

# MANTRA OF HOPE

## Counselling

Reflections on Healing, Transition & Human Resilience

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*Based on the writings of*

**Mr. Prashant Bhatt, MACP, MD, RP**

Registered Psychotherapist - Mississauga, Ontario



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Mantra of Hope Counselling Services

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## Foreword

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This small book is a curated distillation of the counselling blogs written throughout 2024 by Mr. Prashant Bhatt — Registered Psychotherapist and founder of **Mantra of Hope Counselling Services** in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada.

Drawing on more than 35 years in healing professions across India, Libya, and Canada, Prashant integrates *Third Wave Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)*, Eastern Mindfulness, Narrative Therapy, Polyvagal Theory, and Existential approaches to meet each client exactly where they are. His writing is deeply personal — shaped by Ignatian retreats at Manresa Pickering, Buddhist study at the Barre Centre in Massachusetts, walks in nature, and decades of sitting with people in their most tender moments.

The chapters ahead explore the themes that recurred most powerfully in 2024: grief and meaning-making; intimacy and isolation; anger understood through both CBT and narrative lenses; the silent language of alexithymia; the invisible wounds of immigrants; transference in therapeutic relationships; and the reflective practices that sustain both client and clinician alike. Throughout, a single conviction shines — *hope is not wishful thinking; it is a disciplined practice.*

**Mantra of Hope Counselling Services** offers individual therapy (\$170/session), couples therapy (\$250/session), and sliding-scale group programmes including Men's Support Group, Hope-Focused Family Support, and Intimacy Anorexia groups. Free 15-minute consultations available. Call (289) 805-3579 or visit [prashantbhatt.com](http://prashantbhatt.com).

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## About the Author & Practice

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**Mr. Prashant Bhatt, MACP, MD, RP** is a Registered Psychotherapist licensed by the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario (CRPO #14237) and a Registered Massage Therapist (CMTO X752). He holds a Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology (MACP Hons.) from Yorkville University and an MD from the University of Mumbai (1996).

Prashant entered the life sciences in 1985 and has practiced medicine, massage therapy, and psychotherapy in India, Libya, and Canada. Having lived through the Libyan Arab Spring of 2011, he knows first-hand that *'all the wounds of war are not seen.'* This experience deepens his commitment to trauma-informed, culturally sensitive care.

### Specialisations include:

- Grief counselling using Worden's Tasks of Grief and Kessler's 'Finding Meaning' model
- Integrative Sex and Couples Therapy
- Acculturation Stress with immigrant and diaspora populations
- Men's Issues, PTSD, Complex Trauma (C-PTSD)
- Existential and identity work through life transitions
- Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) and ACT

He speaks English, Hindi, and Urdu, and is endorsed by Psychology Today as a verified therapist serving Mississauga, Etobicoke, and the Greater Toronto Area.



## CHAPTER 1

# Finding Hope in Every Transition

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Every transition, Prashant often writes, *is also a mourning*. Whether we are changing careers, ending a relationship, emigrating to a new country, or entering the later chapters of life, something must be relinquished before something new can be embraced. The mantra at the heart of this practice — **Hope** — is not passive. It is an active, embodied orientation toward possibility.

Hope-Focused Therapy, one of the group programmes offered at Mantra of Hope Counselling, draws on the acronym **LOVE**:

- **L** — Listen and Repeat (reflective listening)
- **O** — Observe your effects on others
- **V** — Value your partner's or family member's experience
- **E** — Evaluate both parties' interests with curiosity, not judgment

**Key Insight:** Psychotherapy is one pathway to self-awareness — but not the only one. Meditation, walking, Tai Chi, and Yoga are equally honoured in this practice. The goal is not a perfect life; it is an *examined* life.

Transitions are also cultural events. For immigrants and diaspora communities, the passage from one country to another carries grief, excitement, shame, pride, and a loss of the familiar — all at once. Prashant's own journey across continents informs the empathy with which he holds

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these stories.

The Sanskrit mantras woven through this practice affirm the same truth from ancient wisdom: *Sheevo Hum* — I am pure potentiality. Uncertainty is not the enemy; it is an opening.

*In the client's chair, hope begins with a simple but courageous act — showing up. As Prashant writes, 'It takes courage to come. People that come are seeking help, and it requires them to have that courage to find the help they need.'*



## CHAPTER 2

# Grief: The Work of Making Meaning

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Grief is among the most universal of human experiences, yet it is uniquely personal. In 2024, Prashant deepened his integrative approach to bereavement by combining two powerful frameworks:

### **Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning:**

- Accept the reality of the loss
- Work through the pain of grief
- Adjust to the world without the deceased
- Find an enduring connection while embarking on a new life

### **Kübler-Ross / Kessler's Sixth Stage — Finding Meaning:**

David Kessler's expansion of the five stages of grief introduces a sixth: finding meaning. This is not about accepting that the loss was 'okay,' but about discovering what the loss calls forward in us — new identity, new purpose, a legacy carried on.

**Narrative Strategy:** Write a letter to the person you have lost using the Johari Window structure. Explore the Open Self (what was shared), the Blind Self (what they saw in you that you couldn't), the Hidden Self (what you never said), and the Unknown Self (what you may only now be discovering).

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Group therapy at Mantra of Hope offers a 'corrective recapitulation' — the group becomes a safe family in which unresolved grief from one's family of origin can be re-encountered, witnessed, and re-authored. Members bring photographs, poems, songs, and stories of their loved ones, transforming absence into an ongoing, meaning-rich presence.

*Re-membering conversations — a narrative therapy practice — invite clients to ask: 'What was this person's contribution to my life? What was mine to theirs?' Death is not a definitive end; it is an invitation to a renewed, internal dialogue.*

The Hope-Focused Family Support group meets on the second Friday of each month, 7:30–9:00 PM, at Mantra of Hope Counselling Services, 4310 Sherwoodtowne Blvd, Mississauga. Cost: \$40–\$80 on a sliding scale.



## CHAPTER 3

# Intimacy vs. Isolation: Erikson's Lifelong Gift

Erik Erikson mapped the human lifespan as a series of developmental tensions. The blog post *'Intimacy versus Isolation'* (April 2024) uses a client's story — a woman whose marriage dissolved and whose years of acrimony left traces in her children's development — to illuminate Erikson's sixth stage: the challenge of building genuine closeness without losing oneself.

### Erikson's Eight Stages — a quick map:

Stage	Age	Core Tension
1. Infancy	0–1	Trust vs. Mistrust
2. Toddler	1–3	Autonomy vs. Shame
3. Pre-school	3–5	Initiative vs. Guilt
4. School Age	5–12	Industry vs. Inferiority
5. Adolescence	12–18	Identity vs. Role Confusion
6. Young Adulthood	18–40	Intimacy vs. Isolation
7. Middle Adulthood	40–65	Generativity vs. Stagnation
8. Older Adulthood	65+	Integrity vs. Despair

Intimacy — real intimacy — requires the courage to be fully known by another. Many clients arrive carrying years of armour: workaholism, emotional unavailability, deflection, or shame. The therapeutic relationship

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itself becomes a laboratory for practising safe closeness.

Attachment-informed Polyvagal Maps (Stephen Porges) help clients understand their nervous system's role: why they freeze in conflict, shut down in intimacy, or escalate when they most wish to connect. Healing begins when the body feels safe.

**Reflection Exercise:** Write the story of your key relationship — how it began, what concerns bring you to therapy now, and how your partner would tell this same story. What would be their main concern or complaint? This narrative exercise opens the door to empathy and accountability.



## CHAPTER 4

# Dragons & Donkeys: Understanding Anger

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The July 2024 blog post '*Dragons and Donkeys*' explores anger through two lenses: the structured, skills-based framework of CBT, and the storied, identity-rich lens of Narrative Therapy. Both are needed — because anger is rarely just one thing.

*Thoreau's observation — 'I make myself rich by making my wants few' — opens the post, grounding the discussion in a timeless truth: much of our rage is about unmet expectations, many of which were never articulated, let alone negotiated.*

### **CBT Approach to Anger:**

- Identify the triggering thought (often an 'absolute should' or 'catastrophic prediction')
- Examine the evidence for and against the thought
- Replace the distorted belief with a more balanced appraisal
- Build emotion regulation skills: pause, breathe, respond (not react)
- Use cognitive restructuring worksheets and Johari Window 'should' mapping

### **Narrative Therapy Approach to Anger:**

- Externalise the anger — 'the Dragon' is not who you are, it visits you

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- Map the Dragon's history: when did it first appear? Who taught it to you?
  - Identify the values the anger is protecting (loyalty, fairness, dignity)
  - Author a preferred story: who do you want to be in moments of conflict?
  - Write a letter to the Dragon — give it a name, understand its purpose, renegotiate its role

**Group Setting:** The Men's Support Group at Mantra of Hope uses Culturally Informed Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) to help men recognise patterns from their family of origin, reframe narratives around communication, and build a sustainable Circle of Support. Meets every Fourth Wednesday, 7:30–9:00 PM. Cost: \$40–\$80 (sliding scale).

Michel Foucault reminds us that society has long expelled madness — including the madness of righteous anger — from its acceptable discourse. Prashant's work creates the space to bring these exiled parts of the self back into conversation, safely.



## CHAPTER 5

# Alexithymia: When Feelings Have No Words

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The July 2024 blog on *Alexithymia* opens with a deceptively simple observation about gendered socialisation: boys and girls are taught, from their earliest years, to value and voice different parts of themselves. Boys in particular are often cut off, around age 4–5, from the full emotional vocabulary they were born with.

**Alexithymia — literally 'no words for feelings' — is characterised by:**

- Difficulty identifying one's own emotions
- Difficulty describing feelings to others
- Externally-oriented thinking (focusing on facts and events rather than inner experience)
- Reduced capacity for empathy and mentalising
- A tendency toward avoidance of emotional intimacy

Research consistently shows that high alexithymia is associated with lower marital intimacy, higher fear of closeness, and a preponderance of negative emotional language in narratives about relationships. The alexithymic person is not cold — they are often deeply invested in their relationships, but lack the internal map to navigate them.

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**Therapeutic Note:** Attachment-informed Polyvagal work is especially powerful here. By helping clients become curious about bodily sensations — the tightness in the chest, the held breath, the heat in the hands — we can rebuild a body-based emotional vocabulary that was never fully developed.

Mindfulness practices — both Buddhist-informed and secular — train what Prashant calls 'the observer mind': the capacity to notice a feeling without being swept away by it, or denying it entirely. The Barre Centre retreats in Massachusetts, where Prashant has sat with the Mindfulness of Death practices, are a powerful example of how this observer mind can be cultivated even in the face of the most taboo emotions.

The Intimacy Anorexia group at Mantra of Hope — meeting second Wednesdays, 7:00–8:30 PM — provides psychoeducation and practise with communication scripts specifically designed for those who have learned to withhold emotional presence in their closest relationships.



## CHAPTER 6

# Acculturation Stress & the Immigrant Journey

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Having practiced medicine on three continents and navigated the Libyan Arab Spring from within, Prashant brings a lived, embodied understanding of what it means to leave home and build a new life in an unfamiliar culture. His work with immigrants and diaspora communities forms one of the pillars of Mantra of Hope Counselling.

**Acculturation Stress** refers to the chronic, compounding challenges of migration: language barriers, discrimination, separation from family, navigating unfamiliar healthcare and legal systems, intergenerational conflict as children acculturate faster than parents, and the mourning of an entire way of being in the world.

### **Common presenting challenges in this population:**

- Depression and anxiety amplified by isolation
- Trauma from pre-migration experiences (war, persecution, forced migration)
- Somatisation — stress that speaks through the body
- Identity confusion: who am I here, when 'here' has no word for who I was?
- Shame about seeking mental health support ('No soy loco — I am not crazy')

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### **Therapeutic approaches used at Mantra of Hope:**

- Validating and normalising the experience of acculturative stress
- Drawing out the immigration narrative — the journey, the cost, the courage
- Culturally Informed DBT for emotion regulation
- ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy) for values-based living in a new context
- Group therapy to rebuild community and reduce isolation
- Bilingual sessions in Hindi and Urdu as well as English

**Prashant's Reflection:** 'Having lived on the ground in the Libyan Arab Spring — I know first-hand the reality of the dictum: all the wounds of war are not seen. Every transition is also a mourning. Maps and territories are rarely the same thing.'



## CHAPTER 7

# Transference: The Mirror in the Room

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The May 2024 blog '*Transference: ABC — Awareness, BASIC ID, Checklists*' invites therapists and clients alike to examine one of the most potent — and often unspoken — dynamics in the therapeutic room: **transference**.

Transference is the unconscious redirection of feelings from one relationship (typically from the family of origin) onto the therapist or partner. It is not a malfunction — it is the psyche's way of replaying unresolved scripts in the hope that this time, the ending will be different.

### The ABC Framework for Awareness:

- **A — Awareness:** Notice the emotional response arising in you right now
- **B — BASIC ID (Lazarus's Multimodal):** Behaviour, Affect, Sensation, Imagery, Cognition, Interpersonal, Drugs/Biology — map where the pattern lives
- **C — Checklists:** Use structured tools (genograms, Johari Window, Erikson's stage review) to locate the developmental root of the pattern

The blog uses the metaphor of Erikson's developmental stages to help clients see how patterns of intimacy, identity, and trust were laid down long before the presenting relationship began. Tagged under 'Indian Diaspora,' the post acknowledges that transference in cross-cultural therapy carries additional layers — of colonial history, of gendered expectation, of what it

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means to 'be a good family member' in one's culture of origin.

**Supervisor's Wisdom (as Prashant recalls it):** 'See things from different hats, and at times, put on no hat at all. Walk alongside the client. See the world as they see it.' This is the heart of the Johari Window in clinical practice — not just a model, but a posture of radical curiosity about the other's inner world.



## CHAPTER 8

# Reflective Practices: Manresa, Barre & Beyond

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The May 2024 blog '*Deepening Reflective Practices: Insights from Barre and Manresa Retreats*' is among the most personal of the year's writings. Prashant returns from his fourth retreat at Manresa Jesuit Retreat House in Pickering, Ontario, and reflects on how it calls him back to an earlier retreat at the Barre Centre for Buddhist Studies in Massachusetts — specifically a guided retreat on the *Mindfulness of Death*.

These two traditions — the Ignatian contemplative practice of the Jesuits and the Vipassana-informed Buddhist practice of Barre — might seem worlds apart. But both invite the same fundamental question: *What does it mean to live, knowing that I will die?*

### **How reflective practice shapes clinical work:**

- Builds the therapist's own 'observer mind' — the capacity to be fully present with distress without being consumed by it
- Develops genuine equanimity: not distance, but the capacity to be moved without being swept away
- Models for clients that self-examination is a lifelong, embodied practice — not a crisis intervention
- Grounds clinical theory in lived experience: Prashant has sat with his own grief, his own transitions

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- Sustains therapeutic presence over a long career: walking, meditation, and retreat prevent compassion fatigue

**Invitation:** Prashant is a member of the Institute of Meditation and Psychotherapy. His practice is informed not only by retreats in Manresa and Barre, but by decades of meditation practice first introduced to him in the Himalayas in the 1970s. He invites clients to explore their own contemplative practices — whatever tradition or form feels authentic to them.

*In Sanskrit, one of the mantras for hope reads: Om Shara Vana Ya — My awareness is aligned with the creative power of the universe. Right now as I breathe, there's a quiet consciousness that's experiencing me: the true me that's bigger than every thought, bigger than every fear.*



## CHAPTER 9

# Therapeutic Modalities at Mantra of Hope

Mantra of Hope Counselling Services is not a single-method practice. Prashant's integrative approach draws on a wide range of evidence-based and humanistic modalities, matched carefully to each client's needs, culture, and goals.

Modality	Key Use
Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT)	Values clarification; psychological flexibility
Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)	Depression relapse prevention; emotional regulation
Narrative Therapy	Re-authoring life stories; externalising problems
Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT)	Emotion regulation; distress tolerance; men's groups
Attachment-Informed Polyvagal Maps	Trauma; nervous system regulation; intimacy
Existential Therapy	Meaning-making; identity; mortality; freedom
Family / Marital Therapy	Couples; intergenerational patterns; communication
12-Step Recovery Integration	Addiction; intimacy anorexia; sexual compulsivity
Trauma-Focused CBT	PTSD; C-PTSD; childhood abuse; war trauma
Bibliotherapy	Psychoeducation through curated reading
Psychodrama / Expressive Arts	Embodied grief; role play; narrative enactment

Beyond individual therapy, Mantra of Hope offers three running group programmes — Men's Support Group, Hope-Focused Family Support, and Intimacy Anorexia — each integrating group therapeutic factors (universality,

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altruism, corrective recapitulation, instillation of hope) with structured psychoeducation.



## CHAPTER 10

# A Mantra for the Road Ahead

In the Hindu and Buddhist traditions that have shaped Prashant's contemplative life, a mantra is not merely a word — it is a vibration, a returning, a way of remembering who you are when the world has made you forget.

The name of this practice — **Mantra of Hope** — carries that intention. Hope is not naive optimism. It is the disciplined belief, tested in the crucible of real suffering, that the present moment is not the final word.

**Eight Sanskrit Mantras for Hope** (adapted from ancient wisdom): 1. Sheevo Hum — I am pure potentiality. Uncertainty is an opening. 2. Samprati Hum — My true self is wide awake. 3. Sat Chit Ananda — Existence, Consciousness, Bliss — this is my nature. 4. Aham Brahmasmi — I am the wholeness of the universe. 5. Ritam — I live in truth and flow with the rhythm of the cosmos. 6. Ananda Hum — I am bliss — even in the presence of difficulty. 7. Shree Gum Namah — My limitless awareness overcomes all obstacles. 8. Om Shara Vana Ya — My awareness is aligned with the creative power of the universe.

For every client who sits in the chair, for every family that finds its way to a group circle, for every immigrant who dares to name their grief, for every man learning to say 'I need help' — this practice exists as witness, as companion, and as guide.

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*There is a way through every block. There is help and I am willing to ask for it. I can find hope in all things, for all things are part of my progress.*

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To begin your journey with Mantra of Hope Counselling Services, contact Mr. Prashant Bhatt for a free 15-minute consultation:

**Phone:** (289) 805-3579

**Web:** [prashantbhatt.com](http://prashantbhatt.com)

**Location:** 4310 Sherwoodtowne  
Blvd, Mississauga, ON L4Z

**Languages:** English, Hindi, Urdu

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## Resources & References

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### Primary Source

All chapters are based on blog posts published at [prashantbhatt.com/counselling-related-blogs-2024](https://prashantbhatt.com/counselling-related-blogs-2024). The counselling blogs span January through December 2024 and cover topics including intimacy, grief, anger, alexithymia, acculturation, transference, and reflective practice.

### Key Frameworks & Scholars Referenced

**Erik Erikson:** Psychosocial Stages of Development — 'Childhood and Society' (1950)

**William Worden:** Tasks of Mourning — 'Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy' (2009)

**David Kessler:** Finding Meaning: The Sixth Stage of Grief (2019)

**Robert Neimeyer:** Narrative Strategies in Grief Therapy — Constructivist approaches

**Arnold Lazarus:** Multimodal Therapy / BASIC ID framework

**Michael White & David Epston:** Narrative Therapy — 'Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends' (1990)

**Stephen Porges:** Polyvagal Theory — safety, connection and the autonomic nervous system

**Marsha Linehan:** Dialectical Behaviour Therapy — emotion regulation skills

**Steven Hayes:** Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

**Joseph Luft & Harrington Ingham:** Johari Window model of self-awareness (1955)

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**Barre Centre for Buddhist Studies:** Mindfulness of Death retreat — Barre, Massachusetts

**Manresa Jesuit Retreat House:** Ignatian Contemplative Retreats — Pickering, Ontario

**Institute of Meditation and Psychotherapy:** Integrating contemplative practice and clinical work

### **Practice Information**

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