

Promote Employee Success and Well-Being Through the Practice of Mindfulness

Do you know what real life implementable skill could make a huge difference in overall well-being, employee engagement and productivity all at the same time? You might be surprised... The answer is *Mindfulness* - the ability to stay present and be aware of what's happening as it's happening.

Mindfulness is a natural ability inherent in everyone, but to be powerful, needs to be exercised much the same way that muscles need to be regularly used to build strength. Mindfulness practices train employees in developing focus and also how to expand their sphere of awareness to include respect, loyalty, compassion and empathy for others. These fundamental competencies that evolve from mindfulness are the foundation of high performing teams, successful leaders, and happier employees. These skills have proven to have a measurable ROI on time and money invested in them.

As a certified Search Inside Yourself* teacher, I can knowledgeably share results of this immersive mindfulness training experience. At Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute ([SIYLI](#)), data has been compiled from thousands of individuals and companies who have taken the SIYLI mindfulness based emotional intelligence program, and they have reported up to a 200-percent return on investment. Rich Fernandez, CEO of SIY, cites German based business software leader [SAP](#) as an example.

Case Study: SAP and Mindfulness

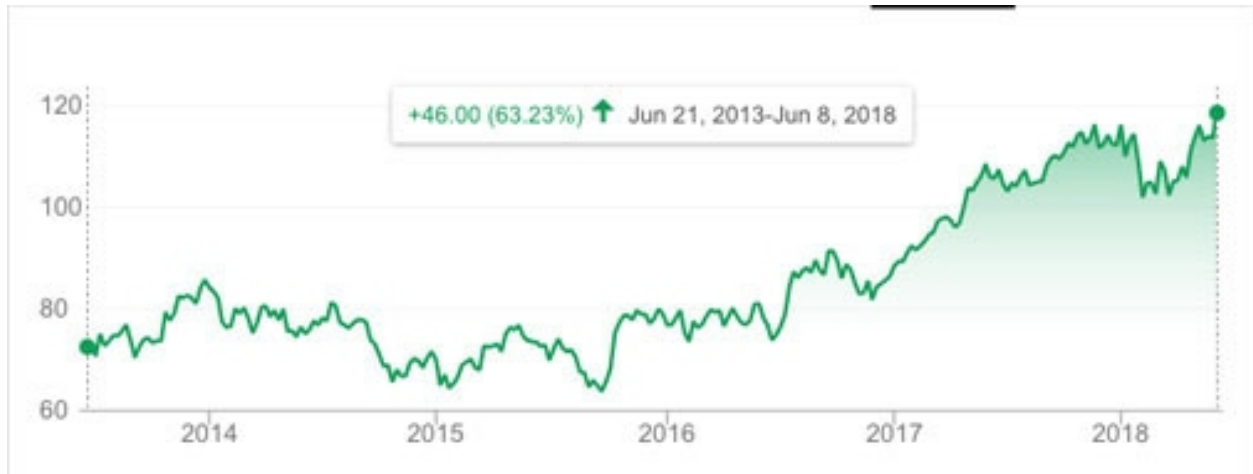
Ten years ago, Peter Bostelmann, then an industrial engineer at SAP, took the Search Inside Yourself training, which was developed at Google. He felt transformed by it and could see how it could help his own organization. In 2012 he brought the first pilot SIY programs to SAP, and since then thousands of employees have taken the program. Bostelmann is now the director of SAP's [global mindfulness program](#). Since that time at least 7,000 of the companies 91,000 employees have taken the mindfulness training program.

SAP has found that providing employees with tools to reduce stress and improve focus, empathy, communication and resilience has had a definite effect on the bottom line. The training has increased employee engagement and reduced absenteeism. According to SAP's calculations, a 1 percentage point increase in employee engagement corresponds anywhere from 50 to 60 million euros in operating profit. At the same time, a 1 percentage point increase in its business health culture index can boost profits by 85 to 95 million euros.

SAP calculates the success of SIY by taking measurements over time - from before participants formally acquired SIY mindfulness tools to about six months afterward, once they've had the opportunity to use the new tools. They measure the impact on indicators such as engagement, focus, productivity, stress and well-being. These measurements are used to quantify their

employees' capacity for building relationships, communicating effectively and collaborating productively.

Another quantifiable result that Bostelman offered was SAP's strong [first-quarter results for 2018](#) and its steadily rising performance in the New York Stock Exchange, especially in recent years.



You can watch Peter Bostelmann himself talk about this program [here](#).

According to Fernandez, “What they’ve found is that participants in the SIY program showed statistically significant improvements in critical areas. And the indexes—things like wellness, focus, a decrease in stress, and an increase in creativity and collaboration—correlated directly to business outcomes on which they could put a dollar value. That was the 200-percent return on investment.”

SIYLI's own [2017 impact report](#) shows that individual participants in Search Inside Yourself experience a significant decrease in stress, as well as increased resilience, better focus and improvements in the ability to collaborate and manage challenging situations.

How Mindfulness Develops

The rewards of learning to focus attention and empathize with others are available to everyone. The benefits cited above are accumulated slowly and surely through the practice of noticing when your mind wanders and bringing it back over and over again to what is actually happening and to what you are feeling at that moment.

A fundamental tool of mindfulness practice is meditation, which focuses on returning attention lightly to the breath, training you to develop the ability or “muscle” of mindfulness and awareness. This strengthens your ability to focus on what is happening without being pulled away by distractions. As practitioners of meditation all know, you will undoubtedly get “hooked” or pulled away by thoughts, emotions, stories, hopes and fears. This is not a

problem, and you are not doing anything wrong when this happens! It is the noticing and returning that will build your mindfulness muscle and over time you will find it easier and easier to stay in the moment.

This is something everyone can find time to do....even five minutes in the morning before work can energize and center you. Five minutes of breathing practice in the evening can help calm a busy mind and prepare for sleep.

Mindful Breathing Exercise

- Find a comfortable upright and relaxed posture
- Feel your body grounded on your cushion or in the chair
- Allow your gaze to lower and soften (or close your eyes if that is more comfortable)
- Rest in the present by placing your mind on your body breathing
- Feel your chest or belly rising and falling, or air coming and going from your nostrils
- When thoughts arise, they are not a problem; if you are present, you can acknowledge them and let them go
- If a thought, emotion, or story pulls you away from your focus on your breathing, simply notice, and gently bring your attention back to feeling your body breathing

“Micro-Practices” for the Workplace

In the workplace, it is not necessary to take time off for dedicated meditation practice. Simple “micro-practices” can bring us back to the present and help us prepare for a difficult conversation or shake off a particularly stressful email. Here are a few suggestions to improve your day.

Decide to be Present.

At the start of your work day, when you first sit down at your desk, pause and set this intention in your mind before you dive into your work.

Connect with Your Senses.

When you feel yourself getting lost in a train of thought, bring your full attention back to simple activities like washing your hands, opening the door, hearing a phone ring. When you are waiting for a meeting, you can take those few moments to tune into your breathing.

Take Mindful Breaths

Any time you find you are overwhelmed, tense, or unable to focus, simply pause and take a few mindful breaths. Sit up in your chair, get in touch with your body and your breathing. Relax your shoulders, your eyes and your jaw. Breathe deep into the belly, in through your nose and out through your mouth. That's it! After three to seven breaths, you can return to your task with renewed focus and calm.

Set Reminders to be Present.

Try setting an alarm on your phone, perhaps a vibrating reminder. Notice what you are thinking or doing when the alarm goes off. Set appointments in your calendar to be mindful, and when those reminders pop up, take a mindful moment.

With greater awareness, we all can deal better with stress and will be able to unhook from constant mental distraction. We can find more meaning in work, and be more engaged in collaborative endeavors. With practice, these easily learned behaviors also lead to greater emotional management, empathy and enhanced interpersonal communication. A further bonus of this renewed sense of well-being is that your greater satisfaction and genuine happiness will communicate itself to customers and clients.

* The SIY Program is now available in a flexible virtual format. Please contact Gayle@TransformYourCulture.com for more information.

By Gayle Van Gils, MBA

Gayle Van Gils is the author of [Happier at Work: The Power of Love to Transform the Workplace](#), a practical guide for developing the powers of attention, stress reduction, communication and collaboration. Gayle is a senior meditation teacher in the Shambhala Buddhist lineage, and is a certified instructor of [Search Inside Yourself](#) - the mindfulness and emotional intelligence training developed and proven at Google. She is the founder of the consulting, training and coaching company [Transform Your Culture](#), a popular [mindfulness teacher on the app Simple Habit](#), and a [Goleman EI](#) "meta-coach," helping leaders and other coaches to deepen their Emotional Intelligence. Through her teachings both in person and through online courses, Gayle has helped thousands of people to find more peace, energy, inspiration, joy and success in their lives and businesses.