

Self-Care for Therapists

Addressing Burnout with Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy

COURSE INFORMATION PACKET

Charlton Hall, MMFT, PhD
Executive Director
Mindful Ecotherapy Center, PLLC
chuck@mindfulecotherapy.com



Mindful Ecotherapy Center

www.mindfulecotherapy.org

COURSE DESCRIPTION – Self-Care for Therapists

Therapist burnout has become a significant concern within the mental health professions, affecting both clinician well-being and the quality of care provided to clients. Burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of professional accomplishment that can result from prolonged exposure to high caseloads, administrative demands, compassion fatigue, and the emotional intensity of clinical work. Therapists experiencing burnout may struggle with decreased empathy, impaired concentration, reduced job satisfaction, and increased risk of ethical concerns or professional errors.

Over time, burnout contributes to higher rates of absenteeism, workforce turnover, and shortages of qualified mental health professionals, further limiting access to care for those in need. Research suggests that intentional self-care practices, supportive supervision, mindfulness, and maintaining healthy professional boundaries can help reduce burnout and promote resilience among mental health practitioners, ultimately benefiting both therapists and the clients they serve (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Rupert & Dorociak, 2019).

Self-Care for Therapists: Addressing Burnout with Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy is an online home study course designed to help mental health professionals recognize, prevent, and respond to burnout through practical, nature-informed mindfulness strategies.

Drawing from Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy, this course explores how chronic stress, emotional labor, and systemic pressures impact therapists both personally and professionally, while offering accessible tools for restoring balance, resilience, and presence in clinical work. You will learn how to identify early signs of burnout, strengthen emotional regulation, establish sustainable professional boundaries, and integrate restorative ecotherapy practices into daily life, even within demanding schedules. Through guided reflection and applied techniques rooted in mindfulness and ecological awareness, you will develop a personalized self-care plan that supports long-term well-being and ethical, sustainable clinical practice.

COURSE OBJECTIVES – Self-Care for Therapists

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to

- Identify early warning signs and symptoms of professional burnout, including compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and emotional exhaustion.
- Explain the core principles of Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy and its relevance to therapists' well-being.
- Apply mindfulness and nature-based practices to support emotional regulation and stress reduction.
- Develop practical self-care strategies that integrate ecotherapy principles into daily professional life.
- Recognize personal and professional patterns that contribute to burnout, including boundary challenges and overextension.
- Strengthen reflective practice skills to support ongoing self-awareness and emotional monitoring.
- Create a sustainable self-care framework that supports long-term resilience and clinical effectiveness.

COURSE INSTRUCTOR – Self-Care for Therapists

This course was created by Charlton Hall, MMFT, PhD.

Charlton Hall, MMFT, PhD, is a former Marriage and Family Therapy Supervisor and a former Registered Play Therapy Supervisor (now retired from both those roles).

In 2008, he was awarded a two-year post-graduate fellowship through the Westgate Training and Consultation Network to study mindfulness and ecotherapy. His chosen specialty demographic at that time was Borderline Personality Disorder.

Dr. Hall has been providing training seminars on mindfulness and ecotherapy since 2007, when he founded what would become the Mindful Ecotherapy Center, PLLC, and has been an advocate for education in ecotherapy and mindfulness throughout his professional career, serving on the South Carolina Association for Marriage and Family Therapy's Board of Directors as Chair of Continuing Education from 2012 to 2014.

He served as the Chair of Behavioral Health for ReGenesis Health Care from 2014 to 2016 and trained all the medical staff in suicide risk assessment and prevention during his employment at that agency.

Dr. Hall is also a trained SMART Recovery Facilitator and served as a Volunteer Advisor in South Carolina for several years.

Dr. Hall's area of research and interest is using Mindfulness and Ecotherapy to facilitate acceptance and change strategies within a family systemic framework, and he has presented research at several conferences and seminars on this and other topics.

Publications by Dr. Hall:

Self-Care for Therapists: Addressing Burnout with Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy

Nature-Based Recovery with Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy

Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy in Clinical Practice, First Edition

Sandtray Eco-Art Therapy in Clinical Practice, First Edition

The Ecospirituality Workbook: Reconnecting with Nature, Others, and Self

The Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Workbook

The Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy Facilitator Manual

Ecoplay: Re-Introducing Your Children to Nature

The Mindful Mood Management Workbook

The Mindful Mood Management Facilitator Manual

Mindfulness: An Introduction

References

Review of General Psychology, 15 (4), 289–303.

American Psychological Association. (2017). *Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct*. <https://www.apa.org/ethics/code>

American Psychological Association. (2024). *Burnout and stress in helping professions*. American Psychological Association.

American Psychological Association. (2024). *Stress effects on the body and mind*. American Psychological Association.

Barnard, L. K., & Curry, J. F. (2011). *Self-compassion: Conceptualizations, correlates, & interventions*.

Barnett, J. E. (2017). *Informed consent and boundary issues in psychotherapy*. American Psychological Association.

Barnett, J. E., & Johnson, W. B. (2015). *Ethics desk reference for psychologists*. American Psychological Association.

Barnett, J. E., Baker, E. K., Elman, N. S., & Schoener, G. R. (2007). In pursuit of wellness: The self-care imperative. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 38(6), 603–612.

Berto, R. (2014). The role of nature in coping with psycho-physiological stress: A literature review on restorativeness. *Behavioral Sciences*, 4(4), 394–409. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs4040394>

Bratman, G. N., Anderson, C. B., Berman, M. G., Cochran, B., de Vries, S., Flanders, J., Folke, C., Frumkin, H., Gross, J. J., Hartig, T., Kahn, P. H., Jr., Kuo, M., Lawler, J. J., Levin, P. S., Lindahl, T., Meyer-Lindenberg, A., Mitchell, R., Ouyang, Z., Roe, J., ... Daily, G. C. (2019). Nature and mental health: An ecosystem service perspective. *Science Advances*, 5(7), eaax0903.

Bratman, G. N., Hamilton, J. P., & Daily, G. C. (2015). The impacts of nature experience on human cognitive function and mental health. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1249(1), 118–136. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nyas.12750>

Buzzell, L., & Chalquist, C. (Eds.). (2009). *Ecotherapy: Healing with nature in mind*. Sierra Club Books.

Evans, G. W. (2003). The built environment and mental health. *Journal of Urban Health*, 80(4), 536–555. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jurban/jtg063>

Figley, C. R. (1995). *Compassion fatigue: Coping with secondary traumatic stress disorder in those who treat the traumatized*. Brunner/Mazel.

Fook, J., & Gardner, F. (2007). *Practising critical reflection: A resource handbook*. Open University Press.

Freudenberger, H. J. (1974). Staff burn-out. *Journal of Social Issues*, 30(1), 159–165.

Geller, S. M., & Greenberg, L. S. (2012). *Therapeutic presence: A mindful approach to effective therapy*. American Psychological Association.

Gelso, C. J., & Hayes, J. A. (2007). *Countertransference and the therapist's inner experience: Perils and possibilities*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Germer, C. K., Siegel, R. D., & Fulton, P. R. (2013). *Mindfulness and psychotherapy*. Guilford Press.

- Germer, C. K., Siegel, R. D., & Fulton, P. R. (2013). *Mindfulness and psychotherapy* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Goldberg, S. B., Riordan, K. M., Sun, S., & Davidson, R. J. (2022). The empirical status of mindfulness-based interventions: A systematic review of 44 meta-analyses of randomized controlled trials. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 17(1), 108–130.
- Hayes, J. A., Gelso, C. J., Van Wagoner, S. L., & Diemer, R. A. (2011). Managing countertransference. *Psychotherapy*, 48*(1), 88–97.
- Jerath, R., Crawford, M. W., Barnes, V. A., & Harden, K. (2015). Self-regulation of breathing as a primary treatment for anxiety. *Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback*, 40(2), 107–115. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10484-015-9279-8>
- Jordan, M., & Hinds, J. (Eds.). (2016). *Ecotherapy: Theory, research and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2013). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness* (Revised ed.). Bantam Books.
- Kaplan, R., & Kaplan, S. (1989). *The experience of nature: A psychological perspective*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kerr, M. P., Murray, E., & Stevenson, M. (2006). Effect of workbook-based reflective practice on clinicians' emotional well-being. *Medical Education*, 40*(2), 163–169.
- Laborde, S., Mosley, E., & Thayer, J. F. (2022). Heart rate variability and cardiac vagal tone in psychophysiological research: Recommendations for experiment planning, data analysis, and reporting. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 756633. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.756633>
- Martin, L., White, M. P., Hunt, A., Richardson, M., Pahl, S., & Burt, J. (2024). Nature connection and mental health outcomes: Recent advances in environmental psychology research. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 57, 101812.
- Maslach, C., & Jackson, S. E. (1981). The measurement of experienced burnout. *Journal of Occupational Behavior*, 2(2), 99–113.
- Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2016). Burnout. In G. Fink (Ed.), *Stress: Concepts, cognition, emotion, and behavior*. Academic Press.
- Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2016). Burnout. In *Stress: Concepts, cognition, emotion, and behavior* (pp. 351–357). Academic Press.
- Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2016). *Burnout: A multidimensional perspective*. In G. Fink (Ed.), *Stress: Concepts, cognition, emotion, and behavior* (pp. 351–357). Academic Press.
- McEwan, K., Giles, D., Clarke, F. J., Kotera, Y., Evans, G., Terebenina, O., Minou, L., Teeling, C., Basran, J., Wood, W., & Weil, D. (2023). A systematic review of nature-based interventions and mental health outcomes. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(4), 3278.
- McEwen, B. S. (2007). Physiology and neurobiology of stress and adaptation: Central role of the brain. *Physiological Reviews*, 87(3), 873–904. <https://doi.org/10.1152/physrev.00041.2006>
- McEwen, B. S. (2017). Neurobiological and systemic effects of chronic stress. *Chronic Stress*, 1, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2470547017692328>

- Morse, G., Salyers, M. P., Rollins, A. L., Monroe-DeVita, M., & Pfahler, C. (2012). Burnout in mental health services: A review of the problem and its remediation. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 39(5), 341–352. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-011-0352-1>
- Neff, K. D. (2003). Self-compassion: An alternative conceptualization of a healthy attitude toward oneself. *Self and Identity*, 2*(2), 85–101.
- Neff, K. D. (2011). *Self-compassion: The proven power of being kind to yourself*. William Morrow.
- Norcross, J. C., & Lambert, M. J. (2018). Psychotherapy relationships that work III. *Psychotherapy*, 55*(4), 303–315.
- Norcross, J. C., & VandenBos, G. R. (2018). *Leaving it at the office: A guide to psychotherapist self-care* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Porges, S. W. (2022). Polyvagal theory: A science of safety. *Frontiers in Integrative Neuroscience*, 16, 871227. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnint.2022.871227>
- Porges, S. W. (2022). *Polyvagal theory: A science of safety*. W. W. Norton.
- Richardson, M., Passmore, H. A., Lumber, R., Thomas, R., & Hunt, A. (2022). Moments, not minutes: The nature-wellbeing relationship. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 12(4), 45–67.
- Roszak, T. (1992). *The voice of the earth*. Simon & Schuster.
- Rupert, P. A., & Dorociak, K. E. (2019). Self-care, stress, and well-being among practicing psychologists. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 50(5), 343–350.
- Saakvitne, K. W., Pearlman, L. A., & Staff of TSI/CAAP. (1996). *Transforming the pain: A workbook on vicarious traumatization*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Schon, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. Basic Books.
- Shapiro, S. L., & Carlson, L. E. (2009). *The art and science of mindfulness: Integrating mindfulness into psychology and the helping professions*. American Psychological Association.
- Siegel, D. J. (2010). **The mindful therapist: A clinician's guide to mindsight and neural integration**. W. W. Norton.
- Siegel, D. J. (2010). *The mindful therapist: A clinician's guide to mindsight and neural integration*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Siegel, D. J. (2012). *The developing mind* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Skovholt, T. M., & Trotter-Mathison, M. (2016). *The resilient practitioner: Burnout prevention and self-care strategies for counselors, therapists, teachers, and health professionals* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Sonnentag, S., & Fritz, C. (2015). Recovery from job stress: The stressor-detachment model as an integrative framework. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 36(S1), S72–S103. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.1924>
- Sonnentag, S., & Fritz, C. (2015). Recovery from job stress: The stressor-detachment model as an integrative framework. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 36(S1), S72–S103. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.1924>

- Spinelli, C., Wisener, M., & Khoury, B. (2023). Mindfulness training for healthcare professionals and its impact on well-being and professional functioning: A systematic review. *Mindfulness*, 14(5), 1094–1110.
- Tang, Y. Y., Hölzel, B. K., & Posner, M. I. (2015). The neuroscience of mindfulness meditation. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 16(4), 213–225. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nrn3916>
- Ulrich, R. S., Simons, R. F., Losito, B. D., Fiorito, E., Miles, M. A., & Zelson, M. (1991). Stress recovery during exposure to natural and urban environments. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 11(3), 201–230. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-4944\(05\)80184-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-4944(05)80184-7)
- Wise, E. H., Hersh, M. A., & Gibson, C. M. (2012). Ethics, self-care and well-being for psychologists: Re-envisioning the stress-distress continuum. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 43(5), 487–494. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029442>
- Wolsko, C., & Lindberg, K. (2023). Experiencing connection with nature: Psychological benefits and implications for well-being. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 87, 101988.
- World Health Organization. (2019). *Burn-out an "occupational phenomenon": International classification of diseases*. World Health Organization.
- Young, J., Haas, E., & McGown, E. (2010). *Caring for the caregiver: Mindfulness-based approaches to therapist self-care*. Routledge.
- Zur, O. (2017). *Boundaries in psychotherapy: Ethical and clinical explorations*. American Psychological Association.