



**Mindful Workplace
Community**



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How Being Mindful Helps Us to Slow Down

Our 24/7 society means that every aspect of our lives is speeding up. We can access goods and services around the clock, smartphones mean that we are available long after we have left the office, and the need to maintain our work, social, and family lives means that we are constantly multitasking.

Rushing through our lives with a seemingly never ending to do list leads to stress, anxiety, poor sleep, and a lack of balance. People realise this and they're becoming more interested in slowing down the pace of their lives; but how can they realistically achieve this? Mindfulness might just be the answer.

What science says about mindfulness

There is an increasing body of research on the benefits of mindfulness. Among its many benefits, its ability to reduce anxiety and depression, improve cognition and reduce distractions are the focus of many studies. It's in these ways that mindfulness gives us more control over our lives and helps us to slow down.

How to live and work mindfully

Rushing through things and always 'doing' instead of 'being' can make us forget the reason why we're doing those things in the first place. We live our lives on autopilot, and our lives pass by without us even realising. If this sounds like you, it's time to slow down. Here's how you can learn to be mindful every day, in life and in work.

Focus on the present

Mindfulness is about living in the moment here and now, not in the past or thinking about the future. You can ground yourself in the present moment by thinking about what you can see, what you can smell, what you can hear, or the contact your body is making with the floor or your chair. Just be, and appreciate the things you don't notice when you're rushing around at 100mph.

Listen to your thoughts

Don't judge them, just observe. Let them come and go, then focus on the present moment again. Being able to do this increases awareness and reduces the effects your thoughts have on you.

Focus on your breath

Focusing on your breathing can really help to ground you and calm your mind. Try taking 3 slow deep breaths, or just focus on your breath for a minute. If your mind wanders, realise that this is normal and take your focus back to your breath.

Do more things you get lost in

When you're listening to music, painting, or drawing, or doing something else you enjoy, have you noticed how you get so focused on it that time seems to slow down? Do more of the things that lift you up and make life more joyful.

Stop multitasking

If you're forever trying to do multiple things at once, you'll find that your focus and attention is scattered, and this only adds to stress. Focusing on one thing at a time gets rid of chronic distraction and gives you a sense of achievement.

Putting mindfulness into practice:

The 3-minute Breathing Space Meditation

When you're stressed out, it can be difficult to remind yourself to stay calm, and when you're busy, you might feel like you don't have time to meditate. This is exactly why this short Breathing Space meditation was created. It's designed to create a pause in your day so you can collect your thoughts, ground yourself, and keep perspective. Use this daily, anytime you feel like you need it.

Here's what to do:

Sit or stand up straight and close your eyes if possible. Be aware of your thoughts and feelings and acknowledge any difficult feelings that arise. Can you feel any sensations in your body? Acknowledge that they're there, but don't try to change them.

Now concentrate on the breath. Focus on the physical sensations of the breath in the abdomen; expanding as you breathe in, and relaxing as you breathe out. Ground yourself with each breath, and if your mind wanders, guide it gently back towards the breath.

Finally, expand your awareness to take in the body as a whole. Imagine the whole body is breathing. If you feel any discomfort in your body, imagine that you're breathing in to these areas. Explore the sensations, but don't try to change them in any way. Once they stop being the focus of your attention, become aware of the whole body again.

-adapted from Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World by Mark Williams and Danny Penman.

If you are interested in learning more about Maureen's research, looking at relationships between character strengths, mindfulness and trustworthiness in business entrepreneurs e-mail mOCallaghan@lincoln.ac.uk

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The MWC would like to thank the author, Maureen O'Callaghan, for sharing her research. Please acknowledge Maureen if reproducing or sharing this article.

Any questions, please contact info@mindfulworkplace.community.