



A Comparison of Centering vs. Opening Meditation Processes in Healthcare

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Background

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- Meditation is widely used in healthcare to reduce stress, depression, and pain
- Yet there remains lack of conceptual clarity regarding different types of meditation that is needed to guide the rapidly growing body of research in this area (Ospina et al., 2007)



Purpose

To clarify the distinction between centering and opening meditation processes to contribute to the development of multidimensional models of meditation in healthcare needed to guide research and evidence-based practice in healthcare settings

Adapted from Birx (in press)

Method

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- Rodgers' (2000) evolutionary method of concept analysis
- Healthcare literature 2006-2011 was searched using Alt HealthWatch, CINAHL, PsychNET, and PubMed databases using keywords “centering” and “opening” alone and in combination with the term “meditation”
- Included nursing, medicine, neuroscience, psychotherapy, and CAM literature

Definition of Centering

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Centering is the gentle focusing of attention inward, calming body, thoughts, and feelings, thus being present in the moment with an integrated, balanced sense of self.

Definition of Opening

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Opening is present moment awareness without focusing on any particular object while maintaining a receptive attitude and letting go of sensations, emotions, and thoughts, thus cultivating an intuitive experience of spacious clarity and non-duality.

Comparison

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Centering	Opening
Attention focused inward	Attention open including both internal and external perceptions
Awareness focused on calm place within	Open awareness
Sense of center	Spaciousness, without boundaries or center
Exploration of inner self	Dissolving of ego-boundaries and sense of separate self; beyond inner/outer, subject/object, self/other dichotomies
Integrated	Non-dual or unitary

Exemplars

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- Centering (Watson, 1999, p. 171-172)
- Opening (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 152; Makransky, 2007, p. 82)

Conclusions and Implications

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- There are many different types of meditation that may fall along a continuum from focused, to open monitoring, to wide open (Kornfield, 2003)
- Different types of meditation activate different areas of the brain (Austin, 2011)
- Even subtle differences in the instructions can affect the experience and outcomes (Chiesa, Raffaella, & Serretti, 2011)

Conclusions cont.

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- One aspect of classifying different types of meditation is whether or not the aim is experiencing non-duality (Josipovic, 2010)
- The distinctions between these two meditation processes are significant in the context of the understanding of self in new models of psychotherapy (ACT, DBT, & MBCT) and the development of unitary-transformative healthcare models

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