Mindfulness and Resilience Training in the Workplace
Organizations are increasingly concerned with the resilience and wellbeing of their employees, in part because of a growing awareness of the costs of absenteeism, presenteeism and staff turnover associated with stress and mental health problems.

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Stress has been called the, “health epidemic of the 21st century,” by The World Health Organization. Unmanaged stress can lead to anxiety, loss of focus, insomnia, low productivity, burnout, depression and negative or destructive coping mechanisms (American Psychological Association). It is estimated that stress costs American businesses up to $500 billion a year in absenteeism, turnover, diminished creativity, decreased productivity and healthcare expenditures. In one study investigating the factors that support individuals’ resiliency to stress, only 12% of individuals said their organizations help with stress management and resiliency. This is reflected in workforce engagement. According to Gallop, 85% of American employees are not engaged or actively disengaged at work, meaning they are not cognitively nor emotionally connected to their work or workplace and would quickly leave their company for a slightly better offer.

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In 2015, Harvard Health published the statement, “to combat the stress epidemic, businesses and schools alike will need to start teaching stress reduction skills such as mindfulness and meditation—skills that are proven to reduce anxiety and stress and increase focus and resiliency.” A 2016 Fidelity study found that 22% of companies surveyed were implementing mindfulness programming and 21% were considering introducing one in 2017.

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Aetna, Apple, Asana, Cisco, eBay, Facebook, General Mills, Google, Intel, LinkedIn, Nike, Target and Twitter are just a few examples of the many corporations investing in company-wide mindfulness and resiliency initiatives. Aetna found that their mindfulness-based yoga and meditation program yielded an 11:1 return on investment. Harvard affiliated Massachusetts General Hospital found that individuals participating in mindfulness-based programs used 43% fewer medical services, saving on average $2,360 per person in emergency room visits alone. Aetna noted similar results, reporting a reduction in healthcare costs of about $2,000 per participant and an increase of 62 minutes a week in productivity per employee. Stress reduction and resiliency skills are integral to the future of individual and organization health.
Co-led by Meriden McGraw and Dr. Sian Cotton the corporate mindfulness team at the University of Cincinnati Center for Integrative Health and Wellness provides evidenced-based mental resiliency skills to individuals and organizations. Collectively, our team has years of experience working with a breadth of individuals including hospital executives, corporate leaders, military Colonels, medical students, veterans, lawyers and their clients, high school students and sports teams, including the Cincinnati Bengals and Cleveland Browns, to teach evidence-based techniques proven to enhance cognitive capacity, improve stress management, increase productivity and focus, decrease symptoms of anxiety and depression and increase resiliency and overall wellbeing. Techniques include:

**Mindfulness**
A mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts and bodily sensations. Read more [here](#).

**Resilience**
The process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of stress. Resiliency can be taught and increased. Read more [here](#).

**Breathwork**
Breathing is the only function humans can perform consciously as well as unconsciously. The use of functional and conscious breath balances and down-regulates the stress response of the nervous system. Read more [here](#) or [here](#).

**Grounding**
Easily learned practices that provide a solid platform to help mitigate feelings of imbalance, indecisiveness or restlessness. Read more [here](#).

**Positive Psychology**
The science of optimal human functioning. Positive Psychology teaches a combination of lower order constructs of optimism, self-awareness and positive emotions to enhance wellbeing.

In combination, these techniques help improve individual and organizational wellbeing by:
- Equipping individuals with self-awareness tools that help them to understand resilience and actively participate in its development.
- Enabling individuals to recognize the signs of stress and respond more effectively.
- Developing discernment between activities that nurture or deplete internal resources.
- Recognizing the power of thoughts and finding ways of skillfully working with them.
- Supporting a culture of teamwork and compassion.
When practiced consistently, these techniques change brain patterns and coping abilities to support a more resilient cognitive and emotional process. Expected outcomes for individuals and organizations include but are not limited to:

**Overall Wellbeing**
- Decreased symptoms and better management of anxiety and depression (from a 2014 meta-analysis of 209 clinical research studies with a total of 12,145 participants).
- Reduced perceived stress, anger and rumination.
- Improved positive outlook, empathy, sense of cohesion, self-compassion and overall quality of life.

**Productivity and Performance**
- Increased task performance and attention regulation. Source.
- Increased focus, idea generation and flexible thinking.
- Increased customer loyalty and satisfaction, reduced employee turnover and increase in company innovation and financial performance.
- Improved resilience in the face of challenges.
- Reduced tendency to rely on confirmation bias (our tendency to look for evidence to support what we already believe often times resulting in poor decision making).

**Worklife Balance**
- Less emotional exhaustion, better work-life balance, improved employee satisfaction and better job performance ratings (from a 2012 study of 96 supervisors and their direct reports).
- Improved ability to eliminate tasks with limited productivity value (from General Mills’ self-report data).
- Increased ability to leave work at work and unplug when at home by focusing on the present moment.

**Improved Teamwork and Workplace Culture**
- Improved relationships, team collaboration and unity (from 45 workplace mindfulness studies with employees from a wide range of sectors).
- Better listening skills and increased compassion.
Next Steps

The most successful mindfulness and resilience workplace solutions can look very different for differing organizations, which is why our team partners with each workplace to create a customized implementation plan.

We make suggestions for the largest impact while catering to your company’s pain points and desired outcomes. Based on this information our team will also create an individualized evaluation plan for your company’s programming to track individual employee and company wide outcomes.

Did you know?

A recent two-year research project by Google (Project Aristotle) found that the key drivers of a team’s performance are trust and psychological safety.

How team members feel about their co-workers and managers can impact how effectively a team accomplishes tasks. Positive relationships help create productive teams, ultimately affecting a company’s bottom line.

Workplaces that cultivate collective mindfulness can be described as “organizations that pay close attention to what is going on around them, refusing to function on ‘autopilot’.”

For more information, please contact Meriden McGraw at meridenmcgraw@gmail.com
"Meditation more than anything in my life was the biggest ingredient of whatever success I've had."

—Ray Dalio,
Founder of Bridgewater Associates