



## Utilizing Mindfulness-based CBT to Address Anger and Aggression in Middle Schools

### SUMMARY

This article explores mindfulness based cognitive behavioral therapy (MCBT) as an evidence-based practice to help adolescents develop positive coping skills, specifically as it relates to managing anger and aggressive behavior. Both mindfulness and cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) aim to proactively influence areas of the brain responsible for impulse control, decision-making, and planning. While CBT is focused on restructuring thoughts, MCBT emphasizes identifying negative thought patterns and addressing their underlying processes. The end goal of MCBT is to decrease impulsive and reactive behaviors.

### IMPORTANCE

- **Middle school** youth are entering a key stage of brain development, therefore it is a **critical time** for students to **learn and use emotion regulation skills**.
- Students who have difficulty regulating their emotions can experience **negative outcomes** both inside and outside of school.
- School mental health professionals play a major role in helping students develop the necessary **coping skills** to prepare them for future success.
- MCBT is a **long-term technique**, therefore, it may not be appropriate for students who would be better suited to a short-term approach.

### EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

- Both mindfulness and CBT have **extensive research** documenting benefits to individuals' mental and emotional health.
- School mental health professionals must take care to consider the **cultural responsiveness** of MCBT before incorporating it into counseling sessions with a particular student

### PRACTITIONER TIPS

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Consider using the **Firework model** as a method of explaining the connection between a stimulating event and the potential outcomes in the absence of proper regulation.

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School mental health professionals should emphasize the **mind / body connection** as a key component of managing aggressive feelings and behaviors.

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After introducing the concept of MCBT, school mental health professionals should identify facets of the practice that **best fit the student** and **reinforce** those concepts in future sessions.

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Clark, L.B. (2020). Utilizing mindfulness-based CBT to address anger and aggression in middle schools. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Counseling*, 6(2), 97-109.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23727810.2020.1719351>