

The MindOptions approach to Mindfulness Skills Training

Whatever your job or profession, whether you work on your own, whether you run a business or whether you are part of a team in a larger organisation, the modern day workplace seems to be characterised by increasing pressure; to meet targets, to generate more sales, to cut costs, to do more with less. As a consequence, stress-related illnesses are on the rise with the result that workplace stress is undermining employee performance, creativity, innovation and health.

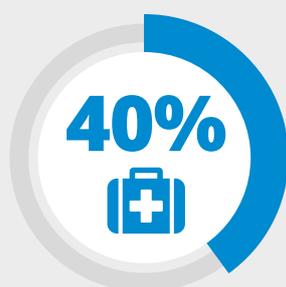
Mindfulness skills training is a valuable resource that can help build individual and team resilience, strengthen compassion amongst workplace leaders, managers and employees, and develop a greater sense of mutual trust and respect. In short, it can not only help individuals and teams meet the challenges that face them more effectively, but ensure that long-term, sustainable foundations for success, achievement and high performance are embedded.



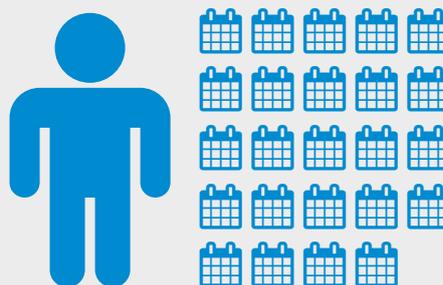
Workplace Stress: Recognising the signs, understanding the impact

Stress is defined as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them at work.”¹ Stress itself is not an illness, it is a state, but if the stress becomes too excessive or prolonged it can lead to physical and mental health problems. As well as sickness absence from work, other signs of stress amongst your colleagues or employees are high staff turnover rates and poor performance.

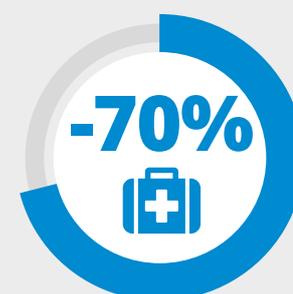
2011-12



work related illness caused by stress



On average, each person suffering from work-related stress took 24 days off work



TFL see stress, anxiety and depression related days off fall since introduction to mindfulness

The Health & Safety Executive, using data collected from the Annual Labour Force Survey by the Office of National Statistics, calculated that stress was the cause of 40% of the total 1,073,000 cases of work-related illnesses in 2011-12. The top three activities identified by respondents as the main causes of their work-related stress were work pressure, managerial support and work-related violence and bullying².

The survey concluded that in 2011-12, work-related stress was responsible for 10.4 million lost working days across the UK. On average, each person suffering from work-related stress took 24 days off work. It is little wonder therefore that businesses such as Transport for London, NHS, Google, GlaxoSmithKline, the Home Office, KPMG and PwC use mindfulness with their workforce development programmes. Indeed, Transport for London has seen the number of days taken off because of stress, anxiety and depression fall by 71% since introducing employees to mindfulness³.

¹ www.hse.gov.uk/stress/furtheradvice/whatisstress.htm

² *Stress and Psychological Disorders in Great Britain 2013. Health and Safety Executive, October 2013.*

³ *How practising mindfulness in the workplace can boost productivity. Liz Hall, Occupational Health Magazine, May 2013.*

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a meditation technique that involves learning to pay attention: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgementally to whatever arises in a person's field of experience. It is the opposite of being absent-minded or operating on 'autopilot'.

"Half our waking time is spent thinking about something other than what we're actually doing and this mind wandering typically makes us unhappy."³

If you find yourself doing things without really being aware of them, constantly multitasking, juggling priorities, focusing less on what's happening now and more on worrying about what happened in the past, or might happen in the future, then these are all classic symptoms of operating on autopilot.

Your mind will always wander - it's one of the things it's programmed to do. However, mindfulness skills training teaches you how to be in control of your mind instead of letting it be in control of you. Mindfulness training will develop your skills to be able to engage actively with whatever is happening in the moment, to recognise signs of a wandering mind and to be able to bring it back to focus on 'the now'. It also helps you assess what's happening in the moment more objectively and strategically.

What are the benefits of mindfulness?

There is growing research which clearly demonstrates the effectiveness and impact of mindfulness. Neurological research on the impact of mindfulness training on the brain demonstrates that it can reshape the part of the brain that impacts emotional and social intelligence, improving positive mood and wellbeing⁴.

Mindfulness can help:

- You stay focused and be calmly present, whatever the situation
- You develop a more aware and considered approach
- You improve self-leadership in times of high workload, time restraints, instability and major or constant change
- You develop a more thinking, emotional and instinctive mind
- You build emotional resilience

³Killingsworth, M. and Gilbert, D.T. *A wandering mind is an unhappy mind*. *Science*, vol. 330, no. 6006, p932, 2010.

⁴*Mindful Leadership: Compassion, contemplation and meditation develop effective leaders*. Bill George, Professor of Management Practice, Harvard Business School.

What services does MindOptions offer in terms of mindfulness skills training?

At an organisational level, MindOptions can help implement a five-step framework to deliver a mindfulness organisation:



We can assist you in:

- Evaluating your current workforce's health and wellbeing
- Planning what it is you could do to maintain or improve health and wellbeing
- Educating your workforce to develop a mindful approach
- Implementing mindfulness programme or workshop, or integrating mindfulness skills training into your existing workforce development programmes

We offer a range of mindfulness workshops (see next page for more detail) including the eight-session programmes which are clinically proven Mindfulness Based Stress Reductions (MBSR) / Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) and recommended by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) and The Mental Health Foundation as a way of promoting health and wellbeing.

Who is mindfulness suitable for?

It's suitable for everyone - individuals, frontline workers, managers, leaders, executives, teachers, health and social care practitioners, emergency services personnel, teams, communities. Anyone can benefit from the technique and it's an easily learnt skills.

What will I learn?

You will learn to use and implement key mindfulness skills and techniques in an accessible, experiential and practical manner. This enables you to explore and experience what mindfulness is and what it can do for you. Longer courses help develop a more personal, in-depth and incremental learning and understanding of mindfulness. Any of the courses or workshops on the next page can be designed and delivered around your specific individual, team or organisational needs.

Mindfulness Workshops and Courses

Introduction to Mindfulness

Taster session of 45-60 minutes suitable to operate as a 'lunch and learn session', staff meeting, built in to a conference agenda or after work workshop.

The session will cover:

- A quick introduction to what mindfulness is and the benefits of using mindfulness skills
- Learning some quick, simple and effective mindfulness techniques that can immediately be used anywhere, anytime
- Finding out how mindful you are and what simple steps you can take to become more mindful in your daily life

Mindfulness in the Workplace

Half or full day (3-6 hours), content will vary depending upon on length but will cover and build on the basics learnt in Introduction to Mindfulness

The session will cover:

- What is stress? Positive and negative stress, chronic stress
- The stress response and what impact it has on performance and wellbeing
- How to manage and prevent stress
- Exploring what happens when we go on 'autopilot', how to stop this and how to become more aware, more attentive and less reactive
- Discovering any unhelpful habitual habits and learning new, more supportive ones
- Discovering how mindful you are and how to build and strengthen your mindfulness skills
- Learning simple steps to become more focused, calm, relaxed, creative and content
- Learning and practising a variety of mindfulness techniques including 'quick rescue' techniques that can be used anywhere, anytime
- Creating a personal mindfulness action plan

Eight Week Mindfulness Course - Promoting Health and Wellbeing

Using clinically proven MBSR / MBCT techniques and recommended by NICE and The Mental Health Foundation as a way of promoting health and wellbeing. Each session is 2 hours weekly, with short home practices to be completed between each session, or 4 hours every fortnight. An additional full day workshop can be provided at the end of the course which enables participants to reflect on their learning and develop their own action plan. A confidential health questionnaire is required to be completed before being accepted onto the course. Maximum group size is 15.

The eight week syllabus will cover:

- Practising and learning a variety of mindfulness meditation skills and techniques, such as BodyScan and mindfulness of breath, as well as everyday mindfulness and mindful movement skills
- How to incorporate these skills into your work and daily life
- How to identify and deal with difficult physical sensations, thoughts, feelings and moods that can be associated with stress, anger, anxiety, depression and pain
- How to identify your own triggers
- How to develop your own coping strategies

Next steps and additional information

All course can be delivered in-house, at a suitable external venue or, if your organisation is small and unable to sustain its own courses, participants can join the MindOptions Open House Programmes (see our website for more details). All course materials, including recorded meditation tracks to aid home practice, are provided.

Costs will vary depending on the length and duration of sessions, number of participants and any bespoke tailoring of courses to individual or corporate needs.

The course will be delivered by Jude Ryan, a Mindfulness Practitioner, MBCT Trained Teacher and ACC ICF Coach who adheres to Mindfulness Teachers UK Network Guidelines.

Ready to explore your full potential?

Contact MindOptions for coaching, Mindfulness skills training, leadership and development consultancy for organisations, business teams and individuals in performance improvement, communication, change and stress management.



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