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GE Appliances, a Haier company

Mindful Listening @ Work:
STOPPING THE NOISE & BEING WITH WHAT'S IMPORTANT

Hello Everyone,

It was a pleasure to be with you all for the Affinity Network Conference. I've compiled notes from our workshop as a reminder of the training and to offer resources for continued study. Mindful Listening is a way of dropping in and connecting. It's a practice that builds an internal awareness and changes the way information is held in the mind. When I work with a business and have individual talks with employees the number one thing I hear is that people do not feel validated and therefore valued. They do not feel seen or as if they matter. Often these are hard-working people who have even received accolades and promotions for their good work; however, they continue to feel like something is missing. I also hear that when people feel stressed and disconnected at work they do not feel as effective or clear. They can become overwhelmed with an internal critical voice that tells them they are never enough. Mindful listening is a simple practice to stop the noise, listen to our own inner wisdom & resources and connect in a meaningful and supportive way with others. Through this practice we build our resonance circuitry, the function of the brain to find points of connection with each other in order to learn how to be human. I look forward to learning how you are using this tool to better your world and build community at GEA. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you would like more information or have questions. Thank you, Shelly

Mindfulness is a:

- State of being present
- Natural capacity that a 24/7 culture erodes
- Practice that involves regulating breathing, bringing stillness to the body, focusing attention, assessing our inner experience
- present-focused awareness that is intentional, in the moment, and non-judgmental.

Mindful listening invites us to:

- cultivate our inner ability to pause
- help others thrive by seeing, hearing and validating their experience
- move from fix-it mode to a more collaborative and creative process

When we are in distress

*"We don't rise to the level of our expectations,
we fall to the level of our training."*

— Archilochos

Basic definitions of mindfulness:

“Mindfulness is present moment awareness that assists in witnessing and experiencing life in a responsive and compassionate way. Engaging in mindfulness practices helps one to develop a state of peace in the midst of chaos, as it increases skills to observe fully one's inner and outer experience and creates clarity of the mind for enhanced perspective and effective decision making.” – Shelly Sowell, M.Ed., LPCC

“Mindfulness is the **art of observing** your physical, emotional, and mental experiences with deliberate, open and curious attention.” – Dr. Susan Smalley and Diana Winston, authors of *Fully Present: The Science, Art, and Practice of Mindfulness*

“Mindfulness is: the **awareness that emerges** through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally, to the unfolding of experience moment by moment.”

- Jon Kabat-Zinn, founding Executive Director of the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School

“Instead of being on automatic and mindless, mindfulness **helps us awaken**, and by reflecting on the mind we are enabled to make choices and thus **change becomes possible.**” – Dr. Dan Siegel, Co-founder of UCLA’s Mindful Awareness Research Center, *The Mindful Brain*

We become present (rather than stuck in past or future thoughts) when we practice building the muscle of mindfulness. Benefits will come within 2 weeks, but it takes 90 days to create a new habit of mind.

Select Research on Benefits of Mindfulness Practice for Adults

From *Fully Present: The Science, Art, and Practice of Mindfulness* by Susan Smalley, Ph.D., and Diana Winston

The research exploring mindfulness, although still relatively new, is demonstrating that repeated practice can lead to changes in our lives, including

- Reducing stress
- Reducing chronic pain
- Boosting the body’s immune system to fight disease
- Coping with painful life events, such as the death of a loved one or major illness
- Dealing with negative emotions like anger, fear, and greed
- Increasing self-awareness to detect harmful reactive patterns of thought, feeling, and action
- Improving attention or concentration
- Enhancing positive emotions, including happiness and compassion
- Increasing interpersonal skills and relationships
- Reducing addictive behaviors, such as eating disorders, alcoholism, and smoking
- Enhancing performance, whether in work, sports, or academics
- Stimulating and releasing creativity
- Changing positively the actual structure of the brain

Select Research on Benefits of Mindfulness in the Workplace

- lower health costs
- improve productivity
- ability to stay “on task”
- reduce stress
- enhance leadership skills
- engage in innovative thinking
- increased communication skills
- appropriate reactions to stress

WHY DOES MINDFUL LISTENING AT WORK MATTER?

Businesses promote the best in humanity when we are creating from responsive presence rather than reactivity. Reactivity is a state of stressful living where we are speaking, thinking, feeling and behaving from a place of heightened unintegrated emotion and thought that has an undertone of fear. In short, a fear-based mindset. When employees engage in a fear-based, stressed-out mindset they can make rash decisions, internalize or externalize judgements, get stuck in fix-it energy, and even participate in implicit bias. This work environment creates a lack of trust and diminishes the effectiveness of the employee as well as the team. Mindful listening is a way to make work “human-centered” and growth-oriented. When we feel heard, we feel safe to create, vision and produce.

MINDFUL LISTENING VS. ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening is workplace staple. It is like having a decision tree in your head at all times. We are engaging in conversation in order to actively listen for agendas, needs, wants, connections, buy-in, vulnerabilities, etc. It is useful for problem-solving, lobbying an agenda, and decision making. Mindful listening is built for connecting with self and other. It is a way to help someone “feel” heard and valued. It also focuses on the listener creating space for the talker to be in a process rather than having someone else tell them what to do. Creative process and vision work in a company come from talking things through and noticing what arises. Mindful listening gives support for people to bring their full gifts and wisdom to the table. Both forms of listening are important.

Mindful Listening helps:

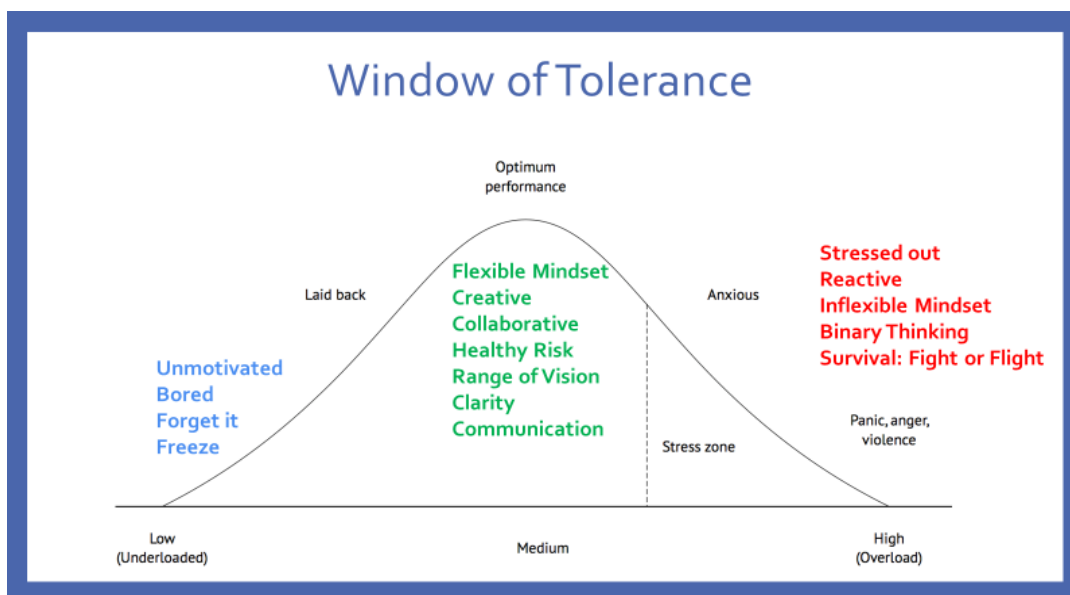
- Create integration for the other person through validation, empathy, resonance, accepting body-language
- To calm another person’s nervous system – helps someone to “drop in” to their experience (and helps us drop in to ours)
- Create present moment awareness through intention of holding space for the other person’s process rather than stepping in and fixing it for them.
- To cultivate compassion by dropping our own agenda and being fully present to another person’s life
- To promote teamwork through healthy, growth-promoting connections at work

STRESS

- World Health Organization – stress costs American businesses \$300 Billion per year
- Americans consume 5 billion tranquilizers per year in an effort to control stress
- Employees check FB 21 times per day and email 74 times per day

Sources: Linda Lantieri, *Building Emotional Intelligence*; Gloria Mark, *Forbes*; World Health Organization

Window of Stress Tolerance – We become reactive and hit the red zone when we are experiencing stressors that are greater than we have the skill set to manage/integrate. Taking 3 to 5 minutes to stop, regulate your breathing, and refocus attention can move us from the red zone to the green zone (or keep us from going all the way into the red zone in the first place). Mindful Listening can help us to slow each other down and work from the green zone.



We have an old stress-response system to deal with a new way of being. We're wired to quickly respond to environmental situations that pose a threat to our safety (ex. being chased by a bear). However, in current American culture more stressors are coming from internal and external psychological/emotional threats.

Fight, Flight, Freeze responses are on a spectrum and depend on our genetic inheritance + environment (ex. stress-response patterns/habits learned from caretakers). For example, if one has a fight response that could range from a quick-tempered anger or judgmental defensiveness in a stressful situation to physical violence when physically threatened.

We can regulate our nervous system stress response through mindful awareness, intentional abdominal breathing and healthy communication of our needs.

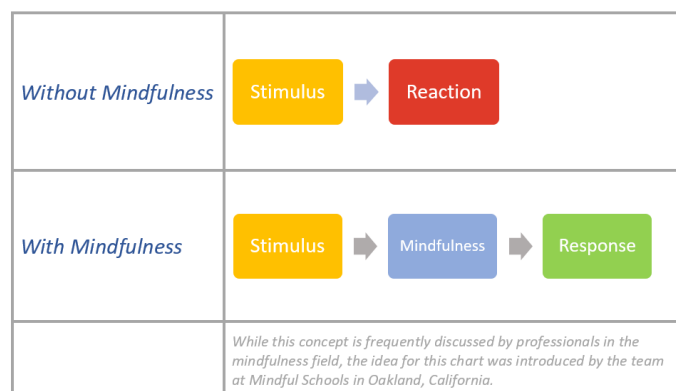
We all have healthy and unhealthy patterns to deal with stress. The key is to mindfully see those patterns and take meaningful action. It's important to find stress-management actions that are restorative (ex. mindfulness) rather than just a distraction (ex. binge watch tv).

DYAD PRACTICE:

Sit with a partner and take turns answering the question below. The listener practices Mindful Listening and only speaks after the speaker completes 2 minutes of speaking on the following question: What is an example of you responding from the green zone this week and how did it feel?

Mindful Listening

ME	Subjective listening
YOU	Objective Listening
US	Intuitive/Global Listening



9 Functions of Pre-Frontal Cortex - Mindful awareness practices can allow us to calm/reintegrate a reactive nervous system response, and then we are able to more fully access the pre-frontal cortex. The PFC is also important for the front end of the regulation process. As the skills related to the functions below are strengthened, we are able to pause and stop ourselves from going into a reactive state. See the Daniel Siegel talk below for a complete understanding of how the PFC is connected to our ability to be mindful.

- Body Regulation
- Attuned Communication
- Emotional Balance/Affect Regulation
- Response Flexibility
- Empathy (Mind Sight)
- Insight or Self-Knowing Awareness
- Fear Modulation/Fear Extinction
- Intuition
- Morality

INDIVIDUAL PRACTICES:

- Basic Breath Awareness: Notice your breath moving through your body and whether or not you are holding your breath or practicing a shallow breath. Extend the breath to fit what feels good (nourishing) to your body
- Feel your feet on the ground as a starting point for getting grounded
- Find one way to increase your self-care this week
- When you feel triggered emotionally/physically/mentally, take a time out and STOP (Stop, Take breaths that support your body, Observe your experience, Proceed with responsiveness rather than reactivity)
- Create a list of when you are mindful and when you are mindless to raise awareness and create choice
- Raisin Practice http://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/raisin_meditation
- Mindful Magazine with practice suggestions and links to other articles on mindfulness at work practices <https://www.mindful.org/mindfulness-gives-edge-work/>

Resources & Articles Online:

- **Forbes Mindfulness at Work** <https://www.forbes.com/sites/drewhansen/2012/10/31/a-guide-to-mindfulness-at-work/#55dfe4eb25d2>
- **Mindful Magazine – Job Burnout** <https://www.mindful.org/mindfulness-beats-job-stress-burnout/>
- **Dan Siegel:** <http://www.drdansiegel.com/home/>
- **Jon Kabat-Zinn** at University of Massachusetts: <http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/>
- **Research on Mindfulness in Workplace Summary:**
<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/03/160310141455.htm>

Books General:

Fully Present: The Science, Art and Practice of Mindfulness by Susan Smalley and Diana Winston

https://www.amazon.com/Fully-Present-Science-Practice-Mindfulness/dp/0738213241/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1504798013&sr=1-1&keywords=fully+present

Mindsight by Daniel Siegel http://www.amazon.com/Mindsight-New-Science-Personal-Transformation/dp/0553386395/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1442183525&sr=8-1&keywords=mindsight

Mindful Work: How Meditation is Changing Business from the Inside Out by David Gelles

https://www.amazon.com/Mindful-Work-Meditation-Changing-Business/dp/0544705254/ref=sr_1_6?ie=UTF8&qid=1530155961&sr=8-6&keywords=mindfulness+at+work

Search Inside Yourself: The Unexpected Path to Achieving Success, Happiness (and World Peace) by Chade-Meng

Tan https://www.amazon.com/Search-Inside-Yourself-Unexpected-Achieving/dp/0062116932/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1504797723&sr=8-1&keywords=search+inside+yourself

10% Happier by Dan Harris <https://www.harpercollins.com/9780062265425/10-happier>

Full Catastrophe Living by Jon Kabat Zinn https://www.amazon.com/Full-Catastrophe-Living-Revised-Illness/dp/0345536932/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1504797910&sr=8-1&keywords=jon+kabat+zinn

Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself by Kristin Neff https://www.amazon.com/Self-Compassion-Proven-Power-Being-Yourself/dp/0061733520/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1504798069&sr=1-1&keywords=self+compassion+kristin+neff

Articles and Videos

Dan Siegel Mindfulness TED Talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LiyaSr5aeho>

Jon Kabat Zinn Talk at Google: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3nwwKbM_vJc

Andrew Puddicombe, Founder of Headspace, TED TALK: https://www.ted.com/speakers/andy_puddicombe

Kelly McGonigal TED Talk on Healthy Stress and Mindset:

https://www.ted.com/playlists/315/talks_to_help_you_manage_stress

Danger of Mindfulness: <https://www.fastcompany.com/3053718/the-future-of-work/the-trouble-with-mindfulness-training>

Apps

Headspace: <https://www.headspace.com/>

Whil: <http://whil.com>

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Calm: <http://www.calm.com/>

Insight Timer: <https://insighttimer.com/>

www.shellysowellwellness.com

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