

Improving working life with mindfulness:

**A guide to introducing mindfulness to your
organisation**



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This guide has been researched and developed to assist and guide people who are considering introducing mindfulness to their employees, or adopting more mindful and effective ways of working.

The aim of this guide is to provide occupational safety and health practitioners with a quick, easy, and practical guide, which includes the key essentials you need to know to be able to make well-informed decisions on behalf of your organisation. Others, including managers and human resources personnel, will also find it useful.

The guide contains an explanation of what mindfulness is and how it works, why and how it's being used in the workplace. It examines some of the potential benefits of mindfulness in the workplace and its evidence base. Guidance is provided on how to commission, pilot and evaluate a mindfulness programme, along with case studies and answers to frequently asked questions.

This guide is only intended as an introductory text on mindfulness, with references to further reading and information sources, and not as a definitive guide to the subject.

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“The world is not spinning faster, it just seems that way. Businesses operate 24/7 and expect constant performance. Workers multitask through multiple projects, teams, and time zones, trying to keep up with too many “top priorities”. Many silently wish to, “stop the madness”, and wonder why results don’t change. An answer lies in our ability and choice to focus attention, which may be the most critical management skill of the 21st century.”

Focus is Power: Effectively Treating Executive Attention Deficit Disorder, People and Strategy Journal (2014) by Jeremy Hunter (Drucker Business School) and Marc Sokol PHD

What is mindfulness?

At present there is no universally agreed definition of mindfulness. Mindfulness is concerned with people's ability to focus attention on the situation at hand with the intention to observe the judgments we often make so quickly, and to choose how to respond appropriately. Developing this ability helps individuals step away from autopilot rote responses, see context and different perspectives more clearly, and make smart decisions. It has its roots in ancient eastern practices, but is entirely secular.

Mindfulness pioneer Jon Kabat-Zinn defines the components of mindfulness as *“Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.”* From a workplace perspective, Jutta Tobias from Cranfield School of Management defines mindfulness as *“our ability to pay attention to any situation we encounter with the intention to engage with the here and now in an open, curious, and authentic way, before making a judgment about the situation”*. Comedienne and mindfulness scholar Ruby Wax describes one of the key functions of mindfulness as *“taking over the wheel and being the driver rather than the driven”*. Definitions of mindfulness from a workplace perspective are likely to evolve and refine over time as more research emerges.

On the other hand *Mindlessness*¹ can be defined as when an individual operates much like a robot: thoughts, emotions, and behaviours are determined by ‘programmed’ routines based on distinctions and associations learned in the past. Mindlessness is often a consequence of the tendency to apply previously formed mind-sets to current situations, which lock individuals into repetitive, unelaborated approaches, which may be unhelpful.

A 2010 Harvard study² concluded that on average the mind wanders for around 47% of the time. Humans spend a lot of time thinking about what *isn't* going on around them: contemplating events that happened in the past, might happen in the future, or may never happen at all. The study suggested that the more our mind wanders, the unhappier our mind tends to become. The authors concluded that mind-wandering is an excellent predictor of people’s happiness, in fact, how often our minds leave the present and where they tend to go is a better predictor of our happiness than the activities in which we are engaged.

In the workplace, the cost of mindlessness and mind wandering may include higher levels of stress, presenteeism, poor performance, accidents and mistakes, increased sickness absence and longer-term health effects.

Practicing mindfulness allows you to reduce or stop the flow of incoming information and observe your mental processes. Doing this can have the effect of reducing your primitive brain’s threat system allowing you to respond in a wiser, more considered manner. Creating a small gap between the stimulus and the response allows you to act based on present moment facts, reducing your tendency to work on autopilot.

No one organisation formally owns or accredits mindfulness. A key recommendation of the Mindful Nation UK report is that more pilots are needed to further build the evidence base for new applications of mindfulness.

Mindfulness in the workplace

According to the Mindful Nation UK Report³, mindfulness is currently being used in health, education, workplaces, and the criminal justice system. Organisations introduce mindfulness within their organisations for a number of reasons ranging from well-being to improvements in workplace productivity. Two early well-known adopters of mindfulness in the workplace were Google⁴ and Transport for London⁵. The UK Government have been interested in mindfulness in recent years, with over 115 Parliamentarians and 80 of their staff attending mindfulness training⁴. The work of the Mindfulness All Party Parliamentary Group has also increased public interest in the applications of mindfulness in the workplace.

Organisations that have run mindfulness programmes for staff include Apple, eBay, General Motors, KPMG, McKinsey, the US Military, and in the UK the National Health Service (NHS) and the Department of Health.

Leading Universities now offer staff and students mindfulness training, and it is increasingly becoming a component on executive education programmes offered by the world's top MBA and Management Schools.

The potential benefits and pitfalls of mindfulness in the workplace



In a fast changing world, mindfulness may help both employees and organisations to adapt by training skills and attitudes such as: tolerance of ambiguity and paradox; openness to change; responding rather than reacting. Mindfulness can improve the quality of employees' attention, which in turn has a direct impact on the quality of their performance. Mindful organisations support employee potential, well-being and performance, whilst proactively working to prevent occupational stress and burnout.

Organisations who offer staff mindfulness training, or adopt mindful working practices, may benefit from the following:

Figure 1: Mindfulness at work metacognition model

- *Happier employees:* happy people show greater activation of the left pre-frontal cortex of the brain. Completing an 8-week mindfulness course has resulted in employees demonstrating greater activity in that part of the brain;
- *Greater creativity and flexibility:* the creative brain in flow is open, flexible, attentive and not too stressed, ideal conditions for innovation, problem-solving and workarounds;
- *Increased productivity:* mindfulness improves focus, reduces distraction and enables employees to keep attention on whatever needs finishing: mindful employees waste less energy worrying and more energy actually getting on with things; mindfulness also fosters greater awareness in employees of their tendencies, for example unhelpful behaviours or patterns, or helpful patterns such as times of day when their energy is higher;
- *Improved decision making:* mindful employees are more likely to respond to situations in a constructive way, rather than react from "hot" emotions; this is because mindfulness has an impact on the activity of the amygdala. Also mindfulness has been shown to reduce "sunk cost bias", a very helpful asset in both business and personal life;
- *Reduced staff turnover and sickness absence:* mindfulness can increase employee resilience and reduce perceived stress, leading to improved team/organizational effectiveness and reduced costs.

Mindfulness training will not be suitable for all staff. Staff suffering from clinical depression, or undergoing major trauma may not be best placed to learn mindfulness in the workplace. They may need to be referred to clinical variants of mindfulness training, or wait until things improve for them.

Mindfulness can bring many benefits to the workplace, but it's important to recognise that it's not a magic bullet or cure all. It should certainly not be used to paper over the cracks of toxic working environments. Whilst mindfulness can improve focus, attention, and productivity, regularly working long working hours cannot and should not be encouraged. Whilst mindfulness can help employees to become more flexible and resilient, no employee should have to endure bullying or inappropriate behaviour from managers or peers for example.

Before considering offering staff mindfulness training, it's worthwhile checking that you have the basics right. Your day-to-day working culture and practices should contribute to employee engagement and well-being.

What is the evidence for mindfulness at work?

Mindfulness has been the subject of thousands of research studies in the last 40 years, most focussing on the medical and therapeutic applications of mindfulness. Mindfulness in the workplace is still relatively new and in recent years, research specifically exploring the use of mindfulness in the workplace has started to emerge. At the time of writing this document (2015) there were more than 100 workplace specific papers published on the subject of mindfulness in the workplace, ranging from the performance of supervisors in high reliability organisations to the impact of mindfulness on decision making and ability to focus.

A number of these studies were randomised control trials (RCTs) – regarded by many as the gold standard for research. We do not yet know the correct formula for teaching mindfulness in the workplace. Emerging evidence is suggesting that shortened courses (for example 6 x 1 week) with shortened practices (8-15 minutes) are achieving similar results to longer courses with longer practice times. We also know that practice is key – didactic input alone, i.e. teaching or instruction, does not produce the desired outcomes, and those who spend more time practicing tend to achieve better outcomes.

The following bullet points are a small selection of the evidence for mindfulness at work.

- Research at a biotech company concluded that **Mindfulness increases left prefrontal cortex activity**, leading to improvements in mood and work engagement. In addition participants experienced significant increases in immunity, and felt more positive, more energetic, more engaged in their work and less stressed.⁶
- Research into mindfulness training and its impact on the brain's grey matter concentration suggests that participation in an eight week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction programme **increases the grey matter concentration** in brain regions involved in learning and memory processes.⁷
- **Mindfulness decreases fear-based responses.** MRI scans show that after an eight-week course of mindfulness practice, the brain's "fight or flight" centre, the amygdala, appears to shrink. This primal region of the brain, associated with fear and emotion, is involved in the initiation of the body's response to stress.⁸
- **Shortened versions of mindfulness training are effective in the workplace.** 186 University faculty and staff took part in an RCT mindfulness training programme with shortened meetings and formal mindfulness practice, with sessions conducted in the workday. The programme significantly enhanced mindfulness and this improvement was maintained for up to a year when compared to the education control.⁹
- **Mindfulness helps you switch off from work when at home.** This RCT research study examined the role of mindfulness in recovery from work. Those who practised mindfulness during working hours experienced improved sleep quality, and the ability to psychologically detach from work in the evening.¹⁰
- **Mindfulness improves productivity.** A RCT study to determine the effects of mindfulness training on the multitasking behaviour of knowledge workers suggested that those trained in mindfulness stayed on tasks longer and made fewer task switches, as well as reporting less negative emotion after task

performance, as compared with the other two groups. The mindfulness-trained group also showed improved memory for the tasks they performed. ¹¹

- **Mindfulness improves employee engagement and well-being.** 299 adults in full time employment were interviewed for this study. The researchers concluded that mindfulness leads to improved work engagement and general well-being. It also improves job satisfaction, hope, optimism, and resilience. The results indicate that non-reactivity and being non-judgemental are important skills for the workplace.¹²
- **Mindfulness improves decision-making.** Mindfulness does not only have a positive effect on health and well-being, but also, is likely to improve one’s ability to make high-quality judgments and decisions. Mindfulness can help individuals at each stage of decision-making. At the stage of decision framing, mindfulness is likely to increase one’s awareness of the possibility (or the necessity) to make a decision and mitigate the sunk cost bias. It may also increase goal awareness thereby enhancing decision consistency with one’s objectives and reducing post-decision regret. Greater goal clarity will in turn facilitate option generation, which will be further enhanced by creativity that mindfulness is likely to spark.¹³
- **Mindfulness increases resilience and vigour, whilst decreasing stress.** In this RCT study, 44 randomly selected Dow Chemicals employees took part in a 7 week mindfulness course especially adapted for the workplace, with short practices. The course was taught live over the Internet each week. Stress, mindfulness, resilience, and vigour were measured pre, post and 6 months after the intervention. Stress decreased, mindfulness, resilience, work engagement, vigour and employee well-being increased.¹⁴
- **ACT Mindfulness Training increases psychological flexibility, improves work performance, job satisfaction, mental health, training outcomes, and innovation, while reducing work stress, absenteeism, burnout, and job-related errors:** these were some of the outcomes described in Moran’s review paper which describes ACT workplace studies in workplace settings ranging from call centres, media, mental health services and local government.¹⁵
- **ACT Mindfulness Training** has also been used to **improve safety behaviours** (such as wearing protective clothing & equipment and hand washing), **problem solving, innovation, and leadership behaviours.** These are areas where persisting in or changing behaviours - willingness to experience undesirable, difficult, or just plain unhelpful thoughts and feelings - in the pursuit of values and goals is especially beneficial to organisations and employees. ¹⁶

Approaches to teaching mindfulness

Generic approaches to teaching mindfulness

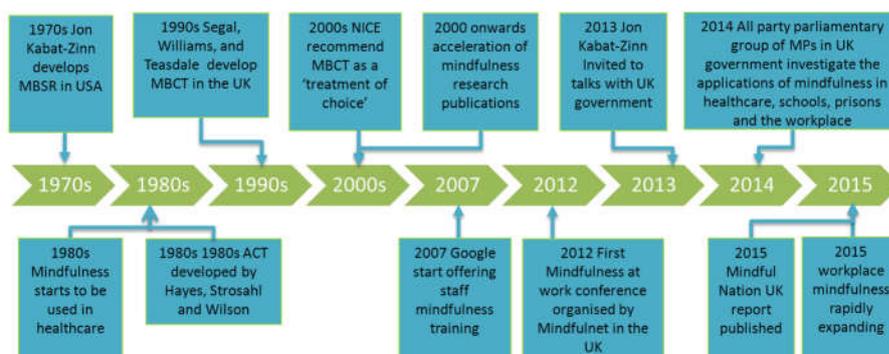


Figure 2: Mindfulness timeline

The most well-known and widely researched mindfulness teaching approaches are:

- **MBSR** – Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction – originally developed to help patients suffering from chronic pain. An 8 x 2hrs a week programme with a practice requirement of around 40 minutes a day, often followed by a half or full day retreat – partly in silence. MBSR is the only modern mindfulness based intervention (MBI) that is overtly rooted in Buddhist tradition, but remains a secular intervention. MBSR has been the subject of numerous randomized control trials (RCTs)
- **ACT** – Acceptance and Commitment Therapy has been the subject of many RCTs, with the strongest evidence for ACT helping with chronic pain, anxiety, depression and stress. The ACT model has an emphasis on measurable behaviour change. In the workplace, it can be used to improve performance and reduce stress by supporting the development of psychological flexibility, which increases willingness to persist in important behaviours in the face of adversity. Programme lengths vary from very short to similar lengths to MBSR/CT.
- **MBCT** – Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy - originally developed to help patients suffering from depression. An 8 x 2hrs a week programme with a practice requirement of around 40 minutes a day. Its philosophical background is influenced by MBSR. The subject of many RCTs, MBCT is recommended by NICE (UK National Institute for Clinical Excellence).
- **Breathworks** – mindfulness programmes were specifically tailored to the needs of people with lasting pain, illness and stress, and so may be of particular relevance to organisations where sickness absence is an issue or where employees with health conditions may benefit from additional support. The core programme is based around 8 weekly sessions and flexible home practice schedule of 10 - 40 minutes per day.

MBSR, MBCT and ACT have been the subject of thousands of research studies, many of which have been randomised control trials (RCTs) – which are regarded as the gold standard for research. ACT alone has been the subject of over 100 RCTs.

What are the similarities and differences in the above approaches?

MBCT and MBSR are broadly similar, sharing around 80% of the same content, but have been developed to help different groups of people. MBSR, MBCT and ACT all promote psychological flexibility and the idea that thoughts are merely *mental* events, not actual events, therefore should not always be the sole guide for behaviour. All three approaches promote, to a greater or lesser extent, acceptance of uncomfortable experiences (or turning towards difficulty), encouraging individuals to move forward with discomfort by creating a different relationship with difficult experiences. MBSR/MBCT/ACT all facilitate self-awareness through direct contact with experience and encourage participants to step back from the “control and elimination” agenda.

A key difference with ACT is that it has strong behavioural roots and promotes committed behaviour change in the direction of values; some describe it as “mindfulness with a purpose”. Formal mindfulness practice may or may not be included in ACT protocols, and requirements for home practice vary. When formal practice is included within an ACT programme, the duration of in-session mindfulness practices tends to be shorter than traditional MBSR or MBCT (although many MBSR/MBCT programmes adapted for the workplace also employ shorter practices).

All the above approaches have strengths, and it’s best to discuss your needs with your mindfulness trainers/adviser, who should be able to advise on best fit. Some trainers of these approaches offer a tailored or blended approach; but do be aware that the further you move away from evidence-based approaches, the less certainty you have of achieving outcomes commonly predicted from standard courses, so it’s worth spending time on careful evaluation.

Workplace specific approaches to teaching mindfulness

Workplace specific programmes such as CBMT, WorkplaceMT and ACT-based workplace programmes all place an emphasis on tailoring the programmes to meet the needs of both organisations and employees.

Mindfulness programmes adapted to the workplace often contain the same core practices as the generic programmes described above. As all these approaches are evidence (research) informed, care is taken to always deliver the same core content that has been proven to be effective, but exercises, delivery style and emphasis are carefully tailored.

Common examples of adaptation include adapting the language for specific audiences or including exercises of particular relevance to the workplace, for example adding in taught input or exercises on mindful emailing when working with knowledge workers.

Workplace specific approaches to teaching mindfulness include:

- **CBMT** - Corporate Based Mindfulness Training – developed by The Potential Project. A modular programme, which is design specifically to address an organisation's particular business imperatives. Its main programme focuses on individual, team or organisational change and consists of 10 x 1-1.5 hrs. weekly face-to-face group sessions with a suitably experienced corporate-based trainer, with a practice requirement of 10 minutes a day. CBMT has been provided to a large number of employees in organisations around the world.
- **WorkplaceMT** – Workplace Mindfulness Training – originated by The Mindfulness Exchange (TME), a spin off from the Oxford Mindfulness Centre. A 6 x 1 hr. a week MBCT based programme based on the book *Mindfulness a guide to finding peace in a frantic world* by Mark Williams and Danny Penman, with a practice requirement of around 15 minutes a day. 6 x 1.5 hour versions of WorkplaceMT are also available. This training has now been offered to a large number of employees, mainly based in the UK and Netherlands.
- **The Mindful and Effective Employee** – ACT training based on a book of the same name by Paul Flaxman, Frank Bond and Fredrik Livheim. It has a 2 + 1 delivery method: 2 half days of training followed by another half day some weeks or months later. Home practice requirement includes practical assignments as well as formal mindfulness, and time commitment over the duration of the course may range from 2-6 hours.
- **LIFECOMPASS** – Fredrik Livheim of the LIFECOMPASS organisation <http://actorganisation.com/> has provided training in their ACT group intervention to over 700 trainers in Sweden, UK and other countries, using the ACT group format protocol. The ACT training strategies, practice requirements and trainer skills are similar to those described in the Mindful and Effective Employee training above. Delivering the programme in the workplace takes about 12 hours in total, across a number of sessions.

Considerations when commissioning a mindfulness programme

Before considering commissioning a mindfulness programme, you need to consider if mindfulness is the right solution. Mindfulness is not a panacea or cure all, but can be highly beneficial. Before considering mindfulness as a business intervention, it's worth having a quick audit of your existing policies, working practices and day-to-day working culture. Do they actively seek to:

- Prevent and or reduce stress?
- Prevent and or reduce sickness absence in general?
- Prevent and or reduce burnout?
- Improve safety, situational awareness and reduce errors?
- Improve employee well-being and resilience?
- Develop leadership capability?
- Help staff to cope with change and organisational transformation?
- Improve empathy and team relationships?
- Improve employee engagement?

- Improve employee performance?

If they do not, it may be worthwhile to work on these before or in parallel to commissioning a mindfulness programme. Secondly, consider if mindfulness is a good cultural fit for your organisation. For individuals, a crucial aspect of mindfulness practice is to bring an attitude of curiosity, observation, objectivity and openness to your experience, indeed personal reflection, supported by the mindfulness trainer within taught sessions, is central to the teaching of mindfulness. Consider how readily this approach to learning would be accepted by your staff.

If a quick fix is needed, mindfulness isn't the answer. A full, or half-day (or even shorter) introduction to mindfulness may be a good starting point, but it's unlikely to create the changes you desire. Mindfulness training involves didactic input, practice, reflection, and regular practice, ideally over a period of time such as 6-8 weeks, in order to embed change.

Start with the end in mind

If you decide that mindfulness could be of benefit within your organisation, there are a number of considerations before you get going. One size does not fit all. In this section, you will find some helpful suggestions to get you started, and help you avoid potential pitfalls.

If you are considering introducing mindfulness into your organisation, start with the end in mind: what is it that you want to be different as a result of the training? For example, if mindfulness is being offered as an employee benefit, by the end of the programme you might wish to see an increase in staff engagement. You might wish to address a need that is currently apparent (stress, inattention, low staff engagement, high sickness absence etc.). Occupational Health, Health & Safety, Human Resources, Trade Union and Staff representatives may be able to advise. If you have limited resources, this may avoid a mindfulness programme becoming a "rabbit hole" down which resources disappear. Consider if there are any obstacles that may prevent equality of access, for example shift patterns, applicability for manual workers or lower grades of staff in your organisation.

Gaining a clear agreement on what you hope to achieve will enable you to shape a programme that is right for your organisation. It's always best to build in evaluation and ways to measure return on investment at the outset of the project rather than bolting it on at the end. If designed in at the outset, data gathering is easier, and good quality evaluation data benefits participants, researchers and future MBIs.

Metrics for measurement can go from fairly straightforward and practical to more complex academic research measures (which would need expert support) and include:

- Existing in-house data such as a staff surveys, absenteeism figures or data gathered by HR;
- Staff members' self-assessment of the impact of the programme. For example 40% of staff reporting an increase in their ability to concentrate, or 50% of staff reporting that meetings are now more effective;
- Research scales, many of which are freely available.

Planning at the outset is key. You can decide to keep it simple and evaluate in-house; you could ask your mindfulness provider to conduct the evaluation, or enrol support from a suitable university department to help with study design and interpretation of data.

As a minimum, consider some end-of-course qualitative questions, which need not add significantly to the administrative burden of running an MBI, may provide more richness of data and some unexpected additional insights, and are useful for both participants and trainers.

Selecting your approach

Once you have defined the outcomes you hope to achieve, you need to consider which mindfulness teaching approach might serve you best to achieve these.

You may decide to adopt a generic approach to teaching mindfulness (typically an 8 week programme with longer practice requirements) or a workplace specific approach (6 weeks or less with shorter practice requirements) or 2 sessions followed by a later follow up session. Mindfulness tools and techniques may be incorporated into leadership or management programmes, but may not produce the same results as a standalone course. Mindfulness programmes can also be linked to other programmes such as health, well-being, safety, change or organisational transformation.

Selecting providers

Emerging best practice in the UK is that workplace mindfulness teachers should follow a minimum of a 12-month training pathway consisting of Level 1 training, supervised practice delivering training and attendance at Level 2 training. Trainers should be experienced in working with similar client groups within organisations.

ACT trainer training requirements are broadly similar, with a range of competencies from peer reviewed trainers who are viewed as being able to help people to learn ACT with high fidelity and those trainers who undergo training to deliver ACT interventions to specific groups with which they are familiar, such as the workplace. You will find further information on the ACBS website which is listed in Appendix “Websites”.

In the UK, the [UK Network for Mindfulness-Based Teacher Trainers](#) have agreed voluntary [guidelines](#) for teachers of 8 week courses (at presently mainly for therapeutic mindfulness). The ‘Good Practice Guidelines’ provide a good starting point for the identification of key characteristics that make a good mindfulness teacher, but may not be fully applicable to workplace mindfulness interventions.

In the USA, no similar network exists, and so reference is often made to the [“Principles and Standards”](#) document prepared by UMASS Medical School’s Centre for Mindfulness (the home of MBSR). For readers outside the UK/USA, there may be local guidelines in development, for example Ireland has recently agreed their own guidelines.

When selecting a mindfulness trainer to work with, some key considerations are:

- **The training that the provider has undertaken.** Ideally trainers should have had their own established mindfulness practice before attending level 1 training. Level 1 training should include around 60-80 learning hours, followed by delivery of 2 or more courses under the guidance of a more experienced teacher. Level 2 training should include observation of the delivery of 2 or more weekly sessions from the 6 or 8 week programme they teach.
- The mindfulness trainer should practice mindfulness daily themselves
- The mindfulness trainer should have experience of working in similar organisations or with similar individuals
- The mindfulness teacher should take a genuine interest in your organisation and its needs, rather than adopting a one size fits all approach

Piloting

Once you have selected a mindfulness teaching approach and a trainer that you feel is a good fit for your organisation, you can work together collaboratively to design a pilot. Using your desired learning outcomes as a starting point, decide on the audience your mindfulness training is for. It is advisable to only offer mindfulness to those who want it, and never try to force staff to attend mindfulness training against their will.

Agree exclusion criteria and support available to participants with your mindfulness trainer and your occupational health service, if you have one; for example it may not be the right time for some participants if they are experiencing acute mental illness (and it might be appropriate to facilitate access to mental health services). Also participants who have had a recent severe loss such as bereavement or divorce may be in too raw a state of distress to find a course helpful; they may be advised to wait till they have worked through the acute stage of the grieving process and are more settled with their loss.

There are two common routes to piloting:

- Run a taster session, and use this to establish likely interest in a full course;
- Run one or more courses and evaluate outcomes.

Some training providers will be happy to help you write website content, briefings and flyers. They may also be able to help you design pre- and post-course evaluation.

Designing evaluation in at the outset

Benefits gained from MBIs are largely dependent on fidelity to the approach and competency in delivery, and may not always be replicated, so it's important to gather pre- and post-course evaluation data. You may wish to do your own evaluation, and/or ask your teacher to assist with this. An ideal scenario might be a local academic researcher undertaking the research as part of their studies or for a fee. External evaluation (by the trainer or by a researcher) may elicit more honest responses.

Here are some of the potential challenges and opportunities around gathering your metrics:

- **Long questionnaires can cause staff to disengage.** In one workplace example, more than 50 people signed up for a programme and attended the first session, but only 5 completed the MBI, due in large part to the requirement to complete questionnaires 5 times during the course!
- Another problem with some types of questionnaires is that, at the beginning of the MBI, participants may not be so aware of their thoughts and behaviours, and their **increased self-awareness by the end of the course may skew the scoring.**
- **Online survey tools can be a cheap and time effective** way to gather pre and post course quantitative data.
- **Qualitative data**, gathered via one-to-one or group discussions may provide more **richness of data** and some unexpected additional insights, **but may take longer to evaluate.**

You might wish to consider using the following measures and scales:

- General Health Questionnaire (GHQ)
- Work-related Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (WAAQ)
- Scales for measuring various aspects of mindfulness including:
 - Five facet mindfulness questionnaire (FFMQ)
 - Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS)
- Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)
- Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS21)
- Self-compassion scale (SCS) and Compassion for others scale (CFO)
- Maslach Burnout Inventory

If time and resources allow, you might consider evaluation measures such as

- Attention tests such as those used by the US Marines
- Physical research measures such as salivary cortisol, HRV (Heart rate variability) fMRI (Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging).

Additional pre-course questions could include:

- Have you practiced any form of meditation before?
- Do you have any physical or mental health conditions that you think we should be aware of?
- Have you experienced a difficult life event recently, such as bereavement or divorce?

Additional post course additional questions could include:

- I feel that mindfulness has helped me at work, because I
 - Function better when under pressure
 - Focus my attention on the task in hand
 - Make better decisions
 - Improve the way I manage strong feelings and emotions
 - Respond differently to challenges and difficulties at work

- Improve relationships with colleagues
- Look after myself better at work
- Sleep better
- Overall, I feel that the course has helped me to be a more effective employee

(No change/ To a small extent/ To some extent/ To a great extent/ Significantly)

- To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
 - I plan to continue practicing mindfulness
 - Participating in the course was a good use of my time
 - Overall, I feel that the course has helped me to be a more effective employee
 - (Strongly disagree/ Disagree/ Agree/ Strongly agree)
- Have you any other comments on what you have gained from the course? (optional)

A sample 'end of course' reflection sheet is shown in the Appendices.

Post pilot next steps

Following on from pre and post course evaluation, data can be shared with those sponsoring the pilot and/or with senior managers. Informal evaluation with the trainer may also provide valuable data on what worked and did not work, and thus what could be improved in future.

If the outcomes of the pilot were positive, the evaluation data gathered may be used as the basis of a formal or informal business case for further roll out of mindfulness training across the whole organisation, within specific business functions or geographical areas. Staff with a special interest in mindfulness may play a role as champions, helping to overcome obstacles and encouraging uptake. If they have suitable experience they may also be able to host weekly drop in sessions for staff, although it is not advised that they should teach mindfulness.

If it is agreed that mindfulness is good for business, and the organisation wish to support and encourage it, leaders might consider:

- Setting aside a quiet room for people to practice mindfulness in;
- Starting meetings with a few minutes of mindfulness to focus attention;
- Encouraging staff to have technology-free periods of time;
- Banning laptops and mobile phones from meetings unless essential;
- Discouraging working practices that require multi-tasking;
- Encouraging staff to eat and drink appropriately throughout the day, not feeling guilty about taking time away from their desk to take a break.

FAQs - Frequently asked Questions

Is mindfulness just a fad?

No - mindfulness has been around for thousands of years. Whilst mindfulness at work may be relatively new, the mindfulness programmes described in this guide are based on 40 years of scientific research, which continues to grow year on year. However, there is a danger that inexperienced people will inadvertently dilute mindfulness into something meaningless, in which case it could become a passing fad. It's therefore important to ensure that workplace mindfulness training is conducted by people who have attended in-depth mindfulness trainer training that broadly aligns to the UK Mindfulness teachers Good Practice Guidelines.

Is mindfulness a cure for toxic working environments?

No - mindfulness is not a panacea – MBIs cannot replace primary approaches such as carrying out stress risk assessment of work, eliminating or reducing sources of stress, and improving working conditions; by the same

token, mindfulness as part of an overall health, safety and well-being strategy can have more powerful benefits than a stand-alone intervention.

Can a member of my team deliver this training?

Not without adequate training. Mindfulness isn't something that can be learned from a book and translated into a course curriculum by an able member of staff; mindfulness is a skill that is learned through practice and experience over a period of time. Even staff members who are experienced meditators may struggle to translate mindfulness and effectively teach it to others.

Can a member of my staff become a mindfulness teacher?

Yes. Becoming a mindfulness teacher takes around 12 -24 months from start to finish. Those applying for teacher training should have first attended a full mindfulness course and have established their own regular mindfulness training for at least 6 months. At present few mindfulness at work trainer-training pathways exist. The Mindfulness Exchange, a spin off from Oxford University's, Oxford Mindfulness Centre (OMC) offer WorkplaceMT Trainer development designed specifically for those delivering mindfulness in the workplace. After an initial week's intensive training, trainers can start delivering training, but are not fully signed off as a certified trainer until they have delivered a number of courses to the required standard. Due to the limited availability of Mindfulness at Work trainer training, many currently practising trainers initially trained in MBSR or MBCT and then looked for ways to adapt this for the workplace.

How much does mindfulness training cost?

It depends on the teaching approach you select. If you want to provide professional mindfulness at work training to staff, delivered by suitably trained and experienced facilitators, expect to pay similar prices to those you would pay for management or leadership training.

What does a good workplace mindfulness programme look like?

Good workplace mindfulness programmes tend to be scheduled in work time, tailored to organisational needs, supported by line managers and senior staff, and take place over a long enough period to effectively embed learning in the brain. Adaptation should incorporate changes in language and application to work challenges participants are facing, whilst retaining all the essential core elements of the original approach.

Mindfulness cannot be taught by didactic input alone – experiential learning is key. Based on best available research to date, the programme should be 6-8 weeks long – with weekly sessions from 2 hours to 45 minutes in duration. ACT formats are often delivered in 3 separate half-day sessions, with the final session 1-6 months later to embed benefits. Each taught session should ideally be around 60% practice and reflection on experiences and 40% didactic input

How can I gain buy in from my organisation?

Educate and sell the benefits based their ability to solve real organisational issues. Despite media interest in mindfulness, there are still many misconceptions surrounding mindfulness. When seeking buy in from others who may have little knowledge of mindfulness or may have misconceptions, talk about the organisational benefits. For example if distraction and inattention are a major issue for your organisation, focus on how mindfulness can address this, quoting if necessary research studies that support this. Similarly, you might discuss how mindfulness can improve employee health and well-being, reduce risk or burnout, improve leadership, or improve flexibility and resilience in times of change. Stick to the evidence base when seeking buy in, tailoring your message to the needs and interests of those you are presenting to.

Do I have to call it mindfulness?

No – it depends on your organisational culture. The word “mindfulness” has gained much more acceptance within the business community over the last few years, largely because of the research that underpins it. Many organisations have incorporated aspects of mindfulness into their learning programmes without actually calling it mindfulness. The US Military Mindfulness based programme is called ‘Mind Fitness Training’.

How did Google introduce mindfulness to their staff?

Google, one of the earliest adopters of mindfulness, posted a sign-up sheet for staff to take “MBSR classes” and nobody signed up. It wasn’t until Google adapted MBSR to fit the young, data-driven engineers that staff showed interest. Google referred to the teachings as “mindfulness-based emotional intelligence” and showed how different practices could cultivate this intelligence. The course was rebranded as “Search Inside Yourself”. More than two thousand of Google’s engineers around the world have taken the course since then.

How much time is involved?

It depends on the approach you select, and the outcomes you seek to achieve. Home practice + attendance of all taught sessions is an essential element of mindfulness training, so those participating should be willing to commit to this for the full duration of the course. Typical mindfulness course durations vary from 8-week MBSR and MBCT courses (16+ hours in total) to 6 week WorkplaceMT programmes (6+ hours in total). ACT programmes are often taught over a three month period with 2 sessions close together and another 3 months later (9+ hours in total).

Is mindfulness the same as meditation?

No. Mindfulness is a very specific form of meditation. Whereas some meditation is about escaping the present moment and taking yourself to your ‘special place’ in order to relax, mindfulness is about being with your present moment experience, warts and all! As Jon Kabat-Zinn famously put it *“You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf”*.

Is mindfulness all about relaxation?

No, it’s about learning to manage your mind. Although for many people practising mindfulness is relaxing, it’s not the aim, it’s a by-product, it’s a bonus when it happens, but don’t count on it. At times practising mindfulness can be anything but relaxing. Your mind wanders, you notice and bring it back – over and over. This can be frustrating, but with each repetition, your ability to manage your mind increases.

Do you need a special room or equipment?

No – not usually. Mindfulness at work courses are normally taught in standard meeting rooms. Some trainers require an empty room with a circle of chairs, others are happy with a standard desk and chairs set up. In weeks 2 and 3 of 8-week courses, some teachers may require the use of yoga mats on the floor (which they often provide). Some teachers require a flip chart, projector and screen. Other teachers do not require this – it’s dependant on their preferred approach. Mindfulness can be run onsite or offsite. If using organisational meeting rooms, the most important thing is that the rooms should be relatively quiet and free from disturbances. Some trainers may be more creative, offering participants the opportunity to practice in nature in a nearby green space.

Is online teaching or group teaching best?

Both approaches have pros and cons; online mindfulness teaching can be offered as part of a blended learning approach, but may not suit all. Research to date suggests that good quality online courses can be highly effective, but the dropout rate tends to be high¹.

The benefit of online courses, in addition to the reduction in cost to the organisation, is the provision for the participant to do the course from their own home or other comfortable surroundings and in their own time, allowing a large number of people to benefit from mindfulness who maybe unable to attend another course for various reasons. On the other hand, group courses enable participants to share their experiences of challenges and successes, but also participants learn much from the investigative dialogue between trainer and class participants after each mindfulness practice, which forms a major part of the learning process.

What are the alternatives to offering mindfulness training?

If you simply want to improve employee health or well being, you might wish to consider offering staff yoga classes, tai-chi or massages. These alternatives can increase employee well-being, staff engagement and may improve attention. However, a number of RCT studies² have compared the outcomes of relaxation activities with mindfulness. Broadly, the findings of these studies suggest that mindfulness offers a much wider range of potential desirable outcomes and enhanced self-management capabilities

Does mindfulness replace other ways of staying well?

Certainly not! Mindfulness complements other aspects of the Healthy, Safety and Well-being agenda, such as work-life balance, designing good work, healthy eating, physical activity, and maintaining our connections with others. Mindfulness may support, but not replace, workplace policies on smoking, substance abuse and alcohol.

Is mindfulness religious?

No. Mindfulness approaches such as MBSR, MBCT, WorkplaceMT, and ACT are entirely secular. Anyone can practice mindfulness as part of their everyday lives; it can be practised by people of all faiths or none. You don't need any special equipment. You don't have to have any religious belief or philosophical conviction. And you certainly don't need to sit on a cushion in lotus position unless you want to.

Is mindfulness a quick fix?

No, it takes time and practice to develop mindfulness. Although media hype around mindfulness is high, it's certainly NOT a quick fix or cure all. Mindfulness will not fix inadequate or inappropriate people management, nor will it enable people to work excessive hours on a long-term basis. It may even encourage staff to push back and lobby for better ways of working if their current ones are causing undue suffering. It's essential not to forget the fundamentals of running a successful business.

What is 'compassion training'?

Compassion is defined as 'an awareness and sensitivity to the suffering of self and others, with a willingness and commitment to try and alleviate it.' I.e. a combination of awareness and intention, so it's a very practical matter - not simply about 'being nice'. In terms of mindfulness, there are a number of stand-alone or follow-on programmes that may be called 'self-care', 'self-compassion' or 'mindful compassion', available or in development worldwide. If you are interested to investigate more, there are several resources listed in the appendices. MBSR, MBCT, CBMT, ACT, and WorkplaceMT usually include some compassion practice as a core element.

Can 'compassion training' help those in the caring professions?

Yes, but remember that mindfulness is not the only approach – an organisation's culture can either support or hinder compassion. Fear, threat and shame inhibit performance whilst a safe, compassionate and non-judgemental environment supports better performance, self-compassion, empathy and compassion for colleagues, customers and service users. Special care is needed when offering mindful compassion, or "compassion training" because this can imply that employees need fixing; many employees are already quite hard on themselves, and may well be struggling to fulfil their compassionate potential for a number of situational factors such as workload, emotionally demanding work, leadership and manager behaviour. The subject of cultivating compassion-conducive contexts and structures is worthy of study in its own right, so vital is it to well-being and performance.

Can Mindfulness champions help to embed mindfulness within an organisation?

Yes – if you pick the right people and provide adequate support. Organisations such as Capitol One have a number of mindfulness champions, each with an interest in mindfulness, who offer staff weekly drop in sessions. Remember that mindfulness champions are not a replacement for experienced professionally

trained mindfulness teachers, but can play a vital role in the rollout and embedding of mindfulness. Becoming a mindfulness champion can be highly beneficial to employees training to become mindfulness teachers, creating a win-win situation.

References

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14. Aikens et al (2014) Mindfulness goes to work: impact of an online workplace intervention
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16. Moran, Daniel J. (2013). Building Safety Commitment. Valued Living Books.

Appendices

Books and publications

Adams, J (2015)	Mindful Leadership for dummies. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons	Includes full 6 week WorkplaceMT mindfulness training course for busy professionals. Also includes Mindful leader case studies and ways to apply mindfulness to a number of everyday workplace challenges
Alidina S, Adams J (2014)	Mindfulness at Work For Dummies. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons. 400pp	A dip in and dip out style textbook for anybody interested in workplace mindfulness.
Burch, V and Penman, D (2013)	Mindfulness for Health: A practical guide to relieving pain, reducing stress and restoring . London: Piatkus. 288pp	8-week mindfulness programme with audio tracks, based on MBSR. Modified and developed specifically for the needs of people with chronic pain and illness, for example, includes education about the anatomy of breathing as many people with pain tend to have habit of 'breath holding' which increases pain and tension. Also pacing, compassion and ACT. Relevant to occupational health specialists helping people with physical challenges to stay in work and remain productive when in work. The book supports the Breathworks Mindfulness for Health Course.
Bush M (2013)	Working with Mindfulness - Research and Practice of Mindful Techniques in Organizations - Full Series [Kindle]. Western Massachusetts: More than Sound. 57pp	The full series, containing all interviews, is better value than the same interviews sold separately; background material for those curious about introducing mindfulness to their organisation.
Chaskalson M (2011)	The Mindful Workplace: Developing Resilient Individuals and Resonant Organizations with MBSR. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell. 226pp	For those interested in introducing mindfulness to their organisation, also for mindfulness trainers.
Flaxman P, Bond FW, Livheim F (2013)	Mindful and Effective Employees: A Training Program for Maximizing Well-Being and Effectiveness Using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger. 248pp	Book-length manual, designed for practitioners delivering ACT in workplace. Also reviews the evidence and rationale for using ACT in the workplace.
Gelles, D (2015)	Mindful Work: How Meditation is Changing Business from the Inside Out: Profile Books. 304pp	Features insights from high-level managers at Fortune 500 companies through to Google employees and the Dalai Lama, Mindful Work is a guide to mindfulness based in the realities of running a successful business.

Germer, C. (2009)	The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion Freeing Yourself from Destructive Thoughts and Emotions. New York: Guilford Press. 321pp	A key text on mindful self-compassion, Christopher Germer worked with Kristen Neff to develop an 8-week Mindful Self Compassion course (MSC, similar in structure to MBSR). His website has free meditations, handouts and other resources.
Gilbert, Paul and Choden. (2013)	Mindful Compassion: Using the Power of Mindfulness and Compassion to Transform Our Lives. Hachette: London UK. 384pp	Another key text on mindful compassion practices; contains background information as well as practical exercises.
Goleman, D (2013)	Focus: The Hidden Driver of Excellence. New York: Harper Collins. 320 pp	Essential attention skills.
Hall, Liz (2013)	Mindful Coaching: How Mindfulness Can Transform Coaching Practice. London and Philadelphia PA. Kogan Page Publishers. 280 pp	Of interest to coaches, guide to using mindfulness effectively in coaching.
Hanson, R (2013)	Hardwiring Happiness: How to reshape your brain and your life. London: Rider. 304 pp	Neuroscience and mindfulness.
Harris, R (2008)	The Happiness Trap London: Constable & Robinson. 271pp	Pragmatic introduction to ACT, also available as an illustrated pocket book.
Kuyken, Crane and Williams (2012)	Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) Implementation Resources. 112pp	http://mindfulnessteachersuk.org.uk/pdf/MBCTImplementationResources.pdf Designed for delivering the 'full' MBCT programme, these guidelines are not adapted for the workplace context, but are a useful reference point for Occupational Health Specialists, Workplace Counsellors, Therapists, and Mindfulness Trainers.
Moran Daniel J	"Acceptance and Commitment Training in the workplace. "Current Opinion in Psychology 2 (2015): 26-31.	Freely available paper giving an overview of ACT in the workplace; worth reading if you are interested in understanding ACT processes and how they translate into effective behaviours at work.
Moran Daniel J (2013)	Building Safety Commitment. US: Valued Living Books. 208pp Supporting website with free tools: http://buildingsafetycommitment.com/	How could eating a mint or candy help you to keep important commitments or reinforce safer behaviours? This book describes how mindfulness and ACT can be applied in the workplace, supported by worksheets and audio exercises; the short mindfulness exercises are designed for busy working people. For those interested in introducing mindfulness to their organisation (not just for safety reasons), and for mindfulness trainers.

Neff, Kristin. (2011)	Self compassion. Hachette: London UK. 320pp	Introduction to self-compassion, with useful exercises; complemented by free resources on her website.
Noteberg S (2010)	Pomodoro Technique Illustrated. North Carolina: Pragmatic Bookshelf. 144pp	Not usually described as a mindfulness technique, nonetheless the practice of bringing your attention back to the work time and time again, combined with skilful handling of distractions is an approach familiar to mindfulness practitioners; of interest to knowledge workers, office-based workers and students, can be incorporated into time management or workplace mindfulness courses.
Reb, J (Editor) and Atkins W B (Editor), (2015)	Mindfulness in Organizations: Foundations, Research, and Applications. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 436 pp	Not for the casual reader, this book gives a thorough account of the evidence around lengths of intervention, delivery mode, and work-related benefits. Suitable for business leaders, specialists in organisations, mindfulness trainers, academics and other professionals. 16 chapters written by a variety of experts, on a range of subjects including, research and applications of mindfulness, including creativity, decision-making, leadership and management and coaching.
Rock D (2009)	Your Brain at Work: Strategies for Overcoming Distraction, Regaining Focus, and Working Smarter All Day Long. New York: Harper. 304pp	Collects together relevant neuroscience and explains in clear terms how your brain works at home, in the workplace, and in social interactions.
Tan CM (2012)	Search Inside Yourself: Increase Productivity, Creativity and Happiness. London: Harper Collins. 352pp	Provides an overview of Google's Search Inside yourself training programme, which combines mindfulness with Emotional Intelligence.
Weare, Katherine	Evidence for Mindfulness: Impacts on the Wellbeing and Performance of School Staff	Free report: although written for education sector, its contents are applicable to many workplaces. http://mindfulnessinschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Evidence-for-Mindfulness-Impact-on-school-staff.pdf
Weick, Karl E., Kathleen M. Sutcliffe, and David Obstfeld	"Organizing for high reliability: Processes of collective mindfulness." Crisis management 3 (2008): 81-123	This report describes how organisations with mindful processes and leadership practices engage in more reliable safety performance, report fewer errors and have staff with lower unit-level turnover rates. http://drillscience.com/DPS/Organizing%20for%20High%20Reliability.pdf
Williams M and Penman D (2011)	Mindfulness: A practical guide to finding peace in a frantic world. London : Piatkus. 288pp	In 2011 Professor Mark Williams co-wrote Mindfulness: Finding Peace in a Frantic World with journalist Danny Penman. Based on MBCT, this is an 8 week programme with guided mindfulness audio, this book makes mindfulness accessible to a lay audience, and is widely used for MBIs in workplace settings

Websites

Action for Happiness	Evidence-based approaches to general wellbeing and happiness, includes information about mindfulness, creating happy workplaces and communities.	http://www.actionforhappiness.org
American Mindfulness Research Association	Monthly reports on mindfulness research from the American Mindfulness Research Association.	https://goamra.org
Association for Contextual Behavioral Science (ACBS)	ACBS is a worldwide online learning and research community, for anyone interested in ACT. The website has a wide range of resources, for example audio/video recordings, helpful metaphors, worksheets, protocols, measures, conference proceedings and a worldwide directory of practitioners.	https://contextualscience.org
Be mindful	The UK Mental Health Foundation's website Be Mindful, provides a geographical listing of mindfulness teachers whose training pathway has followed the Good Practice Guidelines (GPG). The listing may exclude those teaching shorter or adapted programmes. It's a good starting point, but certainly not a complete listing. (Another way to find a teacher in your area, try a web search such as "MBCT Birmingham" or "MBSR London").	http://bemindful.co.uk
Breathworks	Offer courses in Mindfulness for Stress, Mindfulness for Health, Mindfulness within the Workplace and online training; they also train mindfulness trainers to UK Good Practice Guidelines standards, and provide mindfulness training for Healthcare Workers who want to incorporate mindfulness and compassion into their work. Breathworks courses are a mixture of MBSR, ACT, compassion and pacing. Best delivered via teacher-led sessions but can also be accessed online in a group format.	http://www.breathworks-mindfulness.org.uk
HSE Management standards: Stress	HSE's management standards for preventing or reducing work-related stress, designing 'good work'.	http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/
IOSH – stress assessment	Free stress risk assessment template.	http://www.iosh.co.uk/Membership/Our-membership-network/Our-Groups/Health-and-Social-Care-Group/Resources/Stress-Risk-Assessment-template.aspx
Jeremy Hunter	The website of Jeremy Hunter, Assistant Professor of Practice at the Peter F. Drucker Graduate School of Management at Claremont Graduate University. Jeremy created and teaches "The Executive Mind". The resources page contains useful articles and videos (plus free mindfulness guided audio) that are particularly suitable for the workplace context.	http://jeremyhunter.net

Mindfulnet.org	Many resources on mindfulness in general and workplace mindfulness.	http://mindfulnet.org
Oxford Mindfulness Centre (OMC)	Home of the Oxford Mindfulness Centre at Oxford University, their research was instrumental in the development of MBCT and other mindfulness initiatives; courses for mindfulness trainers and the general public.	http://oxfordmindfulness.org
The Center for Contemplative Mind	The Center for Contemplative Mind specializes in Higher Education mainly, but does have some workplace-related resources.	http://www.contemplativemind.org
The Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice (CMRP)	The Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice (CMRP), based at Bangor University, trains professionals in the application of mindfulness-based approaches and researching applications of mindfulness. Also offers MBSR/MBCT classes to specific populations and the general public both locally and further afield.	http://www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness
The Compassionate Mind Foundation	Resources for Mindful Compassion, Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT, a therapeutic approach to shame-based difficulties) and related subjects. Links to many other relevant websites.	http://www.compassionatemind.co.uk
The Greater Good	Based at the University of California, this website has many resources about mindfulness: http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/mindfulness and mindfulness practices: http://ggia.berkeley.edu/ also how to increase compassion at work.	http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/
The Institute for Mindful Leadership	Based in Oakland New Jersey, the Institute for Mindful Leadership, provides mindful leadership training. The site has videos, articles and a free excerpt from their book "Finding the Space to Lead: A Practical Guide to Mindful Leadership".	http://instituteformindfulleadership.org
The Linehan Institute	DBT (Dialectical behaviour therapy) is a mindfulness-based clinical treatment developed by Marsha Linehan in the 1980s. The UK National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommend DBT for women with Borderline Personality Disorder who want to reduce self-harming. May be of interest to Occupational Health Practitioners, and other clinicians, seeking to refer people who cannot participate in workplace programmes.	http://behavioraltech.org/resources/whatisdbt.cfm
The Mindfulness Association	Offer Compassion Based mindfulness training and Mindfulness based living courses.	http://www.mindfulnessassociation.net/
The Mindfulness exchange	The Mindfulness Exchange (TME) are a spin off from the Oxford Mindfulness centre (OMC). They provide WorkplaceMT Training and were the training provider for the CVS Vets Case Study 4 in this guide.	http://mindfulness-exchange.com
The Mindfulness in Schools	The Mindfulness in Schools Project is a non-profit organisation that offers mindfulness training and teacher training for school staff, parents, teachers and children.	http://mindfulnessinschools.org

UK Network for Mindfulness-Based Teachers	The UK Network for Mindfulness-Based Teachers has Good Practice Guidelines (GPG), which aim to promote good practice in teaching 8-week mindfulness-based courses. Professional standards for teachers of workplace mindfulness are still emerging, and the register does not currently extend to those teaching shorter or adapted programmes so may not include many workplace mindfulness trainers.	https://www.ukmindfulnessnetwork.co.uk/
Working with ACT	Suitable for a business audience, members of the public and ACT practitioners with an interest in using ACT-based mindfulness and values in the workplace to improve performance and wellbeing; regular blog articles and resources.	http://workingwithact.com
WorkplaceMT	A list of WorkplaceMT trainers can be found on this website, along with an outline of the WorkplaceMT approach to teaching mindfulness in the workplace and Level 1/2 teacher training.	http://workplacemt.com

Apps

ACT Coach	ACT Coach is free and was designed by the US Department of Veterans Affairs for Veterans, for service members and others who are in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) with a mental health professional and want to use an ACT App in conjunction with their therapy. It offers exercises, tools, information, and tracking logs to support practice in daily life.	https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/act-coach/id804247934?mt=8
ACT Companion	Features dozens of ACT-based exercises and tools (paid app).	http://www.actcompanion.com
Headspace	Paid by monthly subscription; free introductory course.	https://www.headspace.com
I-here-now	I-here-now is a paid-for app offering exercises from ACT, mindfulness and positive psychology; available in Swedish and English, other languages to come. Supports the LifeCompass and Mindful Effective Employee mindfulness programmes.	http://iherenow.net
Insight Timer	Insight Timer is a free app available on iPhone, android and iPad, has numerous free guided meditations; many of the offerings are not representative of mindfulness as it is usually taught in the workplace, or in MBSR/CT, ACT programmes.	https://insighttimer.com
Stop Breathe Think	Stop Breathe Think is available on IOS, Android and web; free and paid content.	http://stopbreathethink.org/

Video and audio

David Sillito on BBC Breakfast	Mindfulness on BBC Breakfast - David Sillito tried mindfulness meditation and talks about his experience & an interview with Dr Danny Penman. (12.27 minutes)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMsUGB_KV7s
Dr Jutta Tobias	Mindfulness for leaders. Dr Jutta Tobias describes how mindfulness training has been incorporated into an MBA programme, and its impact on leadership qualities (3.44 minutes)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZnfPFuBseoQ&ab_channel=CranfieldSchoolofManagement
Dr Patrizia Collard: What is mindfulness?	Dr Patrizia Collard: What is mindfulness? Introduction to mindfulness, touching on its value in coaching too. Finally she offers a brief mindfulness practice for viewers to try (10.52 minutes)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=348&v=3Q8BrKxwz8s&ab_channel=stressminus
Dr Russ Harris	ACT in a nutshell – Dr Russ Harris gives a relaxed introduction to ACT, not specific to workplace. (9.36 minutes)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QS13jRcaufs&ab_channel=HumourAustralia
Janice Marturano on the BBC	Can mindfulness increase profits? In amongst all the talk of boosting the global economy at the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2013, something called 'mindfulness' crept on to the programme for the first time. Janice Marturano from Institute For Mindful Leadership explained to the BBC's Tanya Beckett how the technique can improve commercial performance. (2.03 minutes)	http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-21244171
Marsha Linehan,	Marsha Linehan, originator of DBT, describes how there are many avenues to mindfulness, and gives some examples of brief practices that can be tried by people who can't do longer practices (6.09 minutes)	https://www.09youtube.com/watch?v=yoLKQLvGyIQ&ab_channel=FACESConferences
Professor Jeremy Hunter	The Executive Mind: Teaching Mindfulness Practices to Leaders - an excerpt from More Than Sound's Working with Mindfulness webinar features Professor Hunter discussing the development of mindfulness trainings for executives at The Peter F. Drucker School of Management. (6.47 minutes)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llRix12kgDc
Testimonial from David Miller, small business owner	Testimonial from small business owner on how mindfulness helped him (1.33 minutes) after he attended work-based mindfulness course at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w4N4TGsVwMY&ab_channel=AthrofaCymruDysguSeiliedigarWaith/WalesInstituteForWorkBasedLearning

End of course reflection sheet

The following is a **sample** "End of course reflection sheet" is adapted from the [Good Medicine](#) blog:

1.) Looking back over the course, what for you personally have been the best things about it?

- In what ways has your life improved?
- What new skills or abilities have you developed?
- Have you had any insights or new ways of seeing things that feel valuable?
- Are there other positive things you have experienced doing the course?

2.) Looking back over the course, what for you personally have been the main difficulties that you have experienced?

- Are there useful lessons you can learn from these problems?
- Are there any implications that are important for you to remember?
- Is there anything further you want to do about these difficulties now or in the future?

3.) Home practice.

- How did you find the home practice?
- How much of the practice did you manage?
- Do you think you'll continue to practise?

4.) The course.

- How do you feel the course could be improved?

5.) Finally Is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't covered?

Allow plenty of time to think and write about these questions. Good learning tends to involve reflection as well as taking in new knowledge and experience. Ideally allow time for participants to discuss what they have been writing, first in pairs or small groups and then bring it back to an open forum in the full group.

Dr James Hawkins, Good Medicine

Case studies

Case study 1: an unsuccessful intervention

The following case study has been anonymised with the intention that valuable lessons may be learnt.

An evidence informed mindfulness based intervention (MBI) was designed to promote self-awareness for employees in a public sector organisation, with the intent to help them find purpose, direction and meaning, offer new ways to improve work and life effectiveness, and identify and pursue valued goals and actions.

The MBI was based on techniques which have been shown to help people in all kinds of situations, gain perspective on the results they are achieving, reflect on the workability of their current strategies and assist them in widening their behavioural repertoire by helping them persist in adopting a more flexible approach to pursuing common goals in the face of obstacles.

The trainer (who had been well trained in the approach) had delivered the MBI on numerous occasions to a variety of public sector groups, with consistently good feedback that it was both relevant and useful.

The first session, which covered causes and responses to stress, was attended by 22 staff, mandated to attend, many of whom voiced reluctance at attending. Of those that did actively participate, the main cause of stress was attributed to 'management' i.e. an external source that they saw themselves as separate from. Some openly questioned their need to attend, which prompted an interesting comment from a colleague "you may not think you need to be here, but I may think you do!". The theme of team members not supporting each other ran through all three sessions, as did the dwindling attendance numbers (10 for session two and just 4 for the final one) but also in the reluctance generally to participate in exercises.

The difficulties continued in the second session, with all participants present unable to give concrete examples of how they were applying their learning to their lives. None had attempted to access the learning materials website (the link to which had been circulated after the first session). Some staff members repeated under their breath complaints of 'nepotism' at the start of the session but were unwilling to expand on this when invited.

At this point the rumour mill was in full flow, with some staff fearing that the trainer was a "spy", working on behalf of the Team Manager and Assistant Director, which was not the case. In reality, the intervention had been offered due a high level of complaints being received by the service and associated staff sickness and turnover.

The final session was cancelled by the trainer due to low attendance and the strong suspicion that many were "reluctantly compliant" and were keen to have it noted that they 'just' turned up and had therefore 'completed' the course. Sadly, it later emerged that a couple of employees had rearranged leave to attend the final session.

A number of valuable lessons can be gained from this case study:

1. Staff were mandated to attend which is rarely a good idea;
2. The intervention was badly timed. At that time, staff members were under immense pressure, with a major public scandal and media pressure. They were suffering from criticism from the public and felt at odds with the management team;
3. Staff were not consulted, nor given the opportunity to decide what type of intervention they would most welcome. There was little indication the staff wanted to participate in the MBI;
4. The reasons why the MBI was being offered were not clearly communicated to staff;
5. Insufficient support and commitment was given by management and stakeholders.

Case study 2: Capitol One

Capitol One staff's main reason for sickness absence was mental health related. Their staff surveys indicated that staff felt that workloads were high and they were struggling to prioritise. The HR team looked for some ways to support this. As a forward thinking company, they had heard about the many benefits of mindfulness and they wanted to encourage staff to become more mindful at work and in their home lives.

The HR team first heard about mindfulness via an Occupational Psychologist and mindfulness teacher (Roz Kings). Roz began to talk about and use mindfulness techniques as part of her one-on-one therapy sessions for staff experiencing mental health issues with great success. Building on the emotional well-being workshops they had offered staff for a number of years, in early 2013 Roz and a HR employee developed and piloted Introduction to Mindfulness 2 hour workshops. These are now run every few months. By 2014 over 230 of Capitol One's 1000 staff had attended. Sessions were advertised this via their intranet, team meetings and all-staff emails, but the majority of staff heard about the sessions through word of mouth.

Each workshop attendee receives "A Taste of Mindfulness" CD which has 6 guided meditation tracks. They also receive a detailed booklet, which includes everything they have learnt on the workshop plus extra techniques and tips. The HR team created a mindfulness page on their intranet, which details what mindfulness is, how to practice it, benefits, research and links to a variety of techniques. This page is also used to advertise workshops and other mindfulness initiatives. One of their senior leads and one of their advocates have written blogs about mindfulness posted on their intranet site, which has increased staff interest.

In January 2014 Capitol One opened their mindfulness room. This room was created following feedback from employees about wanting somewhere to sit quietly and practice mindfulness. The room was designed by a HR employee, Emma Wardropper, who has been championing mindfulness across the business. The room's design was based on feedback from a number of mindfulness specialists: it has a natural and calming design. The room design consists of wooden floors and natural furniture, neutral walls, rugs, bright and soft lighting, a floor lamp and fish tank. The room has upright wooden chairs which fold away when not needed to allow space for group practice, cushions and stools. There is also a resource area with a wide variety of mindfulness books, CDs and laminated internet and magazine articles. The room has some art work on one of its walls which depicts what mindfulness is – this was drawn by an employee who works in one of Capitol One's Operations departments who is also an artist. The room also has a notice board advertising upcoming events.

Capitol One hold a weekly lunch time drop in sessions for 30 mins. Two internal mindfulness advocates (who have attended MBSR training) alternate in leading guided mindfulness sessions. If the advocates are not available a guided CD can be played.

The HR team created a video which featured some of their mindfulness network (employees from across the business) filmed talking about their own experiences of mindfulness as a way to launch and advertise the opening of the room. They try and weave links to mindfulness wherever they can, for example through various HR initiatives such as a Men's Health event which featured a photo of one of the Operation Directors asking "Are you Mindful?" – this was eye catching and got people talking. They also held a mindful eating promotion as part of their healthy eating links with their staff restaurant.

In addition to the room Capitol One purchased 6 large acoustic booth style chairs (2 on each floor of our business). These have been labelled as "mindfulness chairs" and are all natural colours (greens and browns) to match the theme of the room. The chairs each have a folder with guided meditation techniques in that employees can use and the style of the chair give employees somewhere private to close their eyes and practice. They are currently researching suitable audio devices to allow employees to listen to guided meditation tracks on each chair (most likely iPad stands with headphones).

Roz Kings and her team (Mindfulness CIC) have worked closely with the HR team at Capitol One to create a bespoke version of MSBR for Capital One employees. In late 2014, 9 staff attended an 8 week mindfulness course. The course was offered in work time. Some staff funded themselves, with a small number funded by Capital One instead of providing them with individual therapy sessions with their Occupational Psychologist

and mindfulness teacher. The HR team have also offered 8 week mindfulness courses on a one to one basis - for example for a staff member with depression who had been away from work for a number of weeks.

The main challenge encountered was gaining senior backing for the cost of the workshops, chairs and room, and later an 8 week course. Staff feedback from the 2012 staff survey from the question "what would make Capital One an even greater place to work" (following winning top place in our first Best Places to work award) along with staff sickness absence data was used to help make the business case for the mindfulness room, chairs and workshops.

Later, it was necessary to demonstrate the return on investment (ROI) for an 8 week course. It was agreed that staff would be given time to attend in work hours but they would need to self fund (unless they were attending for therapy purposes). Data on outcomes is being used to make the business case for further courses.

Staff have reported how useful the mindfulness room and introductory sessions are. It is reported that the chairs positioned on each floor of the Capitol One building are used frequently. The numbers attending the weekly drop-in guided meditation sessions increase week on week as word spreads which is an indicator of their success.

Staff comments include:

- IT dept. employee - "I've used the room almost every day, really like having somewhere to go and practice in the office without feeling too conspicuous!"
- Fraud dept. employee - "would just like to mention that the Mindfulness area that has been created on the 1st floor is really helpful."
- Introduction to Mindfulness attendee: "Great use of two hours. Tried some of the techniques last night. Certainly need to get my Mindfulness fully functioning. Thanks for arranging this for the business."
- "The course was very good and I will be using the techniques that I learnt during the session, to help during times of anxiousness (presentations, interviews etc.)"
- "I thought the course was really interesting. Must admit I was a bit sceptical beforehand but really got a lot out of it, very insightful, and makes you step back, pause and look at reality. The comments about the past and the future, humans beings rather than 'human doings' also is very thought provoking."
- "Loved it – it should be made compulsory here "

Case study 3: Cambridge and Peterborough Foundation Trust

In early 2011 the Care Quality Commission told Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT) that if it did not take immediate steps to improve standards of its mental health services, enforcement action might follow. CPFT was failing to meet five essential standards covering care and welfare, staffing, safeguarding people, assessing and monitoring service provision and safety and suitability of premises. In addition, the foundation trust regulator Monitor had put CPFT in serious breach of its authorisation.

Over a two-year period under the leadership of Dr Attila Vegh (who joined CPFT in October 2011), the Trust undertook a major turnaround programme. The turnaround programme saw substantial changes to ward environments, care planning and patient care. In early 2013 CPFT was given a clean bill of health by the CQC and came out of breach with Monitor. CPFT, like most NHS Trusts, has been subject to extensive cost cutting initiatives.

In February 2012 a representative from CPFT attended the Mindfulness at Work conference. This led to a meeting between Juliet Adams, A Head for Work, and CPFT's Senior Chaplin; who was keen to promote well-being within the Trust. As a result of the meeting, CPFT arranged a one-day conference on 'Brain science, wellbeing and mindfulness', which Juliet helped arrange and chair. Following on from a successful one-day conference on in October 2012, a large percentage of participants indicated that they would like the opportunity to learn mindfulness. A letter was written to the Chief Executive, which led to a meeting with the CEO and Director of People and Business Development to discuss how mindfulness could be piloted in the Trust.

Juliet worked closely with the Workforce Development Manager to develop a flyer and web content to publicise the development opportunity. The development opportunity was offered to staff as 'personal development' rather than therapy. Exclusion criteria for the course included screening for depression, anxiety and stress. This was because the courses on offer were unsuitable for staff with very high levels of depression, anxiety and stress.

It was agreed that the desired outcomes of the course would include helping staff to become more resilient to work pressures, and helping staff to learn to manage their mind better. As the outcomes desired were wider than 'stress relief', a teaching syllabus based on Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) was chosen. Mark Williams MBCT based book 'Mindfulness a guide to finding peace in a frantic world' was provided to participants to reinforce learning.

Around 75 applications were received for the 34 places available. The pilot included two taught groups and one group learning online. Juliet worked with CPFT to select staff for the pilot. Consideration was given to group dynamics, ensuring that line managers were not attending with direct reports and vice versa. Attempts were also made to ensure a good mix of departments and job roles. Participants were asked to confirm that they could attend each of the 8 weekly sessions of the training. Applications were not accepted without the relevant Line Manager's signature to confirm that they could be released to attend all the sessions.

The eight-week taught programme consisted of 8 x 2 hour training sessions. Adult learning theories were incorporated into the course materials and overall course design. The approach adopted was more didactic than the traditional mindfulness teaching methods, and more in line with western expectations of a business training course. Training sessions consisted of 60% of the time focussed on experiential learning and reflection, 40% on the theory and practice that underpins each aspect of mindfulness and all practices. PowerPoint slides were used to illustrate key learning points, and use was made of discussion cards and flip charts. Participants were asked to practice a new mindfulness technique each week, and work on some aspects taught in the course such as habit releasers and appreciating the good. The online course was designed to be completed over a 4-6 week period, with CPFT staff taking between 7 and 12 weeks to complete the online course.

Key Outcomes:

- Between 93% and 100% of participants reported that mindfulness had in some way helped them to improve their performance at work, with between 45% and 59% reporting a great or significant increase in performance:
 - 100% agreed that mindfulness training had helped them function better when under pressure
 - 100% agreed it helped them improve the way they manage strong emotions and difficulties
 - 93% agreed it helped them improve relationships with colleagues
 - 93% agreed it helped them focus on their work better
- An increase in positivity when answering staff survey questions.
- A decrease in depression, anxiety and stress, with some participants decreasing their levels of depression, anxiety and stress from severe to normal.
- An increase in self-compassion from moderate to high, and a slight increase in compassion for others.
- 83% of participants completed their courses with an average attendance rate on the training days of 84%. The online course had the lowest completion rate at 60%.
- 93% of participants plan to continue practicing mindfulness, with 93% agreeing it was a good use of their time.
- The average time participants spent practicing mindfulness each day was 15 minutes
- Data suggests that those people who attended only 4 or 5 of the 8 sessions still gained from the course, but their general results are less positive than the average for the group. Those who found least time (5 minutes a day) reported less of a positive impact on their work, and less of an increase in positivity about staff survey metrics than the group average.

Comments from participants

- “This has impacted on my whole life - helping me to become more present and in control of my responses to situations and thoughts.”
- “I have fewer migraines experienced over the 8 weeks, better working relationships, calmer at home/work. Feel like a different person!”
- “This course has helped me gain confidence in myself again. It helped me recognise why I doing and feeling what I was, within certain circumstances and as a daily habit, so given the time to Practise and Focus on ME gave me a greater ability to be more productive with a clearer and more positive mind. I feel that everyone, in some way or another could benefit from this course for the better. I have nothing negative to say about it. If this was implemented throughout a workforce it would be turn to a workforce in a million, pleasant, positive, understanding, co-operative, and productive. Marvellous.”

CPFT are in the process of looking for ways to roll out more mindfulness courses for staff. This will include training three staff as mindfulness champions / co-trainers.

Case study 4: CVS Vets

Suicides in veterinary surgeons are around four times the national average and double that of doctors and dentists. An internal Health and Safety audit across all staff within CVS identified risks that needed to be managed.

Interest in mindfulness was first promoted within CVS by a senior veterinary surgeon who had found it helpful to deal with his personal experience at a challenging time in his working career. Following this, the CVS National Health and Safety Manager, the Human Resources Director and the senior vet concerned attended three all-day meetings with Mark Leonard and Marina Grazier at the Oxford Mindfulness Centre to explore how mindfulness training could help, positioning of mindfulness training in the organisation, a practical (course design and training style) and effective (reduced dose) format and logistical challenges to delivering training courses in the organisations with potentially sceptical staff scattered in practices over wide areas.

Positioning was a key issue due to general attitudes to stress in the profession. Mindfulness was initially positioned for its potential to improve performance in the context of the impairment of performance caused by common exposure to stress in veterinary work. Over time there has been greater willingness to discuss stress and the suicide risk. This may be due to changes in the perceived benefits of mindfulness training across the organisation.

Following these meetings, a presentation was delivered with a follow up experiential session at the CVS conference in 2011 to promote the idea of mindfulness in the organisation. Following positive reception at the conference, a small pilot was then delivered in the South West, which evaluated with qualitative feedback. This proved that it was logistically possible to run a programme (six weeks of one hour) and that it was enthusiastically received by participants. A further two programmes were then provided (by The Mindfulness Exchange (TME) in the North East and were subject to a study conducted by a Masters Student from Birkbeck College.

Budget for further courses was then secured on the basis of further evidence of the impact of the training gathered and enthusiastic and committed support from the Health and Safety Manager and the HR Director to run programmes in the South East, East Anglia, the North and the Midlands (provided by TME). Before and after studies consistently show significant or near significant reductions in stress and improvements in mindfulness.

Participants are generally well motivated however the tendency for the courses to be perceived as an intervention for stress may be becoming a limiting factor in the selection process. Despite good levels of motivation it is evident that participants are often doing little practice at home during the week. Continuing practice, once having completed the course is also recognised as something that may need to be taken into consideration.

All participants were volunteers. Some participants come with little knowledge of mindfulness and some may come with high expectations. Some staff are identified as having specific stress related problems are encouraged to attend programmes. Staff from all roles are represented in the participant groups.

It is still relatively early days in creating a culture that incorporates mindfulness into working life in CVS but significant steps have taken place to date. About 7% of the staff across the organisation have participated in mindfulness training to date.

Providing further mindfulness programmes are being discussed. TME is also mentoring the national Health and Safety Manager to deliver the TME training internally within CVS vets across the country.

TME were also invited to present their work in a series of workshops and presentations at the VPMA/SPVS Congress in Jan 2014, which provided the opportunity for sharing the experience of mindfulness training in CVS vets across the profession. There are positive indications that profession wide adoption of mindfulness training may take place.

Case study 5: NIKE working with the Potential Project

Being the world's most popular sports brand, delivering the highest quality on the market for 5 decades requires extraordinary people. Nike headquarters in Europe uses CBMT to maintain sustainable high performance and well-being amongst their top performing staff.

In collaboration with The Potential Project, Nike designed a 4-module program (6 hours spread over 4 weeks). The program contains key elements of the Corporate-Based Mindfulness Training program and specifically targets sustainable high performance in a busy Nike work life. Nike monitors the training and reported the following results:

- 100% reported IMPROVED FOCUS
- 90% reported IMPROVED AWARENESS
- 82% RECOMMEND THE TRAINING
- 80% reported IMPROVED EFFECTIVENESS
- 80% reported STRESS REDUCTION
- 63% reported IMPROVED WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Nike participant's feedback included:

- "A constant busyness requires a strong focus. The training has increased my ability to stay focused and thereby effective in my work."
- "In Nike we are always connected and there is always a task at hand. The training helps me to be more effective and less stressed. I enjoy the here and now more."
- "In a busy organization I need to drop the chaos in my head to be effective and not stressed. The training has given me more inner calm and a better balance between work and the rest of my life."
- "The training program has helped us to a more smooth collaboration culture with less conflicts and more."

Case study 6: Dow Chemicals: a web based intervention

In this randomised control study, 89 Participants recruited from The Dow Chemical Company who wished to participate in mindfulness training. 44 were randomly assigned to an on-line mindfulness intervention, whilst the remaining 45 were assigned to a wait-list control.

Before, immediately after and 6 months later, all 89 staff members completed:

- The Perceived Stress Scale
- The Five Facets of Mindfulness Questionnaire
- The Connor-Davidson Resiliency Scale, and the Shirom Vigor Scale

The program studied was a mindfulness intervention, which was modified in length, content, and messaging to fit workplace needs and delivered through an on-line platform that included personal coaching. A standard MBSR programme involves around 29 hours of classroom based teaching over an 8 -10 week duration (including a retreat at the end) + 42-48 hours of practice at home. The Dow programme involved 7 hours of online teaching time + 11 hours of home practice time.

The results indicated that those who had attended mindfulness training online had significant decreases in perceived stress, as well as increased mindfulness, resiliency, and vigour. The on-line mindfulness intervention seemed to be both practical and effective in decreasing employee stress, while improving resiliency and work engagement, thereby enhancing overall employee well-being.

Overall, the results of this mindfulness intervention were in the moderate to large range and were either maintained, or further improved, over time. This indicates that a shortened, web-based mindfulness program can replicate the results of traditionally delivered MBSR. In addition, program compliance was significant, suggesting that a workplace specific mindfulness intervention is practical within an employer setting. The results suggest that mindfulness training is more than just an effective stress management solution but an efficacious intervention for the development of positive organisational behaviour, which can be used throughout the employee base. Although ROI is difficult to measure because of the many ways mindfulness can impact the organization, widespread application has the potential to result in significant employer competitive advantage through a combination of improved employee well-being, enhanced human performance, and decreased health care costs.

In 2012 (just as the programme was starting) Dow announced one of the largest layoffs in the company's history at the location of the mindfulness pilot. The first layoffs were announced in early April 2012, approximately 2 weeks before the baseline assessment scales were administered. A subsequent, more substantial, announcement occurred in late October 2012, which included the closing of a local plant. This second announcement coincided closely with the administration of follow-up outcome measures. Researcher's follow-up analysis showed only a very slight, non-significant increase in perceived stress. The follow-up analysis showed continued improvements in mindfulness, resiliency, and vigour. These results, which occurred despite widespread layoffs, may indicate that this intervention can have significant protective effects on employees, regardless of difficult corporate economic circumstances.

Another interesting element to this study is reflected in a cost-benefit analysis based on the program's survey question regarding self-reported burnout. This analysis showed a significant decline in self-reported burnout in both the intervention and wait-list groups, which decreased by one full day per week at post intervention. This decrease in self-reported burnout represents a significant (20%) potential increase in worker productivity. The current average yearly wage for Dow reported in December 2012 was \$112,900, a 20% increase in worker productivity could represent an employer savings of up to \$22,580 per employee year, if the improvements in burnout are sustained over time. This savings is due to potential declines in absenteeism and presenteeism, perhaps associated with a decreased employee burnout rate.

Abridged from 'Mindfulness Goes to Work. Impact of an On-Line Workplace Intervention' Aikens et al 2014

Case study 7: Mindfulness for staff at the University of Leeds

The University of Leeds is a large higher education organisation with approximately 7500 employees. The Staff Counselling and Psychological Support Service is a small service that is part of the larger Wellbeing Safety and Health Service and linked with Occupational Health. It was established in 2010 to extend the existing staff counselling provision into a more proactive service. Mindfulness has become a key part of a range of provision to support positive psychological health and functioning.

Sally Rose, who leads the service, is a psychotherapist who had completed an 8-week course and started to use mindfulness with 1-1 clients. Sally saw that mindfulness training could offer staff an effective method of self-management and response to common psychological challenges and mental health problems. Introducing mindfulness within the workplace and through an established service normalized the challenges facing people and provided an opportunity to learn together without having to discuss the content of their lives or problems. The University supported Sally to train to teach MBSR at the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice at Bangor University. Initially, the course was offered as a pilot, in 2011, to 'friends and family', colleagues from human resources, health and safety, occupational health, training and development and psychologists, therapists and counsellors with a professional interest in mindfulness. The response was so positive that Sally had to run 2 courses for the pilot. Pilot participants were asked to feedback on their own experience and whether they thought the intervention should be offered more widely to staff. 27 out of the 29 colleagues who completed the course, and all thought that that the course was useful and relevant to them and thought that it should be offered to all staff.

Since then Sally has ran 16 courses with a total of 220 people from across the organisation.

Sally has adapted the 8-week MBSR course to include her own model of stress and emotional balance called 'Workable Ranges'. This model is presented visually as a diagram. It is used to help people learn about emotional regulation and stress physiology and how they affect well-being and functioning day by day. This is then linked with the self-awareness that develops with the experiential learning via meditation practices and the group discussions of them. Sally is now undertaking doctoral study about the use of the model with mindfulness to regulate stress and emotions.

After the course, graduates are able to attend monthly follow up sessions called Maintaining Mindfulness. The sessions are two hours long and comprise guided practice and reflection around a particular theme such as acceptance, compassion or silent practice. A handout on the theme is sent to everyone who has completed the course. Sally regularly gets emails thanking her for these little reminders and prompts to maintain mindfulness.

Mindfulness is also offered within the 1-1 counselling and coaching service, in taster sessions in healthy week or bespoke for teams, in a two hour workshop within the Personal Resilience Suite, This enables staff to move onto mindfulness training after 1-1- work or to access 1-1 support and coaching by Sally or her colleague who has done the course. This enables staff to draw on and develop their mindfulness in particular circumstances.

Evaluation

Evaluation has been important from the beginning. Feedback was sought as about how useful the course was and what people felt they benefited from doing it.

Some of the things people from one of the early courses said about how they would describe what they learned or how they benefited from by doing this course

- "I'd say it is life changing – it has made a big difference to me".
- "The course has had a huge impact on my life, in and out of work, it is what I needed".
- "This course made clearer to me how much I need to use my mind differently and more constructively".
- "I learned not to judge and what being in the moment feels like. I can identify what my distracted mind feels like and can choose to tune out of this and "re-set" mentally".

- “I can achieve and sometimes maintain a calmer mind. I am learning to be more accepting of “what is”, and not look back as much; not worry as much about the future”.
- “This has been a very valuable experience for me, personally and at work. My life overall is taking a more coherence – in small ways, but growing.”
- “I will definitely attend follow up sessions and I’m grateful that I’ve been able to do this course through the university”.

Research – contributing to the evidence that mindfulness works at work

Working within higher education the service had the opportunity to develop a collaborative relationship with the School of Psychology who conducted a research project to evaluate of the effects on and experiences of staff that completed the course. This grew in particular from the co-incidence of personal and professional interest in mindfulness. The results of this mixed-methods study are currently being prepared for publication.

Tips regarding offering mindfulness training and courses within an organisation

- Safety – make sure you have professional back up for people who may find meditation or increased body-awareness destabilizing.
- Offer mindfulness training alongside and in relation to other individual and organizational strategies
- Work closely with Human Resource, Occupational Health, Health & Safety and Staff Development colleagues.
- Encourage the growth of networks and activities to support the maintenance and application of mindfulness at work

Case study written by Dr Zografo (Gina) Koutsopoulou, Lecturer and Researcher in Occupational Psychology and Occupational Health Psychology at the University of Leeds, Sally Rose (Manager, Staff Counselling and Psychological Support Service, University of Leeds) and Dr Siobhan Hugh-Jones (Senior Lecturer in Health Psychology, School of Psychology). August 2015

Case study 8: Breathworks Work Preparedness Programme

Breathworks, in collaboration with the Department of Health North West and the North West NHS delivered an innovative public health pilot using mindfulness approaches to help people in recovery from addiction to return to well-being and community involvement. The programme was designed to provide bespoke mindfulness training for individuals otherwise unlikely to access these resources, support the health and well-being of individuals currently outside the labour market, and to assist a sustainable and appropriate move towards volunteering, training or employment, with all the social and mental health benefits this has been shown to provide. The programme also supported public health policy of supporting people to live a drug free life in which the priority is to move from treatment to supporting full recovery.

The programme was developed in relation to the principles of Empowerment, Dignity and Respect, “No decision about me without me” and the recovery champion principle that ‘Transformed People can help Transform People’. Hence, a strong emphasis was placed upon pre-established trust relationships in the third or public sector and nurturing community support networks. Key community workers themselves participated fully in the programme alongside participants, and provided support groups between sessions.

The course content was based on the Breathworks Mindfulness for Stress Programme, a development of MBSR, ACT and mindful compassion, and practices included mindfulness of everyday life, 3 minute breathing space, 20 and 40 minute practices; the course ran over 4 fortnightly day-long sessions, with local community support groups in between to keep momentum going, support home practice, address challenges and gather development suggestions.

It was then followed by a “Next Steps to Employment” session with supported employment and benefit experts helping inform and guide a focus on effective personal action planning. Following the course, there was a Celebration Day sharing initial outcomes, with participants’ stories and certificates presented by the Regional Director of Public Health.

A mixed group of 30 Participants were drawn mainly from the Recovery community (former drug and alcohol users) as well as from the black and minority ethnic, asylum seeker and carer communities. The pilot programme was delivered by Breathworks C.I.C. in Manchester UK, in partnership with support workers, with the goal of helping participants to become work-prepared. Community support workers selected applicants as ready and able to engage with and benefit from the project.

Programme delivery was supported by distinct Steering and Advisory groups, which included NHS, third sector and academic expertise as well as “experts by experience” from the recovery community. Clinical and risk governance protocol was developed with the regional psychological governance NHS lead. The primary evaluative tools used before and after programme were the Recovery Star and the 5 facets of mindfulness questionnaire and initial results suggest that the project has been extremely successful. Community members were also trained to conduct interviews with participants in tune with the empowerment approach of the project.

A community-led Mindfulness blog has been popular on a recovery web forum, encouraging debate, ownership, and promotion. Real time feedback has supported on-going adjustment and improvement of provision. Participants are being linked up with 1-2-1 public sector “Mindful Buddies” within NHS NW to support practice and offer further career support and linkage with “the world of employment”. Local Support groups are continuing to be fostered, aided by a planned follow-on event.

Some participants went on to mindfulness teacher training, initially to assist and support local community Mindfulness programmes, with a view to some going on to become full mindfulness trainers. Participants have gone on to work in several community projects and research pilots, including suicide prevention in prisons.

Comments from participants:

- It's helping me slow down my thinking and grounding me. It's enhanced my recovery by taking away a lot of anxieties; with breathing spaces I can bring myself back into the moment, really helping with the "racing head".
- I notice a lot more things, mindfully walking through Manchester. I'm a lot calmer and can deal with things a lot better, accepting and releasing, I'm sleeping a lot better, and I definitely think it helps with my continued recovery.
- I've been paying a lot more attention to my surroundings. Taking time out and relaxing is going to benefit you.
- It's made me appreciate all the things around me, you do run on autopilot. I feel a lot calmer and feelings in my body that I've never felt. I heard the rain bouncing off things, the magpies, the kids, it was really nice. I'm someone that takes on lots of things then starts thinking "you can't do all this", rushing around trying to make everyone else happy. It's enabling me to appreciate actual surroundings and myself. It's like a new door opening; it makes me feel dead at ease. Walking down the street I'm not rushing.
- I think it's absolutely wonderful, superb, I do it every day, it makes you feel so good, fresh and alert. It takes a lot of aggression out of me and calms me very much. It's so simple, but if you don't know it, it's a million miles away. You can go to pain and make it feel totally different from what it did before the body scan. It is a different part of recovery, something you control in yourself, I think I'll be doing this for the rest of my life It makes you feel so good, and it's not hard to get to grips with it. The exercise takes some of the anxiety away from me. Looking at things and doing something about them rather than getting rid of them.

Case Study 9: Taking mindfulness to hospital frontline workers

With hospitals providing a 24 hour service, and the high work demands involved in providing good quality patient care, frontline hospital staff are amongst the most difficult to reach. Backfilling posts to release staff to attend training courses is not only expensive but even if funding is available, the time and opportunity to attend a mindfulness training course may never actually materialise for some, because of non-stop challenges including clinical emergencies, sickness absence, winter pressures, organisational change, skills shortages, and so on. At the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham UK, the hospital's multi-faith chaplaincy team already provided weekly lunchtime mindfulness sessions on Mondays, and the hospital's intranet site hosted some short mindfulness practices and tips, and although this was a welcome start, there was an aspiration to offer access to a wider range of staff.

So in 2013, Antony Cobley, Senior HR Manager, decided to investigate flexible ways of offering staff the opportunity to try out mindfulness, and he discussed the idea with Margo Campbell, the hospital's Health & Safety Manager. At that point, Margo had worked in her spare time as a volunteer support worker on Breathworks mindfulness courses for a few years, and had introduced Antony to Richard Hawkins, an experienced and well-qualified mindfulness trainer. Antony identified a possible pilot ward with a supportive ward manager in order to champion a new approach, and organised initial discussions with Margo, Richard, the ward manager and a staff representative.

The group discussed different potential course timetables, and it quickly became apparent that releasing staff for 2 hours a week was simply not practical; the possibility of offering one hour training per week was also discussed and this would only have been possible if ward staff came to work half an hour early or left half an hour after the end of their shift, and there were too many practical obstacles to this plan - in any case the group were committed to offering training within working hours. It took a couple of meetings (with discussions with ward staff in between) to establish that the best time would be half an hour at the beginning of shift with some ward staff kindly agreeing to cover their colleagues' duties.

Richard and Margo agreed to provide the training - with some trepidation - because they were familiar with 8-week courses of a more leisurely 2-3 hours per week! They felt it was important to offer staff something, even if it only turned out to amount to an extended 'taster course'. So they decided to have a go and take an experimental approach, letting participants know that they were trying something new and the ward staff were very willing and interested to go ahead on this basis.

The next step was for Richard and Margo to do some careful planning and course design, for example because it was a novel intervention as far as they knew, it was very important to collect pre and post course evidence of any changes. The course itself was based on MBCT with "Peace in a Frantic World" (Williams and Penman) as the course handbook, and this helped to minimise administration time and costs of producing an in house course manual. Additional content was geared to the needs of healthcare staff, for example the cultivation of self-compassion to support ward staff in their commitment to delivering compassionate patient care. An important priority was to hold an uninterrupted space for staff where experiential learning could be maximised, and the sessions were run within the hospital ward, in a quiet seminar room. However this took some commitment on the part of other hospital staff: for instance the mindfulness session took place between 8.30 and 9 am and when the seminar room was booked for clinical education to start at 9 am, the clinical educator offered to 'guard the door' to prevent her delegates from 'barging in'! This gave Richard, Margo and course participants considerable reassurance that they had space and time for themselves, at the same time managing to finish exactly on time so that clinical work was not affected.

After a couple of weeks, all felt that the course was going well: the materials had been delivered as planned, with time for mindfulness practice and reflection in-session, and without feeling "rushed" or pressurised which might have undermined the programme; participants reported that they were appreciating the space, and learning new things. So at this point Richard and Margo decided to introduce a very short didactic slot of 1-5 minutes maximum, presenting key mindfulness concepts in order to support the experiential learning. Some standard ACT metaphors were included and proved to be a natural match for the MBCT syllabus; the trainers

introduced the versatile ACT metaphor “passengers on the bus” during week 4, and later in week 6 the same metaphor was reintroduced in an adapted format as a vehicle for a self-compassion exercise originally designed by Choden and Professor Paul Gilbert. Participants later reported that they had found this exercise especially helpful as they spontaneously found themselves experiencing new self-compassionate insights to difficult situations in relation to their work and home life.

Participant feedback included:

The best thing about the course has been:

- Having some defined “me” time each week;
- Meeting as a group;
- The course has helped me calm myself;
- Focussing on one thing, e.g. breathing, allows you to slow down and “take stock” of things;
- Meeting the co-ordinators informally before meetings to chat about me (since I started my job a few months ago, this was the first time I felt anyone had time for me)
- Better appreciation for nature and improved communication – I’m not shouting any more.

Insights and new ways of seeing things that feel valuable:

- The concept of “being” rather than “doing” all the time;
- Made me look at myself;
- Learning to love myself;
- When I’m low, I focus on breathing and this helps;
- Look after myself so I can help others;
- With the help of this course I learnt to overcome my depression and anger;
- Exploring difficulty is hard. I need to work on this more;
- Introspection – in order to be “available” to others, I have to look after myself first.

My life has improved because:

- I feel I have a better understanding of what mindfulness is all about and that I can now use my new skills when dealing with difficult situations; My self-esteem has improved; I’m not as depressed now as when I started a few weeks ago; I take time to think about what I am doing next, not rushing around; I’m not so forgetful; I’ve developed concentration skills; Focusing on problems better/prioritising better.
- Appreciating time and being able to accomplish more in less time; I’ve actually learned to be kind to myself, which is a new experience: recently something really got to me, most patients and relatives (99 out of 100) I have no problem with, but on this occasion I had the “relative from hell”, who was criticising me about the patient’s treatment. Normally I’m quite self-critical as well which makes things worse - I haven’t got an inner critic, I’ve got a whole load of critical voices inside me! This time, I managed to listen to one of my quieter kinder voices and it really helped me, and because I’m learning to look after myself better, I feel that I have more to give to others like patients and my family;
- I’ve recently taken on more responsibility and I don’t think I would have coped had I not attended the mindfulness sessions. As a senior member of staff it’s helped me to cope far better with the stress and demands and focus on my priorities; The last 2 months have been the most difficult and busy of my working life, but somehow I’ve managed OK – I believe that the course is what’s helped me to get through

An overview of the programme is contained in an infographic below. Training materials are freely available on the ACBS website (see Appendix “Websites”) to members (listed on the website as “Worksite stress interventions II”); ACBS offer protocols as resources to the world ACT community so that development of effective approaches can be accelerated.

Developing Psychologically Flexible Employees: Description of a Brief MBI that combines MBCT, Compassionate Mind and ACT

Margo Campbell, Senior Health & Safety Adviser; Richard Hawkins, Psychology Research Fellow; Antony Cobley, Senior HR Manager.
Affiliation: University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust

Introduction

Mindfulness is a 3rd generation cognitive behavioural therapy and perhaps the biggest barrier to offering MBIs (Mindfulness-Based Interventions) is that they are time consuming: 2-3 hours for 8 weeks plus home practice for NICE-recommended MBCT (Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy). In an occupational setting, in order to enable staff to attend within working hours, the obvious thing to do is see if we can streamline MBIs to deliver the "active ingredients" in less time, as releasing staff is a key consideration.

Description

We offered an 8-week brief MBCT course using "Peace in a Frantic World" as the course handbook to 11 staff on a hospital ward; this included nurses from auxiliary grade to ward manager and 3 pharmacists.

We had just 30 minutes per week to deliver the course and our aim was to adapt the format without losing the integrity of the work, and we hoped that ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy) could add power to our approach because of the evidence that it enhances psychological flexibility and resilience. Hence we anticipated that a Compassionate Mind approach could benefit both staff and patients.

In order to prioritise experiential learning (mindfulness practice and inquiry) within the taught sessions, we modified standard teaching methods. In order to deliver didactic content as efficiently as possible by incorporating "1-minute concepts" (in reality these brief methods took between 1-10 minutes). Examples are shown on the right.

Home practice for busy lives: handouts, written in Plain English, were designed to support participants in making effective choices about home practice for example by "greying out" discretionary elements, and visually prioritising mindfulness practice.

Kindness was embedded within the very structure of the course in many ways – as well as trainer stories and course content, we took great care in presentation, for example gift-wrapping the introductory "taster pack" containing chocolate, raisins and audio CD.

Programme

Week 0
Taster Session: Gift packs and baseline questionnaires

Week 1
Waking up to the autopilot
(CD track 1: mindfulness of body and breath)

Week 2
Keeping the Body in mind
(CD track 2: Body Scan)

Week 3
The mouse in the maze
(CD track 3, 4, 5: Mindful Movement, Breath and Body, 3 min Breathing Space)

Week 4
Moving beyond the Rumour Mill
(CD track 4, 5, 6: breath and body, sounds and thoughts)

Week 5
Turning towards difficulties
(CD track 4, 5, 6: Breath & body, sounds & thoughts, exploring difficulty, 3 min Breathing Space)

Week 6
Trapped in the past or living in the present?
(CD track 7: Befriending meditation)

Week 7
When did you stop dancing
(self-reflection funnel)

Week 8
Your wild and precious life:
post-course questionnaire

Week 9
6 months Post-Course follow-up



Adaptations

Week 0 Taster Pack



Week 3 One minute concept getting distracted, coming back



Week 5 The pull of avoidance

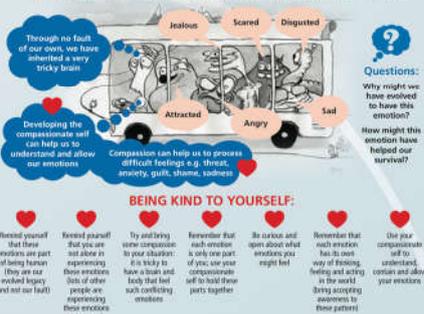


The heartwarming sight of a Chinese Finger Trap in a nurse's top pocket

Week 4 Thoughts are just thoughts



Week 6 The Evolved Brain and how Compassion can help



Participant feedback

The best thing about the course has been:

- Having some defined "time" for each week.
- Meeting as a group.
- The course has helped me calm myself.
- Focusing on one thing, e.g. breathing, allows you to slow down and "take stock" of things.
- Meeting the co-ordinators informally before meetings to chat about the course (since I started my job a few months ago, this was the first time I'd anyone had time for me).
- Better appreciation for nature and improved communication - I'm not shouting any more.

Insights and new ways of seeing things that feel valuable:

- The concept of "being" rather than "having" all the time.
- Made me look at myself.
- Learning to love myself.
- When the law, I focus on breathing and this helps.
- Look after myself so I can help others.
- With the help of the course I learned to overcome my depression and anger.
- Exploring difficulty is hard, I need to work on this more.
- Introspection - in order to be "available" to others, I have to look after myself first.

My life has improved because:

- I feel I have a better understanding of what mindfulness is all about and that I can use my new skills when dealing with difficult situations.
- My self esteem has improved.
- I'm not as depressed now as when I started a few weeks ago.
- I take time to think about what I am doing next, not rushing around.
- I'm not so forgetful.
- I've developed concentration skills.
- Focusing on problems seems/feels better. Appreciating time and being able to accept things in less time.
- I've actually learned to be kind to myself, which is a new experience, recently someone really got to me, most patients and relatives (99 out of 100) have no problem with, but on the occasion I had the "relative from hell" who was criticizing me about the patient's treatment. Normally I'm quite self-critical as well which makes things worse. I haven't got an inner critic, I've got a whole host of critical voices inside me! This time, I managed to listen to one of my guided audio voices and it really helped me, and because I'm learning to talk after myself better. I feel that I have more to give to others like patients and my family.
- I've recently taken on more responsibility and I don't think I would have coped had I not attended the mindfulness sessions. As a senior member of staff it's helped me to cope far better with the stress and demands and focus on my priorities.
- The last 2 months have been the most difficult and busy of my working life, but somehow I've managed OK - I believe that the course is what's helped me to get through.

Results

Our sense was that we were seeing exactly the same type of experiences and shifts in participants as we'd observed during more classic 8-week formats, and the feedback from participants supported this.

One participant, a middle-aged healthcare worker, showed improvements on baseline measures of depression and anxiety: PHQ9 reduced from 13 to 2 and GAD7 from 18 to 6.

Conclusions

The current delivery format, although effective in terms of benefits reported by participants, is unlikely to be suitable for all staff especially those based in clinical areas, as they may struggle to attend all 8 sessions. (The successful 3 x 3 hour session format based on the work of Bond, Flaxman & Livheim, may also be a barrier to participation for some staff groups in some organisations).

Reminder

In the UK, as a complement or prerequisite to MBIs, employees should also be offered stress risk assessment (or its equivalent) in order to optimise work and human factors.

Next Steps

- Share course materials with interested parties.
- Refine the brief MBI further to make it available to those who find it difficult to attend an 8-week course, and develop different, shorter, mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) to better meet the needs of all staff.
- Continue to collect qualitative and quantitative data.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS TO:

- The participants of the course.
- Victoria Smith whose approach influenced ours - the use of ACT and "Mindfulness on the Bus" (adapted for health) course the compassionate based "Tricky Brain in a Frantic World".
- Clare and Paul Gilbert on whose work the adaptation of "Mindfulness on the Bus" was based.
- The ACT community.

Figure 3: UHB Summary and outcomes poster Credit: graphics@uhb.nhs.uk

Case Study 10: ACT for coaching

A solicitor in her mid-30s, Carla, was feeling stuck in her career. She was working exceptionally long hours, commuting long distances and unsurprisingly, was feeling drained by the experience.

Although she didn't hate her job exactly, she had a sense that somehow the choices she had made were not really hers. She had drifted into law almost by default. Whilst she was successful and was even enjoying some elements of the job, she was lacking a sense of meaning and felt that life was slipping away. At the same time, thoughts of changing her role or stepping off the treadmill terrified her:

"I felt as though I was living someone else's life, and yet at the same time that I owed it to those around me to keep going. I did not want to disappoint anyone and was worried about providing for my parents when they were elderly. I didn't want to let them down."

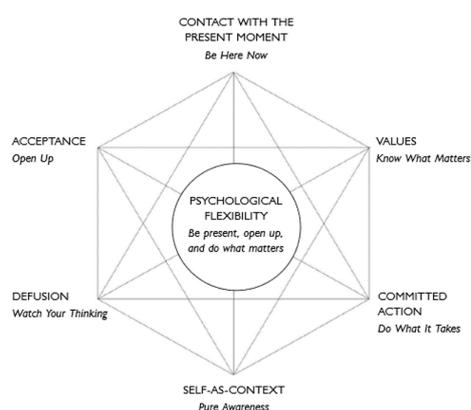
Carla felt stuck between these feelings of meaninglessness and frustration at her inability to change. Her situation was especially challenging because she lacked the time and energy to think and take stock. Plus she was wedded to law in many ways. She earned good money, which provided stability, and being a lawyer was an important part of her identity. She saw it as a respectable profession and her parents and family equally so.

At the beginning of coaching, Carla's health was poor, and she had recently had a dizzy spell in the office and subsequent time off. An in-house stress scale had her at severe risk of stress-related illness and lacking in engagement.

"I had no time for anything else or anyone else. I could only be in relationships with people who were on this treadmill too, for only they could understand and accept this lifestyle. But just like the lifestyle I felt these relationships were missing something."

After an initial assessment Carla attended a further four 90-minute coaching sessions over a period of around 6 months, as well as e-mail discussion, mindfulness home practice and assignments in between. Carla was a perfect candidate for ACT coaching because she had a sense that she had tried before to change but nothing had worked – something called 'creative hopelessness'.

ACT is a combination of **six continuous processes**, summarised in the **ACT Hexaflex** below:



- **Contact with the Present Moment:** by mindfully focusing on the present, both within and between sessions, Carla was able to contact her feelings of 'stuckness' and the accompanying thoughts of failure, plus the physiological sense of panic that she was experiencing. Working with an ACT coach, Carla could also trace how she would numb these feelings by staying busy (and occasionally, with wine). By mindfully exploring her feelings, she was able to deepen her understanding of herself and what was driving her behaviour:

Figure 4: ACT Hexaflex

"It's like driving up to a red traffic light. It's so easy to get frustrated – but actually the light is a signal for something. If you don't pay attention to the signal it could kill you. I was not listening to the signals in my life, and I was paying the price."

- **Defusion:** in ACT, 'fusion' is a term for when we become fused with, or stuck to, our thoughts. In a state of fusion, it can be hard to separate ourselves from our thoughts. Carla was particularly fused to thoughts about how hopeless it felt to think about alternative directions. When fused to the thought "this is

hopeless”, or even “I am hopeless” it would have been easy for Carla to *act* as if the thought was true. This is often when people drift away from coaching. However, ACT-mindfulness practices helped Carla to ‘defuse’ from the thoughts, enabling her to continue to act in valued directions.

From an ACT perspective, Carla was also fused with her identity as a lawyer and so could be hard on herself when she attempted to change this identity. Rather than trying to battle with or get rid of these thoughts, she cultivated a mindful approach of noticing the thoughts and being curious about them – ‘defusing’ from them so as to provide a little psychological breathing space between herself and her thoughts.

- **Self-as-context** can be thought of as developing a more flexible sense of self. In Carla’s case, she had quite a rigid identity. In ACT terms, she had lots of ‘I am’ stories, which helped her to make sense of the world, but which were not always helpful in terms of functioning effectively. This is something she worked on within coaching sessions by considering the many different ‘selves’ she had. There was her lawyer self, her artistic self, her kind self, her mean self. By seeing that she was actually the container for all of these ‘selves’, Carla found she was able to behave more flexibly.
- **Acceptance:** instead of trying to eliminate distressing thoughts or feelings, the focus is on altering the struggle itself: Carla singled out a particular ACT exercise (*Tug of War with the Anxiety Monster*) that had been especially helpful to her, enabling her to live with unhelpful thoughts and feelings, at the same time as conserving her time and energy for other things.
- **Values:** In ACT, values are seen as ongoing qualities of action. In other words, they describe *how* we want to behave rather than what we do. For Carla, a value that resonated with her deeply was about being kind to others. However, by seeing the value as an ongoing quality of action, it became less about a rigid goal – i.e. providing financially for others – and more about *how* she was behaving with other people, moment to moment.
- **Committed action:** the ACT model emphasises the importance of mindful action; of moving with one’s hands and feet in the direction of one’s values. In Carla’s case, a full career change was likely to take years, not months. However, a new direction was emerging – something about helping others, especially children; of learning more about psychology and having more time for cooking and being in nature. Carla worked with her coach to devise small life experiments, designed to broaden her horizons and contact the parts of her ‘self’ that felt meaningful. By taking small steps of committed action, a new Carla emerged.

Outcome

“Coaching forced me to create some more time for myself, and I learned to focus more on the things and people that feel meaningful and less on how scary change can be.”

Carla started to connect to things that brought her joy more often; children, cooking, handiwork. This had an energising effect, which brought positive outcomes in other areas of her life. She was able to negotiate a 4-day week and used this time to explore alternative careers. She became less fused with her identify as a lawyer and is now exploring opportunities to work with children, potentially as part of a portfolio career.

6 months after coaching her stress-risk scores had come down from severe to normal, and her engagement scores had climbed. Ironically, she reported feeling just as anxious as ever about exactly what the future held. However, this fits ACT theory – in that it is not aiming for symptom reduction but rather a different *relationship* with difficult thoughts and feelings in return for a richer, more vital, meaningful life.

The final word should be Carla’s: *“I know this will be a long road, but...it is the right one. I still struggle with some of my demons, but they have less power over me these days. I have more energy and enthusiasm for life now, and feel more in touch with myself. I finally feel I am creating the person I want to become.”*

Case study provided by: Rob Archer <http://www.thecareerpsychologist.com>

ACT coaching, both 1-2-1 and in group work, can support people with a range of concerns such as stress, burnout, confidence, career change, leadership, loss of vocation, public speaking and improved safety. Rob and other ACT trainers around the world teach ACT-based mindfulness to people from a diverse range of professions ranging from students to construction and factory workers, to professionals.

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