

mindful@work

8 essential strategies for focus,
resilience and well-being

Workbook
(Sampler)

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Mindfulness Without Borders is a non-profit organization that brings best practices in mindfulness and social-emotional intelligence to education, healthcare and corporate settings. We offer educational programs that explore key strategies and tools to empower individuals with vital life skills they need to tackle the challenges of an increasingly complex world.

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preface

About mindful@work

Thriving at work requires, clarity, creativity and compassion. It requires striking a balance between the consuming nature of work and the necessity to find well-being and purpose in one's workplace. Based on neuroscience, emotional intelligence and secular mindfulness practice, the **mindful@work** program teaches tools to help executives and employees better manage stress, cope with anxiety, increase self-esteem, and foster deeper connections both in and out of the workplace. As a professional development resource, the overarching goal is to seed ideas and strategies, rather than specify what may be the right approach. Rather than provide answers and solutions, we explore what science and individual experience is saying, so that people in all walks of life can build healthy qualities of mind, boost their resilience and perform at their best.

The Learning Theory

The *mindful@work* program addresses eight integration and practice strategies that combines two learning theories, including:

i. Social & Emotional Intelligence

A set of competencies that enables individuals to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. Strengthening these essential skills has the power to shape more effective, collaborative and empathetic leaders, which in turn creates a more compassionate workplace environment at large.

ii. Mindfulness

A set of practices that train the mind to pay attention to the present moment with a non-judgmental quality of mind which observes thoughts, emotions and body sensations as they are happening, and acting on them with discernment, kindness and compassion. More than just the acquisition of a mental skill, it can reshape brain circuitry and create new neural pathways. Science has shown that a regular mindfulness practice can change how the body and brain responds to stress by strengthening connections in the prefrontal cortex and reducing reactivity in the limbic system. These cognitive adaptations facilitate better self-reflection and self-regulation; key functions that play a critical role in the workplace.

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Chapter One

Exploring Mindfulness

Exploring Mindfulness

“Mindfulness is the awareness that emerges through paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to things as they are.”

— ZINDEL SEGAL

FOUNDER, MINDFULNESS-BASED COGNITIVE THERAPY

Mindfulness is a way of being and perceiving. When we are mindful, we focus our attention on what is happening in our body, our mind and our environment in the moment. With mindfulness, we live in the present, focused on what is happening right now. The intention is to see things as they are, rather than as they used to be or as we wish they could be. We notice when the mind is judging experiences as ‘black’ or ‘white,’ ‘positive’ or ‘negative,’ ‘fair’ or ‘unfair.’ Sometimes when we judge, we are resisting what is true in the moment; we may cloud our experience and create worry, stress and suffering. With mindfulness, we learn to notice these judgments, let them go, and observe the experience for what it is - clearly and accurately. With this quality of attention, we learn to relate directly to whatever is happening—every gift and every struggle that life offers us.

Mindfulness is not something we need to create; mindfulness exists inside every one of us and we can access it at any time. The idea is to deliberately slow down and bring more awareness to the mind and body experience in the moment. It’s a non-judgmental quality of mind which does not anticipate the future or reflect back on the past. It’s about observing our thoughts, emotions and body sensations as we are experiencing them, and acting on them with discernment, kindness and compassion. The objective is to view the experience with more focus and to reflect and respond with the understanding that habits of thinking, feeling, and behaving are constantly changing. In fact, learning to perceive thoughts, images and memories as transient subjective events is key. They can be viewed as bits of language and narratives we experience as opposed to objective truths. The result will be that we are willing to look at our life without feeling bad. We are looking at our experience with a caring, kind, and non-judgmental approach.

In contrast, mind-lessness tends to take over when our minds are scattered and we are not paying attention to our words and actions. With mindlessness, we may react thoughtlessly to a given situation without concern and compassion for ourselves, others and the environment. We may let our old stories and habitual actions govern our experiences, rather than choosing to see each situation with curiosity as a unique learning moment. With mindfulness, we are not trying to get rid of our thoughts and feelings. Rather, we are learning to look at our selves and our experience as it is unfolding moment by moment with more awareness and acceptance.

INSPIRATIONAL QUOTE

“You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf.”

— JON KABAT-ZINN

FOUNDER, MINDFULNESS-BASED STRESS REDUCTION



REFLECTING ON THE TOPIC

What does this quote mean to you?

Tell a story of a time when you acted on auto-pilot.

What could you have done differently?

MINDFULNESS PRACTICE: TIME TO BREATHE

Paying attention to the breath is a core mindfulness practice that helps us focus our attention in the present moment. Sometimes this breathing practice is called the anchor breath as when practiced in a purposeful and focused way, it can help steady us in different situations. Whether in times of stress, challenge or dealing with strong emotions, taking time to breathe can strengthen our capacity to steady our mind, get in touch with our bodies and help regulate our emotions. In fact, we can practice this anywhere and at anytime and the more we practice in moments of relative ease and calm, the better able we will be able to practice in moments of anger, stress and discomfort.

TIME TO BREATHE

here's how:

- Sit in a comfortable position. Allow both soles of your feet to connect to the floor.
- Rest your hands on your thighs and let your shoulders drop.
- Gently close your eyes or look for a reference point somewhere on the floor where you can return your eyes when they get distracted.
- Let your spine grow tall and noble like the trunk of a tree.
- Take a moment to notice how your body feels.
- Bring your attention to the flow of your breath.
- You don't need to breathe in a special way. Your body knows how to breathe.
- Simply notice each breath coming into the body with an in-breath, and leaving the body with an out-breath.
- If you notice your mind is caught up in thoughts, emotions or body sensations, know that this is normal.
- Notice what is distracting you and gently let it go, by redirecting your attention back to the flow of your breath.
- Notice each breath coming into the body with an in-breath and leaving the body with an out-breath.
- When you are ready, slowly bring your attention back to your surroundings and let how you feel now guide you.

PRACTICE STRATEGY:

For decades, research has shown that practicing mindfulness can help reduce negative emotions and anxiety, foster compassion, boost the immune system's ability to fight off illness, reduce stress and depression and improve overall well-being – making a strong case for a personal mindfulness practice. One way to begin a daily mindfulness practice is to develop a consistent breathing practice. We call this core mindfulness practice time to breathe. It enables us to slow down, steady our minds and pay attention to our thoughts, emotions and body sensations in the moment. To get started, schedule specific times in the day that you can pause, take time to breathe and observe how that works for you. Ideally, practice breathing mindfully for 3-5 minutes a day. See page 8 for here's how or access a recording at <https://www.mindfulnesswithoutborders.org/media/recordings>

For the entire week, practice time to breathe. Simply find a quiet place and focus your attention on the flow of your breath. This controlled, purposeful breathing practice is a powerful tool you can call upon whenever the need arises. Using the chart below, record one word that describes your experience.

DATE	WHEN	ONE WORD OBSERVATION
<i>i.e. Day</i>	<i>upon rising</i>	<i>grounded</i>

INTEGRATION STRATEGY:

SETTING INTENTIONS

We live in a world of constant stimulation. While we may have grown accustomed to the pervasive demands of pings, rings and alerts, that doesn't mean we're immune to their effect on both our attention spans and ability to connect with the world around us. Somewhere along the way, amidst all the texts, tweets and technology, opportunities for authentic connection seem to have grown fewer and farther between. As cognitive scientist Herbert Simon made clear, "what information consumes is attention. A wealth of information means a poverty of attention." How might you feel if you were able to spend even just a couple moments paying more attention to how you feel, appreciating your surroundings or simply more focused in the moment?



GETTING STARTED

If we choose, any activity can be done with more mindfulness and less attention to distraction. In the space below, what steps can you take to move the busy nature of your life from autopilot to focus and from mindlessness to mindful, including:

thoughts & feelings...

i.e. I can be more communicative of how I really feel.

bodily sensations...

i.e. I can be kinder to my body when experiencing physical distress.

sensory experiences.....

social interactions...

health & well-being....

appendix

Keywords

acceptance experiencing a situation or condition without trying to change or avoid it.

accountability accepting responsibility for the effects our words, actions and decisions have; acknowledging our part in creating, either actively or passively, the conditions in which we find ourselves.

altruism thinking and acting in a way that arises out of an unselfish concern for others.

authentic connection interacting with another in a genuine way, respectful of our values and theirs, through deep listening, mindful speech and thoughtfulness.

collaboration working jointly and cooperatively with another person or group to achieve a common goal.

community having an interest, values, activity or proximity in common with a group of people, such as religion, ethnicity, geographic location, activism, or membership in an organization or workplace.

compassion feeling deep empathy and caring for another person's sorrow or suffering, and being willing to take action to lessen it.

council a Native American non-hierarchical forum in which individuals meet face to face to address community matters.

deep listening paying attention to what others are saying on all levels, hearing the essence with a quiet mind, free of judgment and expectation.

dialogue participating in an exchange, conversation or process of inquiry in which two or more persons share thoughts, ideas and insights.

discernment perceiving clearly, seeing the long-term impacts of an action, and making wise decisions.

emotional intelligence the ability to identify, use, understand and manage emotions in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathize with others, handle challenges and conflict.

empathy feeling concern for another; choosing to understand his or her feelings, emotions and motives.

emotional trigger a stimulus, such as a person, situation, event, dialogue, reading, film, or other entity, that provokes an unusually strong emotional reaction in an individual or a group.

equanimity being stable and composed with our feelings and emotions, especially under tension or stress; an inner balance.

forgiveness letting go of resentment and the desire to exact punishment related to an actual or perceived offense. This does not mean to “forget,” or that actions do not have consequences, but rather that we do not harbor hatred, which tends to damage us more than its target. This applies to self-forgiveness as well as forgiveness of others.

heartfelt gratitude expressing sincere caring.

integrity adhering to moral and ethical principles, being consistent in actions and words, focusing not just on what we “say” but how we “live,” realizing that we teach through our every act.

loving kindness cultivating an appreciation for our oneness with others through generosity, love and unrestrained friendship; a practice of the heart.

meaningful being full of purpose and value.

mindfulness concentrating awareness to foster attention to our thoughts, feelings, movements and actions, as well as to the external environment; a method of coping skillfully with life situations and learning from them on a moment-to-moment basis.

mindfulness practice formal mindfulness is the practice of sustaining attention on body, breath or sensations, or whatever arises in each moment. Informal mindfulness is the application of focused attention in everyday life.

mindless showing little attention or thought, acting without awareness of the impact of our words and actions.

neuroplasticity the brain’s ability to form new neural connections throughout life in response to changes in behaviour, environment, neural processes, thinking, emotions, as well as changes resulting from bodily injury.

nonviolence refraining from using violence in reaction to any given situation; the policy, practice and strategy of rejecting the use of physical force in favor of peaceful resolutions or tactics.

nonviolent communication relating to others with an emphasis on understanding and compassion; connecting with others without blame, anger or defensive reaction.

open-mindedness being open to new kinds of information that call for new responses; being willing to consider other perspectives or points of view.

peaceful coexistence living in peace with others, side-by-side, in a way that advances cooperation, mutual understanding and acceptance.

perspective having a calm, objective point of view; considering multiple opinions, approaches and possibilities.

presence the state or fact of being in the moment, with others, ones self and in the environment.

rerun feelings emotions that get stuck in our bodies in a playback loop, even though the experiences that generated them may have long passed. This playback loop can get in the way of experiencing the present moment.

respect honoring the ideas and actions of others; treating individuals with consideration, courtesy and civility.

self-acceptance appreciating, validating and supporting who we are, now, without judgment.

social and emotional learning the process through which individuals acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

social awareness the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behaviour, and to recognize family, school and community resources and supports.

skillful doing something effectively, with clarity and wisdom.

sympathetic joy experiencing someone else's happiness as connected to our own; celebrating another person's joy and success without envy or jealousy.

thoughtful taking the time to consider the impact of our words and actions; showing consideration for others; being reflective and exercising discernment.

tolerant being fair and objective towards those whose opinions, practices, race, religion or nationality differ from our own; actively promoting respect for the differences of others.

values the ideals, customs, principles and beliefs held by a person or group. Values usually grow out of culture, religion and political affiliation, and often guide and inform our actions.



The first step toward peace-building is looking inward, cultivating your own inner peace, and then looking outward to bring peace to the world. As corporate professionals you are joining thousands of individuals from around the world who stand for kindness and compassion – driving positive impact in your workplace.

The Mindfulness Without Borders team would like to extend its deep appreciation to all individuals who are dedicated to bringing peace and mindful living to the world.

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