



What is “Mindfulness” ?

Mindfulness is a particular way of paying attention. It is the mental faculty of purposefully bringing attention to one’s present moment experience. Mindfulness can be applied to sensory experience, thoughts, and emotions by using sustained attention to be present with our experience, without reacting.

What are the benefits?

Practicing Mindfulness at work can lead to:

- increased patience and adaptability
- greater empathy and compassion
- improved communication with colleagues
- enhanced ability to respond skillfully to challenging situations
- improved feelings of well-being, and
- greater focus and success with applying other trainings or techniques needed on the job (e.g, safety procedures).

How do we know it is effective?

Decades of research and, more recently, advances in neuroscience, and our understanding of neuroplasticity offer compelling evidence supporting the effectiveness of mindfulness practice. A sampling of research indicates regular mindfulness practice has been shown to increase gray matter in the parts of the brain responsible for executive functions (including attention control); establishing context (or perspective); and self-awareness and empathy. It has been shown to elevate mood, preserve telomere length and reduce cortical thinning (both of which come with age).

A few research highlights:

- MBSR changes brain activity and structure, enhances emotional regulation, memory and perspective taking [Davidson, Kabat-Zinn, et al., 2003, Hölzel, et al 2011].
- Mindfulness enhances cognitive functioning, including focused attention, working memory and unfocused sustained attention [Chiesa & Serretti, 2010].
- In an 11 week mindfulness program including meditation and journaling a group of medical students showed cortisol increased by a factor of 2.4 in the control group as compared to the mindfulness group. Cortisol is a hormone associated with stress and poor health problems, including heart disease, diabetes and abdominal obesity. [Georgetown University , 2011]
- Meditation was found to improve quality of sleep (time spent in slow-wave sleep (SWS) and REM sleep), prevents age-related SWS declines, and increased melatonin production, and its pre-cursors, especially serotonin (key sleep regulators). [“Meditation and its regulatory role on sleep”, Frontiers in Neurology, April 2012]

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Ways to apply mindfulness every day

1. Slow Down – coming in to the present moment helps you gain information for better decisions, which actually saves you time.
2. Take regular breathing breaks to come back to your body and to bring your thoughts back to the present.
3. Try not to divide your time between “my time” and “work”. All time can be your own time if you stay in the present moment and keep in touch with what’s happening in your body and mind. There’s no reason why your time at work should be any less pleasant than your time anywhere else.
4. At lunchtime eat only your food and not your fears and worries. Don’t eat lunch at your desk. Change environments. Go for a walk.
5. Take some time to relax and come back to yourself when you get home before starting on household chores. Recognize that multitasking means you’re never fully present for any one thing. Do one thing at a time and give it your full attention.

Resources

Weekly drop-in meditation session on campus:

12:15 – 12:45 p.m.

Mondays – Health Center Mural Room

Wednesdays – Humanities 2, Room 359 and at Shaffer Rd. R. 161

Thursdays - Educ Bldg Room 0292 at McHenry Library

Relevant Research University of California Mindful Health and Safety

<http://sites.uci.edu/mindfulhs/relevant-research/>

Greater Good Science Center <http://greatergood.berkeley.edu>

Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction classes at Dominican Hospital, through their PEP program (community education)

<https://registration.dignityhealth.org/ClassDetail.aspx?code=yV5E0QKXA64jHDCxjtID62kuFty20J1BJEfQesNTrCBjqBIFMp48kguF43CstY&SoftwareID=Lsne9lu%2bflYZXW79iG3m1A%3d%3d>

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15 practical steps we can take to bring mindfulness to our work day:

- 1 Start your day with 10 minutes of sitting in meditation.
- 2 Take the time to sit down and enjoy eating breakfast at home.
- 3 Remind yourself every day of your gratitude for being alive and having 24 brand-new hours to live.
- 4 Try not to divide your time into "my time" and "work." All time can be your own time if you stay in the present moment and keep in touch with what's happening in your body and mind. There's no reason why your time at work should be any less pleasant than your time anywhere else.
- 5 Resist the urge to make calls on your cell phone while on your way to and from work, or on your way to appointments. Allow yourself this time to just be with yourself, with nature and with the world around you.
- 6 Take regular breathing breaks to come back to your body and to bring your thoughts back to the present.
- 7 At lunchtime, eat only your food and not your fears or worries. Don't eat lunch at your desk. Change environments. Go for a walk.
- 8 Make a ritual out of drinking your tea. Stop work and look deeply into your tea to see everything that went into making it: the clouds and the rain, the tea plantations and the workers harvesting the tea.
- 9 Before going to a meeting, visualize someone very peaceful, mindful and skillful being with you to help stay calm and peaceful.
- 10 If you feel anger or irritation, refrain from saying or doing anything straight away. Come back to your breathing and follow your in- and out-breath until you feel more calm.
- 11 Practice looking at your boss, your superiors, your colleagues or your subordinates as your allies and not as your enemies. Recognize that working collaboratively brings more satisfaction and joy than working alone. Know that the success and happiness of everyone is your own success.
- 12 Express your gratitude and appreciation to your colleagues regularly for their positive qualities. This will transform the whole work environment, making it much more harmonious and pleasant for everyone.
- 13 Try to relax and restore yourself before going home so you don't bring accumulated negative energy or frustration home with you.
- 14 Take some time to relax and come back to yourself when you get home before starting on household chores. Recognize that multitasking means you're never fully present for any one thing. Do one thing at a time and give it your full attention.
- 15 At the end of the day, keep a journal of all the good things that happened in your day.

*Excerpted from the article **15 Practical Ways To Find Your Zen At Work***

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