

## Workplace Mindfulness Training: Key information

### WorkplaceMT Mindfulness training: Overview

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WorkplaceMT is an evidence informed approach which has been evaluated, researched and refined in the workplace to meet the challenges of modern day working. It started life in the Oxford Mindfulness Centre based on Mark Williams and Danny Penman’s book, Mindfulness: A practical guide to finding peace in a frantic world'.

Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) has an emphasis on developing skills to help people to manage the mind, a valuable ability in the modern day workplace. MBCT was designed to be taught by clinicians and therapists to people who are unwell. Professor Mark Williams and Danny Penman adapted MBCT into a self-help format, designed for use with a healthy population.

WorkplaceMT is based on this model of MBCT mindfulness teaching. It was initially adapted into mindfulness at work training by The Mindfulness Exchange, and then further adapted and refined over a five year period.

WorkplaceMT helps employees to develop mindfulness skills supported by a six week training programme. Employees attend a 60 or 90 minute training session each week delivered by suitably experienced trainers on your premises. Each week participants learn new techniques to improve performance, leadership, well-being and resilience, which they then practice each day and apply to their work.

Unlike traditional MBSR and MBCT, which are designed for use by therapists and clinicians, WorkplaceMT is designed specifically for those looking for mindfulness training tailored for the workplace and which meets the needs of leaders, managers and employees. It’s designed to be taught in a standard meeting room, without the need for additional equipment or unusual room layouts. Unlike MBSR and MBCT, WorkplaceMT was designed by specialists in corporate learning design.

### Different approaches to teaching mindfulness compared

	Traditional MBSR	Traditional MBCT	WorkplaceMT
Designed for use in	Clinical / therapeutic settings	Clinical / therapeutic settings	The workplace
Length of programme	8 weeks + a full or half day retreat	8 weeks	6 weeks
Length of weekly teaching session	120 minutes	120 minutes	60 or 90 minutes
Home practice requirement	20 – 40 minutes a day	20 – 40 minutes a day	10-15 minutes a day
Total hours of study required	44 hours	44 hours	18.5 hours
Teaching approach	Eastern teaching Style	Eastern teaching Style	Western teaching style
Emphasis on experiential learning	Yes	Yes	Yes – but balanced with theory and application
Explanation of key underpinning theory	Limited	Limited	Yes
Materials provided to support participants	Variable depending on trainer. MP3 recordings to aid practice usually supplied	Variable depending on trainer. MP3 recordings to aid practice usually supplied	Choice of 2 well-written popular and accessible books to support learning + MP3s

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### The evidence base for WorkplaceMT

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#### The impact of mindfulness training

There are now over 5000 academic research studies on the impact of mindfulness – the majority involving clinical populations. There is a very substantial evidence base that demonstrates how mindfulness reduces stress, anxiety and depression.

In recent years researchers have turned their attention to the impact of mindfulness on the working population. There are now around 270 research papers on the impact of mindfulness in the workplace. The following are conclusions from a small number of these research papers.

#### MINDFULNESS AND PERFORMANCE

- Mindfulness widens your attentional breadth (Dane 2010)
- Mindfulness-based practices in the workplace enhance employee self-regulation of thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, linking them to both performance and employee well-being in the workplace. In addition, mindfulness enhances social relationships in the workplace, making employees more resilient in the face of challenges, and increased decision making and task performance (Glomb)
- A study involving 231 employees concluded that mindfulness is beneficially associated with employee well-being, as measured by emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction, and psychological need satisfaction, and with job performance, as measured by task performance, organizational citizenship behaviours (Reb)

#### MINDFULNESS AND RELATIONSHIPS

- Persons who practice mindfulness are better able to cope and remain calm in difficult work situations; be more likely to experience work difficulties as challenges than threats; enjoy their work more; be more adaptable at work; and have more positive interpersonal relations at work. (Hunter)
- Mindfulness may benefit equanimity both outside and inside the workplace. The study suggests that mindful people were less hostile in their behaviours in part because they were less prone to hostile feelings. (Krishankumar 2015)
- Mindfulness influences attention, with downstream effects on functional domains of cognition, emotion, behaviour, and physiology. Ultimately, these domains impact key workplace outcomes, including performance, relationships, and well-being. (Good 2015)

#### MINDFULNESS AND LEADERSHIP

- Supervisor mindfulness reduced employee emotional exhaustion and increased employee work–life balance. It improved employee performance and staff engagement. Supervisor mindfulness was positively related to employee job satisfaction and psychological need satisfaction. Furthermore, leader mindfulness was positively related to overall job performance, as well as to in-role performance and organizational citizenship behaviours. (Reb 2012)
- A study involved over 1000 leaders in a range of roles in organisations across New Zealand concluded: “The findings of this study attest to the positive impact that mindfulness seems to have in combating a number of dysfunctional outcomes affecting today’s leaders. (Roche 2014)
- Research on healthcare managers found that significant positive changes in leadership were reported by mindfulness retreat participants and that this was confirmed by their colleagues. The aspects of leadership which showed statistically significant improvements were ‘leadership effectiveness’ and ‘balanced processing.’ Follow-up interviews were carried out post-intervention which showed significant increases in mindfulness and corresponding decreases in stress that were sustained across eight weeks post-retreat. (Wasylikiw 2015)

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### WELL BEING, RESILIANCE AND BURNOUT

- This Randomised Control trial involved Dow Chemicals employees. After mindfulness training, stress decreased, Mindfulness, resilience, work engagement and vigour and employee well-being increased. (Aikens 2014) Key improvements included
  - 30 percent reduction in perceived stress
  - 50 percent decrease in number of high stress episodes
  - 13 percent increase in resiliency
  - 15 percent increase in work engagement and vigour
  - 50 percent decrease in employee burnout
- Mindfulness leads to improved work engagement and general well-being. It also improves job satisfaction, hope, optimism and resilience. The results indicate that being non-judgemental and non-reactivity are important skills for the workplace (Malinowski 2015)
- A study involving employees in a busy call centre concluded that after mindfulness training, client satisfaction increased. Stress anxiety, depression, fatigue and negative affect (low mood) decreased for all employees throughout the intervention (Grégoire & Lachance, 2014 )
- Research involving 113 Canadian elementary school teachers - Teachers who participated in mindfulness training showed greater focused attention and working memory capacity, and occupational self-compassion, as well as lower levels of occupational stress and burnout at post-program and follow-up. (Roser 2013)
- “Participating in an abbreviated mindfulness training course adapted for primary care clinicians was associated with reductions in indicators of job burnout, depression, anxiety, and stress. Modified mindfulness training may be a time-efficient tool to help support clinician health and well-being, which may have implications for patient care” (Fortney 2013)
- A pilot study working with Dutch GPs showed promising results in assisting busy practitioners in reducing stress and burnout using a short course. The study shows that Mindfulness for GPs is feasible and might result in fewer burnout symptoms and increased work engagement and wellbeing. (Verweij et al 2016)

### Research that underpins the WorkplaceMT approach to teaching mindfulness

#### Course length

WorkplaceMT training is designed to be 6 weeks in duration

*Why?* Recent guidance for employers<sup>1</sup> issued in 2016 recognises that the traditional 8 week model is not always suitable for the workplace. WorkplaceMT has taken the core elements from weeks 1-8 of MBCT training and reduced the duration of the teaching from 8 weeks to 6 weeks. The 6 week duration ensures that there is enough time to embed learning, and for it to become a robust new habit.<sup>2</sup> 16 Research studies demonstrate that shortened mindfulness courses are capable of producing a range of desirable workplace outcomes.

#### Practice requirement

WorkplaceMT training requires participants to practice each day for 10-15 minutes.

*Why?* Until recently it was thought that 20-40 minutes of daily practice was required to produce noticeable improvements.

14 Research studies demonstrate that 10 -20 minutes of daily practice for the duration of the course was capable of producing a range of desirable workplace outcomes. One of the most recent research studies, a study by Ashridge on a mindfulness programme for leaders, concluded that 10 minutes of more of daily mindfulness practice produced ‘statistically significant results’.

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<sup>1</sup> Building the case for mindfulness in the workplace: The Mindfulness initiative on behalf of the Mindfulness All Party Parliamentary Group

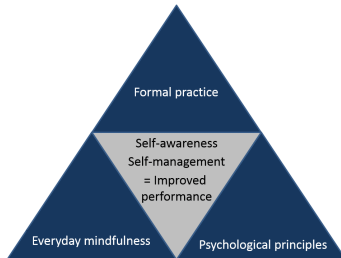
<sup>2</sup> Scientists agree it takes between 6 and 8 weeks to form a reasonably robust new habit

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### WorkplaceMT programme overview

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#### WorkplaceMT core components



Research demonstrates that mindfulness is developed via a combination of 3 key elements:

- Formal practice (normally practiced at home)
- Gaining an understanding of key psychological principles
- Everyday mindfulness (short moments of mindfulness that can be practiced at work)

Each week of WorkplaceMT training includes these three elements along with:

- opportunities to practice mindfulness in a safe, supportive environment
- The opportunity to reflect and transfer learning the workplace
- Opportunities to ask questions to overcome challenges and blocks encountered
- Learning from peers and peer to peer support

#### Weeks 1-6 overview

##### Week 1: Starting to learn how to focus the mind

- Introduction – (if required)
- Myths (if required)
- Course overview (if required)
- Psychological Education: Attention training
- Coming off autopilot :Mindful eating Exercise
- Psychological Education: Training the mind, Formal practice foundations 1&2
- Formal exercise: Practicing focusing the attention, observing mind wandering: Mindfulness of Breath
- Reflection and summary of key learning
- Home practice
  - Mindfulness of a routine activity & habit releaser x 1 a day
  - Mindfulness of breath 1 x day

##### Week 2: The mind body feedback loop

- Welcome
- Emotions in the body group activity: introducing the mind- body connection
- Psychological Education – review of week one
- Home practice review to consolidate learning, address any issues that may have arisen and share experiences
- Formal exercise: Body scan exercise
- Reflection and summary of key learning
- Setting Week 2 Home practice
  - Mindfulness of a routine activity & habit releaser x 1 a day
  - Body scan x 1 a day

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Week 3: It's how you do it not what you do (Mind the gap)

- Revising 'Keeping the Body In Mind'
- Three minute breathing space
- Psychological education: approach mode and creativity
- Formal exercise: Mindful movement followed by breath and body
- Recap key learning for weeks 1&2
- Review of Home practice week 2
- Setting Home practice for week 3
  - Mindfulness of Breath and body x1 a day
  - Three step breathing space & habit releaser of choice

Week 4: Relating differently to thoughts

- Welcome
- Home Practice review
- Review of key learning so far
- Scenario Exercise to illustrate story telling mind
- Formal exercise for Week 4: Mindfulness of Sounds & Thoughts
- Psychological education: Story telling mind + ABC model
- Setting Home practice for week 4
  - Sounds and thoughts x 1 a day
  - Three step breathing space & optional: the intensely frustrating queue exercise

Week 5: Turning towards the difficult

- Three minute breathing space
- Home Practice Review
- Review of Last week's theme
- Learning to drive (recap activity)
- Psychological education: Mental pain & cultivating an approach mode of mind
- Week 5 formal exercise: Bringing mindfulness to a difficult situation at work
- Set Home exercises week 5
  - Breath and Body + Exploring difficulty x 1 a day
  - Breathing space for facing the difficult

Week 6: Developing Intention

- Three minute breathing space – re-engaging with reality
- Home Practice Review for week 5
- Psychological education: Habits and developing intention
- Nourishing and Depleting exercise – How to keep your energy tank balanced for performance and well-being.
- Mindful listening exercise
  - Staying in touch / Feedback forms
  - If time allows action planning, and possibly forming peer support networks / buddying if appropriate

For further information contact [info@aheadforwork.com](mailto:info@aheadforwork.com)