Mindfulness:
The Impact of Being Here Now
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November 29, 2018
What does it mean to be mindful?
“Mindfulness is awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally.”

Jon Kabat-Zinn
Mindfulness Exercise
Being Mindful Means

- Focusing our attention
- Moment-to-moment, present-time awareness
- Being open to the current experience
- Experiencing things “as-is”

But Normally...

- We multi-task or are easily distracted
- Our minds are in the past or future
- We try to ignore what is boring or uncomfortable
- We interpret, assume, judge, engage in stories
• A businessman had just turned off the lights in the store when a woman appeared and demanded money. The owner opened a cash register. The contents of the cash register were scooped up, and the woman sped away. A member of the police force was told of the incident.

• Which of these statements are true, based on the facts of the story?

1) Someone appeared after the owner turned off the store lights.
2) A woman appeared and demanded money.
3) A robber took the contents of the cash register.
4) Someone opened a cash register.
5) Someone ran away from the store with cash.
6) This is a series of events that involves four people.

Adapted from Be Legendary Ladder of Inference Exercise
We think we see things “as-is” (mindful)

But we often make assumptions & interpret (narrative)
Although our default state is not mindful, we can develop this ability.
In 20-30 years, ‘mental exercise’ will be talked about in the same way as physical exercise is today.

Richard Davidson, neuroscientist
University of Wisconsin

It’s safe to say [mindfulness practice] is brain-training at work. It makes sense. Anything you train to do, you do better.

Judson Brewer, psychiatrist
University of Massachusetts
Mindfulness Exercise
• Pause several times a day and pay attention to the sensations of your breath.

• Eat your lunch mindfully, focusing on the sensations you see, hear, smell, taste, and touch.

• Pick one of your senses and notice details of what you are experiencing right now.

• Check in with yourself to note your thoughts and feelings in a given moment.
Mindfulness

Present & Aware

**Skills**
- Cognitive Focus
- Attentive Listening
- Self-Awareness
- Non-Judgmental Observation

**Outcomes**
- Improved Performance
- Empathy & Connection
- Self-Management
- Stress/Discomfort Regulation
We can’t control many things…

…but we can control how we relate to them.

Then the “state of the waters” becomes less important.
When we stay present with discomfort, we increase our tolerance for discomfort!
Mindfulness

Present & Aware

Skill

Outcome

Cognitive Focus
Attentive Listening
Self-Awareness
Non-Judgmental Observation

Improved Performance
Empathy & Connection
Self-Management
Stress/Discomfort Regulation

Skills

Outcomes
• **Speaker**: Share a positive experience you had recently, such as a vacation, or an occasion with friends or family. What made it enjoyable and memorable?

• **Listener**: You may not interrupt or share your own experiences. If the speaker pauses, you may ask questions to be curious and deepen your understanding.

• Have a five-minute conversation.

• Switch roles, repeat.
• When we give and receive empathy, we produce more oxytocin
• Oxytocin prompts us to reach out to others for support
• Oxytocin inhibits activity in the amygdala
• Social support reduces cortisol levels and improves mental and physical health
Those who experience caring and compassion from their colleagues are more:
- satisfied with their jobs
- committed to the organization
- accountable for their performance

Leaders who project warmth are more effective than those leading with toughness & skill.

Gallup: >50% of employees who “strongly agree” that their manager is approachable and open are engaged.
Mindfulness

Present & Aware

Skill

Cognitive Focus

Attentive Listening

Self-Awareness

Non-Judgmental Observation

Outcome

Improved Performance

Empathy & Connection

Self-Management

Stress/Discomfort Regulation

Skills

Outcomes
• Take notice of and write down:
  – What am I thinking right now?
  – What am I feeling right now?
  – What can I sense in my body right now?

• What did you become aware of that you were not aware of previously?
• Bad impressions and negative evaluations are quicker to form and are more resistant to disconfirmation

• Negative evaluations can create counter-productive stories and trigger our biological stress response
You arrange to meet your colleague Mary for coffee at 10:30am. Mary is late and does not explain why. In fact, she doesn’t seem to have noticed that she’s late at all.

▪ What reaction do you have? What thoughts and feelings?
▪ What assumptions or beliefs triggered your reaction?
▪ What do you know for certain? What is unknown?
▪ What are some alternate explanations for Mary’s behavior?