

Body awareness and the MAIA

Multidimensional assessment of
interoceptive awareness

Windesheim University of Applied Sciences
Zwolle
The Netherlands

Dieneke Jol
02-07-2018 Summer school Lisbon



Definition Body awareness

Mehling et al 2012

- The perception of bodily states, processes and interactions originating from sensory proprioceptive and interoceptive afferents.
- The concept contains the perception of physical sensations (heart beat, posture) and more complex sensations (such as pain or relaxation).

PMT focusses on body awareness

- Emotions and feelings are influenced by one's internal state of bodily arousal
- The physiology in brain and body mediates the embodiment of emotions
- Detection of bodily sensations can shape emotional and affective experience



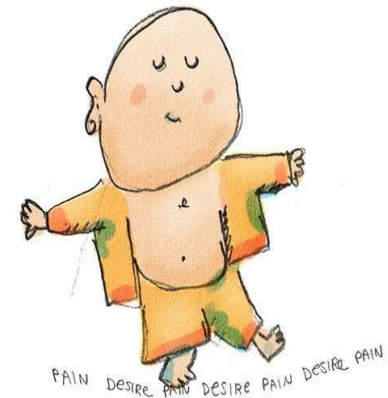
Maladaptive body awareness

An abstract and ruminative self focus on body sensations causes distress, anxiety and somatization.

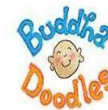


Beneficial body awareness

characterized by *mindfulness*,
non-judgmental acceptance
grounded in experiencing the
present moment, sometimes
summarized as a *sense of*
embodiment.



Balance.



Why working on body awareness?

The link between interoceptive awareness and physical sensations (e.g. of emotions) is a key element for:

affect regulation

decision making

the sense of self

Body awareness and new motor patterns

(Shafir, 2016)



To explore and practice new motor patterns so the client can experience new unaccustomed feelings

Body awareness

Exteroception:

The perception of environmental stimuli acting on the body



Body awareness



Proprioception:

The conscious perception of joint angles and muscle tensions, posture and balance.

“posture”



Body awareness:

Interoception:

The conscious perception of sensations from inside the body that create the sense of physiological conditions (heart beat, breathing, hungry or not) and the autonomic nervous system sensations related to emotions

“awareness of the internal processes”

Interoceptive awareness

by relaxation



Recent definition of interoceptive awareness

Garfinkel et al. (2016)

Two aspects:

- Accuracy (heartbeat)
- Sensibility (self report)
- Metacognition (insight in self report)

Garfinkel studied children with ASD
(autism spectrum disorders)

Finding: Children with ASD have reduced interoceptive accuracy and exaggerated interoceptive sensibility

Broadening the definition of interoceptive awareness

Mehling (among others) broadens the concept with

- behavioural and cognitive aspects, such as appraisals and beliefs (e.g. catastrophizing)
- attention regulation (ignoring, distraction)
- anticipations and past experiences

Multidimensional conceptual framework

*Dimension: Awareness of body sensation
(noticing)*

examples:

1. When I am tense, I notice where the tension is located in my body.
4. I notice changes in my breathing, such as whether it slows down or speeds up

•
Dimension: Emotional reaction and attentional response to sensations (quality of attention)

6. I distract myself from sensations of discomfort.

7. When I feel pain or discomfort, I try to power through it.

(NB: use reversed scores)

*Dimension: Capacity to regulate attention
(not worrying)*

8. When I feel physical pain, I become
upset.

(NB use reversed score)

Dimension: Trusting body sensations

31. I feel my body is a safe place.

32. I trust my body sensations.



*Dimension: Emotional awareness and
body listening*

Example:

27. I listen for emotion from my body
to inform me about my emotional state



literature

Garfinkel, S.N., Tiley, C., O’Keeffe, S., Harrison, A.K.S and Critchley, H.D. (2016). Discrepancies between dimensions of interoception in autism: implications for emotion and anxiety. *Biological Psychology*, 114, 117-126.

Mehling, W.E., Price, C., Daubenmier, J.J., Acree, M., Bartmess, E. & Steward, A.(2012). The Multidimensional assessment of interoceptive awareness (MAIA). *PLoS One* 7:e.48230.

Shafir, T. (2016). Using Movement to regulate emotion: neurophysiological findings and their application in psychotherapy. *Front Psychol.*7:1451.