

# WORKPLACE CHALLENGES



People are working longer,  
harder and becoming  
more stressed.

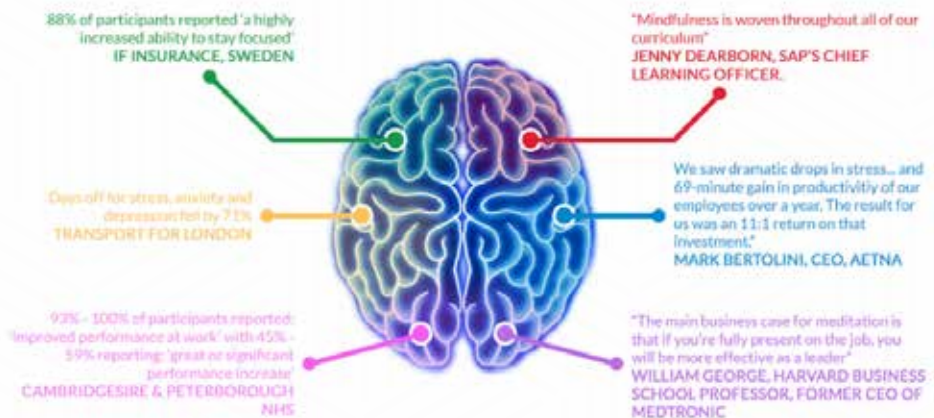


# MINDFULNESS AT WORK - JOIN THE TREND TODAY

**Google, Nike, Goldman Sachs and Apple** have implemented wellbeing and mindfulness programs realizing a **7% decrease in healthcare costs and a productivity gain of nearly \$3000 USD per employee**, which represents an 11-to-1 return on their investment (Schaufenbuel, K, 2014).



## Mindful Leadership Directly Impacts Results



## MINDFULNESS AT WORK HAS PROVEN TO:

- Help people experiencing stress, anxiety and depression
- Increase Emotional Intelligence in Leaders
- Improve Productivity
- Reduce Sick Leave and Turn Over
- Improve communication & decision making
- Build individual and team resilience
- Improve self-care and interpersonal relationships

## PROBLEMS FACED IN THE WORKPLACE INCLUDE

Significant increase in reported mental health issues at work

1. **Reduction in Productivity**
2. **Increased Sick Leave**
3. **High Turn Over**
4. **Disconnected Work Culture**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) stated that Long-term exposure to work-related stress = depression, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, long-term absenteeism, work disability, and early retirement (WHO, 2012).

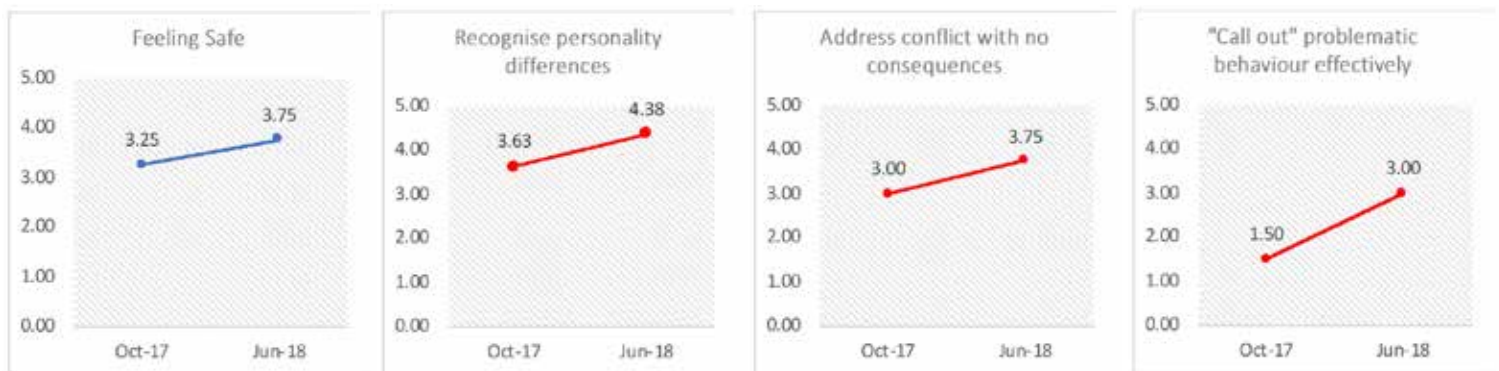
Willis Towers Watson's earlier 2017 Benefits Trends Survey found that about 60% of employees admitted to having above average or high levels of stress. However, only 27% of employers are actually taking acts to reduce work-related stress (Davenport, 2017).

## PROOF THAT MINDFULNESS SOLVES THESE PROBLEMS

Aetna, the health care company, embarked on a 12-week pilot mindfulness programme for over 200 employees. They found that the workers who had learnt mindfulness gained 62 minutes per week of extra productivity. That added an estimated \$3,000 per employee each year to the bottom line.

## I HAVE PROVEN IT WORKS

In 2015, I proved that participating in a 6-minute Mindfulness practice, 4 times per week for 4 weeks increased overall wellbeing in 15 CEOs. In 2018, I proved that incorporating Mindfulness as part of improving individual and team performance lead to more cohesive teams.





# WHY MINDFULNESS WORKS?

When we perceive any kind of threat, our brains transport us back millions of years ago, when we were wandering the savanna looking for food, and just as we spot dinner, a large hungry lion spots us as their dinner!

The fear, flight, fright part of our brain called the amygdala lights up and gets us ready to respond. However in 2020 unless you are on safari, it is unlikely it is a lion in your path. Your amygdala doesn't know the difference between real and perceived threat. Your amygdala just sees Lion! Your Lion might be telling your boss you won't make your deadline or target, or perhaps it is giving or receiving negative feedback on performance, it could be you letting your board know you had a bad quarter or having to go to yet another networking event and promote yourself or your services.



## AMYGDALA HIJACK

When the amygdala is “switched on” it stops us from accessing our “smart-brain” or “logical-brain” which is in the pre-frontal cortex. So you know that saying “I couldn't think straight?” Your amygdala has hijacked your smart brain to protect you from your lion.

People who practice Mindfulness are able to notice the flight, fright, fight response before acting or reacting. This pause allows the “smart-brain” to switch back on. People who are more mindful are able to make better decisions even when faced with a stressful situation.

# LEADERSHIP, STRESS AND PERFORMANCE

“We found it interesting that there were multiple correlations between mindfulness practices and leadership performance. It is possible that leaders who adopt and implement practices related to mindfulness are viewed as more caring than other leaders, thereby enhancing their reputations as emotionally intelligent people capable of engaging their workforces.” (Overholt & Vickers, 2019).

This is because the mechanisms underlying mindfulness practice increase a person’s willingness to experience difficult emotions (e.g., anxiety, distress, anger), pause, and notice these emotions rather than react. For example giving or receiving negative feedback can lead to anxiety, distress and anger while having the ability to observe these emotions rather than become a form of emotional intelligence allows this person to respond and behave in a more considered manner. Normally more aligned to theirs and their organisations’s values.

Mindfulness improves awareness of thoughts, awareness of bodily sensations, and self-compassion and helps people to deal with stress. For example, a person who practices Mindfulness can notice a negative thought about their boss or a peer, notice the tension in the body (e.g., head, neck, lower back) and recognise they are about to go into a “fear, flight, fright” response.



“Mindfulness can also help senior leaders improve their focus on their mindsets, emotional states, and how those two affect how they interact with others. Intentional, long-term focus helps improve leaders’ flexibility and adaptability. It also helps them move beyond their familiar ways of thinking and seeing the world and become open to new ways of listening, leading, responding, and innovating.”

**(Mindfulnet.org, n.d.)**



Now in 2019 our minds are made for peak performance while working under stone age conditions

**Dr Rick Hansen,  
Neuroscientist**



## **BUT I HAVE AN EAP PROGRAM FOR THIS?**

I absolutely support EAP providers, in fact I have worked for them. So I understand the value they provide for employees. EAP is considered a tertiary intervention (also known as the third of final intervention or strategy) which is considered reactive. A situation occurs where an employee needs support and if you have an EAP program that employee can get that support. This is great, however due to the anonymous nature of most EAP programs, designed to protect the employee, it also means the employer has no visibility of who is using the program and who needs help. Most of the clients I worked with accessing their EAP program may have benefited from an earlier intervention. With increased stress, sick leave and turnover do organisations need to consider alternative ways to support their people, that are proactive and therefore able to intervene sooner?

### **Do you have a proactive plan in place?**

Primary and Secondary strategies are proactive

**Primary** is specific to the job or process, for example redesigning a Leader's or employees' job that enhances their ability to be successful. This could be as simple as changing one process or modifying their key responsibilities. Or hiring a Coach to help them overcome challenges and be successful in their role.

**Secondary** interventions are typically focused on training new skills. For example educating Leaders on how to recognise when they or their employees are at risk of burnout and what to do about it. But more importantly learn how build resilience so that when those peaks of stress arrive (end of financial year, unexpected and competing demands, change of any kind, redundancies) your people are better equipped to perform even during these times of stress.

# CONCLUDING COMMENTS

My research and experience strongly suggests that if organisations take a proactive approach in educating their Leaders and team how to navigate stress, we see less burnout, less stress, sick leave and turnover, and arguably less reliance on EAP. When I worked as an EAP counsellor what I noticed was the problems these folk were experiencing were now impacting their home and work life, and mental health. Some were critical. I would like to help you, and organisations change that.

I also understand that cost is an issue. In a recent survey I conducted, my clients indicated that although there was a need for proactive approaches such as coaching and team programs, they could only afford to invest in EAP. Interesting. And a bit of a dilemma.

What the evidence does suggest is group-based Mindfulness programs do work! And group-based programs are far more affordable than one-on-one coaching. If I haven't convinced you just do a couple of searches on mindfulness in the workplace.

**If you would like to know about my group based Mindfulness & Resilience programs click on the contact link below.**

Join me, and other organisations in fostering workplaces where people are enabled and motivated to perform their best, even during times of stress.

**Margie Ireland**  
**Passionate about People and their work**

**CONTACT ME**

## FURTHER EVIDENCE:

Mindfulness transforming organisations from the inside out Chiesa & Serretti identified 10 studies involving 671 participants from a healthy (non-clinical population) showing a significant reduction of stress by practicing Mindfulness ranging 4-10 weeks.

Janssen and colleagues in 2018 reviewed 23 studies involving employees and managers participating in group Mindfulness programs had:

- Reduction in symptoms of Burnout (decrease exhaustion, increase personal accomplishment, decrease depersonalisation)
- Reduction in Stress, Psychological Distress, Depression, Anxiety, Occupational Distress
- Increase Compassion, Life-Satisfaction, self-efficacy, Relaxation, Regulating emotions at work, Work Engagement

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