

Factsheet

Mindfulness Helps Overcome Resistance to Change

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a special way of paying attention that can help with how you cope with everyday life or deal with tough times, and there are great benefits for your physical and mental health.

Mindfulness is about training yourself to pay attention in a specific way. When a person is mindful, they:

- Focus on the present moment
- Try not to think about anything that went on in the past or that might be coming up in future
- Purposefully concentrate on what's happening around them
- Try not to be judgemental about anything they notice, or label things as 'good' or 'bad'

We spend so much time thinking over stuff that has happened in the past, or worrying about things that may happen in the future, that often we actually forget to appreciate or enjoy the moment.

Mindfulness is a way of bringing us back to experience life as it happens. When you're mindful, it:

- Helps clear your head
- Helps you be more aware of yourself, your body and the environment
- Helps to slow down your thoughts
- Slows down your nervous system
- Helps you to concentrate
- Helps you relax
- Can help you cope with stress

Who is mindfulness for?

Mindfulness is something that everyone can develop, and it's something that everyone can try. It's been practiced for thousands of years, with origins in Eastern philosophy, and over the past 40 years, it has been taken up in western societies. People can increase their mindfulness in everyday life, through activities like meditation and yoga, or even by simply paying more attention during regular activities like walking, driving or something as basic as brushing your teeth.

Why build mindfulness?

There is a lot of evidence on the many benefits of mindfulness; it can:

- Help to relieve stress.
- Help to improve sleep.
- Help manage depression and/or anxiety.
- Help you to be less angry or moody.
- Improve memory.
- Help you learn more easily.
- Help you to solve problems more easily.
- Make you happier.
- Help you to be more emotionally stable.
- Improve your breathing.
- Reduce your heart rate.
- Improve your circulation.
- Improve your immunity. or
- Help you to cope with pain.

Practising mindfulness at work

Practising 'mindfulness' at work can help employees deal with organisational changes beyond their control. In most, if not all, work environments, change is constant – processes change, systems change, people change, and so on. The extent to which you are able to manage these changes is critical to both your wellbeing and our ability to realise potential.

Ninety-five per cent of behaviours are based on habit; in other words, only 5% of what we do is based on conscious choice. People are therefore hardwired to value certainty, and naturally respond to resisting uncertainty in their work environment.

When we try to resist resistance, we only generate more of it. We create an inner struggle that often leads to anger, frustration, stress and anxiety. Resisting resistance doesn't help us move forward; instead it negatively impacts both our health and wellbeing.

Practising mindfulness at work enables us to separate habitual resistance versus legitimate concerns, and ultimately, gives people an opportunity to accept change or to develop a skilful response to it.

Mindfulness steps in the face of change

Step 1: Recognise that things are changing

The first step when using mindfulness techniques to face up to any organisational change is to simply **recognise that things are changing**. Gain as much information as possible regarding the change and what it might entail. Ideally, this process is done with a mind that accepts the reality of constant change, enabling curiosity, rather than fear, to be the driver behind the investigate process.

Step 2: Be aware of any resistance

The second step is to be **aware of any resistance** to the change, rather than try to run from it, or resist it. If you think you don't have any resistance, think again. It's natural for us to resist change; there's nothing wrong with resistance.

Resistance can be very instructive and can help us gain insight into how to better manage the change.

Step 3: Observe the resistance

Next, **observe the resistance**, and seek to understand where it comes from and what might be underlying it. See if there's anything you can learn from it that might inform or enhance the change management process. Then, **mindfully choose your response**. With a solid understanding of the change and your resistance to it, you can choose a response. People facing change mindfully can do one of the following:

- fully embrace the change and let go of any resistance;
- try to skilfully influence the change process by mindfully presenting alternatives; or
- not accept the change at all after realising it's not in their best interest.

Regardless of your choice, make the decision with a calm, clear mind.

Step 4: Taking Action

Finally, by **taking action** in accordance with the choice made, this gives the individual the opportunity to move forward; but, this will not be easy, as there will still be ongoing spikes of resistance and setbacks in the process.

During this step, it's important to both identify and accept the support you need to manage the change. This could be attending training, being coached, or practising mindfulness.

Being mindful of our resistance and skilful in our response is a solid recipe for successful change, enabling us to work toward greater cooperation and collaboration.

Resources

Find mobile apps for brain and body at the reachout.com website (<http://au.reachout.com/sites/thetoolbox>).

Find out about activities at the headspace.org.au website (<http://headspace.org.au/search/SearchForm?Search=mindfulness>).

View article (subscriber content) 'Mindfulness helps overcome resistance to change' at the HR Daily website (http://www.hrdaily.com.au/nl06_news_selected.php?act=2&nav=1&selkey=3797).