

# MINDFULNESS



THE **CONSCIOUS**  
PROFESSIONAL

# The Conscious Professional



The Conscious Professional offers mindful education to corporate clients through innovative training programs, coaching and consultancy. Founded by Neil Seligman in 2012, our mission is to introduce firms to the benefits of mindfulness, resilience and wellbeing services to improve the experience of professionals both at home and at work. Our vision holds a place for conscious businesses and enlightened executives.

The Conscious Professional's growing suite of training solutions includes Professional Resilience, Mindfulness 101, Mindfulness-Based Professional Effectiveness (MBPE), Mindfulness Retreats at Champneys Health Spa, Powerful Communication and The Conscious Leader. We also offer Wellbeing and Personal Excellence Programs and Events which can include talks, classes and workshops on subjects including Conscious Nutrition, Sleep Optimisation, Conscious Fitness, Yoga, Pilates, Mindfulness, Digital Wellbeing and many more.

Conscious Coaching can be provided for those who wish to take their learning further.

We believe that when professionals increase their capacity for self-awareness and resilience, they are healthier, more productive and more likely to express excellence in all aspects of their lives.

Welcome to your conscious future!

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when professionals increase  
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— THE CONSCIOUS PROFESSIONAL —



## 1 Mindfulness at Work

- What is Mindfulness? 4
- The Basics of Mindfulness Meditation 5
  - Sitting & Posture 5
  - Awareness of the Breath 5
  - Awareness of the Body 5
  - Awareness of the Mind 5
  - Awareness or Sense of Self 6
  - The Mindful Life 6

## 2 Why Practice Mindfulness?

- A. Meditation Reduces the Risk of Heart Attack and Stroke 8
- B. Long Term Meditators are Able to Process Information Faster 8
- C. People who Practice Certain Forms of Meditation are More Creative 8
- D. Meditators are Less Distracted and Less Stressed During Multi-Tasking 9
- E. Meditation: an Antidote to Addiction? 9
- Corporate Applications 9
- Mindful Marines 10

## 3 Presence

- What Is Presence? 11
- Exercise in Practicing Presence 11
- Presence and Nature 12

## 4 Mindfulness Exercises

- The Mindful Minute 13
- Conscious Breath 13
- Mindfulness Cues 13
- Exercise: My 3 Mindfulness Cues 13

## 5 Take It Away

- Remember the Three Bee's 14

## Resources and Contacts 16

# 1 Mindfulness at Work



Everyone seems to be talking about mindfulness! In fact, it is almost impossible to flip a page of a magazine or swipe an iPad without coming across yet another article telling us why we should be more mindful and less mindless. Doctors, academics, neuroscientists, marines, journalists, coaches and politicians alike all seem to be embracing the practice, proclaiming its benefits, and pushing forward what might perhaps be described as the mindful revolution!

So what is it all about...?

## What is Mindfulness?

The most widely-used definition of mindfulness is that coined by Jon Kabat-Zinn, advocate of mindfulness and author of bestsellers ‘*Wherever You Go, There You Are*’ and ‘*Full Catastrophe Living*’:

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*Mindfulness is paying attention  
in a particular way  
on purpose,  
in the present moment  
and non-judgmentally.*

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I like to think of mindfulness as a method for turning all of your time into ‘me-time’. Mindfulness gives you the skills to be consciously present and available in every single moment. It increases the quality of your awareness. We could refer to that as improving your user-experience.

I also like to explain mindfulness as a way of developing a craft of consciousness because mindfulness gives you the ability to navigate your internal world (of conscious awareness) with competence. Commitment and practice of the mindfulness principles later bring about excellence.

Mindfulness is not only an internal experience though. Mindfulness can help keep you balanced and effective throughout the day, as we will see.

It all begins with a decision to simply stop.

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## The Basics of Mindfulness Meditation



Mindfulness training starts with simple exercises to help us become familiar with practices of contemplation and meditation.

As the practices become second-nature, mindfulness can be practiced in day-to-day situations and integrated into work and home life. To run with the computing analogy, once you install mindfulness as your new operating system, your human user-experience upgrades.

**The Four foundations  
of mindfulness:**



Before saying more about each, we must first take our seat.

### Sitting & Posture

To meditate it is best to sit on a chair or on the floor. Lying down should be avoided as it is more likely to encourage a snooze than alert contemplation.

If you can, allow the spine to be self-supporting rather than resting on the back of the chair. The spine should be tall, aligned and energized. It need not be rigid or tense. Allow the neck to drop forward from upright, just a few centimetres, so it is comfortable. Your lips can be touching, your teeth slightly apart. Breathe through the nose.

### Awareness of the Breath

The entry point to our internal awareness is the breath. Close your eyes and count 10 breaths in and 10 breaths out then let the counting stop but the breathing continue. With the focus of your intention follow the breath into the body and follow it out again. Notice that there is an exchange going on inside of you. Witness the flow that is constantly moving in you and all around you.

### Awareness of the Body

Now notice your body, your physicality. Follow your awareness, feel through it. Take your focus into an arm and simply listen and discover. How does it feel? Is it comfortable? What are the characteristics of that arm being alive? Feel for temperature, movement, sensations of being. Move through other parts of the body at random. Check in. Listen. Feel. 'Be' in your body. Are certain parts of your body calling for your attention? An itch, a scratch? A shift of body weight? Pay attention and attend to the body's needs until the body is quietly resting at peace.

### Awareness of the Mind

The mind is likely to be chattering away. The chatter will be about all sorts of information jostling for your attention. Just watch or listen to the chatter. Remember this, you are the awareness of this chatter. The chatter is not you. So observe it.

Remark to yourself, 'This chatter is quite a peculiar happening. It is coasting along without me. I will sit calmly here and watch it, and see where it goes.'

The one thing not to do here is to give any energy to any particular thought that travels through. Simply allow thoughts to come and go. Know that if there was a useful reminder about something important that it will still be available to you in 5 minutes time when you come out of your practice.



## Awareness or Sense of Self

Finally notice who you are in this moment. What are the characteristics of being you right now. Become adept at observing and describing your sense of self. Remember also to BE your experience of this sense of self. In other words, participate fully in the moment.

## The Mindful Life

As you hone your skills of contemplation, meditation, stillness and awareness, life will provide multiple opportunities for you to put mindfulness into practice. You can respond with the three actions of mindfulness:



## THE THREE ACTIONS OF MINDFULNESS

- 1) OBSERVE** – become consciously aware of what is occurring without judging it as good or bad.
- 2) DESCRIBE** – neutrally name all aspects of the experience that you are aware of.  
E.g. I am experiencing anger. I feel hot. My palms are sweating.
- 3) PARTICIPATE** – make a choice, take action, speak your feelings, take the next step as consciously as you can.

Here are a few examples:

### ANXIETY

When we are anxious, mindfulness encourages us to meet the experience with acceptance, non-judgment and compassionate awareness. One of the outcomes of the mindful approach is that we step into resourcefulness rather than victimhood. We acknowledge our experience and through not resisting, we allow it to normalize. Anxiety dissipates or we take action.

### CATASTROPHISING

Have you ever noticed that when something small goes wrong, the mind starts listing a whole sequence of future problems that may arise as a result. This mindset can be referred to as catastrophising. Mindfulness allows us to come back to our actual experience, it returns us to the present moment and therefore brings us back to our senses (literally). It is far more useful to be fully present with what has actually happened than to live a life predicting the worst.

## VULNERABILITY AND TRAGEDY



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*Pain is inevitable,  
suffering is optional.*

— DALAI LAMA —

No human life will go untouched by vulnerability and tragedy. Whilst mindfulness cannot protect you from the pain of either it can remind you that suffering is a choice.

## STRESS AT WORK

The pressure of deadlines, difficult colleagues, the struggle for recognition and office politics all provide wonderful opportunities to put the lessons of mindfulness into practice. Noticing your growing ability to respond resourcefully, to create solutions and to meet each moment with curiosity are all signs that your mindfulness practice is paying dividends.

## FAMILY ISSUES

If you think you are enlightened they say you should spend a week living 24/7 with your family! Some of our biggest challenges to remain mindful are found at home. It is so easy to repeat old patterns, to rehearse painful conversations, arguments, to re-draw familiar lines in the sand.

Mindfulness invites us more deeply into the uniqueness of the moment and allows us to see beyond the drama and patterns that may have kept us stuck for so long.

## MINDFULNESS OUTCOMES

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*When you get the inside right,  
the outside falls into place.*

— ECKHART TOLLE —

So many professionals today are high-functioning and exhibit excellence in many aspects of their lives, yet struggle with their experience of internal conscious awareness. They long for release from perpetual thinking and over-analysis.

Mindfulness invites us back into a simpler, purer and more effective state of being and gives us the tools we need to bring excellence to our craft of consciousness. By learning how to let go, we discover new ways to be effective in all aspects of our lives.

## 2 Why Practice Mindfulness?



In recent years mindfulness has been the focus of numerous research papers and case studies. The science now supports what wisdom teachers have been proposing for millennia. A practice of stillness improves multiple aspects of human function from health to concentration and from productivity to wellbeing.

Here are some of the specific benefits you can look forward to:

### **A. MEDITATION REDUCES THE RISK OF HEART ATTACK AND STROKE**

Whilst a certain amount of stress can be motivating and engaging, a lifetime driven by extraordinary levels of cortisol will have consequences. Mental or physical breakdown, addiction, frustration, anger and bitterness are all consequences of mental overwhelm.

The latest study into the long-assumed physical benefits of meditation has shown the strongest link yet between a regular practice of meditation and better physical health.

“The main finding [of our research] is that, added on top of usual medical care, intervention with a mind-body technique (here transcendental meditation) can have a major effect on cardiovascular events,” says Robert Schneider, lead author on the study published in *Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes*.

### **B. LONG TERM MEDITATORS ARE ABLE TO PROCESS INFORMATION FASTER**

Much of your life is spent reading. Speedy and accurate assimilation of facts and information is the hallmark of any professional worth their salt. Meditation can help you become even faster and leave you with more free time:

Researchers at UCLA studied the brains of people who had meditated for years comparing them with those who never meditated or who only did it for a short period of time. They took MRI scans of 100 people, half meditators and half non-meditators. They were fascinated to find that long-time meditators showed higher levels of gyrification (a folding of the cerebral cortex that may be associated with faster information processing). In a study published in *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* in February 2012, they shared that, the more years a person had been meditating, the more gyrification their MRIs revealed.

### **C. PEOPLE WHO PRACTICE CERTAIN FORMS OF MEDITATION ARE MORE CREATIVE**

Even if you don't work in a profession considered to be 'creative' remember that creativity includes both problem-solving and idea-generation. Both vital skills that we all use on a daily basis.

Researchers at Leiden University in the Netherlands looked at the way two types of meditation, focused-attention (for example, focusing on your breath) and open-monitoring (where participants focus on both the internal and external) affected two types of creative thinking: the ability to generate new ideas and solutions to problems. In a study published in April 2012 in *Frontiers in Cognition*, they revealed that those who practiced open-monitoring meditation performed better than non-meditators at tasks related to coming up with new ideas.



## **D. MEDITATORS ARE LESS DISTRACTED AND LESS STRESSED DURING MULTI-TASKING**



You field client enquiries, work around your supervisor, prep your presentation, communicate with your colleagues and surf your inbox, often all at the same time. For most professionals, multi-tasking is the norm and being good at it is a necessity:

A computer scientist at the University of Washington teamed up with a neuroscientist at the University of Arizona to test whether meditation can help professionals stay focused and calm. The pair recruited 45 human resources managers and gave a third of them eight weeks of mindfulness-based meditation training, a third of them eight weeks of body relaxation training and a third of them no training at all. All the groups were given a stressful multi-tasking test before and after the eight weeks. In a study published in the Proceedings of Graphics Interface in May 2012, they showed that the meditation group reported less stress as they performed the multi-tasking test than both of the other groups.

This study has further obvious implications for burnout and breakdown.

## **E. MEDITATION: AN ANTIDOTE TO ADDICTION?**

A drink at the bar is one thing, but how many of us have, at one time or another, relied on some addictive substance or behaviour to get us through the week? Even if it does not affect you personally, you have probably seen the effects of addiction on colleagues at work. Work itself can also become an addiction, so can email, social media and food.

The body of evidence for the power of meditation in addiction treatment and prevention is growing. One 2007 study showed that individuals who participated in meditative practices during recovery gained higher levels of coping skills, as well as a heightened awareness of substance-abuse triggers.

Addiction could cost you lost days or even your career. Meditation offers the prospect of addressing some of the root cause. Prevention is indeed better than cure.

## **CORPORATE APPLICATIONS**

So the science now supports much of what many always assumed to be true about meditation. Do you need another reason? Well, the world is becoming more conscious. Professionals are being challenged in new ways. Here's how some of the corporates are responding to the challenge of a conscious future for business:

At General Mills in Minneapolis, Janice Marturano, deputy general counsel at the multinational has founded a program of meditation, yoga and mindfulness, "It's about training our minds to be more focused, to see with clarity, to have spaciousness for creativity and to feel connected. That compassion to ourselves, to everyone around us, our colleagues, customers, that's what the training of mindfulness is really about."

William George, a current Goldman Sachs board member agrees, "The main business case for meditation is that if you're fully present on the job, you will be more effective as a leader, you will make better decisions and you will work better with other people, I tend to live a very busy life. This keeps me focused on what's important."

## MINDFUL MARINES



If you are still wondering whether mindfulness has anything to offer you, consider that even the U.S. Marines have implemented and studied the effects of mindfulness training. As expected, Marines who received Mindfulness-Based Mind Fitness Training (MMFT) prior to deployment reported a significant decrease in stress-perception in the field.

Whilst we don't all face the imminent dangers of a modern soldier, our corporate environments can be fraught, stressful and challenging. Most of us could use enhanced tools to diminish stress.

### **QUESTION:**

*What keeps you focused on what is important to you and well enough to do it...?*



## What Is Presence?

Take yourself back to the last time you arrived in an unknown and exotic foreign country. The sounds, the smells, the tastes, the colours all compete for your attention as you attempt to take everything in. The experience is physical, visceral, vital and totally captivating. This is presence. It is that feeling of aliveness and alertness that means we are making ourselves fully available in the now moment for everything that life has to throw at us.

A key aspect of presence is therefore awareness. When we are fully present, we are truly 'being' where we are.

We might think that presence should be the natural state, but if you think back over the last 24 hours you might agree that these moments of clear total awareness are, in fact, quite rare. Take right now for instance.

### **QUESTION:**

*On a scale of 1–10 how present are you right now?*

Sometimes when I read I am totally absorbed and present with the material, whilst other times my mind wanders on to other concerns so that I have to read the same page 2 or 3 times. Wherever you fall on the presence scale, as an experiment, see if you can become more focused, alert, centred, stable and present right now. All it takes is a clear intention to welcome the fullness of the present moment into your awareness. This is the 'Power of Now' that Eckhart Tolle describes so well in his bestselling book of the same name.

The word presence can be defined as existing or occurring in a place or thing. You are present in you (your body, mind and consciousness). So we could say that your state of presence is really your best attempt in any moment to experience all of yourself. It would also make sense then, that the more of yourself that you can keep online and experience at any one time, the more energy will be available to you.

Consequently, in a world of distraction, stress, and competing needs, it is important and practical to develop a craft of presence.

If you aren't already familiar with how to do this, then you might like to follow the suggestions below.

### **EXERCISE IN PRACTICING PRESENCE**

Wherever you are, take your attention to the breath. Breathe in and out at a natural pace 5 times. Follow the breath in and out. In your head count 1 on the inhalation and 1 on the exhalation then repeat for 2,3,4 and 5. Keep your focus gently on the breath and the number. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back without judgment or frustration.

Now, simply expand your awareness into your body. Feel the body as it is right now. There might be an itch, a pain, a congestion or just a hum of life buzzing through the cells. Let it be

exactly as it is. Explore with your mind the feelings of this physicality that is 'you'. See if you can feel areas separately and then all of you at once.



As you become more fully present in the body open your eyes and see how long you can continue this focus. As you practice you will be able to hold presence for longer periods until you carry greater presence around with you all the time. By doing so, you are choosing to become more conscious, available and embodied.

## PRESENCE AND NATURE

Most professionals and more than 50% of the global population now live in large densely-populated cities. To a greater or lesser extent, we all know that heightened presence is directly supported by nature. Being in the mountains, walking through a shaded forest and taking time by the sea all nurture our consciousness in a way that urban environments cannot. This is why we tend to focus our holiday time around places of natural beauty that restore us.

There is a distinct truth and reality to nature that is deeply resonant with the fullness of a human being. Recent studies now indicate that time spent in natural environments may also be an effective population-wide strategy in the prevention of mental illness and other health issues.

Spending time with those aspects of our world that resonate most energetically with the energy and mystery of life, feels good.

The simple truth is that we should do it more often and if possible every day.

Without too much difficulty you might find it possible to take a few minutes on your way to work to head through the park instead of directly to the station, to eat your lunch on a bench in the park, or to wander through a local garden or along a river. Even 5 minutes contemplating or simply being in nature will have a positive impact and gets you connected to your practice of presence.

## Stages of Entry

### ECKHART TOLLE'S STAGES OF ENTRY INTO THE PRESENT MOMENT



# 4 Mindfulness Exercises



## THE MINDFUL MINUTE

Time yourself. How many relaxed breaths do you take in a minute?

**In 1 minute I breathe \_\_\_ times.**

Whenever you feel anxiety or stress inhibiting your productivity, give yourself a mindful minute simply by closing your eyes and counting up to that number of breaths.

## CONSCIOUS BREATH

—  
*A single conscious breath is a meditation.*

— ECKHART TOLLE —

A conscious breath is a single inhalation and exhalation taken with focus, presence with the intention of gentle, compassionate awareness.

## MINDFULNESS CUES

Research shows that mindfulness is most impactful when it is done little and often throughout your day. Mindfulness cues are things that crop-up randomly in your day which remind you to be more mindful. A simple way to do this is to take a single conscious breath.

### *Example:*

MINDFULNESS SOUND CUE: Phone Ringing

Each time the phone rings, before you pick-up you pause, take a conscious breath and then answer.

## Exercise: My 3 Mindfulness Cues

Choose your first 3 mindfulness cues. Add more as you wish.

**1 SOUND** \_\_\_\_\_

**1 OBJECT** \_\_\_\_\_

**1 PERSON** \_\_\_\_\_



## Remember the Three Bee's



**BREATHE** – Take a conscious breath.



**BODY** – Bring awareness to your body.



**BASICS** – take care of your thirst, hunger, temperature, anxiety etc **FIRST**.

## And Finally Consider This:

—  
*Keep your thoughts positive,  
because your thoughts become your words.*

*Keep your words positive,  
because your words become your behaviors.*

*Keep your behaviors positive,  
because your behaviors become your habits.*

*Keep your habits positive,  
because your habits become your values.*

*Keep your values positive,  
because your values become your destiny.*


— MAHATMA GANDI —





## Learn More

Follow our social media feeds for daily tips and updates on mindfulness and resilience.

 Neil Seligman

 The Conscious Professional

 theconsciousprofessional

 @consciouspro

## Further Reading and Internet Resources

*100 Mindfulness Meditations* by Neil Seligman

*Mindfulness, A Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World* by Mark Williams and Danny Penman

*This is Happening* by Rohan Gunatillake

*Wherever You Go There You Are* by Jon Kabat-Zinn

*Mindfulness at Work for Dummies* by Shamash Alidina and Juliet Adams

*Mindfulness @ Work* by Anna Black

[www.mindfulnet.org](http://www.mindfulnet.org)

[www.bemindful.co.uk](http://www.bemindful.co.uk)

[www.getsomeheadspace.com](http://www.getsomeheadspace.com)

APPS: *Headspace* / *Insight Timer* / *Buddhify* / *Mindfulness Daily* / *i-Qi timer*

## Mindfulness Retreats

Neil Seligman leads Luxury Mindfulness Retreat weekends at Champneys.  
See our website for more information.

## Work With Neil

I love catalysing transformation in people and organisations. I would love to hear from you and learn about your needs. [neil@theconsciousprofessional.com](mailto:neil@theconsciousprofessional.com)

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