

Mindfulness Counteracts Workplace Stress

Stress in the Workplace

With today's business climate placing so much emphasis on meeting deadlines, increasing workloads, cutting costs, and maximizing profits, business leaders and employees are paying a heavy price. Such regular, sustained pressure gradually but surely overloads both the mind and the body. The result? Debilitating STRESS! Stress, once it attains unhealthy levels, not only degrades workplace performance but also imperils individual health—physically and psychologically.

The Costs of Stress to Businesses

- Inferior work performance
- Reduced productivity
- Reduced creativity,
- Inability to focus on job tasks and organizational goals
- Less cooperation and teamwork
- Higher absenteeism
- Higher turnover
- Rapid burnout

The Impact of Stress on Health

- According to the World Health Organization, stress is the number one health problem in the United States.
- The World Health Organization also reports that stress costs American businesses \$300 billion a year.
- The American Academy of Family Physicians report that two thirds of all doctors' visits are for stress-related conditions.
- As employees get sicker, company health care benefits & insurance costs rise.

According to the *iOpener Institute For People and Performance*, reducing stress in the workplace results in these improvements:

- 46% reduction in employee turnover costs
- 19% reduction in sick leave costs
- 12% increase in performance and productivity

The bottom line: Happier and healthier employees **cost less** and **produce more**.

Mindfulness Promotes Productivity, Health, and Job Satisfaction

Providing mindfulness training in the workplace is one of the best investments an organization can make.

To date, researchers have performed nearly 3000 studies on mindfulness practices to measure their effect on health, mood, and performance. The science is clear: mindfulness, an age-old meditative practice, is dramatically effective at improving overall health (as well as specific health conditions), promoting and sustaining positive moods, and strengthening mental clarity and focus.

By promoting mindfulness in the workplace, organizations can expect to see a positive impact on their bottom line. Participants of mindfulness meditation programs in their workplaces are experiencing and personally reporting:

- Fewer hospital and doctor visits
- Fewer sick days
- Lowered stress
- Reduced burnout and turnover
- Increased productivity
- Improved quality control
- Fewer workplace conflicts and improved cooperation among co-workers
- Sharper mental acuity
- Improved creativity and innovation
- Heightened job satisfaction
- Sustained positive attitudes

When organizations invest in the health and happiness of their workforce, they not only receive ample return on their investment, but they also communicate to their staff that they care about the staff's well-being.

Companies Implementing Mindfulness Programs

- Aetna
- General Mills
- Apple
- Google
- Twitter
- Proctor & Gamble
- McKinsey & Company
- Deutsche Bank
- Astra Zeneca
- Target
- Green Mountain Coffee Roasters

An article in the *Financial Times* promoted the value of mindfulness in the workplace by citing the example of General Mills. General Mills has made mindfulness practice an integral component of the company's culture. The article noted that the company had documented significant improvements from implementing mindfulness programs:

“The company has even begun research into its efficacy, and the early results are striking. After seven weeks, 83 percent of participants said they were “taking time each day to optimize my personal productivity” – up from 23 percent beforehand. Eighty-two percent said they now make time to eliminate tasks with limited productivity value – up from 32 percent before the course. And among senior executives who took the course, 80 percent reported a positive change in their ability to make better decisions, while 89 percent said they became better listeners.”

How Does Mindfulness Work?

When we feel stressed or overwhelmed, our mind activates the “under threat” network. When this network is active, we switch to “avoidance mode” – similar to the “fight or flight” response. So if you were being chased by a bear, your “under threat” network would light up. Then your body would begin pumping out stress hormones to prepare you either to flee or to protect yourself.

Avoidance mode may have been a highly adaptive trait in prehistoric days when we might regularly encounter great physical dangers. But in contemporary times, when we seldom find our lives in imminent danger, avoidance mode is usually overkill. Nonetheless, our bodies continue to react to perceived threats by kicking in to avoidance mode.

As an example, a “bear” in your workplace could be the overwhelming influx of emails in your inbox. Your brain might react to the influx by activating the “under threat” network. You would experience some form of aversion: anxiety, frustration, despair, etc. This in turn could lead to avoidant behavior, such as procrastinating your email processing.

Our brains also manifest an “approach mode.” In this mode, we are attracted to or comforted by something in our environment. Our brains pump out chemicals that give rise to feelings of well-being, satisfaction, or desire. A plate of your favorite food, for example, could elicit the “approach mode.” This mode, by its nature, reduces negative emotions and increases our resilience, creativity, and mental sharpness. In short, it counteracts the harmful effects of stress.

One of the powers of mindfulness practice is the ability it gives us to switch our minds into “approach mode.” With mindfulness, we learn how to treat perceived threats as neutral or even desirable. With practice, we can respond to previously stressful situations with deliberate composure rather than with reactive distress. This positive state improves our confidence, our ability to trust our own decisions, and increases our capacity to handle information “overload.” Hence, we approach, rather than avoid, our overflowing inboxes.



The Mindfulness Remedy

Mindfulness training can be the key to turning around a business's trajectory from downward to ascendant. Effective stress-reduction techniques pay for themselves many times over. Just ask General Mills, Apple, Google, Aetna...

Are you ready to maximize productivity?

Reduce stress?

Realize your organization's full potential?

Contact Ronya Banks to get started!

828-808-4444

Ronya@MindfulnessRemedy.com

<http://mindfulnessremedy.com>