

**ACCEPTANCE AND CHANGE:**

The Science and Practice of Abandoning Unwise Effort

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TO HELP CLIENTS TO BECOME MINDFUL...



Become a mindful helper first.  
You have to be present to help!

**A MINDFUL HELPER IS...**



1. Aware of self first (biases, feelings, thoughts).
2. Mindfully present and attuned to client.
3. Accepting of client's experience with respect.

**THE MINDFUL HELPER**

"Presence is vital in our clinical work. Nothing substitutes for presence."  
— Daniel Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist*

Mindfulness: focusing on present-moment experience without

- judgment**
- preconceptions**
- expectations**

Being mindful of

**what is**

circumvents your thoughts of

**what should be**

**HELPER'S UNWISE EFFORT**

- Directing before listening with a flexible mind.
- Having an expert's posture vs a beginner's mind.
- Teaching mindfulness as a *means to becoming* vs a *way of being*.
- Teaching mindfulness without having a mindfulness practice.

**A Wise Helper  
Practices and Models Mindfulness**

Helper practices mindfulness → has an open, flexible mind.

Helper shows open flexible mind → Client is open and flexible.

Helper accepts client → Client accepts help

Client's unwise effort refers to unrealistic desires:  
wishing for things to be some other way,  
and rejecting what is.



Desperately trying to get to sleep keeps you awake.



*Trying to be calm is a rejection of feelings.  
Being calm is an effect of acceptance.*



Trying not to think is thinking about not thinking.

**Client's unwise effort:**

1. Focusing more on sharpening the tool than on using it
2. Meditating to feel better rather than to live better

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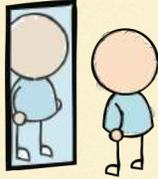
3. Focusing on the breath to stop thoughts

4. Trying to stop a rising feeling...a wave of emotion

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5. Engaging in self-centered thoughts:

- (a) Thinking that you are worse than you are
- (b) Thinking you are better than you are.



A cartoon illustration showing a person in a blue shirt and white pants looking into a mirror. The reflection in the mirror is a taller person, while the person standing next to the mirror is shorter, illustrating a self-comparison.

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6. *Intending* to do something...instead of *doing*

7. Trying to meditate instead of meditating.

8. Dreading a task instead of starting the task

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9. Adopting a cat and complaining about scooping litter.

10. Thinking there should be no bad drivers on the road.

11. Believing that washing dishes gets in the way of living.

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**UNWISE EFFORT IN MARRIAGE**



A photograph of a man and a woman sitting on a bed. The man is on the left, wearing a blue t-shirt and shorts, looking down at his smartphone. The woman is on the right, wearing a white tank top and shorts, sitting with her arms crossed and a frustrated or annoyed expression on her face.

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**The ADHD Marriage Vow**

(a) ADHD partner:

*I will love you just the way you are...until I start thinking you should be different...someone who is unaffected by my ADHD...*

*someone who doesn't mind my inattention, neglect, and forgetfulness...*

*someone who will love me just the way I am.*

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(b) Non-ADHD Partner:

*I will accept you as you are...until I see who you are when the novelty wears off...*

*then I will hate you for not loving me...and insist that you get yourself and your ADHD fixed...*

*I will be evaluating you...and your therapist...and when you stop having ADHD symptoms...*

*I will love you just the way you are.*

**Unwise Effort in Marriage**

Not accepting that ADHD affects others  
and that responding defensively compounds the effects

Non-ADHD partner acting like a parent

ADHD partner acting like a child being punished

Trying to win arguments

**Helper's Unwise Effort with Couples**

Being aligned with either partner as a victim

Privately judging vs remaining curious and open

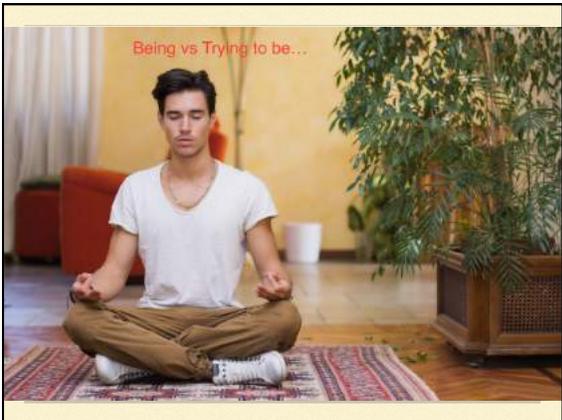
Assigning homework too soon vs giving tasks in session

Neglecting to maintain appropriate boundaries



Sometimes contingent meditation can help, but...

Contingent effort is trying to dial up calmness on demand.  
Daily practice like routine exercise...it conditions the mind.



## Sources

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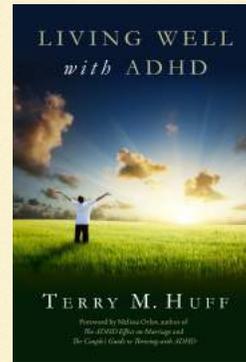
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