



The Hakomi Method: Information Offered to Prospective Clients

By Ron Kurtz, Founder of the Hakomi Method

If you're thinking about becoming a client of a Hakomi therapist, this short description will acquaint you with the method and what you may experience.

Here's What You Need to Know about the Method:

Hakomi is based on the idea that much of our everyday suffering is in fact unnecessary and is produced by unconscious beliefs that are no longer relevant, true or necessary. The method is designed to bring such beliefs into consciousness. Hakomi is a method of assisted self-study and discovery. It can bring normally inaccessible mental processes into consciousness gently and efficiently. Once these mental processes (such as beliefs memories, habits and emotions) are made conscious, they can be examined and modified to provide a more realistic and satisfying way of being. This work of assisted self-discovery requires of clients that they can enter into short periods (a minute or less) of mindfulness. Because of this, clients must be able to become calm and centered enough to observe their own reactions, as if they were observing the automatic behavior of another person.

The therapist pays very close attention to your nonverbal behaviors, such as your tone of voice, movements, gestures, posture, facial expressions and micro expressions. By observing these, the therapist gets ideas about what unconscious material is controlling your automatic, unconscious behaviors. On the basis of those ideas, the therapist creates little experiments, often just a statement, that are done while you are in a mindful state. These little experiments often elicit clear reactions, often emotional ones. These reactions are the links to the unconscious mental processes that create them. When a reaction is evoked, moments later, memories, beliefs and associations emerge which will help you make sense of the reaction. Once beliefs and memories are in consciousness, they are examined and modified.

What to Expect: This method is not about talking out your problems. It won't be a long, speculative conversation about your troubles or your emotional history. It is our belief that your emotional history, the part of it that has created the unconscious beliefs and habits with which you meet the world, is operating right now. Your history is written in the way you do things every minute. It is expressed by your style and your defining characteristics. So, you can expect that the therapist will be looking and listening for these and will bring them to your attention as part of setting up the little experiments in mindfulness that are the core of the work.

The therapist will also be very warm and kind and patient. The vulnerability that mindfulness entails, the openness to unconscious material that's needed, all requires a

very safe environment, which needs a particularly caring, non-judgmental person. You can expect your therapist to be exactly that.

You can also expect the work to bring up intense emotions at times. At those moments, your therapist will work to contain the process, provide comfort and help you understand what's happening.

Because the method is based on this very direct route to unconscious material (evocative experiments in mindfulness), it is faster than most other methods. It works very directly with nonverbal expressions and does not spend a lot of time in conversation, analyzing and explaining. Something significant usually happens every session.

What You Need to be Ready:

It helps if: (1) you can stay with and report on your present experiences; (2) you can study your reactions to experiments in mindfulness; (3) you can stay focused on your present experience; (4) you're able to get into a calm inward focused state and are relaxed enough to allow reactions; (5) you're willing to experience some painful feelings and speak about them. It also helps if you don't need to ask a lot of questions or feel like you must solve problems, explain yourself, justify your actions, have a conversation. And you'll need the courage and be open and honest. That will be your greatest ally.

The Rewards:

There are many. Relief from persistent painful emotions and behaviors is probably the greatest reward. And you will gain a much deeper understanding of yourself and with that, more freedom to choose what you'll be able to feel, greater pleasure in everyday living, and to engage in fuller richer more rewarding relationships. Assisted self-study can achieve all that.