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WORKPLACE MINDFULNESS TRAINING
MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY: EVALUATION REPORT

January 30, 2020

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 post evaluation was administered. Pre and post evaluations were matched for eight participants. Three post evaluations could not be matched. These responses are included in the Qualitative section below.

Participants provided written consent, allowing their evaluation responses to be included anonymously in a report and in materials promoting the Workplace Mindfulness training program.

Mr. Safer administered the pre evaluation during the first session, and the post evaluation during the last session (see pages 7 and 8). Participant responses are reported below under Quantitative Evaluation and Qualitative Evaluation.

Program

The Workplace Mindfulness program consists of nine 1.5-hour weekly sessions and a 2-hour final session. Included were instruction and guidance in various mindfulness practices, Q&A, presentation on a theme, and discussion in pairs and in the group. Links to articles and videos on the current topic were provided weekly by email. The themes of the ten sessions were:

1. The Business Case for Mindfulness
2. Core Mindfulness Practices
3. Attention in the Age of Digital Distraction
4. The Power of Pausing
5. Seeing the Big Picture Beyond the Details
6. Responding Instead of Reacting
7. Building Respectful Relationships
8. Navigating Stress and Uncertainty

- 9. Joining Vision and Practicality
- 10. Tying It All Together

Quantitative Evaluation

Participants indicated their agreement / disagreement with 16 statements on a five-point Likert scale. Megan Walsh, PhD, Assistant Professor, Edwards School of Business, University of Saskatchewan, calculated the averages (“means”) of all participant responses for each evaluation question. The Evaluation Form was co-developed by Martha Traverso-Yepez, PhD, Division of Community Health and Humanities, Memorial University, and Andrew Safer.

Listed below are the statements that showed at least a 10% overall score change. Eight participants are represented. A higher score pre to post indicates greater mindfulness.

Statement	Pre-Intervention Average (Mean)	Post-Intervention Average (Mean)	Percentage Change
When I do something that doesn't meet my expectations, I give myself a hard time.	1.0	1.5	50%
I tend to have a lot of ideas that never get implemented, and I don't know what to do about this.	2.1	3.1	47%
I am unaware of the ways that I am impulsive.	2.7	3.7	36.4%
I am easily distracted.	2.62	3.37	28.6%
When my thoughts overtake me and I feel worried, I don't know how to pause or interrupt this pattern.	2.5	3.1	25%
I am often preoccupied and miss what is going on around me.	2.6	3.2	23.8%
I am keen on multitasking as it	2.6	3.2	23.8%

allows me to accomplish a lot of tasks.			
I have problems dealing with stressful situations.	2.9	3.5	21.7%
When someone is talking, I have trouble putting my own thoughts aside and giving them my full attention.	2.5	3.0	21.7%
When I'm concerned about something, it doesn't occur to me that my thoughts might not be true.	2.5	3.0	20%
When I have difficult thoughts or feelings, I tend to avoid facing them for as long as I can.	2.7	3.1	13.6%
After I "send" an important email or text, I often regret what I wrote.	4.0	4.5	12.5%

Score Change Per Participant

<u>Participant #</u>	<u>Mean (pre training)</u>	<u>Mean (post training)</u>	<u>Difference</u>	<u>Percent Change</u>
<u>1</u>	<u>2.375</u>	<u>3.0625</u>	<u>0.6875</u>	<u>28.95%</u>
<u>2</u>	<u>2.9375</u>	<u>3.5625</u>	<u>0.625</u>	<u>21.28%</u>
<u>3</u>	<u>2.5</u>	<u>3.1875</u>	<u>0.6875</u>	<u>27.50%</u>
<u>4</u>	<u>2.75</u>	<u>3.5625</u>	<u>0.8125</u>	<u>29.55%</u>
<u>5</u>	<u>2.875</u>	<u>2.9375</u>	<u>0.0625</u>	<u>2.17%</u>
<u>6</u>	<u>2.75</u>	<u>2.5625</u>	<u>-0.1875</u>	<u>-6.82%</u>
<u>7</u>	<u>2.9375</u>	<u>4.0625</u>	<u>1.125</u>	<u>38.30%</u>
<u>8</u>	<u>2.9375</u>	<u>2.9375</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0.00%</u>
<u>Average for all 8</u>	<u>2.7578</u>	<u>3.2344</u>	<u>0.4766</u>	<u>17.62%</u>

Note: Data recorded (1 = Strongly Agree)
Qualitative Evaluation

Provided by Megan Walsh, PhD

Julie Huntington, B.Sc., and B.Ed., transcribed the qualitative sections of the evaluation.

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Eleven participants' responses are reflected in the tables below. This includes three for whom pre evaluations could not be matched. Note: Some participants' responses appear in more than one category.

1. *What are some of the main points about mindfulness that resonate for you and your everyday life?*

Categories	Number of Participants
Pausing / Respond not react / Learning to pause and step back from all-consuming worry about details, breathe and see bigger picture / not rush in and feel more pressure, take each task as it comes	4
Compassion and acceptance / Nonjudgmental acknowledgment of things as they are	3
Helps to de-stress / Head and shoulders (practice) relieves day's stress, relaxes tension in shoulders	2
Deep listening / Trying to label thoughts as thoughts, metacognition / Don't get monopolized by thoughts	2
Be present in the moment / Grounding	2
Perfectionism makes it hard to see bigger picture	1

2. *Which mindfulness practices are you finding helpful and in what way?*

Below are the primary practices that were listed.

Categories	Number of Participants
Head and shoulders / Pausing	6
Walking practice	2
Sitting meditation	1
Loving-kindness	1
Grounding	1
Digital detox	1

3. *How helpful has this workshop series been for you? (0 = not helpful; 10 = extremely helpful)*

Ranges / categories	Number of Participants
0-4 (not helpful) =	2
5-7 (somewhat helpful) =	2
8-9 (very helpful) =	6

10 (extremely helpful) =	1
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Average: 7.1

4. *Specifically, how does your study and practice of mindfulness help during the workday?*

Categories	Number of Participants
Can break from work stress, breathe / Don't get overwhelmed by tasks outside comfort zone/stress level / Ground myself; take it as it is	3
Patience and listening improves problem solving and relationships / More patience and focus on being professional	2
More confident and capable; positive feeling about future	1
Recognize knee-jerk reactions; can step back, see many ways of seeing problem, and many solutions	1
More awareness; better at slowing down instead of being too busy/stressed	1
Refocus when mind wanders from task; prioritize more effectively	1

5. *Have you been able to do some mindfulness practice at home? If yes, how many times a week? Usually for how long?*

Frequency of meditation practice at home

Times / Week	Number of Participants	Length of session
1-2	3	5-20 min.
2-3	4	2-3 min.;10-25 min.
5 or >	1	> 10 min.
No practice	3	

6. *Do you think your colleagues could benefit from learning about workplace mindfulness?*

Categories	Number of Participants
Yes	8
Maybe	2
No response	1
No	0

Instructor's Summary

Provided the individual has an open mind and is willing to apply themselves to mindfulness practice outside the weekly sessions, this way of working with the mind builds attention, awareness, and resiliency. Rather than targeting specific outcomes, mindfulness training operates more globally.

Pausing and space awareness brings sanity to claustrophobic, stuck, and stressed situations, inviting openness and a wider perspective. This could come into play at a team meeting, while carrying out a task, or in a conversation with a customer or coworker. This is an example of how mindfulness “works”. Mindfulness-awareness practice develops attention (precision/focus) and awareness of the environment/bigger picture. Loving-kindness practice fosters acceptance of self and others, kindness, and compassion. Mindful listening takes pausing into day-to-day communications. All mindfulness practices have an element of grounding.

Participants highlighted a range of mindfulness applications in the workplace: problem solving and interpersonal relationships through greater patience and listening; increased confidence and positivity; stepping back from knee-jerk reactions and dealing proactively with stress; less susceptibility to being overwhelmed; and greater ability to refocus and prioritize. There was a strong consensus when asked if they thought their colleagues could benefit from Workplace Mindfulness training: 8 said Yes, 2 said Maybe, and one did not answer.

Evaluation scores are generated through self-reports. Regarding the individual statements on the quantitative evaluation form, the highest percentage change pre to post (50%) was about giving oneself a hard time when one's expectations are not met. In place of self-criticism and self-judgment, mindfulness practice cultivates self-acceptance through nonjudgment and loving-kindness practice. The second-highest percentage change (47%) was about having a lot of ideas that never get implemented, and not knowing what to do about it. This seems to suggest a greater awareness of thoughts, discernment, and perhaps greater realism and resourcefulness. There was a 36.4% change in awareness of impulsivity, suggesting greater self-awareness and a greater tendency to respond rather than react. There was a 28.6% improvement in distractibility. Recognizing mind wandering and redirecting attention to the present moment is central to mindfulness practice. Escalating thoughts and worry, and not knowing what to do about it, showed a pre-to-post score change of 25%. This suggests greater awareness of thoughts coupled with a present-moment orientation. Being preoccupied and missing what's going on registered a 23.8% change. In mindfulness practice, the real world, rather than one's concepts, is the reference point. Belief in the virtues of multitasking suffered a blow (23.8% change) in recognition of the knowledge that multitasking can cause stress, take longer to complete tasks, and is subject to errors. Confidence in dealing with stress increased by 21.7%. The same percentage change indicated a greater ability to put thoughts aside and fully listen. There was a 20% change in realizing that thoughts might not be true in matters of concern: a key realization in mindfulness training.

Personal code: _____

Workplace Mindfulness Evaluation Form

(pre-post intervention)

Please write down in the box on the left the number that best fits how you feel with regard to the statement:

1=Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Neither Agree, nor Disagree 4=Disagree 5=Strongly Disagree 0=Don't Know

- Mindfulness helps get rid of disturbing thoughts and emotions.
- I am keen on multitasking as it allows me to accomplish a lot of tasks.
- I am unaware of the ways that I am impulsive.
- When I do something that doesn't meet my expectations, I give myself a hard time.
- I am easily distracted.
- I have problems dealing with stressful situations.
- I find that I am uncomfortable being around people who need help.
- When someone is talking, I have trouble putting my own thoughts aside and paying attention fully.
- When I'm concerned about something, it doesn't occur to me that my thoughts might not be true.
- I am often preoccupied, and miss what is going on around me.
- When my thoughts overtake me and I feel worried, I don't know how to pause or interrupt this pattern.
- I can't imagine getting through a day without my cell phone.
- After I "send" an important e-mail or text, I often regret what I wrote.
- When I have difficult thoughts or feelings, I tend to avoid facing them for as long as I can.
- When I'm working on something, it's difficult to differentiate between priorities and tasks that could be done later...
- I tend to have a lot of ideas that never get implemented, and I don't know what to do about this.

(Post-intervention only):

1. What are some of the main points about “mindfulness” that resonate for you and your everyday life?

2. Which mindfulness practices are you finding helpful, and in what way?

3. _How helpful has this workshop series been for you? (0 = not helpful; 10 = extremely helpful)_____

Specifically, how does your study and practice of mindfulness help during the workday?

4. Have you been able to do some meditation practice at home?_____

If yes, about how many times a week?_____ Usually for how long?_____

5. Do you think your colleagues could benefit from learning about Workplace Mindfulness?

6. Do you have any suggestions on how this workshop series can be improved?

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