Applying the Concept of Mindfulness in the Workplace

So what is mindfulness? Arpa (2013) defines it as “a conscious awareness of the present moment and recognition of what is really happening. This requires us to observe rather than judge events…”. Although this sounds like an easy concept to master, we are often unaware of the subtle guilt and dissatisfaction we apply to our thoughts and emotions every moment. Mindfulness involves accepting our emotions and current situations as they are and finding peace through this process. Bringing awareness into our daily moments is one step towards attaining wellness in our lives.

Now let us consider the application of this concept of mindfulness to the workplace. It is no secret that stress, tension, and burnout are commonplace in the working environment. However, the application of mindfulness on the job can help combat the escalation of these negative work aspects. Some simple and applicable mindfulness activities may help you decrease stress levels, manage conflict, increase productivity, and find joy in your work.

First of all, meditation is a major component of mindfulness theory. Luckily though, this does not mean you have to spend hours on your office floor, sitting cross-legged and trying to match your hum to the harmony of the earth. This can be something as simple as spending thirty seconds with your eyes closed just trying to slow down your breathing, all while at your desk. This act grounds you in the present moment and allows you to explore how you currently feel without judgment. You would be amazed at how different you will feel even after doing this just once.

Mindfulness also plays a role in productivity levels during the work day. Most people can recognize in themselves that their level of productivity varies throughout the day. Further, research has shown that a person can only sustain a high level of productivity for 90 minutes (Fernandez, 2016). So, physically, a human being cannot effectively be productive all day, as much as we may try. A mindful person will recognize when they experience a lull in their productivity levels and take a break. This sounds like a dirty word in our society, but often our productivity relies on giving our minds a timeout every once in a while. These breaks are optimal times to take a deep breath, look out the window, think about your family, or anything that does not involve working. In these moments, we may embrace the idea of mindfulness and being present. Ultimately, the person incorporating this into their daily work routine may move forward with a sense of focus and release.

Finally, mindfulness focuses on increasing your self-awareness. This includes consciously acknowledging your emotions and thoughts. However, people are often unaware of the negative effect that their stream of consciousness has on their mentality and confidence. Sometimes we are not very nice to ourselves. Our thoughts may focus on what we are doing wrong and the question “why aren’t we better (than before, than others, etc.)”. These are harmful thoughts. A mindful person will acknowledge this negative “self-talk” and refocus their energies on the moment itself. Therefore, it is not just what you think about, but how you think about the present moment. This increased self-awareness may be an important step towards decreasing stress levels and finding confidence in your work.

These three suggestions are merely the tip of the iceberg of mindfulness theory. However, they are essential components of mindfulness and have the power to alter your performance in the workplace. More importantly, they may alter the way you feel and think while working. Hopefully, the incorporation of these mindfulness based activities will foster a sense of increased productivity and peace in your working environment.

For a full reference list contact wellness@luther.edu
**Flourless Pumpkin Muffins**

- 1 cup pumpkin puree
- ½ cup pure maple syrup
- 2 eggs
- 1 tbsp vanilla extract
- 4 tbsp almond or other butter
- ¼ cup vanilla almond or other milk
- 2 ¼ cup rolled oats
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- ½ cup dark chocolate chips

**Directions**

Preheat the oven to 350°F and then grease or line a muffin tin for 12 muffins. Starting with the wet ingredients first (pumpkin, maple syrup, eggs, etc.) layer everything except the chocolate chips into a blender or a food processor and blend for about 30 seconds, or until smooth. Using a spoon, gently stir the chocolate chips into the batter. Pour the batter into the muffin tin, filling each about 3/4th of the way full. Bake in the oven for 22 minutes, until light golden brown. Allow to cool for at least 10-15 minutes before stuffing in your face.

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**The Tech Advantage**

**Elevate:** Your brain may not break out in a sweat, but it definitely needs to get its workout on sometimes too. Elevate is a fun yet challenging mind game that aims to help you “improve focus, speaking abilities, processing speed, memory, math skills and more.” Doesn’t hurt that it’s also extremely pretty to look at.

- Selected by Apple as the “Best App of the Year”
- Available on Apple & Android Devices

**Triangle Press:** Lay on your stomach and place your hands under your chest with your palms touching the ground. Make a triangle with your index fingers and thumbs. Next, push up with your arms so that your back arches up. The first few will seem very easy but this does not last long. This exercise requires no equipment and will help tone up the underside of your arms!

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**Employee Spotlight**

**Eddy Atwell**
Preus Library, Public Services Coordinator

We asked Eddy many questions, but whether it was about what the most important part of health is for him, his daily routine, how he manages stress, or advice he has for others, it all circled back to sleep for him. Over the years working a split schedule (12-4 pm and 8pm-12am) he has found a routine that keeps him healthy, well, and alert all day. Not caffeine, but a combination of prioritizing sleep and exercise give him all the energy he needs to devote time to his family and job with full effort, and these ward of things that may be perceived as stressful to others. They are meditative for him, but his advice is to find habits that work for you. They shouldn’t feel forced.