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WORKPLACE MINDFULNESS TRAINING
MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY: EVALUATION REPORT

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Between September and November 2019, Memorial University librarians and staff participated in a 10-week Workplace Mindfulness training program delivered by Andrew Safer of Safer Mindfulness at the McCann Centre in the Education Library. Sixteen participants enrolled in the weekly sessions that met from 10:00 to 11:30 am. Fourteen attended at least seven sessions and received certificates of completion. Various commitments prevented several from attending the last session, when the exit evaluation was administered. Pre and post evaluations were matched for eight participants. Three post evaluations could not be matched to a corresponding pre evaluation.

The weekly session topics were:

1. You Can't Do It Wrong (Mindfulness-Awareness Meditation)
2. Getting to Know Anxiety Instead of Running Away From It
3. Where the Rubber Meets the Road: Mindfulness-Awareness Practice
4. Turning Our Habits on End
5. Birthright of Goodness
6. Treating Ourselves and Others with Kindness
7. Digital Distraction: Mindfulness Meets the Internet
8. Mindfulness in Everyday Life
9. Stress: Exploring Thoughts and Beliefs
10. Self-Centeredness and the Big Picture
11. "Me" Is the Culprit
12. Fear and Fearlessness: Facing What Is

Included in the sessions were instruction and guidance in mindfulness and meditation practice, Q&A, presentation on a theme, and discussion in pairs and in the group.

Participants completed evaluations during the first and last sessions. Both times, they indicated the extent to which they agree/disagree with 16 statements, enabling comparison. At the last session, they also responded in their own words to a series of questions. They provided consent to use their comments anonymously in a report and for promotion of the program.

The statement with the highest average percentage change pre to post (50%) was about being hard on oneself when expectations are not met. The statement with the next highest change (47%) was about having a lot of ideas that don't get implemented, and not knowing what to do about it.

Not being aware of impulsivity showed a 36.4% change, indicating greater self-awareness. Being easily distracted improved by 28.6%. Being overtaken by thoughts and worrying, and not knowing how to interrupt this pattern, showed a 25% improvement. Being preoccupied and missing what's happening around oneself shifted by 23.8%. Believing that multitasking is a net positive because it allows the accomplishment of a lot of tasks, was reduced by 23.8%, reflecting the research on multitasking indicating increased errors, inefficiency, and stress. Having problems dealing with stressful situations improved by 21.7%. In communication, having difficulty putting one's thoughts aside and giving the other person one's full attention, shifted by 21.7%.

Asked *how the study and practice of mindfulness helps during the workday*, three participants said (1) it helps them take a break from work stress, (2) they don't get overwhelmed by tasks outside their comfort zone, and (3) they can ground themselves and take things as they come. Two others cited patience—in relation to listening, problem-solving, and relationships, and also more focus on professionalism. Also cited were increased confidence, recognizing and stepping back from knee-jerk reactions, greater awareness, and refocusing and prioritizing.

Asked how helpful this workshop series has been, the majority—six—indicated very helpful, one, extremely helpful, two not helpful, and two somewhat helpful. Asked if they think their colleagues could benefit from learning about mindfulness, the vast majority said Yes.

Delivered in a workplace setting, participants generally found the workshop series' session content to be relevant and interesting, and they found mindfulness practice to be both challenging and worthwhile. However, the sessions were not focused on providing specific solutions to workplace issues. Rather, the program takes a collective step back from such prescriptions, becoming instead, familiar with the elements of mind—thought processes, habitual patterns, emotional turbulence, and reactivity—that together represent the “bigger game”, enabling greater flexibility in day-to-day situations.

To see the full report, go to: <https://safermindfulness.com/outcomes/>