

## Yoga and Mindfulness based Cognitive Therapy A Clinical Guide

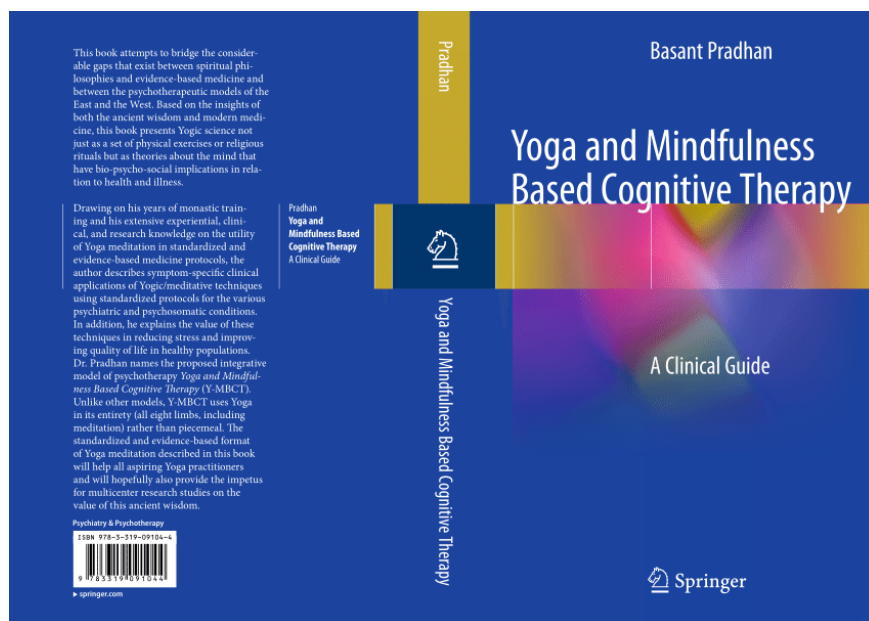
**Author: Basant Pradhan, MD**  
Springer International Publishing, 2015  
E-book: 244 pages  
Language: English  
ISBN: 978-3-319-09104-4

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Psychotherapy is one of the earliest effective treatments for psychiatric disorders known to mental health professionals. The wave of popularity that Freudian psychoanalysis rode on in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was gradually replaced by the efficacious and evidence based cognitive therapy. While cognitive therapy is still a mainstream treatment recommendation, researchers are on the look-out for other interventions that can make psychotherapy, specifically cognitive therapy more useful for patients suffering from psychiatric disorders.

The practice of yoga, initially more popular in Asia has now been researched extensively. Studies have evaluated the role of yoga and meditation in alleviating stress, anxiety and depression One of the components of yoga and meditation which is of great potential utility is mindfulness meditation.

Mindfulness meditation is a type of meditation. The practice of observing one's emotions, thoughts and impulses in a detached manner i.e. without any reaction to them is called as mindfulness. The meditation which helps this skill to develop is mindfulness meditation. There is a large body of evidence accumulating regarding the effectiveness of mindfulness in a variety of psychiatric disorders. However, mental health professionals are not well-versed with these concepts both, due to their relatively recent introduction in mental health care and due to the unfamiliar language that one often encounters when reading literature on yoga and meditation.

The book, 'Yoga and Mindfulness based Cognitive Therapy' thus, promises to fill in a large void in this area. It is authored by Basant Pradhan, an Indian-origin psychiatrist working in the USA. Importantly, he is someone trained in the school of yoga and is also a mental health professional. Thus, he seems to be an apt person to explain and correlate concepts from both the fields with competence.

The book is divided into three parts-the first explores the ancient practice of yoga so that it becomes less mystical for the reader. The second part discusses the standardization in the practice of yoga and mindfulness. The final part talks about the applications of yoga and mindfulness to conventional psychotherapy, specifically cognitive therapy.

In the initial part of the book, the author has discussed the misconceptions associated with yoga. By debunking these false perceptions, Dr. Pradhan has managed to showcase what yoga really is. He has explained some integral concepts of yoga and touched upon the details of its types. The author is clearly steeped in yogic philosophy and is an avid proponent as he has elaborated on the origins, scriptures and proponents of this practice also.

The book has attempted to bridge the gap between the East and the West by drawing parallels between Western concepts of psychology and the models of the mind as described in yogic traditions. Complicated but relevant words like *tristana*, *nibbana* and *vipassana* have been explained using internationally understood and accepted concepts of psychology to enable better comprehension. The author has also discussed the neural underpinnings of the yogic experience thus highlighting the neurobiological basis of the same.

The second part ventures into a detailed description of what the process of meditation entails. This has practical utility for the reader who may be able to execute the basic steps of meditation using the method described in the book after actually understanding the rationale of what he is doing. The common problems that one can encounter while meditating has also been discussed which elevates the utility of this section.

The appropriate technique of mindfulness meditation has also been described. The practices described in this part are standardized, a big advantage for what often seems to be a vague science. In the second part, Dr. Pradhan introduces the reader to his standardized technique of cognitive therapy which has been influenced by yoga which he has aptly named yoga mindfulness based cognitive therapy (Y-MBCT). Y-MBCT is perhaps one of the most interesting parts of the book, as it along with its variations, has been studied extensively by the author and his colleagues. While the initial results are encouraging, more, well designed studies will ensure that there is a robust body of evidence to support its use to treat psychiatric disorders.

The final part of the book explores the application of yoga and mindfulness in therapy. The author has explained the role of attention, empathy and mentalization in therapy. He has spoken of the deficits of these functions in case of psychopathology and how introducing mindfulness in therapy will help correct this. All this has been explained from a neurobiological perspective, thus, making it an informative and convincing read. The author has also elaborated on mindfulness-based stress reduction, mentalization based treatments and mindfulness based cognitive therapy.

Y-MBCT once again takes centre stage in this part with the author discussing the structure of the therapy he has developed. The book also enumerates various models that he has developed for the same and specifies which model can be used in which disorder. Research findings have also been discussed.

Yoga and Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy is a much needed book in the mental health care professional's library. It covers a topic which all of us need to be more aware about. Dr. Pradhan is quite thorough in covering relevant information and the book is a lucid read. It appeals to a wide reader base and provides an interesting fund of information on the topics covered.

The biggest fallacy of the book is that the manner in which yoga has been described using traditional language, sometimes makes it difficult for professionals to digest. The author occasionally tends to digress into details of subtopics, making the text sometimes seem disconnected. The part of the book where the author describes Y-MCBT is rather theoretical, leaving the reader with very little to gain from it. This is understandable given that the protocol is copyrighted but it makes for a pointless read.

On the whole, the book is an educative read for those with an interest in mindfulness and yoga and will definitely enlighten readers about how the same can be applied in therapy.

Overall Rating – 3.5 out of 5

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Acknowledgements – Nil;

Conflict of Interest – Nil;

Funding – Nil.