

30 Day Mindfulness Challenge: Research Report

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Study Overview

The purpose of this research was (a) to investigate whether the mindfulness training program developed by MindWell-U increases mindfulness, and (b) to measure its effects on a number of outcomes relevant to workplace performance.

Research Method

This research used a “waitlist” control design. Participants were randomly assigned to either an “experimental” or “control” group. Those in the experimental group received the training first, while those in the control group received the training after the experimental group was trained. All participants were asked to complete an online survey at baseline. They were then asked to complete the same survey after the training for the experimental group was complete, but before the training for the control group had commenced. In this way, it was possible to compare the scores of the experimental group with the control group that had yet to be trained. To measure the effects of the training over time, participants were asked to complete the survey a third time after the control group finished training. We used scientifically validated measures to test the effects of the training program on mindfulness and numerous workplace outcomes.

Participants

This study was conducted in association with five organizations from a variety of sectors and industries across Canada. Close to 1,000 employees at all levels of these organizations took part. The total number of participants across all five organizations who completed both a pre- and post-training survey was 455, of whom 254 were in the experimental group and 201 were in the control group. The following results are based on the data provided by these 455 participants. The results on the effects of the training over time are based on the 112 participants from the experimental group who completed the survey one month after the end of their training.

Results

1. The Training Increased Mindfulness

Participants in the experimental group reported significantly higher levels of mindfulness after as compared to before the training, and compared to the control group. Increasing mindfulness is important because it leads to improvements in the outcomes listed below.

2. *The Training Increased Emotion Regulation*

Participants in the experimental group reported significantly higher levels of emotion regulation after as compared to before the training, and compared to the control group. In this study emotion regulation consisted of three aspects:

(a) awareness and clarity of one's own emotions; (b) ability to maintain focus on work activities during emotional upset; and (c) emotion acceptance. Emotion regulation is important because it helps employees stay calm and focused in the workplace when stress gets high.

3. *The Training Increased Well-Being*

Participants in the experimental group reported significantly higher levels of well-being after as compared to before the training, and compared to the control group. Well-being consisted of six elements: (a) self-discovery; (b) perceived development of one's best potentials; (c) investment of significant effort in the pursuit of excellence; (d) intense involvement in activities (i.e. absorption or "flow"); (e) enjoyment of activities as personally expressive; and (f) sense of purpose and meaning in life. Studies show that well-being is positively related to job satisfaction and employee performance.

4. *The Training Increased Self-Compassion*

Participants reported higher levels of self-compassion after as compared to before the training, and compared to the control group. Self-compassion is comprised of three dimensions, including (a) self-kindness; (b) recognizing common humanity; and (c) mindfulness. Research links self-compassion with a host of workplace benefits, including resilience, pro-social behaviour, and performance.

5. *The Training Increased Humility*

Participants in the experimental group reported significantly higher levels of humility after as compared to before the training, and compared to the control group. Humility is comprised of three elements: (a) willingness to view oneself accurately; (b) displayed appreciation of others' strengths; and (c) teachability. Studies show that humility relates positively to interpersonal relationships, pro-social behaviour, and leadership performance. Humility is important because it helps employees more accurately understand how they can improve their own performance and seek out opportunities to do so.

6. *The Training Increased Authenticity*

Participants in the experimental group reported significantly higher levels of authenticity after as compared to before the training, and compared to the control group. Authenticity is made up of three dimensions: (a) self-awareness; (b) alignment of values and behaviours; and (c) openness to external influence. Research shows that authenticity relates to positive interpersonal relationships, pro-social behaviour, and leadership performance.

7. *The Training Increased Workplace Vigour*
Participants in the experimental group reported significantly higher levels of workplace vigour after as compared to before the training, and compared to the control group. Workplace vigour is about the energy one brings to one's job and is a key element of work engagement. It is important because it is associated with resilience, endurance, and workplace performance.
8. *The Training Increased Psychological Capital*
Participants in the experimental group reported significantly higher levels of psychological capital after as compared to before the training, and compared to the control group. Psychological capital consists of four dimensions: (a) self-efficacy (i.e., self-confidence with respect to taking on challenging tasks); (b) hope (i.e., persevering towards goals and, when necessary, redirecting efforts towards those goals); (c) resilience (i.e., sustaining and bouncing back from challenges and problems); and (d) optimism (i.e., a positive outlook on succeeding now and in the future). Psychological capital is important because it contributes positively to work attitudes and performance.
9. *The Training Increased the Tendency to Go Above and Beyond the Call of Duty*
Participants in the experimental group reported higher levels of performance directed at helping others in the workplace after as compared to before the training, and compared to the control group.
10. *The Effects of the Training Lasted Up to One Month Afterwards*
One month after the training, participants reported statistically equivalent levels of almost all of the above-noted variables, including (a) mindfulness, (b) emotion regulation, (c) self-compassion, (d) humility, (e) workplace vigour, (f) psychological capital, and (g) performance directed at helping others. While authenticity and well-being decreased, optimism significantly increased.

Conclusion

The 30-Day Mindfulness Challenge was effective at increasing mindfulness and numerous self-reported workplace outcomes including a more positive outlook at work, employee engagement and resilience, and the tendency to go above and beyond the call of duty. For the most part, the effects of the training lasted up to one month afterwards. This suggests that the training has a lasting effect, but that people must continue to practice in order to sustain the benefits derived from the program.