

Considerations for Mindfulness in the Workplace

One of the problems with mindfulness in the workplace that was noted by Hyland et al. (2015) was that it can decrease automaticity. While this could be useful for high-risk decisions, it may be detrimental for mundane tasks, where it would slow down productivity. Another issue comes from increasing mindfulness in instances when an employee's values do not align with those of the organization. It is not difficult to envision that an exploited worker who has low job satisfaction might decrease productivity after becoming more aware of the perceived injustices of the organization. Assessing employee values might be the first step towards managing this issue.



The context of the work environment is also important to consider in the application of mindfulness. A soldier in boot camp might need to think less rather than more to accomplish his or her immediate goals. Unfocused mindfulness might not enhance the productivity of the soldier, but mindfulness in the context of the work environment, with shared values between the individual and the organization, might increase productivity.

In order to develop effective mindfulness interventions in the workplace, researchers must develop one unified concept of mindfulness to measure. Internal validity must be developed first, then external validity. Once this is established, there are a variety of individual difference measures that would seem to be applicable to the development of an understanding of contexts in which the intervention could work in an organization, most notably need for cognition and individual differences in working memory capacity.

Conclusions

Mindfulness interventions in the workplace appear to be well worth researching. However, as outlined above, there are several issues that can be informed by existing research on social automaticity, particularly thought suppression, working memory, bias correction, and the impact of interfering with automatic cognitive processes in specific work contexts.

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