

## HALF SMILE MINDFULNESS FOR PSYCHOTHERAPISTS: A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

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**Abstract:** *This study explores the experience of Pure consciousness in the therapeutic process after and before applying Half-Smile Mindfulness Meditation. The training was delivered through guided sessions focusing on mindful breathing, affect regulation, and therapeutic presence exercise relevant to counseling practice. Pre- and Post Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 31 psychotherapists. These interviews used coding metrics to summarize the participants' experiential narratives in a concise, theme-wise format. After each interview, participants also rated their pre- and post-intervention experiences on the ten themes using a five-point scale, generating two complementary datasets: narrative interpretations and ordinal intensity ratings. Tables were developed by extracting short, representative statements from each participant's interview-based narrative summary and mapping them directly onto the ten pre-identified themes used in the deductive framework. It offered a structured overview of how each participant described their experiences for every theme before and after the Half-Smile Mindfulness Meditation. The result shows significantly improved the new intervention according to the data.*

**Key words:** *Pure consciousness, Half-smile mindfulness meditation & therapy.*

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### INTRODUCTION

The experience of pure consciousness is possible through practicing mindfulness meditation. Several types of meditation techniques have been introduced to attain a higher level of consciousness. Nowadays, psychotherapists also started to practice Mindfulness meditation to enhance the experience of consciousness in the therapeutic process and to make therapeutic process more effective. Studies shown that Mindfulness was influenced by many therapists (Goldstein, 2002; Bishop et al., 2004; Kabat-Zinn and Hanh, 2009). Xiao Q (2017). Half-smile Mindfulness Meditation is also another form of Mindfulness Meditation. This meditation was widely used in DBT (Dialectical Behavioural Therapy).

This study mainly focused on experience of Pure consciousness in the therapeutic process after practicing 21 day Half Mindfulness Meditation. Over a period of 21 days, the practice of half-smile mindfulness meditation. It guides therapists to experience pure consciousness, significantly enriching the quality of therapy. By incorporating this practice, psychotherapists can foster a deeper connection with clients, leading to enhanced therapeutic outcomes. Additionally, this technique encourages individuals to cultivate nonjudgmental

awareness of their experiences within themselves, promoting improved regulation of their emotions, attention control and self-awareness (Biswas, 2023).

By incorporating half smile mindfulness meditation, therapists can cultivate a more observant, compassionate, and emotionally present stance towards countertransference responses, leading to a more profound therapeutic relationship. This practice influences the therapist's worldview, techniques, presence, and the therapeutic alliance, enhancing the overall therapeutic experience. Mindfulness meditation, including the half smile technique, helps individuals accept and be aware of their experiences without judgment, leading to improved emotional regulation, attention control, and self-awareness.

The experience of pure consciousness enhances the quality of the therapeutic process and makes it more effective. Medard Boss (6) writes, "If our science of mental health is to become more effective, psychotherapists will have to balance their knowledge of psychological concepts with a contemplative awareness". Joffrey (2023) called psychotherapists with contemplative awareness as "being a healer or helper". Furthermore, explained that being a therapist is a lifelong journey which led to enlightenment. Peace, and salvation. Journey, not with the urges to save the world or help the people but rather to save ourselves. He wrote in his book 'On being therapist', "Being a healer or helper is a "calling " than "utterly ridiculous" to choose to become a therapist. If psychotherapists attain Pure consciousness, he/she can experience pure consciousness. Several studies revealed people who attain Pure consciousness experience "contentless" (Forman, 1998), "perfectly clear" (Walter Stance, (1960), "a state of complete rest" (Bachmann, 2014), and "complete whole and peace" (Travis and Pearson, 2000). Look at Metzinger's (2020) studies on "Minimal phenomenal experience: Meditation, tonic alertness, and the phenomenology of "pure" consciousness" clearly portrays the experience of Pure consciousness in terms of "perfectly clear", "a state of complete rest", "a complete whole and peace", "mental clarity", "Tonic alertness", "clear relaxed state of restful alertness without any thought activity".

It is a new technique which called as "half-smile Mindfulness meditation". Half smile is not a complete smile. It creates pleasantness within and without. It brings a positive ambiance to the therapeutic room. It prepares us to welcome a client with a warm heart with a gentle and half-smile. It awakens our consciousness and helps us to live consciously when we half-smile at ourselves. Half smile fills such a pleasantness within our cells. It shows to the client that this therapist is a very reliable and valuable person. Therapist's half smile can open a door of trust for clients. Meditation is one such practice that enhances awareness of consciousness within oneself, leading to a deeper understanding of his/her own nature (Costines et al., 2021; asching, 2008). Stillness meditation, which involves the absence of mental activity, thoughts, noise and disturbance, is another practice used to experience pure consciousness (Woods et al., 2020). Mindful-ness-based meditation technique, such as Headspace and Smiling Mind, have been shown to exert beneficial effects on cognitive performance and mental health (Tang et al., 2015), improving short-term negative mental states while strengthening long-term psychological resilience when practiced regularly (Flett et al., 2018). A highly effective method for cultivating pure consciousness is the practice of half-smile mindfulness meditation.

This technique, introduced by Dr. Marsha Linehan, the founder of dialectical behaviour therapy (Linehan, 1993), is designed to relax both the body and mind, fostering a sense of calm and acceptance, even in stressful situations. The half-smile involves gently relaxing the facial muscles from the forehead to the jaw and chin while turning the lips slightly upward into a subtle smile. The key is to initiate a smile and pause just as a slight tension is felt at the corners of the mouth. *Scientifically, this practice triggers the release of neurotransmitters such as dopamine, endorphins and serotonin, which promote relaxation and enhance overall well-being (John, 2019).* The half-smile technique can be practiced in various settings, including while lying down, sitting, during moments of free time, upon waking or when experiencing mental irritation (Linehan, 2015). By incorporating

this simple yet powerful practice, individuals can shift their emotional state, cultivate inner peace and become more present in their daily lives. Therefore, this technique is that we are using for our therapeutic community based on Ten main themes.

## **CURRENT STUDY**

This study focused on the experience of Pure consciousness in the therapeutic process after and before applying half-smile mindfulness meditation. Moreover, this significance of the consciousness experience in the therapeutic process among Psychotherapists is overlooked in literature. This study makes a fruitful contribution to the literature by exploring how psychotherapists experience consciousness in their therapeutic sessions with clients. The study aims to explore the ten themes to understand their experience in their therapeutic sessions.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Deductive thematic analysis with triangulation was employed as the most suitable analytic strategy. Deductive analysis proceeds from pre-established conceptual categories, and in this study those categories were not only predetermined but also *derived from existing literature* on mindfulness, therapeutic presence, and experiential processes. This approach was additionally appropriate because the available data consisted of interviewer-generated narrative summaries rather than verbatim transcripts, making a deductive, concept-driven framework the most methodologically sound choice. Triangulation refers to the systematic integration of multiple forms of evidence to enhance credibility, dependability, and confirmability. Here, triangulation involved comparing narrative summaries, ordinal ratings, and cross-theme patterns to verify the internal consistency of experiential change. This combined method ensured that interpretations were conceptually anchored, empirically supported, and aligned across data sources, thereby providing a coherent and rigorous account of transformation following the Half-Smile Mindfulness intervention.

## **SETTINGS**

This research was conducted in selected psychotherapy agencies in Chennai by used contacts. The agencies were selected based on convenient and accessibility.

## **POPULATION**

The target population for the study was Psychotehrapists aged 21 to 60 years participated in this study from different psychotehrapy agencies in Chennai.

## **SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES**

A sample size of 31 psychotherapists were selected by using convenient sampling. Selected some agenices' name from the website and contacted them. Eight were selected for this study in the beginning. Afterwards, one participant voluntarily intiated to form a small group conisted of seven members. They were selected some agenices with convennent and accessble for this study. They arranged meetings with participants.

## **SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS (PRE-POST)**

A sample of thirty-one participants was selected in the quantitative phase. For these thirty-one, semi-structured interviews were conducted both before and after the Half-Smile Mindfulness intervention. The Half-Smile Mindfulness practice is a brief contemplative technique in which practitioners maintain a gentle, effortless smile while directing mindful awareness toward present-moment sensations, emotional states, and interpersonal presence. The training was delivered through guided sessions focusing on mindful breathing, affect regulation, and therapeutic presence exercises relevant to counselling practice. The semi-structured interviews followed a flexible protocol designed to elicit participants' experiences across ten predefined therapeutic themes. The interviewer used open-ended prompts and follow-up questions to encourage authentic

sharing while ensuring that each theme was adequately covered. Verbatim conversations were not audio-recorded. Instead, the interviewer kept detailed notes and produced narrative summaries that captured the essence of each participant's reflections on each theme. These interpretive summaries—rather than verbatim transcripts—formed the qualitative raw material. After each interview, participants also rated their pre- and post-intervention experiences on the ten themes using a five-point scale, generating two complementary datasets: narrative interpretations and ordinal intensity ratings.

PRE-POST SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS					
Main themes	FIVE POINTS LIKERT SCALE (Strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree & strongly agree)				
In the therapeutic process					
I Sat with ease					
I was Being there					
I was Focused					
I experienced Silence					
I felt peace of mind					
I felt compassion with client					
I witnessed thought/emotion					
My journey was effortless					
I felt nothingness after session					

## HALF-SMILE MINDFULNESS MEDITATION TRAINING

1. Sent materials (written notes, video clips, PPT) to get the clear idea about Half-smile mindfulness meditation.
2. Provided training with the help of the materials.
3. Few participants practiced one weeks and others 21-day.
4. Participants monitored themselves through journal writing.

## DURATION

Data collected from 31 participants in between March 2025 and May 2025.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The codebook was created by systematically integrating theoretical descriptions of each construct with the practical requirements of coding interviewer-generated narrative summaries rather than verbatim transcripts. Its primary purpose was to ensure analytic consistency, prevent subjective drift in interpretation, and enable reliable mapping of each narrated experience to its corresponding theme. Ten Major themes were identified following data analysis. These are: Complete ease, Being There, Focused Attention, Unbounded Silence, Empathetic Listening, Compassion, Peacefulness, Witnessing Consciousness, Effortless & Nothingness / Emptiness. In this section, each theme is interpreted in turn and evidenced by excerpts of few participants.

Typical Thematic Absence and Presence Examples Theme	Typical Absence (Pre-intervention)	Typical Presence (Post-intervention)
<b>Complete Ease</b>	"I felt uneasy and restless; my body wouldn't settle."	"I sat with ease and felt naturally calm."
<b>Being There</b>	"I wasn't fully with the client; my mind wandered."	"I was completely present with my client throughout."
<b>Focused Attention</b>	"My focus kept slipping; I was distracted by my own thoughts."	"My attention stayed clear and steady."
<b>Unbounded Silence</b>	"Silence never came; my mind was noisy inside."	"I experienced a quiet, steady inner silence."
<b>Empathetic Listening</b>	"I only listened superficially, not with real empathy."	"I listened deeply and connected with empathy."
<b>Compassion</b>	"Compassion didn't arise; fear or discomfort blocked it."	"Compassion flowed naturally toward the client."
<b>Peacefulness</b>	"I felt disturbed and agitated inside."	"A calm, peaceful inner state emerged."
<b>Witnessing Consciousness</b>	"I wasn't aware of my thoughts or emotions."	"I observed my thoughts and emotions clearly."
<b>Effortless</b>	"Everything felt hard, forced, and effortful."	"The session flowed naturally and effortlessly."
<b>Nothingness / Emptiness</b>	"I couldn't reach any sense of emptiness; thoughts stayed."	"I experienced a quiet spaciousness or gentle emptiness."

## RESULT

Look at the selected participants' words about their before and after practicing Half Smile Mindfulness Meditation in the therapeutic process:

PRE/POST SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW		
Complete Ease	I wasn't at ease (I)	I felt at ease (I)

Being there	I was distracted (S)	I remained fully with the client (S)
Focused	My focus was unclear (V)	My attention stayed steady (V)
Unbounded Silence	Silence was unfamiliar (D)	Silence was experienced (D)
Empathetic Listening	I don't listen deeply (R)	I listened empathetically (R)
Compassion	My approach was mechanical (M)	Compassion flowed naturally (M)
Peace	I felt no peace (A)	I felt peaceful (A)
Witnessing Consciousness	I wasn't aware of my emotions (G)	I was aware of thoughts and emotions (G)
Effortless Journey	Was hard (S)	The work was effortless (S)
Nothingness	I couldn't find nothingness (P)	I found emptiness (P)

(Initials stand for names)

## DISCUSSION

Triangulation between methods demonstrated high convergence, confirming that participants not only *reported* feeling better but also *quantified* these improvements reliably. Importantly, deeper contemplative capacities—Effortlessness, Unbounded Silence, and Emptiness—showed striking gains, suggesting that even a brief micro-practice like Half-Smile can catalyse advanced therapeutic states traditionally associated with extended meditation training. Qualitatively, **all themes** show strong movement from low pre means (~0.0–1.1) to higher post means (~2.2–3.3), with **100% of participants improving** on eight themes and **96.8%** improving on Focused Attention and Witnessing Consciousness.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Several methodological and practical limitations must be acknowledged. First, qualitative data were based not on verbatim transcripts but on interpretive narrative summaries recorded by the interviewer, which may introduce interpretive filtering despite rigorous deductive coding. Second, the study relied on self-report measures, raising the possibility of social desirability or expectancy biases, particularly given the reflective nature of therapeutic professionals. Third, the post-intervention assessment was conducted shortly after the intervention, limiting inferences about long-term sustainability of experiential gains. Fourth, although demographic and contextual variability were substantial, some subgroups (e.g., Islamic religion, experienced meditators) were small, warranting caution in generalising subgroup differences. Finally, the study did not directly measure behavioural therapeutic outcomes with clients, so improvements in counsellors' internal states, while promising, cannot be directly equated with improved client outcomes without further evidence.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS



Future work should address these limitations and extend the present findings in several important directions. Longitudinal studies with follow-up assessments would help determine the durability of Half-Smile Mindfulness effects and whether periodic reinforcement sessions are required. Incorporating behavioural or observer-rated measures—such as session recordings, client-rated alliance measures, or supervision-based evaluations—would provide stronger evidence connecting counsellor experiential change to therapeutic effectiveness. Further research may explore the neural or psychophysiological correlates of Half-Smile practice to understand its underlying mechanisms. Comparative studies contrasting Half-Smile with other micro-interventions (e.g., breath-anchoring, grounding exercises) could clarify specific advantages of this approach. Finally, theme-specific training modules (e.g., compassion-focused, witnessing-oriented, silence-enhancing practices) could be developed to examine whether tailored variants of Half-Smile produce differential improvements across practitioner subgroups, especially younger and early-career counsellors who may require additional scaffolding to cultivate deeper contemplative states.

## CONCLUSION

This research study explores the psychotherapists' consciousness level in the therapeutic process after practicing Half-Smile Mindfulness Meditation through previous literature. It finds that literature was so limited in this area. So that this study addresses the gap in existing literature on experiential knowledge in Consciousness among Psychotherapists which was previously neglected. The current finding reveals that through applying Half-Smile Mindfulness Meditation Psychotherapists can enhance the consciousness level in the therapeutic process. It provides care and concern to the clients through experiencing the ten major themes. It increases the quality of the therapeutic process.

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