

BUSINESS ENGLISH

How to practice Mindfulness in the workplace

di **Tom Roper**

Do you ever feel like you are missing **important** details in a meeting because your **mind** was somewhere else? Have you ever finished your lunch at your computer and not even **realised** how it tasted?

If these situations seem familiar, you are not on your own. Recent research shows that most of us, **almost 50%** of the time, are thinking about something other than the current activity being performed. Our minds **wander**, whether we are speaking to customers, updating spreadsheets, talking to colleagues, or reading emails.

The same research also found that people had **lower** levels of **happiness** when their minds were not on the task at hand as opposed to when they were **focused**.

Understanding and applying **mindfulness** and paying **attention** to the present can not only improve our concentration but can also reduce **stress** levels, **improve** relationships around us and allow us to be more connected with the present moment.

But the big question is: **what exactly is mindfulness?**

According to *Psychology Today*, mindfulness is a state of **engaged**, open attention to the present situation. When you are “mindful”, you can **observe** your feelings and thoughts from a distance without the **judgement** of considering them either bad or good. Being mindful can mean **living in the moment** and truly experiencing what life can offer you. There are many diverse ways that we can teach our minds to perform this way; One particularly easy and effective way is by practising **meditation** and mindfulness exercises.

With this in mind, how can we learn to be more mindful at work?

1. Find the time for short mindfulness exercises.

You won't always have the time for a full meditation every day, but you can find a moment to **concentrate** on your **breathing** and become aware of your senses. In *A Monk's Guide to Happiness*, Gelong Thubten suggests practising **micro-moments** of mindfulness. One possible way to do this is by sitting with a good **posture** and trying to become **aware** of the sounds around you. By performing exercises such as this one, you can learn to **focus** your attention

and teach yourself to become more mindful.

2. Try to be aware of what you're doing.

Being Mindful is about being **present** and **consciously** experiencing every moment.

When you're conversing with your colleagues, pay **close attention** to their body language, their **intonation**, and what they're really saying. When you're at your desk, try to be **aware** of the feeling of **contact** between your body and the chair. If you find your mind wandering from what you're doing, **notice** those thoughts and bring your **attention** back to the present.

3. Make a list of things that make you grateful.

In our frenetic everyday lives, it can be very easy to focus on **all** the things that have gone **wrong** and be **negative** about the things and people around us. Through creating a **list** of things that we are **thankful** for, we can try to maintain a more balanced view of our day-to-day situation. Keeping in mind that things that go well can also help to improve our **creativity**, **motivation**, and **productivity**.

4. Try to avoid multitasking.

Do you find yourself **replying** to emails whilst being in a meeting? Are you **checking** your work emails or social media whilst on lunch? Completing **multiple** tasks at a time might make you feel more productive, but more often than not it **signifies** that you are not giving your full **concentration** to any of the jobs you are trying to perform. This can lead to you being **inefficient** with a higher probability of making a **mistake** and reduces your capacity to ignore the things that are just not as **important**. Losing your connection with the present moment will also eventually **lead** to you being **unhappier**. With this in mind, the next moment you see yourself moving your **attention** between multiple tasks, give yourself a moment to decide what you **truly** need to **focus** on and give that your complete **attention**.

Of course, when you find the time and the peace, you can **consider** activities such as **meditation**, but the more we **practice** doing these four things regularly in our **everyday** work lives, the more we can **train** ourselves to be more **mindful** at work and the more we can see its **benefits**. So, bring your **mind** back from whatever you're thinking about and turn your **attention** to the **here and now**.

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