



Practicing Mindfulness at Work

We live in a busy world. People feel they are behind and cannot catch up. They rush but there is never enough time. If rushing helped, people would be caught up by now. When you rush, you do not think about what you are doing. You may continue to work in ways that do not make sense. You definitely will not notice the habits that create mistakes. And rushing creates more stress, which makes you rush through things. It is a sad cycle.

What if slowing down on the job worked better than rushing? Studies show that pausing and paying attention works better than rushing. This is known as mindfulness. It is a way of paying attention to the present moment on purpose and without judging. Scientists have studied mindfulness and say it decreases stress and increases health and productivity.

Mindful employees use their time better and rush less. They look at their jobs and their time differently. They avoid mistakes that would take time to fix. They feel more in control, more productive and less stressed.

How will this help at work?

Being aware of the present and being nonjudgmental will help you:

- Keep your mind on your work and be more productive
- Have clearer, more valuable communication with others
- Notice patterns and make the best use of your time

Plan your day

Begin each day with a look at your calendar or list of tasks. You need to understand your day so you can plan and prioritize. What are your goals and how can you achieve them? You may have difficult or overwhelming tasks. Instead of letting emotion take over, break them into smaller tasks. This step will help you act with purpose instead of falling into time-stealing habits.

Sticking to a plan can be hard. You may become distracted or off-task. You may find yourself rushing. Slow down and notice what you are doing and feeling. Come back to the present moment. Taking a few moments to focus on your breath can help you do so. Remember your plan and goals and continue working. The more you use mindfulness to keep yourself on track, the easier it will become.

You can learn a lot by making notes when you realize you are not mindful. What are you doing? Daydreaming? Rushing? Chatting? Note the time and what is going on around you. For example, you may become rushed an hour before lunch every day. Could hunger be affecting your ability to work mindfully? Is your workplace louder at that time? Eventually you may see a pattern. Maybe you need a snack. Maybe you need to take your work somewhere quiet. Maybe that is the best time for a break or an earlier lunch. When you know when and why you stop paying attention, you can take steps to fix it.

Communicate well with others

Knowing your job and priorities will help you communicate effectively. Keep conversations or emails on track by being present and remembering your goals and priorities. Use active listening skills to stay present and attentive. Leave judgment out of it. An open mind is ready to receive useful information.

If you begin an interaction, have a point. What do you need the other person to do? Why? When? If someone else begins an interaction, pay attention and figure out their point. Do they want you to do something? Some interactions can throw you off guard. Stay calm. Remember your goals and priorities. In all interpersonal communication, take time to think before acting or reacting.

Hold useful meetings

A mindful person gets as much out of meetings as possible. Mindfully prepare for the meeting. What do you know about it? What is its purpose? What do you want to know or share? Work the meeting into your plan for the day. Gather any important materials. Leave judgment at the door so you do not ignore information. Even a person who is wrong or off-track is telling you where they stand. Actively listen. People are more open to a receptive audience. If you have a question, know why you want the answer. If it is not related to your goals, it may not be the right time to ask. Doodling, staring into space and using your phone are not mindful actions. They are disrespectful time wasters. After the meeting, take a moment to jot down notes and finish this task. When you go back to your desk, refer to your list and mindfully continue your day.

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