



STARTING WORKPLACE MINDFULNESS with MINDFUL MOMENTS

As many of us spend well over half our waking hours at work, it is useful to reflect on how we can bring mindfulness into the workplace. Mindfulness can make work more rewarding and enjoyable. It can help us to become more efficient and creative and it can help us to manage stress and look after our work life balance.

The techniques mentioned below are useful for bringing mindfulness into your workday. They don't even require a regular meditation practice to get started. A complete novice in mindfulness can practice some, such as "opening to pleasant mindful moments."

Mindful Moments

Many of us get unnecessarily stressed at work. Apart from feeling bad and being bad for our health, this leads to us making more mistakes, being grumpy and rigid. Taking a mindful moment allows us to step back from all of this and let go of unnecessary stress and reboot. However, it is better if we practice regular mindful moments during the day. Not only is it fun, but it also gives us a buffer which significantly reduces the risk of getting into a hyper-stressed state in the first place.



Opening to pleasant mindful moments

Yes, mindful moments can be fun! **Being mindful for a moment can enhance pleasant experiences.** Mindfulness can even remind you of simple pleasures often forgotten since childhood:

- The simple pleasures of walking
- Receiving a friendly smile
- The different aspects of eating – smelling, anticipating, tasting, chewing, swallowing, etc
- Going to the toilet (Yes! Many of us enjoy that but we have been taught it is uncouth to express it!)
- Smelling a pleasant fragrance etc.
- Pleasant sounds – music, an agreeable speaking voice, background ambient sounds can also be quite pleasant for many
- A particular piece of scenery (a picture, tasteful dressing, a plant)

To prepare for the practice of opening up to pleasant moments, it is helpful to take a moment to reflect on some of the predictable pleasant moments that might happen in the work day. As they come to mind, you can try to remember how they made you feel physically. Pick one and stay with the memory of that experience for a few breaths and get a sense of breathing it in. You can allow yourself to really feel it in your body. Your experience may become deeper and richer as you allow yourself to absorb it.

Then make the undertaking of taking a few mindful breaths when that experience actually occurs the next day. Finally, take a moment at the end of the next day to notice if you actually did it. If you did – fantastic! If not – then simply try to remember when you had an opportunity and see if you can remember how you felt at the time. Breathe it in and recommit to the practice the next day. Eventually, you will find yourself spontaneously experiencing a number of pleasant mindful moments every day.



A simple caution *When a pleasurable moment sets off desires, cravings or criticisms we are no longer being particularly mindful. We are projecting into another time or another place than here and now and we usually get sucked into a story associated with it:*

"I would look great in that dress."

"I would love to be cuddling up to that beautiful woman."

"He's got a lovely voice but he is so arrogant."

Dealing with this sort of thing takes us into more demanding aspects of mindfulness. Therefore it is better for the beginner to choose pleasant moments that don't activate these kinds of responses. When we get responses like these, it is better to non-judgementally label them as "just thoughts" and to come back to the breath and body sensations. If that feels unpleasant, we then need to learn how to [sit mindfully with these feelings](#) which is a more advanced practice.

Routine Mindful Moments

We can use **repetitive environmental** as cues to remind us to take several mindful breaths:

- Waiting for the phone to be answered
- Waiting for a program to load up on the computer
- Walking
- Doing any routine, repetitive task
- Sitting bored in a meeting we can make good use of the time by practicing mindful breathing. If anything important or relevant is discussed, you will find that you will pick it up and at the end of the meeting, you will be more likely to feel refreshed, rather than depleted.
- Any time you might check your smartphone just to fill in time

This gives us a chance to check in with ourselves. During these few mindful breaths, it is possible to notice body sensations and our general sense of how we are doing. As a bonus, tension in the body and mind often spontaneously drops away as well.

Mindful Transitions

The work day is full of mindful transitions with the most obvious being arrival at and departure from the place of work. During the day we move between various tasks, interacting with distinctive personalities in different settings. These many varied experiences place diverse demands on us.

We need to adapt and change our ways of being and doing. We often have to engage completely different skill sets. As we do this, the brain is regularly reconfiguring itself, using different components in different combinations. We move from one neurological network to another. This can be quite taxing and doesn't always go smoothly. We are aware of these processes in others when we try to catch them in the right mood for a tricky conversation.

The technique called [the mindful check-in](#) gives us a way to make the most of the routine mindful moments and to manage transitions. Basically it is possible to notice how you are physically and emotionally as you leave one situation and move into the next. You notice what you are bringing with you. For example you could be feeling argumentative because that is what was needed in your last meeting. The next meeting may require you to be



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especially empathic. If you notice the argumentative energy when you take a few mindful breaths you are more likely to manage it skilfully as you transition into the new situation.

Mindfulness for stressful moments.

Mindfulness will help us to handle those moments better. These stressful moments may be relatively mild and predictable. For example, the upper body can become tight when doing a difficult task on the computer. With a mindful check-in it is possible to become aware of this, consciously let go of some of the tension and do the task more efficiently. This simple act can result in you feeling quite a bit better at the end of the work day.

When we do a formal mindfulness practice, such as sitting meditation regularly, it becomes possible to bring mindfulness into more difficult moments. For example, we can deliberately bring mindful awareness to the breath and tone of voice during a disagreement. This gives us more objectivity and the possibility of handling the difficult situation more effectively.

Where to from here?

These techniques can even be the beginning of a deeper more effective mindfulness practice. However, we need a more robust established mindfulness practice to be capable of some of the other work mindfulness practices such as **“Staying mindfully present during a difficult interpersonal interaction.”** In fact learning mindfulness is much like learning any other skill, like a foreign language, a dance style, a musical instrument or a new sport. With practice more fluency develops, more capacity to perform under pressure develops and more creative flair appears.

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