



MINDFULNESS:

A POWERFUL TOOL TO ENHANCE WELL-BEING IN THE WORKPLACE

*“The great benefit of practicing mindfulness ...
is presence of mind within a storm of emotions.”*

*– Phillip Moffitt, former CEO and
Editor-in-Chief of Esquire magazine*

RUNNING ON AUTOPILOT

When was the last time you were fully present – when you felt truly focused on what was happening in the present moment? For most of us, this is rarely the case. Instead, we’re often focused on the next thing on our to-do lists, reliving past events, or worrying about the future. Most of us are stuck in an “autopilot” mode throughout the day, without a full appreciation or awareness of what we are doing or what is going on around us. Consider how often you find yourself lost in thought during your morning commute or during a meeting, or not remembering your highest priority until the end of the day. These are all prime examples of operating on autopilot.



WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Being mindful is the opposite of running on autopilot. Rather than being lost in thought, imagining what the future might bring, or wishing you were someplace else, mindfulness involves focusing your full attention on what's happening in the present moment with a curious and kind attitude. The ability to focus our attention is particularly relevant in today's busy and distracting work environments. Research has clearly demonstrated that being engaged and focused in the present moment can significantly reduce stress and enhance both our well-being and performance in the workplace. This is because cultivating greater mindfulness helps us to slow down, prioritize, and better regulate our emotions, thereby helping us reduce stress and be more productive. For these reasons, mindfulness is increasingly recommended as a tool for promoting well-being.

“Mindfulness practice means that we commit fully in each moment to be present; inviting ourselves to interface with this moment in full awareness, with the intention to embody as best we can an orientation of calmness, mindfulness, and equanimity right here and right now.”

— Jon Kabat-Zinn

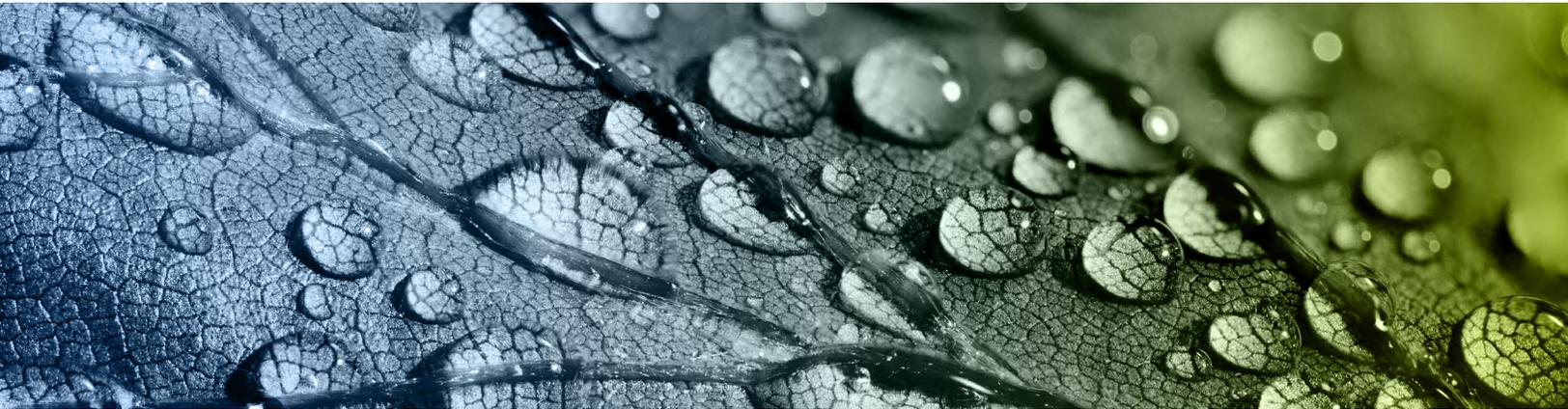


THE BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

The regular practice of mindfulness offers many benefits to well-being including:

RESILIENCE, STRESS REDUCTION, AND ENHANCED IMMUNE FUNCTIONING.

Stress is the body's automatic physiological response to a perceived threat. Although stress can be an adaptive response when we need to “flight, fight, or freeze”, if high stress levels are experienced over a prolonged period of time – referred to as chronic stress – it can have detrimental effects on physical and mental health. In the workplace, chronic stress can present in the form of burnout – a condition characterized by persistent feelings of emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and lack of enthusiasm or sense of accomplishment in one's work¹. This can lead to difficulty concentrating, withdrawal from social activities,



“The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another.”

– William James

and irregular sleeping or eating habits. Compassion fatigue is a similar condition in which repeated exposure to the suffering of others leads to symptoms of burnout. This is more common among those employed in helping professions, who work in close proximity to those who are experiencing pain, distress, or trauma.

Stressful situations cannot be avoided, which is why it is important that we develop effective coping strategies before burnout or compassion fatigue occurs. Some strategies, such as exercise and mindfulness, are healthy and bring us closer to balance, while others, such as emotional eating or social isolation, bring us further out of balance. Resilience is an indicator of whether or not an individual has developed these strategies, as it reflects a person’s ability to rebound from stressful events. Highly resilient individuals still experience stress, but they are able to cope with stress adaptively, rather than become overwhelmed by it^{2,3}.

Research shows that mindfulness techniques can be used to reduce stress by providing individuals with the tools they need to manage stressful situations, thereby increasing resilience^{4,5}. This impact can be seen through increased activity in regions of the brain associated with more adaptive stress responses⁶. Specifically, mindfulness allows you to respond, rather than react^{7,8,9}. By promoting self-compassion and setting realistic expectations, mindfulness can help individuals to better manage their work-life balance and has actually been shown to enhance immune system functioning^{10,11,12}. In turn, these effects reduce the symptoms of both burnout and compassion fatigue^{13,14}.

INCREASED EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND MOOD REGULATION. Emotional intelligence reflects an individual’s ability to recognize, understand, and manage their own emotions^{15,16}. Mindfulness training has been linked to increased emotional intelligence¹⁷. People higher in mindfulness experience fewer emotional “ups and downs”, in part because they are better able to regulate their emotions^{17,18,19}. Research also shows that people who are more mindful tend to have more enriching friendships and closer romantic relationships. They also tend to be more compassionate listeners and are better able to respond to relationship stressors^{20,21,22}.

Individuals who participate in mindfulness practices tend to experience more positive mood and less negative mood^{23,24}. Studies examining the impact of mindfulness on the brain have found that mindfulness meditation training can decrease activity in the amygdala, the part of the brain responsible for emotional reactivity^{25,26}. The amygdala is automatically activated in response to stressful or negative events, especially when we



experience intense emotions like fear or anger. Mindfulness emphasizes taking a non-judgmental, non-reactive approach to one's thoughts and emotions, and may account for this reduction in amygdala activity. There is also evidence to suggest that mindfulness may influence how receptive one is to positivity in a given moment, which may explain why the most mindful individuals tend to experience more positive mood²⁷.

ENHANCED COGNITIVE FUNCTIONING. Mindfulness is also associated with cognitive benefits including improved attention and working memory. Individuals who are more mindful are better able to recall and process information, as well as focus their attention more efficiently^{28,33}. This leads to greater cognitive flexibility – which is described as the ability to efficiently switch between different tasks and take different perspectives while problem solving. Individuals with high cognitive flexibility are not only better able to solve problems creatively but are also less likely to ruminate on negative events and therefore less likely to experience depression³⁴.

BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS



- + Well-being
- + Positive mood
- + Resilience
- + Emotional intelligence
- + Immune system functioning
- + Cognition

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- Stress
 - Negative mood
 - Anxiety
 - Burnout
 - Compassion fatigue



GET STARTED WITH MINDFULNESS TODAY

TAKE MINDFUL PAUSES. Getting started with mindfulness is simple but requires intention, or remembering to remember. Throughout the day remember to pause and take a few deep breaths. Then take note of how you're feeling, what's going on around you, and what's on your mind. When you feel ready, you can resume your activities, carrying that greater awareness with you. This mindful pause can be done anywhere, whether at your computer, waiting in line, or in a meeting. You can find a short guided mindful pause practice [here](#). [Mindful walks](#) are another great way to incorporate mindfulness into your routine.

TRY A GUIDED MINDFULNESS MEDITATION. Short guided meditations can also serve as a gentle introduction to mindfulness practice, or be used for brief mindfulness meditation sessions throughout the day. Explore SIGMA's library of mindfulness meditations [here](#).

ATTEND A MINDFULNESS WORKSHOP. The best way to develop mindfulness skills is through direct learning and shared experiences. SIGMA offers a variety of workshops that can be customized for your team or organization. For more information visit our [website](#) or contact Dr. Nadler at ruby@sigmamindfulness.com.



ABOUT SIGMA

Established in 1967, SIGMA has spent over 50 years developing and delivering science based assessment products and leadership coaching services. We bring simple, intuitive platforms and real-world applicability to our leadership suite of assessments, coaching and mindfulness. Learn about our mindfulness workshops, retreats and one-on-one executive mindfulness coaching, and ask us what mindfulness can do for you, your organization and leaders.



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MINDFULNESS COACHING AND TRAINING

IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF YOUR DECISIONS BY ENHANCING YOUR FOCUS.

Enhance your organization's leadership and team performance through the application of mindfulness skills and the science of positive psychology.

Mindfulness is a way of paying attention to what's happening in the present moment with specific positive attitudes. It means connecting with what's going on inside yourself and around yourself – knowing what you're doing and why you're doing it.

Mindfulness is the foundation for many critical leadership abilities including:

- Focusing on what's most important
- Maintaining emotional control in the face of stress
- Working well with others
- Managing complexity and adapting to change
- Enhancing creativity and innovation

SIGMA offers several options that integrate mindfulness skills training with best practices for leadership success.

We offer:

- Online training that can be done at your own pace
- Workshops (half and full-day options)
- One-on-one coaching

“The main business case for mindfulness is that if you are fully present on the job, you will be more effective as a leader, you will make better decisions, and you will work better with other people.”

– Bill George, Harvard Business Professor, Former Medtronic CEO

OUR MINDFULNESS FACILITATORS



Dr. Ruby Nadler, PhD

rnadler@sigmamindful.com

Ruby has her Ph.D in Cognition and Perception and brings this expertise to bear on SIGMA's executive coaching practice and programs. She has specific expertise in mindfulness and positive psychology and uses her training to support leaders to hone critical competencies including judgment and decision-making skills, interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence, and stress reduction. In 2015 she was awarded a two-year Ontario Centres of Excellence TalentEdge Fellowship to create a mindful leadership training program. Ruby is also a 250-hour certified Yoga Educator. Her research has been featured by CBC and BBC Radio, Happify, and NPR, amongst others.



Dr. Julie Carswell, PhD

jcarswell@sigmamindful.com

Julie oversees research and development projects as well as training, coaching and consulting work. She divides her time between successfully promoting and executing SIGMA's strategic vision to develop innovative, psychometrically superior assessments, and implementing large-scale employee and leadership coaching and development initiatives for clients.

ONLINE MINDFULNESS PROGRAM

Learn the foundations of mindfulness and integrate your practice with the development of key leadership capabilities in this self-paced online training program.

- Choose an 8-week or 4-week program
- Develop a consistent mindfulness practice
- Work through each module in 15-20 minutes
- Enhance your emotional intelligence, resilience, and leadership skills

Participants in an upcoming peer-reviewed study on the benefits of mindfulness in the workplace reported results including improved resilience, decreased stress, improved decision-making and interpersonal skills.

“The faculty of bringing back a wandering attention over and over again is the very root of judgment, character, and will.”

– William James

MINDFULNESS WORKSHOPS

We offer “taster” introduction to mindfulness sessions (60-90 minutes) as well as half and full-day workshops on the following topics:

“Always on, multi-tasking work environments are killing productivity, dampening creativity, and making us unhappy.”

– McKinsey Quarterly



INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS

- Learn about the science of mindfulness and how to put mindfulness skills into practice immediately to benefit yourself and others
- Learn about the common experiences of mindfulness practitioners and how to develop a consistent practice that suits your life and goals
- Experience several different kinds of mindfulness meditation and practices to see what resonates most with you



MINDFUL COMMUNICATION

- One of the most powerful impacts mindfulness can have is strengthening our ability to fully engage with others through mindful listening and speaking
- Learn about mindful communication and put it into practice right away
- Practice speaking mindfully and listening mindfully
- Feel more confident in interpersonal relationships and complex situations



MAKING SPACE FOR INNOVATION

- In this workshop participants will be exposed to mindfulness practices that open up space to think about the innovation challenges they face
- We discuss how mindfulness can be used to support principles of design thinking and stages of creativity
- We will share principles for doing deep work and encouraging flow states



STRESS REDUCTION AND RESILIENCE

- Learn about the science of mindfulness, stress, and resilience and learn valuable tools you can put into practice right away to be less reactive and more resilient

We are also happy to develop a customized training for your team or organization.

IN-PERSON LONGER-TERM TRAINING

We have also done longer-term mindfulness trainings that can be delivered weekly or biweekly, on or off-site depending on the size of your group and your location.

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