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Paweł Holas, MD, specialist in psychiatry, Cognitive-Behavior (CBT) psychotherapist and supervisor, co-founder of the Polish Association for Cognitive-Behavior Therapy; interested in mindfulness meditation and Buddhist philosophy for many years, currently he practices Vipassana meditation; leads mindfulness and acceptance based cognitive therapy group and individual interventions mainly for anxiety problems.

Apart from mindfulness his prime scientific and therapeutic interest lies in anxiety and its disorders, understanding of cognitive mechanisms that underlie vulnerability to them and their maintenance and in development of effective treatment. He is an affiliate member of the Interdisciplinary Center for Applied Cognitive Studies (ICACS)

Paweł is involved in sport psychology (mental training mainly for tennis players). He has been practicing yoga for many years. The president of the Polish Mindfulness Association.

Mindfulness and acceptance based therapies for anxiety disorders. New ways to enhance traditional cognitive-behavior approaches to anxiety?

Anxiety disorders belong to the most commonly experienced mental health problems, which tend to be chronic, associated with poor quality of life and increased risk for suicide. From traditional mental health perspective anxiety, this universally human experience, is regarded as a disorder, especially when it is associated with significant distress and impairments in important life domains. This presentation will review the mindfulness and acceptance perspective on anxiety in which its psychopathological forms are regarded as a result of secondary response of an individual to fear and anxiety, as he or she attempts to control these experiences and is trying to avoid stimuli that elicits them (this is referred to as experiential avoidance), which instead lead to further suffering and maintenance of psychopathology. Here, contrary to traditional CBT approaches the problem is seen as not being the distorted content of thoughts themselves (cognitive content-focus), but rather the functions of thoughts that regulate experiential avoidance (cognitive process-focus). In this respect the focus of mindfulness and acceptance based CBT therapies is not on the reduction of symptoms like it is in traditional CBT (challenging the content of cognitions and reduction of arousal), but instead of this the emphasis is on the importance of allowing and acceptance to whatever inner experiences are present (including bodily symptoms, thoughts and emotions). Moreover, the emphasis of developing broad, flexible and values driven skills aimed to improving quality of life. The author will review the evidence of effectiveness, describe some of distinguishable features and techniques of so called 3rd wave of CBT approaches based on mindfulness and acceptance (MBSR, MBCT, ACT and DBT) in respect to anxiety and its clinical manifestations and will give examples of their relevance and usage in his group and individual therapy practice.