MINDFULNESS X

AN 8-WEEK MINDFULNESS TRAINING TEMPLATE

INSTRUCTION MANUAL
Since 2000, the number of scientific studies on mindfulness has increased significantly. As a result of these studies, valuable insights about both the effects of mindfulness and the underlying mechanisms have emerged. These studies have shown that the effects of mindfulness cannot be attributed simply to relaxation, but also to complex processes, like attention regulation, emotional coping, observation, and time perspective.

This training was developed to systematically increase mindfulness not only through mindfulness practice, but also by considering the underlying mechanisms of mindfulness. For instance, in addition to practicing meditation, this training also answers questions like: “What happens when I meditate?”, “Why does meditation help reduce the effect of negative thoughts?”, “Why should I become aware of judgments I make?”. Understanding the underlying mechanisms makes it easier to apply mindfulness in a wide range of contexts and counteract the misconception that mindfulness is a trick or technique rather than a way of being.

The combination of the practice and the psychology behind mindfulness has been proven very helpful for many people. Over a number of years, this training has benefitted hundreds of people, helping them better understand the workings of the mind and applying the insights into practice to create a more balanced life. Mindfulness is a complex and multi-faceted construct. By addressing the most important elements of mindfulness, one-by-one, this training breaks down mindfulness in a comprehensive way, making it accessible to a large audience. This training program addresses different building blocks of mindfulness in each of the first 7 sessions and integrates these building blocks in session 8. After completing this training, participants have learned to integrate mindfulness into their daily lives and have gained a deep understanding of the essence of the construct itself. skills and deliver a professional training without having to put in hundreds of hours of prep-work.
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INTRODUCTION

This Training
Since its introduction to the mainstream western medicine and society in the late 70’s (Kabat-Zinn, 1990), mindfulness has received considerable scholarly attention. Over the last decade, scientific research on mindfulness has intensified, approaching the concept from both a practical and a theoretical angle. For instance, different mindfulness training programs have been developed and tested using a wide range of target populations. Training programs, such as mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR: Kabat-Zinn, 1982), mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT: Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002), and mindfulness-based eating awareness training (Kristeller, Bear, & Quillian-Wolever, 2006) have been used successfully to treat emotional and behavioral disorders, such as borderline personality disorder, major depression, chronic pain, or eating disorders (cf. Bishop et al., 2004). A growing body of empirical research has found evidence for the effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) (a) to reduce symptoms in clinical samples (for meta-analytic reviews, see Bohlmeijer, Prenger, Taal, & Cuijpers, 2010) and (b) to promote psychological well-being in non-clinical samples (Collard, Avny, & Boniwell, 2008). Besides its practical application, different studies have attempted to uncover the underlying mechanisms of mindfulness, aiming to understand the construct in terms of processes like self-regulation, impulsivity, executive functioning, and memory (see for instance Fetterman, Robinson, Ode & Gordon, 2010).

**MINDFULNESS DEFINED**

Mindfulness is defined as “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment” (Kabat-Zinn, 2003 p. 145). In other words, mindfulness involves directing attention to the experience in the present moment and a non-evaluative observation of that experience (Bishop et al., 2004). Research has consistently shown that mindfulness is an important predictor of well-being. For instance, the trait of mindfulness has been associated with higher levels of life satisfaction, more positive affect, less negative affect, greater life satisfaction, and sense of autonomy and competence (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Higher levels of mindfulness have also been found to be associated with various positive psychological outcomes, such as lower levels of neuroticism, depression, and anxiety as well as higher levels of self-esteem, vitality, and authenticity (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Lakey, Kernis, Heppner, & Lance, 2008).

**PRACTICE**

Researchers have convincingly argued that mindfulness is a natural human capacity
that untrained laypersons can experience (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Dane, 2011; Glomb et al., 2011). Natural variations in mindfulness are likely due to variations in genetic predisposition and environmental influences. However, mindfulness can also be trained. Research has revealed that meditation practice enhances mindfulness and thereby promotes psychological health in clinical and non-clinical samples (for meta-analyses, see Chiesa & Serretti, 2009; Grossman et al., 2004). However, mindfulness is not a “rarified state open only to those undergoing . . . training” (Brown, Ryan, Loverich, Biegel, & West, 2011, p. 1042; also see Brown & Ryan, 2004). The goal of mindfulness interventions is to teach participants to become aware of body sensations, thoughts, and emotions and to relate to them with an open, non-judgmental attitude (Shapiro, Astin, Bishop, & Cordova, 2005). Such an open state of mind can be cultivated by repeated practice. It is important to note that mindfulness is related to but not equal to meditation. Although mindfulness is often predominantly associated with meditation, the range of practical mindfulness exercises vastly extends beyond formal meditational practice. In other words, “sitting on a cushion” is merely one way of cultivating “an openhearted, moment-to-moment, non-judgmental awareness” (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, p. 24). Integrating mindfulness into daily life routines and working habits is an important consideration, especially when under time pressure, deadlines, and tight schedules.

## TECHNIQUES

The aim of this section is to briefly discuss the most commonly used mindfulness practices, both formal and informal, that are well documented and researched and are part of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program developed by Kabat Zinn (Kabat-Zinn, 1982; Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Formal exercises include meditation practices as well as movement practices, such as mindful yoga or mindful walking. Informal exercises on the other hand, involve paying full attention, in a mindful way, to what one is doing or experiencing at a given moment.

### FORMAL MEDITATION EXERCISES

The following sections describe three formal mindfulness meditation exercises that are an inherent part of mindfulness interventions and performed during group sessions under the supervision of the mindfulness trainer. Participants are also encouraged to perform them at home daily. To help them do so, participants usually receive audio files in which the trainer guides them through the respective meditations.
Body scan
The body scan, as the name suggests, entails bringing awareness to each part of the body. Participants are first instructed to pay attention to the posture and then to their breathing. Subsequently, attention is directed to different body parts, starting with the feet and moving up from there. During the exercise, participants pay attention to different physical sensations present in a specific area of the body. After focusing attention briefly on a particular region of the body, one is instructed to move on to the next region. During the exercise, many find themselves easily distracted by thoughts, bodily sensations, or sounds. When distraction occurs, the participant is instructed to gently return attention to the body part at hand. Participants are encouraged to do so without blaming themselves or reacting in frustration, as the occurrence of distracting thoughts or sensations is inevitable, which requires extensive practice until they become less. In addition, when paying attention to the body, one might become aware of painful or unpleasant sensations (e.g., neck or back pain). Instead of altering, ignoring, or suppressing these sensations, one simply notices them on a moment by moment basis.

Seated meditation
Just as the body scan uses the body as an object of attention, the seated meditation takes the breath as the main focus of attention. Participants are instructed to sit in an upward position with a straight back, preferably with their eyes closed. After becoming briefly aware of the current posture, the participant directs attention to the breathing. He or she notices the physical sensations of the breathing, such as the air moving into the nostrils and the chest expanding. As soon as the mind begins to wander, the participant simply notices the distracting thought without evaluating it and returns his attention to the breath in a kind way.

Three-minute breathing space
The three-minute breathing space is a very brief mindfulness meditation that can help integrate mindfulness into everyday life. It enables one to disrupt automatic patterns of thinking and behavior and increase acceptance-based coping. The exercise commonly involves the following three steps. The first step involves asking oneself "Where am I?" “How am I?” “What am I thinking?” In this way, one steps outside the “doing mode” for a moment, disrupts habitual patterns, and becomes aware of the current experience. The second step involves a single focus of attention. Attention is directed away from thinking to the breath. During the third and last step, attention is expanded so that it also includes the awareness of body sensations. The focus here is on the body as a whole. The three-minute breathing space involves a direct way of coping characterized by the awareness and willingness to experience what is present.
Obstacles and practical advice
During working hours, it is often difficult if not impossible to spend 15 minutes lying down performing a body scan or focusing on one’s breath with the eyes closed. Note, however, that formal exercises can be adapted. While the body scan is most often carried out in a lying position, it is possible to use a seated position as well. Moreover, the duration can be altered. Both longer (e.g., 45 minutes) and shorter versions (e.g., 15 minutes) of the seated meditation and body scan have been used in practice and research. For some people, starting with shorter meditations and building from there is more effective in terms of adherence than starting with full 15-minute meditation sessions. The three-minute breathing space may be particularly useful in this respect because of its short duration. First, to build a habit, participants can be asked to use the breathing space at three fixed times during a day. Next, when participants are used to the exercise, they can use the exercise whenever they feel the need. In the latter case, the exercise is used to cope with emotions, thoughts, feelings, or sensations. For instance, when an employee experiences stress at work, he/she may pause for a moment and use the exercise to disrupt the negative cycle of stress-related thoughts. By taking some time to connect with the body, he/she may also become aware of bodily stress responses, allowing for appropriate measurements (e.g., taking a break).

Integrating more extensive formal mindfulness practices in an already busy daily life often requires careful planning and communication. It is recommended that people decide themselves when and where they want to do the exercises. While some people find it more feasible to practice in the morning before going to work, others may benefit more from practicing in the evening after work. Moreover, informing family members about the practice can help them minimize interruptions during practice. Repeating a practice on a regular basis using the same time and location is likely to result in a habit, which will increase these effects.

INFORMAL EXERCISES

In addition to these formal exercises, mindfulness interventions also involve informal exercises that aim to enhance mindful awareness during everyday activities. They require a single focus of attention and the ability to gently turn back to the object of attention following distraction. The object of attention can be anything, ranging from a conversation with a colleague to eating lunch. We predict that these exercises are particularly useful when attempting to integrate mindfulness at the workplace because they do not necessarily require additional time or environmental changes. Note that there are virtually endless examples of informal practices, which makes it impossible to list and describe them all. We have attempted to categorize the most important informal exercises and briefly explain them in the context of work.
Awareness of routine activities
Routine activities are activities performed regularly, often daily. Most routine activities require little conscious attention because they are highly automatized. Examples include taking a shower, driving or walking to the workplace, or consuming lunch. The idea is to focus attention fully on the activity; the body movements, the sight, the sensations. When thoughts or other distractions emerge, one notices them and brings back attention to the task at hand. For instance, when eating mindfully, one eats slowly, directing attention mainly to the experience in the present moment, which includes physical movements, the taste and smell of the food, and the like. Thus, rather than doing multiple things at the same time (such as reading while eating, talking on the phone while driving home, thinking about work while taking a shower), one adopts a single focus of attention. As part of mindfulness training programs, participants are encouraged to pick a few of these routine activities and to practice performing them in a mindful way. Since it is not time consuming and involves activities that are performed daily, this exercise can easily be implemented into one's workday. Participants may pick activities, such as being mindful while having lunch, being mindful while walking to the copy machine, or being mindful while driving home from work.

Body awareness
The awareness of the body that is cultivated through the body scan can be implemented in daily life by paying attention to the body regularly throughout the day in various circumstances. One can pay attention to the posture and become aware of physical sensations, such as pain or tension. Jobs requiring lifting, monotonous work tasks, uncomfortable work postures, repetitive movements, and prolonged periods at computer terminals have been found to be associated with physical problems, such as neck/back pain and occupational repetitive strain injuries (Aaras, Horgen, & Ro, 2000). Mindful awareness of these sensations is likely to enhance early detection and prevention of physical complaints. One can, for instance, implement daily moments of mindful awareness by setting an alarm at random intervals to disrupt repetitive movements or become aware of one's posture.

Awareness of impulsive and reactive patterns
Many daily patterns of thinking and behavior are habitual (unconscious) reactions to experiences or events. Failing to perform well may immediately trigger negative self-critical thoughts and judgments. The experience of sadness can result in a direct attempt to push away the unwanted feeling. Receiving a snide remark from a colleague may cause one to raise the voice and say things that he/she might regret afterwards. In all these examples, automatic patterns guide the behavior. Mindfulness requires awareness of these experiences as they arise during the day.
While it may be difficult to become aware of these experiences before the onset of an impulsive reaction, becoming aware of them afterwards can also be beneficial because it may enhance detection of similar patterns in the future.

**Awareness during social interaction**

Practicing mindfulness in a social context involves interacting with the other person(s) as a single point of focus. Instead of multi-tasking during a conversation with a colleague or thinking about what to say next, attention is paid to the current conversation. In contrast to identifying with one’s own assumptions and reacting impulsively, mindfulness requires an open, non-judgemental attitude during the conversation characterized by deep listening, perspective taking, and allowing the other to respond. Moreover, mindfulness during social interaction can involve speaking with awareness. Examples include pausing before speaking, monitoring one’s thoughts, and considering the effect of speaking them out loud. Practicing awareness during social interaction is an exercise that can easily be implemented into one’s everyday life.
SESSION 1

Attention and the Now
OBJECTIVE

The objective of this first session is to familiarize participants with the two most important building blocks of mindfulness, attention and the present moment. The cultivation of attention to the present moment is at the heart of mindfulness. The most common reason why people fail to pay attention to the present moment is because they are occupied by thinking, often about the past or the future. In this session, we introduce the role of thoughts and their relationship with the present moment.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Attention
A core component of mindfulness practices is focused attention. The practitioner uses one object of attention, for instance the breath or a body region, and attempts to stay connected to this object. This process has also been referred to as ‘alerting’, sustained attention, or vigilance (Posner & Petersen, 1990). Moreover, as soon as one gets distracted by thoughts, feelings, body sensations, or sounds, attention is redirected to the initial object of attention, a process referred to as orienting or selective attention (Posner & Petersen, 1990). In other words, mindfulness practices can help individual learn to detect when attention wanders and thus strengthen the capacity to monitor thoughts and behavior, a crucial aspect of successful self-regulation (e.g., Carver, 2004).

The present moment
Mindfulness involves focusing attention on the present moment. In a mindful state, the individual directs attention to the internal and external phenomena occurring at each moment of awareness (e.g., Baer, 2003). It is contrasted with states in which the mind is preoccupied with thoughts about the past or the future, such as memories, plans, or fantasies. Both rumination and worry, which are associated with increased severity of depressive symptoms, are examples typically do not focus on the present moment. When ruminating, the individual is preoccupied with automatically recurring thoughts from the past, such as the causes and consequences of their feelings (e.g., Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991). Rumination is focused on and guided solely by past negative experiences, which inevitably draw attention away from the present moment. In contrast, being mindful entails directing attention to the present moment in a non-judgmental and accepting way. By cultivating mindfulness skills, one becomes skilled at directing attention to the present moment, which may facilitate directing attention away from ruminative thoughts.
Worrying involves continued anxious anticipation of future events. Whereas worry involves a strong focus on the future, mindfulness entails paying attention to the present moment. Moreover, whereas worrying implicates danger and uncertainty avoidance, mindfulness involves stepping out of thinking and allowing present internal and external experiences to be as they are. Past research has shown that mindfulness can help reduce worry by decreasing the number and duration of worry episodes and decrease worry-related anxiety and depressive symptoms (Delgado et al., 2010). Mindfulness has also been found to counter worry at a physiological level. Mindfulness is characterized by lower respiration rate and heart rate, higher expiration time, and increased heart rate variability, whereas worry is characterized by higher respiration rate and heart rate, lower expiration time, and decreased heart rate variability (Delgado et al., 2010).

Mindfulness has also been found to decrease rumination. More specifically, individuals who score high on measures of mindfulness have lower scores on measures of rumination (Williams, 2008). Mindfulness training has resulted in a significant pre–post decrease in rumination in otherwise healthy individuals experiencing significant amounts of stress (Jain et al., 2007).
## OVERVIEW

The table below provides a chronological overview of all steps in this session.

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<td>Welcome and Introduction</td>
<td>10 min.</td>
<td>10 min.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Introducing Each Other</td>
<td>30 min.</td>
<td>40 min.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Exercise - Just Be</td>
<td>10 min.</td>
<td>50 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Exercise - The body Scan</td>
<td>30 min.</td>
<td>1 h. 20 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>30 min.</td>
<td>1 h. 50 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>5 min.</td>
<td>1 h. 55 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Closing the Session</td>
<td>5 min.</td>
<td>2 h.</td>
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**STEP 1: WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

- Welcome the participants
- Introduce the trainer to participants
- Share general rules, such as privacy protection, being on time, switching phone off, etc.

**STEP 2: INTRODUCING EACH OTHER**

Ask participants to briefly introduce each other. The following questions may be addressed:

- Could you tell us a bit about yourself?
- What is your main reason for joining this training?
- What do you hope to learn?
- Do you have any previous experience with mindfulness or meditation?

**STEP 3: EXERCISE – JUST BE**

Instruct participants to do the following:

*I would like to run a small experiment with you. This exercise only takes 1 minute. I will tell you when the time is up. I want to invite you to be silent for 1 minute, without talking or doing anything, just be here.*

**REVIEWING THE EXERCISE**

Pose the following questions to the participants:

- What did you notice during the exercise?
- Were you distracted by your thoughts during the exercise?
- What were your thoughts about?

**EXPLAINING THE GOAL OF THE EXERCISE**

The goal of this exercise was to allow participants to see how much attention goes to their thoughts. Participants likely noticed that the mind is all over the place. The mind may say things like “this is crazy, what’s the use of this?” or conjure up thoughts or images of the past or future. The mind can be a very powerful tool, but it can be very difficult to keep it under control. In most cases, thoughts are
controlling us, rather than the other way around.

**STEP 4: EXERCISE – BODY SCAN**

For a detailed description and transcript, please refer to Chapter 10 "Formal Meditations". After completing the body scan, make sure to review the exercise with participants by posing the questions stated above.

In this first session, extra attention needs to be paid to the tendency of the mind to wander and become occupied by thoughts about the past or future. Many participants will notice that the simple instruction to stay focused on a certain body part in the present moment is often difficult because thoughts take over. This is a very natural process that illustrates the limited amount of control that many people have over their attention.

The body scan is a powerful tool to train both the ability to notice when attention is surpassed by thoughts and the ability to direct attention back to the present moment after this awareness. In other words, the body scan can help to train the “attentional muscle” and connect attention to the present moment.

**STEP 5: PRESENTATION**

See the PowerPoint file “Session 1 - Attention and the Now.ppt”.

**STEP 6: HOMEWORK**

Inform participants about the homework:

- Do the body scan (short or long) at home. The more repetitions, the greater the effect. Try to do the body scan as often as possible. It is advisable to do the body scan daily.
- Choose one (or more) routine activities, such as brushing your teeth, cycling home, eating, doing the dishes, going to the supermarket, taking a walk, etc., and do it with your full attention. In other words, try to focus fully on the act.

Note that this information can also be found in the workbook that participants will receive.
STEP 7: CLOSING THE SESSION

- Ask if there are any remaining questions.
- Hand the workbook to participants.
- Thank the participants for attending.
MINDFULNESS X

The Product
WHAT IS MINDFULNESS X?

Mindfulness X is a complete, 8-session mindfulness training template for professionals. It includes everything you need to deliver a high quality, mindfulness training that is science-based.

This training package is designed for people who are passionate about helping others improve their lives in meaningful ways.

With Mindfulness X, you’ll be able to teach mindfulness and inspire other people. Not only will you understand the 8 most important pillars of mindfulness, but you’ll also learn to explain and implement them.
WHY MINDFULNESS X?

Mindfulness X was developed to systematically increase mindfulness not only through mindfulness practice but also by covering the underlying mechanisms of mindfulness. Understanding the underlying mechanisms makes it easier to apply mindfulness in a wide range of contexts and counteracts the misconception that mindfulness is a trick or technique, rather than a way of being.

The combination of the practice and the psychology behind mindfulness has been proven very helpful for many people. Over a number of years, this training has benefitted hundreds of people with an approach that helped them better understand the workings of the mind and directly put insights into practice to create a more balanced life.

By addressing the most important elements of mindfulness, one-by-one, this training breaks down mindfulness in a comprehensive way, making it accessible to a large audience. Mindfulness X addresses a different building block of mindfulness in each of the first 7 sessions and integrates these building blocks in session 8. After completing this training, participants have learned to integrate mindfulness into their daily lives and have gained a deep understanding of the essence of the construct itself.

The manual you are reading now contains session 1 of Mindfulness X for the practitioner, accompanied by session 1 for the participant in a separate document. The practitioner manual serves as a guide for you as a trainer, coach, teacher, therapist or other kind of helping professional. The full version of this product, available here, contains:

- An instruction manual for you as a practitioner (text, PDF)
- A workbook to hand out to your participants (text, PDF)
- Video instructions for you as a practitioner (8 videos, MP4)
- The audio version of the instructions (8 audio files, MP3)
- 8 PowerPoint presentations (slides, PPT)
- Guided meditations (audio, MP3)
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