

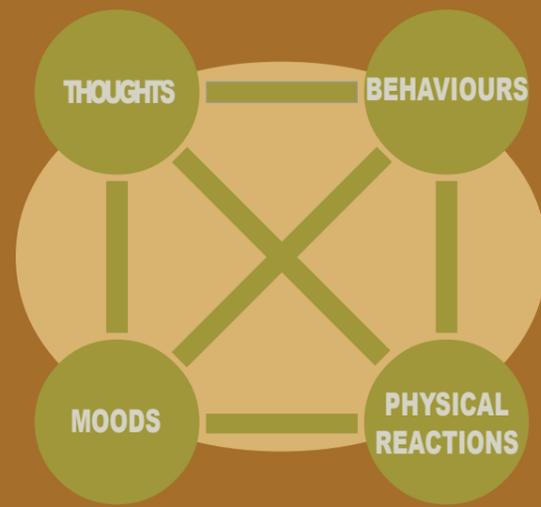
# Can Mindfulness be Contained within a Behaviourist Framework ?

**ABSTRACT:** This paper proposes that third-wave mindfulness and acceptance-based psychotherapies may be undermined in the process of being absorbed into second-wave frameworks, not because they are ineffective, but because the buddhist perspective of mindfulness cannot be contained within a behaviourist perspective. The author relates the behaviourist and buddhist perspectives by showing that Padesky and Mooney's cognitive model (Padesky 1990) can be extended to produce a model based on the buddhist teaching of the four foundations of mindfulness (the four satipatthanas). This model can then be used to explain the mechanics of processes relevant to third wave therapies, such as acceptance and non-judgemental awareness.

When an individual seeks advice and they make contact with a professional in order to get help with a psychological problem, the point at which they approach a professional is the point at which they are offered guidance, and that often includes a set of techniques. In some ways professionalism has taken the place of religion; people have a faith in it similar to what they used to have in religions. But there is a growing recognition amongst some professionals that they need something more than simply techniques in order to offer people real help. Mindfulness is something that a number of professionals believe can be helpful to people - these make up the 'third-wave' of behavioural psychotherapy. I am a practising buddhist. As well as discussing and talking about mindfulness, I am also a practitioner. I continue to study and reflect upon what the buddhist tradition has to say about mindfulness, in addition to meditating, which is the primary way a state of mindfulness can be attained according to the buddhist tradition. And I am bringing all of this to the argument about the application of mindfulness within professional practice.

Mindfulness in buddhism has a whole philosophy behind it to do with conditions, which includes creating the conditions supportive to helping people feel human. Included among them are the development of ethical sensitivity, participation in positive social networks that encourage a human approach, and an intelligent approach to goal-setting. Buddhism is not only about practicing a set of techniques, but it is necessarily about paying attention to the broader conditions that help a person feel human. Kabat-Zinn (2000) has begun to address this theme through his emphasis on participatory medicine. Even for those professionals who are using mindfulness as part of their professional practice, it is not yet clear to me whether they include all of the factors that buddhism deems necessary in order for an individual to attain a full realisation of mindfulness. This paper hopes to say more about this from a buddhist point of view, and my hope is that it will contribute something productive towards those professionals who are using mindfulness in their practice. It introduces an intellectual framework that I hope will help mindfulness grow and develop within professional practice - a framework based on a central buddhist teaching on mindfulness, the four foundations of mindfulness (four satipatthanas). I hope that in considering this framework when teaching or practicing mindfulness, people will not only be helped in solving their problems by becoming more mindful, but will also be helped by the broader conditions that buddhism values, to feel more human.

**Mindfulness in buddhism has a whole philosophy behind it to do with conditions (called Conditioned Coproduction or Conditionality). A buddhist model based on the teaching of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Four Satipatthanas) contains a broader range of conditions than the cognitive model. This can explain third wave processes such as mindfulness and acceptance**

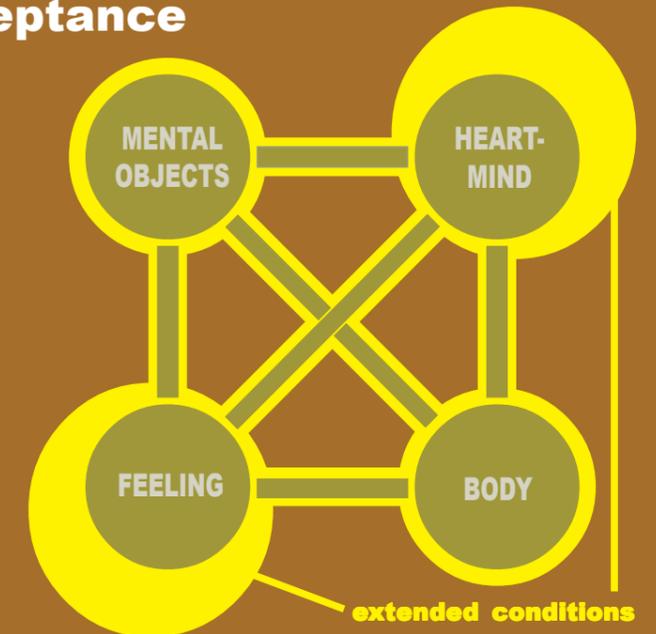


second wave model - Padesky and Mooney's Cognitive Model

+

need to incorporate mindfulness and acceptance

=



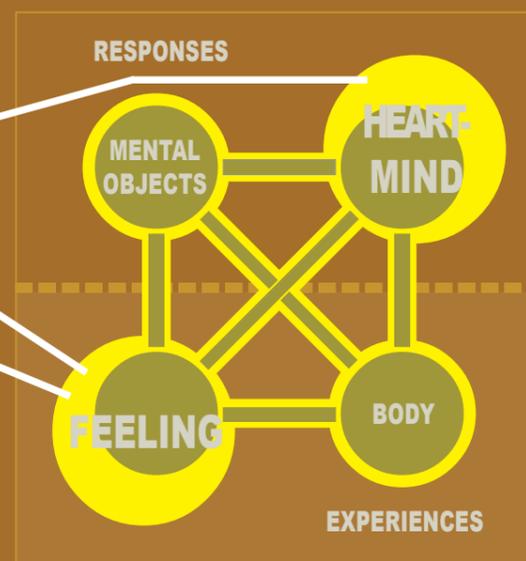
third wave model - based on Four Foundations of Mindfulness

## Details of Satipatthana Model

The buddhist model broadens the conditions of the cognitive model in the areas of mood and behaviour:

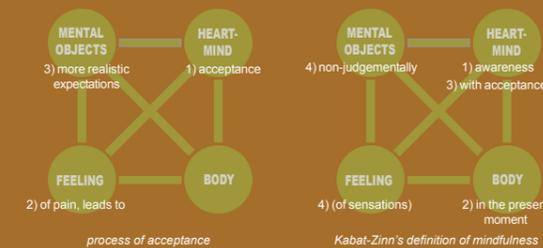
- in addition to external behaviour that can be observed it incorporates internal behaviour - (active mental and emotional states such as **MINDFULNESS** and **ACCEPTANCE**)
- in addition to mood it incorporates two other kinds of feeling - **PHYSICAL FEELING** and **FEELING conditioned by ones STATE OF MIND** (including states such as ethical conscience)

It is necessary to understand the distinction buddhism makes between experience and response to experience, because we need to understand when we are choosing and when we don't have a choice. Heart-mind and mental objects are choices we make, body and feeling are not choices, but given to us in experience. To clarify a common confusion about 'feelings', feeling is always a resultant, a state we arrive in - like mood, sensation, or conscience, and distinct from emotion which is an action: how the heart-mind 'moves' when influenced by feeling.



This discrepancy between the two models is explained by constraints placed on the assessment of internal states in a behaviourist framework. When behaviours take place internally - as in the 'heart-mind', one cannot present them within a behaviourist framework because they cannot be verified by third parties. This is why it is difficult to contain mindfulness within a behaviourist framework.

## Third Wave Processes



Experiences and responses interact in the satipatthana model. A primary condition, say the body, impacts on a secondary condition, such as feeling, causing an associated process. For example physical sensation is the feeling that arises through having a body; another example is that under the influence of mental contents (mental objects), the heart-mind is shaped into thinking; or, the effect of feeling on the body gives rise to expression, laughing or crying. It is worth noting that where experience conditions a response there is always a choice to be made. A person implementing Kabat-Zinn's definition of mindfulness - 'awareness in the present moment, with acceptance, and non-judgementally' tries to choose mindfulness, acceptance, positive emotion and insight over their opposites - distraction, resistance, negative emotion, and ignorance. They choose to allow their views to be changed by accepting difficult experiences, a process aided by not allowing their heart-mind to narrow down in unproductive judgements. They work against the habitual tendency to follow the experience of chronic pain with a 'chronic' state of mind, or a heavy mood of depression with a heavy heart-mind, choosing instead a response of compassion or mindfulness.

There also can be difficulties when we talk about ethics in a secular society, because this is seen largely as a matter for the individual. But ethics is a supportive condition for mindfulness in buddhism. If we ignore it we ignore an important condition. But despite it's usefulness and that it is 'bottom up' (experientially-based) rather than 'top down' (morality-based), as a supportive condition it may not be easily adopted.

## Conclusion

This poster has been an introduction to an intellectual framework that begins to explain third wave therapies. This framework incorporates active mental states, including emotions, which are responses to feelings such as moods or physical pain. It has demonstrated how some third-wave processes - acceptance and mindfulness in Kabat-Zinn's definition - fit in that framework. But the model also suggests that Kabat-Zinn's definition may not be the last word in mindfulness, because it does not overly include an ethical dimension, and this may be a consideration for a person practising mindfulness.

Glenn Burton  
(buddhist name *Mahabodhi*)  
*Western Buddhist Order*

Padesky, C.A. & Mooney, K.A. (1990). Presenting the cognitive model to clients. *International Cognitive Therapy Newsletter*, 6, 13-14.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2000). Participatory Medicine. *Journal of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology*, 14, 239-240

contact: Mahabodhi  
c/o Manchester Buddhist Centre,  
16-20 Turner Street, Manchester M4 1DZ  
United Kingdom.  
email: dhmahabodhi@hotmail.com  
contents of this poster are copyright Mahabodhi 2008