

## **Mindfulness in the workplace improves employee focus, attention, behavior, new management-based research concludes.**

Date:

March 10, 2016

Source:

Case Western Reserve University

Summary:

Mindfulness is often viewed as either a touchy-feely fad or valuable management tool that can lift an entire workplace. A new comprehensive analysis of mindfulness research suggests the latter—that injecting a corporate culture of mindfulness not only improves focus, but the ability to manage stress and how employees work together.

Share:

### FULL STORY

Mindfulness is often viewed as either a touchy-feely fad or valuable management tool that can lift an entire workplace.

A new comprehensive analysis of mindfulness research, co-directed by a management scientist at Case Western Reserve University, suggests the latter -- that injecting a corporate culture of mindfulness not only improves focus, but the ability to manage stress and how employees work together.

"Historically, companies have been reticent to offer mindfulness training because it was seen as something fluffy, esoteric and spiritual," said Christopher Lyddy, an organizational behavior doctoral candidate at Case Western Reserve's Weatherhead School of Management. "But that's changing."

Mindfulness, defined as present-centered attention and awareness, emerged from Buddhist philosophy and has been cultivated for millennia through meditation practices. Organizations such as Google, Aetna, Mayo Clinic and the United States Marine Corps use mindfulness training to improve workplace functioning. The results of this latest research indicate the approach can improve a range of workplace functions.

"When you are mindful, you can have a greater consciousness in the present," Lyddy said. "That's vital for any executive or manager, who, at any given moment, may be barraged with various problems that call for decisions under stress."

Lyddy is co-lead author of the research with Darren Good, who earned his doctorate at the Weatherhead School and is now an assistant professor at Pepperdine University's Graziadio School of Business and Management. They headed an unusually interdisciplinary team that included experts in both management and mindfulness, as well as psychologists and neuroscientists.

The researchers considered 4,000 scientific papers on various aspects of mindfulness, distilling the information into an accessible guide documenting the impact mindfulness has on how people think, feel, act, relate and perform at work.

Their findings, *Contemplating Mindfulness at Work (An Integrative Review)*, are recently published in the *Journal of Management*.

"Remarkably, scientists have found the effects of mindfulness consistently benign," Lyddy said. "Of the thousands of empirical studies we read, only two reported any downside to mindfulness."

A small but growing body of work in the management area suggests mindfulness is linked to better workplace functioning.

Among the new study's conclusions:

- Mindfulness appears to positively impact human functioning overall. Research in such disciplines as psychology, neuroscience and medicine provide a wealth of evidence that mindfulness improves attention, cognition, emotions, behavior and physiology.
- Specifically, mindfulness has been shown to improve three qualities of attention -- stability, control and efficiency. The human mind is estimated to wander roughly half of our waking hours, but mindfulness can stabilize attention in the present. Individuals who completed mindfulness training were shown to remain vigilant longer on both visual and listening tasks.

- Although mindfulness is an individual quality, initial evidence suggests that it affects interpersonal behavior and workgroup relationships.
- Mindfulness may improve relationships through greater empathy and compassion -- suggesting mindfulness training could enhance workplace processes that rely on effective leadership and teamwork.

Lyddy said the research indicating significant and diverse benefits of mindfulness coincides with growing practical interest in mindfulness training nationally and worldwide. For example, British Parliament has recently launched a mindfulness initiative called "Mindful Nation UK" that leverages mindfulness to benefit diverse sectors and improve national health, productivity and flourishing.

Story Source:

Materials provided by Case Western Reserve University. Note: Content may be edited for style and length.

Journal Reference:

D. J. Good, C. J. Lyddy, T. M. Glomb, J. E. Bono, K. W. Brown, M. K. Duffy, R. A. Baer, J. A. Brewer, S. W. Lazar. Contemplating Mindfulness at Work: An Integrative Review. *Journal of Management*, 2015; 42 (1): 114 DOI: 10.1177/0149206315617003

Cite This Page: