

Mindfulness in Intimate Relationships

UCLA workshop: Presenter Stan Tatkin, Psy.D.

The practice of mindfulness has fast become popular in Western psychotherapy, thanks in part to recent neuroimaging studies that show specific benefits to the human brain and body. Some well-known benefits include increased frontal lobe activity particularly in the ventral medial prefrontal cortex, increased neurogenesis (development of new cells) in the dentate gyrus (a part of the hippocampus), increased lateralization between right and left hemispheres, increased parasympathetic tone which is linked to increased heart rate variability (HRV), and some evidence of protection against aging in important areas of the brain.

Mindfulness also has enormous implications for interactive regulation between romantic partners. The practice of mindfulness is a simple technology involving two parts: Noticing and allowing. Sometimes this two-part process is also referred to as attention and equanimity, or awareness and relaxation, or focus and acceptance. This may also be equated to the quiet/alert state achieved in the securely attached relationship associated with production of both oxytocin and vasopressin (a.k.a. attachment hormones).

This workshop integrates the research of mindfulness with that of the intersubjective, psychobiological process of interactive board mutual regulation between adult romantic partners. Attendees will learn how to apply principles of mindfulness to couples therapy for achieving mutually amplified positive feelings while reducing periods of amplified negative experiences during periods of stress.



Stan Tatkin, PsyD, MFT, practices psychotherapy in Calabasas, California. Dr. Tatkin was a primary inpatient therapist at the John Bradshaw Center where, among other things, taught Mindfulness to patients and staff. He was a student of Vipassana teacher, Shinzen Young, Ph.D., and was a trained facilitator in Vipassana. He was also trained by David Reynolds, Ph.D., in two Japanese forms of psychotherapy, Morita and Naikan.

Dr. Tatkin was clinical director of Charter Hospital's intensive outpatient drug and alcohol program, and is a former president of the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists, Ventura County chapter. Trained in developmental object relations, his private practice specialized in the treatment of adolescents and adults with personality disorders. His interests have since branched out toward psycho-neurobiological theories of human attachment, integrating principles of early mother-infant attachment with adult romantic relationships. He speaks to professional audiences on subjects of couples therapy and preventative psychotherapy through early intervention with infants, children and their parents. He has published several articles on the psychobiology of couples' therapy and is currently writing on couples interventions using attachment theory and principles of arousal and affect regulation.

In addition to his private practice, he teaches and supervises first-year family medicine residents at Kaiser Permanente, Woodland Hills, through which he is an assistant professor at the UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine, Department of Family Medicine. He is also adjunct faculty for Antioch University, Santa Barbara Graduate Institute, and California Lutheran University.

Dr. Tatkin is a veteran member of Allan N. Schore's study group. He has trained in the Adult Attachment Interview through Mary Main and Erik Hesse's program out of University of California, Berkeley. He is a contributing editor on a book with Allan Schore entitled, *Reader's Guide to Intersubjective Neurobiology*, for W.W. Norton & Company due out in Winter of 2007 and is currently co-writing with Marion Solomon on a new book entitled, *The Loving-Warring Brain: How Romance Starts and Ends*.