

6 ways embracing mindfulness helps you thrive at work

[Experience](#), [Human Nature](#)



Following a , the CEO of Aetna, raised eyebrows by offering free yoga and meditation classes to employees. As wrote, “ these moves have transformed a stodgy insurance company into one of the most progressive actors in corporate America.”

Bertolini has , “ we offer free mindfulness-based wellness programs to our employees. Because if we can make it easier for our employees to act thoughtfully instead of reacting to stress, we believe it will have a positive impact on their work, their health and the rest of their lives.”

Aetna isn't the only company to find mindfulness an assist in the workplace. Adobe, Google, Target, General Mills, Ford, Apple, Nike, and McKinsey & Co. have all promoted mindfulness. Why? Because it can help employees thrive, which ultimately benefits the bottom line.

In fact, here are six of the most powerful reason why you should embrace mindfulness if you want to thrive at work.

What is mindfulness?

Before we get into the reasons why mindfulness should be embraced, let's quickly explain what it is.

defines mindfulness as “ a state of active, open attention on the present.”

The publication goes on to state that, “ you observe your thoughts and feelings from a distance, without judging them good or bad.” Additionally, “ mindfulness means living in the moment and awakening to experience,” as opposed to letting life pass you by.

It “ is derived from Buddhist tradition and it concerns a self-regulation of awareness towards present mental states and processes, and involves a non-evaluative openness and acceptance towards those moment-to-moment experiences.”

There are many mindfulness practices of to which people can achieve, such as individuals who mediate or participate in yoga practice. However, many consider that mindfulness is essentially doing nothing so that you can concentrate and calm down, which is actually the reason so many beginners fall asleep. But mindfulness is a very active process -- in ones head -- which means that mindfulness can be done anywhere, like at your desk or on the subway platform, and at any time.

Now that you know a little more about , here are those benefits I promised earlier.

1. Keeps you mentally, emotionally and physically happy.

“ Large population-based research studies have indicated that the idea of mindfulness is correlated with well-being and perceived health,” Ellen Langer, a professor of psychology at Harvard University who has been dubbed the “ mother of mindfulness.” Langer adds, “ Studies have shown that rumination and worry contribute to mental illness and that mindfulness-based interventions are effective in the reduction of worry.”

Furthermore, mindfulness has helped individuals deal with chronic pain, eating disorder, addictions, and has helped many sleep more soundly. These

individuals have also reported that that have made fewer visits to healthcare professionals and have had fewer negative feelings, like tension, anger and depression.

As if that weren't enough, mindfulness can improve working memory, executive function, and focus.

2. Helps reduce stress.

And, that's a good thing. Researchers at Harvard found that the hippocampus region of the brain showed "significant increases" in grey matter density among people who had enrolled in an 8-week mindfulness program. This increase in grey matter is what helps us manage stress.

Work is one of the main causes of stress. And when we're chronically stressed, not only does our performance suffer, but we're also putting our health in jeopardy. Learning how to deal with stress isn't just good for your work performance, it may even save your life.

3. Develops emotional intelligence.

Mindfulness can help you cultivate and develop emotional intelligence. That's a big deal since people with a high are generally more successful because they're not worried about being a perfectionist, they know how to balance life and work, embrace change, don't get easily distracted, are empathetic, are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, are self-motivated, don't live in the past, and focus on the positive.

Also, EI doesn't just make you a member of the team, it also helps you strengthen your communication skills and avoid many workplace confrontations.

4. Increases focus, concentration, creativity and productivity.

There have been several studies that have found that mindfulness can help us focus and concentrate. One conducted by the University of Washington tested the effect of mindfulness-based meditation on the multitasking behavior of knowledge workers.

“ We found that only those trained in meditation 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. In addition, both the meditation and the relaxation groups showed improved memory for the tasks they performed.”

David Gelles, author of *Mindful Work: How Meditation Is Changing Business from the Inside Out*, that, “ We regain control of our attention. We come back to our breath over and over again even when our minds wander -- and they're always wandering. Simple attention training can yield big benefits in the long run.”

Also, when we're able to reduce stress, and improve our focus and concentration, we're able to boost our productivity and get those .

5. Helps deal with criticism.

No one likes to be criticized. However, constructive criticism can be useful in helping us grow in the workplace. But, what about that negative feedback that just makes you want to snap? It's not pleasant, but it's going to happen from time-to-time.

Thankfully, mindfulness can help you ground yourself and respond professionally by taking a deep breath, slowing down, listening, observing your response, and processing the information.

6. Builds leadership.

among a sample of senior managers, A. D. Amar and colleagues at the University of Westminster put them through a secularized Vipassana meditation-training program for 12-weeks.

Their results, which were in the *Academy of Management Proceedings* , discovered that the meditation training increased their overall self-confidence, along with other leadership skills like inspiring a shared vision and demonstrating moral intelligence.

Whether you're a manager or employee, you can take the following steps in becoming more mindful;