

Learning Inspirations

LEARNING LINK JAN-MAR 25

TITLE: **How Mindfulness Helps Busy Executives**

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the art of being present and living intentionally in the present moment. It guides your mind from the past and future to the here and now. Through mindfulness, we can ease the pain we feel from the past and reduce anxiety and worry about the future. In turn, you create a space in between where you can be fully present with what is. In this in-between space, you can notice the sounds, smells, sensations, and sights that are already there but usually go unnoticed because you're too distracted or not present.

Through mindfulness, we have an opportunity to feel calmer and more peaceful. And even if those moments are initially few and far between (*and doesn't last long*), knowing there's a place to go to feel OK can help fuel the rest of your day.

1. Improved Focus and Clarity

Regular mindfulness practice can bolster your attention span and enhance your ability to concentrate. By training the mind to focus on the present moment without distraction, mindfulness exercises help to cultivate mental clarity and cognitive resilience. Incorporating mindfulness into your daily routine can sharpen your mental focus and improve your overall productivity.

2. Reduced Stress and Anxiety

Certain kinds of mindful breathing can activate your parasympathetic nervous system which initiates the relaxation response, depresses heart rate, blood pressure and respiration, and allows your body to engage in reparative and restorative functions. While not everyone experiences relaxation right away, most report feeling a sense of calm and a reduction in the feeling of stress after this exercise.

3. Enhanced Emotional Intelligence

Mindfulness helps us become more attuned to our thoughts and feelings, increasing our self-awareness. By observing our emotions without judgment, we can better understand their origins and impacts and learn to respond to our emotions rather than react impulsively. This practice allows us to manage stress, reduce negative emotions, and maintain emotional balance, while fostering empathy by encouraging us to be present and attentive to others.

4. Better Decision-Making

Mindfulness teaches us to observe any thoughts and emotions surrounding a decision – the fear, the stubbornness, the ego – without getting entangled in them. It allows us to step back and see the bigger picture, to weigh my options not based on wishful thinking, but on the reality of the situation. Take a moment to breathe and center yourself, observing your thoughts and emotions without judgment, and then focusing on the present situation. This practice can provide clarity and calm, aiding in a more informed decision-making process.

5. Enhanced Creativity and Problem-Solving

By cultivating a calm and focused mind, you're better equipped to come up with novel solutions. Working memory is a key component of creativity, and mindfulness training can enhance it. Experienced meditators in particular are more verbally creative and better at solving problems. Studies have shown that even brief mindfulness breaks can enhance creativity.



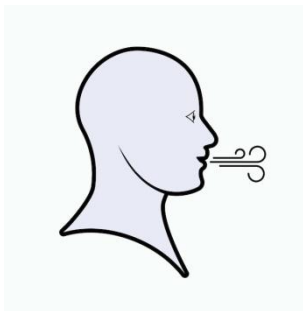
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6. Stronger Leadership

Continually engaging in self-reflection means mindful leaders are highly aware of their strengths, weaknesses, and biases. They understand how their actions and decisions impact others. This self-awareness prevents ego-driven decisions and helps maintain a balanced perspective.

Some Techniques for Practicing Mindfulness

We know the drill (and the battle cry!!) – *I just don't have the time*. So here's the thing about maintaining a good mental state... if you don't find the time on your own accord, *the time will find you instead*. Here's how you can practice mindfulness, even on your busiest days.

	<p>1. Use the moments in between.</p> <p>When you stop to notice them, it's surprising how much time there is in your day to take some mindful moments. For example while washing your hands, preparing food or even waiting in a queue.</p> <p>These in-between moments offer an excellent opportunity to practice mindfulness. When you're in one of these moments, begin to really notice where you are. Feel your feet on the ground. Notice how your body feels. Instead of being distracted, be present in the moment.</p>
	<p>2. Practice eating with gratitude</p> <p>At your evening meal, take a moment to be thankful that you have good nourishing food and give some thought to all the people needed to make it possible. This little moment of gratitude can shift your attitude to enjoying a little feast rather than just getting the meal over with.</p>
	<p>3. One minute of conscious breathing.</p> <p>Even a minute of conscious breathing can evoke calm and contentment by activating the parasympathetic nervous system (the part of us responsible for rest & digestion).</p> <p>Try this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Close your eyes.• Breathe in for a count of four.• Breathe out for a count of eight.• Repeat the cycle until a minute is up. <p>As you breathe out, it can be powerful to visualize releasing stress and tension from your body. You can do this practice anywhere.</p>

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