Four-Week Foundational Mindfulness Curriculum For Small Businesses

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Four-Week Foundational Mindfulness Curriculum for Small Businesses

Madeleine Pizey

Thesis

Professor Melissa Jean and Professor Andrew Olendzki

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Abstract

This creative thesis is for trained mindfulness instructors and facilitators to offer small businesses a curriculum to reduce burnout among their employees and strengthen their inner-resilience through a four-week mindfulness training in the workplace or virtually. This thesis contains a rationale paper which includes a literature review. The focus of this thesis is on offering a four-week foundational mindfulness training for small businesses of twenty-five or fewer employees. It will include the purpose of having this type of training and how it will be of service, the benefits of this type of training, the current epidemic of burnout occurring in businesses, and potential problems with the training and how these can be addressed. The creative thesis project is the four-week foundational mindfulness training, which is a twice weekly, thirty-minute Zoom session, a PowerPoint presentation, and speaker notes on each of the slides. This project will look like a manual as it will have images of the slides and then the notes next to it. The training will be accessible for trained or certified mindfulness instructors to use to aid them in teaching mindfulness to small businesses. The purpose of these two sources, a rationale paper and a creative project (curriculum), is to decrease burnout in employees in small businesses and to do so through a mindfulness training.

Keywords: mindfulness, meditation, small businesses, foundational mindfulness curriculum, burnout, employees
# Table of Contents

Four-Week Foundational Mindfulness Course for Small Businesses to Prevent Burnout  

Literature Review  
  - Burnout in the Workplace  
  - Defining Mindfulness  
  - Research on Mindfulness Interventions Today  
  - Benefits of Mindfulness Training  
  - Increase in Creativity Thinking  
  - Prosocial Performance  
  - Increased Focus  
  - Self-Confidence  
  - Gaps in the Research  
  - Conclusion  

Case Study: Anonymous, Boston, MA  
  - Design of the Program  
  - Challenges and Perceived Negative Results  
  - Results from the Pre- and Post-Survey  

Possible Negative Outcomes of Mindfulness Training for Small Businesses  

Conclusion  

Creative Project
Qualifications for a Mindfulness Facilitator, Consultant, Teacher

References

Appendix A. – Pre-Course Survey

Appendix B. – Post-Course Survey

Appendix C – Detailed Session Layout

Appendix D – Manual for Mindfulness Facilitators

List of Figures

Figure 1 Pre-Survey Results

Figure 1.1 “Are you easily distracted during the workday?” 20

Figure 1.2 “Have you ever meditated or practiced mindfulness before?” 21

Figure 2 Post-Course Survey Results

Figure 2.1 “What do you like about the mindfulness sessions?” 22

Figure 2.2 “How often are you practicing meditation and mindfulness now?” 22
Introduction

There is a high rate of burnout in the workplace within small businesses. Literature shows that there is less support in small businesses than large corporations for employees’ health resources, like mindfulness sessions. Mindfulness has shown to increase prosocial behavior, focus, creative thinking, and self-confidence; these are all positive attributes that have the potential to diffuse burnout. A poll from CareerBuilder (2017) shows that there is a need for support in mindfulness and health for all employees in small businesses as there is a lack of training, and individuals are feeling the symptoms of burnout. The literature review will discuss the current epidemic of burnout in small businesses, define mindfulness, discuss mindfulness interventions for small businesses, and the potential outcomes from mindfulness training for employees, including the benefits of mindfulness that can counteract burnout. The rationale paper will also discuss the possible adverse outcomes and gaps in the research regarding the research question about a virtual mindfulness course for small businesses. These gaps were discovered through a lack of research and then identified through the author's exploration of teaching this course virtually to a small business of 15 employees. There is limited data on the increase of burnout rate of small business employees and the benefits of mindfulness practice and/or curriculum, all essential information to build a mindfulness curriculum for small businesses. The present research will aim to answer the question: “Does a foundational mindfulness program help decrease burnout for employees in small businesses?” The data collected will begin to develop an understanding for the continued study of burnout for small businesses and benefits of mindfulness.
Literature Review

There is limited research on the benefits of mindfulness for small businesses. This literature review examines research-based literature from 2014-2020, exploring four benefits of mindfulness: prosocial behavior, focus, creativity, and self-confidence within the workspace. The literature review focuses on literature reviews, meta-analysis, randomized control trials (RCT), empirical research, laboratory-based research, and field experiments. The review excluded studies that were not within the workplace.

Burnout in the Workplace

Organizations are beginning to see a decrease in employees' performance, energy, and overall wellbeing for multiple reasons by one main reason being burnout. According to the United States-based research firm, Kronos and the Future Workplace states that out of the 614 surveyed leaders, "95 percent of respondents admit burnout is sabotaging their workplace" (2016, para. 1). The article continues to say "15 percent of the survey respondents with more 2,500 employees stated that burnout causes 50 percent or more of their annual turnover" (2016, para. 2). Additionally, Kronos (2016) shows a total of 87 percent of the respondents report that improving retention is a top goal within the next five years, while 20 percent believe that there are too many other priorities to focus on during this time (para.6).

Merriam-Webster dictionary (2018) defines burnout as "exhaustion of physical or emotional strength usually as a result of frustration" (para. 2). In Toxic Clean Up: How to Stop the Spread of Dysfunctional Management by Teresa Day, burnout is defined as, "...the extension of motivation or incentive, especially where one's devotion to a cause or relationship fails to produce the desired results" (2008, p. 33-34). Day (date) explains that burnout from work results in a lack of productivity, which can then spread into their home lives, leading to an increase in
illness (2008, p.35). Day writes, "this vicious cycle produces a downward spiral that results in poor productivity, poor morale, decreased effectiveness for the company, and ultimately, decreased profits” (2008, p.36). Similarly, Mayo Clinic describes that burnout is not a medical diagnosis; however, some experts believe that depression could be behind burnout and that burnout can affect physical and mental health, leaving oneself lacking motivation and a loss of personal identity (2018, para. 1).

Research on burnout is typically assessed through the survey called The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Leiter et al., 1997). Leiter et al. (1997) explain the MBI contains three subscales that measure the different aspects of experienced burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishments (p.192). According to Leiter et al. (1997):

- Burnout can lead to a deterioration in the quality of care or service provided by the staff.
- It appears to be a factor in job turnover, absenteeism, and low morale. Furthermore, burnout seems to be correlated with various self-reported indexes of personal dysfunction, including physical exhaustion, insomnia, increased use of alcohol and drugs, and marital and family problems. (p.193)

Thus, burnout has serious consequences on the individual and the company, and if there is no support, then the employees who are burnt out will only continue on with these negative outcomes. A national study conducted online did a poll on burnout by Harris Poll on behalf of CareerBuilder in 2017 with a sample size of 3,215 individuals (all full-time private-sector workers across various industries in the United States) showing the symptoms of burnout. The CareerBuilder poll expressed that those who are experiencing burnout and stress are having symptoms such as; being tired all the time (29%), sleepless nights (26%), high anxiety (23%),
anger issues at work (16%), depression (15%) (2007, para. 5). It is clear that these symptoms will only escalate or persist if not being taken seriously and evaluated.

Burnout is an epidemic in which companies are beginning to bring awareness to in order to help the employees thrive, feel empowered, and motivated as well as help the corporations succeed and not continue to have to rehire and lose money during that process. One way these corporations are striving to decrease burnout is through mindfulness. Mindfulness has several benefits that are in line with what individuals who experience burnout. Research reports that mindfulness can enhance cognitive abilities. For example, a 2003 study by expert psychologist Richard Davidson and mindfulness expert Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn (2003) researched the effects of an 8-week mindfulness meditation program on brain function. Results showed that meditation could increase activity in the left anterior side of the brain, which is the region of the brain associated with greater resilience toward adverse events (p. 565-566). This research is evidence that mindfulness can defuse stress, which comes with being burned out. The American Psychological Association (2012) lists the benefits of mindfulness, which include decreasing negative ruminative thoughts, which means lessening the repetition of reflecting on one's faults (para. 8). Along with boosting working memory, focus, and less emotional reactivity (2012, paras. 9-13). Each of these benefits can help those with overcoming burnout not have emotional exhaustion, become focused and motivated, and better understand themselves instead of dissociating with the self. There have been various programs and organizations designed to help with burnout and other stressors in the workplace. These various programs focus on using mindfulness as a tool to teach employees to combat burnout. In the next sections, the paper will dive into what mindfulness means and the research around mindfulness interventions today.
Defining Mindfulness

Mindfulness has begun to enter into businesses to help an arrange of issues such as anxiety, team-building, enhance performance, support system, and so on. What does mindfulness mean? According to the American Psychological Association (2012), mindfulness is:

… a moment-to-moment awareness of one’s experience without judgment. In this sense, mindfulness is a state and not a trait. While it might be promoted by certain practices or activities, such as meditation, it is not equivalent to or synonymous with them. (para. 4)

Mindfulness is a state that can be enhanced through practices such as meditation. Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn defines mindfulness as, “[T]he awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally” (as cited in Forbes & Purser, 2016, p. vi). In academic research, this is the definition that is more often seen, discussing the focus on the present moment. Meditation and mindfulness are used interchangeably but from these definitions, it is clear that meditation is a tool or practice that one practices to become mindful in a moment.

Research on Mindfulness Interventions Today

The practice of mindfulness stems not only from religious traditions, such as Buddhism and Hinduism, but also secular practices that have been spread to the West from the East and became popularized and spread by institutions and individuals. Dr. John Kabat-Zinn, the founder of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), and also internationally known for his work as a scientist, writer, and meditation teacher, was the individual who brought mindfulness to the West. Many large corporations and organizations are endorsing mindfulness practices or programs to support their employees for various reasons such as, the overall functioning of the
workplace, coping with burnout, creating better work relationships, psychological safety, increasing creativity, and helping with self-regulation.

For instance, Paranque and Perez 2016, express that Blackrock, the world's largest asset management firm, founded a meditation program in 2013 (2016, p. 302). Founded by Golbie Kamarei, the Global Program Manager for Blackrock offers twice-weekly thirty-minute sessions for over 1,3000 employees in 17 countries (Paranque and Perez, 2016, p.302). As a result of the program, Kamareri collected quantitative data. According to Paranque and Perez (2016), Kamareri sent out a survey that produced the following percentages: "91 percent believe it positively adds to the culture, 66% experience less stress or can manage stress, 60 percent experienced increased focused, mental resilience and better decision-making" (p. 302). This research could have been biased, as the survey came from the researcher herself who created the program, but these are promising outcomes.

An essential knowing when discussing mindfulness is that it is not solely meditation. Professors Hugo Alberts and Ute Hulsheger (2015) wrote:

Applying mindfulness in the context of Work: Mindfulness Interventions, write, the goals of mindfulness interventions are to teach participants to become aware of body sensations, thoughts, and emotions and relate to them with an open, nonjudgmental attitude. Such an open state of mind can be cultivated by repeated practice. It is important to note that mindfulness is related to but does not equal to meditation. Although mindfulness is often predominantly associated with meditation, the range of practical mindfulness exercises vastly extends beyond formal meditation practice (p.102).

The act of mindfulness is not always sitting on a cushion and closing the eyes or softening the gaze; there are numerous ways to practice and integrate mindfulness into the workplace to
strengthen various skills and lessen stressors. This aspect is essential to discuss with businesses as many obstacles people fear mindfulness are sitting still; however, there are other ways to practice mindfulness like walking meditation or eating mindfully.

According to Hilton, et al. (2019), "prominent companies such as Google, Aetna, and General Mills are offering employees mindfulness training to improve their effectiveness and thirteen percent of U.S. workers report engaging in mindfulness-enhancing practices" (para. 7). The research aims to show evidence through a mapping study, which involved searching nine electronic databases in 2017. Hilton et al. describe the mapping as an umbrella focusing on a systematic search of extensive research within the field (2019, para. 9). The research used randomized controlled trials (RCTs), and the results concluded to 1,024 citations, and the most substantial evaluation of mindfulness intervention is on the health outcomes (Hilton et al., 2019). According to Hilton et al. (2019), thirty-nine different topic areas were found, and twenty-eight reviews addressed the health and wellness of healthcare professionals, social workers, informal caregivers, educators, or general work populations (paras. 19-21). Hilton et al. (2019) specifies that "seven systematic reviews addressed psychological wellbeing, and the most significant review included thirty-seven RCTs and based on an AHRQ report on meditation programs for psychological stress and wellbeing using programs like MBSR, MBCT, Vipassana meditation, and other mindfulness meditations" (para. 28). This report showed positive effects of mindfulness interventions for anxiety, depression, and pain compared to the control group. Thus, smaller studies are focusing on the benefits of mindfulness as well as discussing preventive burnout symptoms. This research focuses on mindfulness, increasing creative thinking, which can help create an individual's purpose and lessen burnout, along with research, including prosocial performance and increase of focus.
Benefits of Mindfulness Training

Increase in Creativity Thinking

As discussed previously, the burnout rate is high, which could lead to less creative thinking due to exhaustion and other side effects that come from burnout. Research is beginning to show that mindfulness practices are increasing creative thinking. According to Byrne and Thatchenkerey, mindfulness training positively impacts creativity in the moment and over time (2019, p.91). Their research showed that evidence on mindfulness training impacts an individual's level of attention and awareness in daily activities, which is likely to influence creative outcomes in an organization setting. The research involved a small sample size of participants from a midsize real estate firm that included ten realtors and support staff, six in the treatment group, and four in the comparison group. The study took over 16 weeks, where a pre-test and post-test of mindfulness and creativity assessment (2019, para. 2). The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) is used to determine the base level of mindfulness, and Individual Creative Task (ICT) measures an individual's creativity (Byrne and Thatchenkerey, 2019). Both groups received mini-mindfulness training during ICT. The training involved 30 to 60-minute mindfulness training, an adapted version of the MBSR training. Byrne and Thatchenkery (2019) concluded, “that even a short but consistent practice of mindfulness in organizations can lead to a measurable increase in creativity” (para. 5).

Another study by researchers Greenberg et al. (2012), determine the cognitive rigidity of people who meditate (practice regularly for at least three years) and non-meditators. Two experiments included a computerized water jar task, where participants viewed three jars on a screen that marks A, B, C, with numbers indicating their size, and a target cup indicating the goal to obtain (Greenberg et al., 2012, p.2). The participants task was to get a certain amount of water,
given in each problem, by doing so with the most straightforward and shortest way to find the
answer. Greenberg et al. (2012) concluded that the non-meditators had considerable cognitive
rigidity than the regular meditators (p. 5). Greenberg et al. (2012) writes, "as hypothesized,
following repetitive experience with a complex problem-solving method, experienced
mindfulness meditators were less blinded by experience and were better able than pre-meditators
to identify the simple novel solution" (p. 6). This research demonstrates that mindfulness can
come from creativity and stay focused on the task at hand instead of basing situations on past
experiences.

**Prosocial Performance**

Prosocial performance is essential in small businesses as there is more time than not
cross-collaboration and support needed to get the work complete. If individuals are burnt-out,
they are less likely to have the energy to help others, and most importantly, they do not even
have the energy to help themselves. Research shows that mindfulness can increase prosocial
performance, thus leading individuals to interact and volunteer their time to others.

Another study by Cameron et al. (2020) discusses how mindfulness impacts interpersonal
relationships in the workplace. The researchers did several studies, and one of the studies
included a large insurance company in the United States and included 603 participant employees
in the study (Cameron et al., 2020, p.14). The study involved doing breathe mindfulness practice
each morning for five consecutive workdays (Cameron et al., 2020, p.14). Also, participants
completed two short surveys sent in the morning and the afternoon (Cameron et al., 2020, p.16).
Those in the mindfulness group listened to a seven-minute audio-recording before completing
the survey questions each morning, while participants in the control condition only completed
the morning survey (Cameron et al., 2020, p.16). The participants were asked to reflect on an
event that stood out in their mind, and results indicate that the mindfulness group had a higher level of mindfulness throughout the day than the control condition (Cameron et al., 2020, p.21). This training is an essential benefit for employees, especially those who have burnout, as this is a way to volunteer, support one another instead of feeling the effects of burnout.

The same researchers, Cameron et al. (2020), did another study that was to build off their previous research, which focuses on positive emotions and empathy to determine why mindfulness increases prosocial behavior. A total of 139 employees (focused breathing condition: 52; loving-kindness condition: 46; control condition: 41), were recruited using Amazon's Mechanical Turk survey platform (Cameron et al., 2020, p. 34). A requirement for participation was to be employed. To summarize, participants are randomly assigned to one of the three conditions: two meditation groups (breathing or loving-kindness) and a control group (listening to a New York Times article). The participants then had to deliver bad news to a fake employee and respond to a survey that looked at empathy, perspective-taking, and positive emotions afterward. The results show that mindfulness increases prosocial behavior (Cameron et al., 2020, p. 37). According to Cameron et al. (2020) study shows the participants in the breathing, and loving-kindness groups demonstrated a higher level of compassion throughout the workday. As both of these groups also had higher levels of compassion toward a co-worker in a problematic situation. Interestingly, empathy was the most reliable quality for the loving-kindness group, as perspective-taking was the most durable quality for the breathing group (Cameron et al., 2020 pp.39-41). These results demonstrate that mediation can increase prosocial behaviors.

Another study by Donders et al. (2018) involved a non-randomized pre-post evaluation with self-report questionnaires. Four companies were included: A European Skincare company, a
global automotive supplier, a European space research and technology organization, and a global pharmaceutical company. The participants within the company volunteered to be in the training. The program is called WMT "WorkingMind," which includes philosophical teachings of mindfulness and psychoeducation (Donders et al, 2018, para. 2). The WMT program is similar to other mindfulness training but has a longer training period over two-day-long training days plus eight 2.5 hours-long sessions. As these also took place in a group setting of either 12 to 25 participants. According to Donders et al. (2018) the outcome measures were with The Burnout Measure, a 21 item self-diagnostic measure of occupational burnout (para. 30). There is also a perceived stress questionnaire that rates on a four-point scale. There is also the MAAS scale, the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory, a way to measure traits of mindfulness, The WHO-Five well-being scale, and Landau Organization and Team Climate Inventory, which can detect organizational and team climate and personal performance (Donders et al., 2018). According to Donders et al. (2018), the results show that burnout and perceived stress are greatly reduced during the training than the pre-intervention period (2018, para. 47). Donders et al. (2018) writes, “Additionally, greater increases in team climate, organizational climate and personal performance were reported during the intervention compared to the pre-intervention period with largest improvements in team cooperation” (para. 4). Thus, mindfulness intervention can help create this prosocial behavior and bring teams together to collaborate.

Lastly, researchers Berry et al. (2018) did four studies to research the relationship between mindfulness and prosocial behavior. There were two groups; one group participated in a short mindfulness training that involved focusing on either the breath, thoughts, feelings, and sensations in the body. The control group focused on bringing their attention to essential goals in life. The participants then play an online game called Cyberball, and the colored dots within the
game represent people. Afterward, the participants write emails to each player in the game, saying whatever they wanted to say. This activity is where the prosocial behavior is evaluated. Their responses are coded by level of warmth and how concerned the participants were those who are excluded. The study then has another round of Cyberball, and it was measured how often the participants passed the ball to the individual who was recently excluded. According to Berry et al. (2018), the results showed that the participants who trained in mindfulness had more "warmth" in their emails as they also had higher feelings of empathy and less distress themselves in comparison to the other group (p.97).

**Increased Focus**

Focus is an essential element to productivity in the workplace as it can also help eliminate the negative rumination from levels of stress and burn out. During a workday, the employee can be pulled in several directions, from negative thoughts to meetings, to boredom, to even having to do multiple activities at one time. Mindfulness can help harness focus and can decrease burnout.

Research by Cameron et al. (2020) showed an increase in mindfulness increasing prosocial behaviors also has research on increase in focus through mindfulness practices. The research also entailed a one-day study on two divisions of an extensive IT consulting company, which included 250 employees. Participants could only participate if they were on a team of 3 to 5 people. Participants were randomly in two categories, mindfulness induction, and a control group. After listening to a focused breathing mindfulness meditation or a same-length NPR news recording in the morning, participants completed questions and continued their workday (Cameron et al., 2020, p.24). Each participant rated the other members of their team on how helpful the individual was that day. Results showed that those who practice mindfulness had a
greater focus on their breath, the present moment, and physical sensations than those in the control group (Cameron et al., 2020, pp.26-27). This aspect of greater focus can help eliminate the burnout aspects of feeling unmotivated.

**Self-Confidence**

Self-confidence can aid those with a low self-esteem, the qualities of poor social skills or a lack of assertiveness. The practices of mindfulness can help oneself look at their challenging core beliefs that can help them work with their self-esteem and build self-confidence. The practice can alter burnout as someone with a lack of self-confidence may not have the strength to express to their boss that they are doing too much work or vice versa need more of a challenge. According to Amar et al. (2014), measured the self-perception of leadership skills among a sample of senior managers pilot study in the London area-and then put them through a 12-week Vipassana meditation secular-training program (p.1). Amar et al. (2014) discussed the results, conducted from a randomized pretest and posttest, revealed that training increasingly enhances the overall self-confidence, as well as the individual skills like shared vision, demonstrating moral intelligence, and encouraging motivation (p.25). Thus, these skills of self-confidence can bring an individual to want to collaborate, motivate and motivate others which has potential to decrease the qualities of burnout. In conclusion, each of these skills such as increase in creative thinking, prosocial performance focus, and self-confidence are skills that can be strengthened through a mindfulness practice. However, within all research there is typically a gap in the research which will be discussed further in the next section.

**Gaps in the Research**

During the literature review research and writing process, some gaps came clear within the topic of burnout, and if a foundational mindfulness training will be beneficial for small
companies. Firstly, no research has answers to this thesis question. Though, there were connections that could be analyzed, such as benefits of mindfulness that could diffuse burnout. Although the studies demonstrate that mindfulness is beneficial in various ways, a majority of the sample sizes were small.

Next, there was no evidence or research done previous to the studies to determine if any of the participants had burnout symptoms. A study that focuses on burnout symptoms and mindfulness should have participants take a survey to evaluate burnout symptoms and after the training to see if there were any changes due to the training.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this literature review is the start of finding research-based evidence of how a mindfulness curriculum can benefit small businesses by increasing the employee’s prosocial behaviors, focus, creativity, and self-confidence. No evidence, as of now, discusses how to decrease burnout through mindfulness. However, mindfulness has shown to help bolster these qualities in an individual, which could counteract, lessen, or diffuse burnout in employees. It is essential to cross-collaborate and be of service to others in smaller businesses when an employee needs extra support. When individuals are burning out from work, they are less likely to be of help or even have the awareness that others could use an extra hand. However, mindfulness has been shown through research to increase prosocial performance, which could also factor in empathy and compassion, leading to a team that begins to have deeper relationships and trust amongst one another. Thus, supporting one another and checking-in if someone is beginning to have symptoms of burnout. There were gaps in the research as the thesis question is never directly answered, and the studies being from smaller sample sizes. As you can see from the research above, there are benefits of mindfulness in a small business setting. I was able to take
these findings and implement them with a small business in Boston, MA, and found similar results.”

**Case Study: Anonymous, Boston, MA**

During the time of planning the thesis and discovering what population would benefit from mindfulness training support, I, the facilitator, was asked to support a small business of 15 employees to teach mindfulness during COVID-19. The boss did not know how to support the team in this way and reached out to a facilitator as he knew the facilitator had this type of training and knowledge. As the thesis research was coming together, there were gaps in the research, no one researched this actual population via virtual sessions. These next sections will dive into the research I collected through the training.

**Design of the Program**

A small architectural interiors design company in Boston, Massachusetts, sought mindfulness support during the beginning of the pandemic while the company adjusted to working remotely. The company owner was unfamiliar with mindfulness and trusted the facilitator and was flexible about the structure of the sessions. A proposal was sent to the owner that offered a monthly package of two thirty-minute zoom sessions a week for a month, with optional fifteen minutes of office hours after each session if employees had questions or comments, as well as a weekly email check-in reviewing the material and supporting the team with their practice. The boss quickly approved the proposal and asked to begin the sessions that week.

The company included 15 employees (comprised of two women and 13 men,) and the owner participated in the sessions and his wife. Before the session began, a survey was sent out (Appendix 1). This survey gives the facilitator an idea of where the company stands. After the
four-week course ended, the company asked the facilitator to continue to support their team with once a week thirty-minute session and then offering one-on-one sessions optional per-week that the employee can sign up for via facilitators Calendly. After the four-week course ended, another survey was sent out to see how the company felt about the session; this helped the facilitator understand how the employees are feeling about the sessions (Appendix 2). Both surveys were optional. The next section will discuss perceived negative results and challenges that may or did arise from the curriculum.

Challenges and Perceived Negative Results

Throughout the course, some challenges appeared that led the facilitator to have to adapt and use their mindfulness skills and training to overcome the challenges. An ongoing challenge was that the employees were reticent and shy during the sessions. The team did not feel comfortable talking without being given concrete questions. There were possible reasons for this, such as the boss and his wife participating in the sessions with the employees, leaving them to feel that they cannot be completely vulnerable and open in the sessions. Another reason could be that the employees did not feel comfortable opening up in front of their teammates as well as this mostly being a dominant male company. The employees did open up and speak in smaller break-out rooms, and when returning to the group sessions, the employees felt more relaxed to speak. As the mindfulness facilitator, I was not bothered by the silence, as I was trained to hold space for silence. However, the boss felt uncomfortable with the silence and always spoke when no one else spoke. He also reached out asking why no one was speaking during the sessions. I, the facilitator explained that mindfulness is not about processing always, this is the practice of going inward, finding stillness, and reflecting, but this is not the goal of the sessions. The boss was a very goal-oriented individual and struggled to understand the concept of getting work done by
not seeing the process. I also expressed it may be because he is in the sessions, and she offered to coach him, but he wanted to be with the team. He skipped out on one meeting, and I did notice a shift in the employees as they freely spoke a few more times and asked questions at the end about their practice. To potentially eliminate this challenge in the future, it is essential to explain to the manager that mindfulness is different from therapy, and the goal is to help the employees find meditation and mindfulness practices to help deal with daily stressors and lessen burnout.

**Figure 1: Pre-Survey Results**

1.1 Figure

![Bar chart showing survey results for meditation practice before the course.]  
Source: Pre-course Survey, April 16, 2020
Results from the Pre- and Post-Survey

The form of measurement was qualitative data for both the pre- and post-survey. The questions were asked like “are you easily distracted during the workday?” and “what topics seem most interesting to you?” which could help the facilitator see if the employees have symptoms of exhaustion or burnout. A total of eleven employees answered that they find themselves easily distracted at work as eight of the employees answered that they were interested in coping with stress through mindfulness practices. The results show that the employees are finding the sessions useful to combat stress. Only eight employees took the post-survey, and five of the employees wrote that the sessions help them feel calm and slowdown, which can combat burnout and stress. All employees who answered the survey also responded that they are finding themselves more mindful during the day from the training.
From observation and results from the post-survey it is evident that the employees are finding the mindfulness session to help aid daily stressors and to find a space to pause and connect to their
inner calmness. There is no evident that these employees were burned out from work and are now feeling less of those burn-out symptoms. Using a burnout scale to determine if and how burnt-out employees are prior to training is the next step for trainings in the future. Then inviting the employees to retake the burn-out scale at the end to determine if the training decreases burnout rate for small businesses.

Lastly, a mindfulness practice takes time to see the effects and alter in the brain like neuroplasticity. The participants reported in the survey in regard to the question, “how often are you meditating a week?” mostly everyday was 87.5% of receipts which is a high number. Another option would be to have them take the burnout scale again overtime as the practice continues to deepen, this will give more time for the participants begin to feel more benefits from the practice and feel less burnt out if they had these symptoms.

**Possible Negative Outcomes of Mindfulness Training for Small Businesses**

There are potential adverse outcomes for having this training in the setting of a small business. After teaching this curriculum to the company of fifteen employees, some limitations arose, which led to learning and shaping the teaching and understanding of the needs of this population. These adverse outcomes include employees not feeling safe to open up in the classes, bosses choosing to participate in the sessions can shape the dynamic, Zoom fatigue, and emotional triggers.

Ensuring a safe and confident space is critical in succeeding in allowing participants to open up and be vulnerable in the space. Thus, the facilitator should use phrases such as, “what happens in this space stays in this space.” The facilitator must reiterate that the participants must take care of themselves and practice the principles of mindfulness, such as non-judgment and kindness towards themselves and the other participants. The challenge of creating a safe
container so that individuals can share insight and reflections within the group can still occur even with these ground rules given. An option is to have break-out rooms on Zoom during reflections, which can lead to the participants speaking more freely in pairs of two or three, than within the entire group. After the break-out rooms are complete, the group can discuss the topic and what each group has reflected on in the smaller pairs.

The team dynamics are essential, such as having all of the same positions or levels (i.e., management team, sales team, entry-level position, executives) doing the training together. If the boss is present during the sessions, this could lead to others not wanting to open up and be vulnerable with the boss being in the sessions, especially if the topic of discussion is around issues in the workplace. A possible solution could be to do one-on-one sessions with the boss or have a management team do a training while other employees do the training in separate sessions. The splitting of groups could eliminate this potential negative outcome of people not feeling safe to be vulnerable and discuss how their practice is going.

Currently, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, employees may be experiencing Zoom fatigue as all meetings are now virtual. The employees could be too tired to fully engage in these sessions if they are already in meetings in this format all day. A solution that has benefited is inviting the employees to set the screen on the speaker view. Thus, they do not focus on seeing everyone during the presenter parts or having the option of turning off their cameras.

As a mindfulness practice deepens, it allows oneself to become more connected with their emotional state, especially during the Mindfulness and Emotion session. During the third week of the training the session includes an activity called R.A.I.N., which was created by mindfulness expert Tara Brach. The mindfulness activity involves bringing up an adverse event or occurrence that triggered a challenging emotion. The facilitator guides the student to recall the situation and
feel it in the body. Invite employees to focus on a situation on a scale of 1 to 10, and 10 being the most extreme to focus on an event that was a five and then give examples to help them not pick a scenario that is too triggering.

**Conclusion**

Burnout is becoming an epidemic especially for the population for small businesses. Through researching burnout symptoms and training a small business it became more evident to me that this population is in fact in need of a support in finding ways to deal with daily and work stressors and work-life balance to prevent burnout from occurring. My goal is to help others discover tools within to help them access their inner peace, intellect, and deepest sense of themselves. Through the process of the case study and the research I discovered what a gift it would be to be able to offer this program to other businesses around the world to help their employees feel balanced as well as have other mindfulness facilitators have this curriculum as a blueprint to teach small businesses. At this current time, with the pandemic of COVID-19 and racial injustice it is essential that employees have a strong mindfulness practice to help them navigate their day to day through a great amount of uncertainty and sadness. A curriculum that is available virtual via Zoom like the one that has been created in this thesis, should be mandatory for all small businesses to have that foundational knowing of mindfulness and meditation as a tool to get know themselves better.

In the next section, there will be a detailed outline of the creative project of slides and presenter notes on how to teach this four-week foundational mindfulness curriculum to small businesses. This research is the first implementation to addressing how a mindfulness practice for small businesses can help decrease or eliminate the epidemic of burnout for small businesses.
Creative Project

This project was created through foundational research completed in the literature review where gaps in literature were identified. What is the project? Discuss this and then show that it is a resource. This portion of the thesis offers as a resource to mindfulness facilitators, coaches, and trainers to train the employees of small businesses on the foundations of mindfulness. The mindfulness facilitator must have a dedicated meditation, and mindfulness practice has proper training by having a certification in a Mindfulness-Based Stress-Reduction training or similar training. The teacher must have partaken in at least one seven-day silent retreat. The overarching goal of this training is to reduce burnout for this population and support employees in accessing their inner resilience by developing a mindfulness practice and learning about various practices. As a current mindfulness consultant, there is difficulty in knowing what material to teach to small businesses. Thus, this curriculum is to help those have a blueprint to guide them through their offerings where they can focus on creating a safe space and be less focused on creating material. With current circumstances, this program has been designed to be taught virtually through Zoom or other online platforms as a safe and convenient way to reach multiple businesses globally.

This curriculum is simply an outline that goes over the basics of mindfulness. Thus, the trainer should shape the curriculum to the needs of the population. Determining the population's needs can be done by sending out a survey before the course begins to see where the employees stand in their understanding of mindfulness. Such as asking questions like, if they have a meditation practice, what are their most significant stressors in work and life currently, how they cope with these stressors, and how would one define mindfulness. Also, it is essential to shape the program around the company culture, such that if it is all males speak to that or vice versa, all
women or to the type of company give examples about working demanding clients. Lastly, the development of the slides and the on-going support throughout the training was only completed with the support of consulting with a colleague, Criss Cuervo, who helped share her wisdom and knowledge. The next section will discuss who is qualified to teach this curriculum as there are no regulations or guidelines on what qualifies someone as a mindfulness facilitator.

**Qualifications for a Mindfulness Facilitator, Consultant, Teacher**

The qualifications for a mindfulness instructor are important to understand when it comes to seeing who has the qualities to teach, as there are numerous trainings out there today, as well as a major piece of mindfulness is through embodying the practice and growing wisdom.

According to Crain et al. (2013), the two most popular forms of mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) are Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) in 1990 and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) in 2012 (para.1). Crain et al. (2013) writes, “these interventions are closely related and evidence-based, delivered in weekly sessions over 8 weeks, with distinctive curricula and teaching processes” (para.1). In 2008 researchers from three U.K. universities who are highly trained in MBSR and/or MBCT worked together to create the Mindfulness-Based Intervention Teaching Assessment Criteria, or MBI: TAC, which focuses on skills that are required to teach a class of participants, measuring in six domains (Crain et al., 2013, para. 7). According to The University of Bangor, Exeter and Oxford Mindfulness-based Interventions Teaching Assessment Criteria (MBI:TAC) Manual, Summary and Addendum by Crane et al., the six domains are, coverage, pacing and organization of session curriculum, relational skills, embodiment of mindfulness, guiding mindfulness practices, and holding the group learning environment (2016). The teacher is evaluated on level of teaching from incompetent to advanced and is scored on each domain (Crain et al., 2013). Thus, a teacher from an accredited training or
organization that has the MBI:TAC within their training or uses a similar competent training scale to determine the teacher’s ability to teach mindfulness is able to use the curriculum to teach foundations to small businesses.

**Conclusion**

The research I reviewed and worked with shaped the creative element of this thesis. The research collected determined the exact needs for the population of small businesses of 25 or less employees and even what population would benefit most from a mindfulness training. The company size was determined by the lack of support in the wellness and health that the smaller businesses offer for their employees. Though, there is not a specific type of business that this training is for, as the facilitator should do personal research of the company to make examples that the participants can relate to within their day-to-day workday. There are multiple pieces of training out there already for more substantial corporations like *Search Inside Yourself* or *MeQuilibrium* online platform that partners and supports larger companies; however, there is not an abundance of training that is more affordable for smaller companies. Thus, the research narrowed down the training for companies of 25 employees or less.

Small businesses would benefit from having a foundational practice of mindfulness and meditation to prevent burnout. According to the CareerBuilder 2017 survey, three in five workers at small businesses say they feel burned out in their current position (para 1). Twenty-eight percent reported having high or extremely high levels of stress during the typical workday (para 5). This number is a very high percentage of individuals feeling burnt-out and stressed, and there is not a vast amount of support done to help them cope with this matter. The CareerBuilder (2017) survey also reported that 79 percent say their company does not offer classes or programs to manage that stress (para. 5). Another fascinating finding is that lower entry positions have
higher levels of stress (61 percent) than senior management and vice president positions (43 percent) (CareerBuilder, 2017, para. 7).

The research demonstrates that there is a high rate of burnout in the workplace for smaller businesses. Studies discuss larger corporations jumping on the meditation bandwagon (Amar et al., 2014, p.3). According to Amar et al., “many companies, such as General Mills, Google, and Target, allow their employees to engage in organized sessions of meditation during their work hours and believe it to be having beneficial effect” (2014, p. 3). However, there is less studies showing that smaller businesses are supporting their employees’ health resources like mindfulness sessions. This could be because larger corporations have more funding to put towards their employees' wellness or perhaps have more individuals to take up time to set up these types of programs for support.

The research in the literature review discusses how mindfulness has shown to increase prosocial behavior, focus, creative thinking, and self-confidence. These are all positive attributes to diffuse burnout. Thus, mindfulness training can enhance these qualities and eliminate and decrease burnout. The current research on mindfulness creates evidence that there is a need for support for all employees in small businesses as there is a lack of training, and individuals are feeling the symptoms of burnout.

The literature review and additional research helped shape the training structure as to what would benefit this population came from the evaluation of many mindfulness immersion trainings, such as observing and participating in three of Search Inside Yourself trainings, which is an intensive four-day or three-day training. These training sessions have an abundance of useful material but can leave one feeling exhausted and depleted by the end of the day and
overloaded with information. Also, the *MeQuilibrium* material is excellent but very impersonal and unmotivating.

From a teaching perspective, it is important not to speak too often and have time for discussion and practice. Thus, the format begins with stretching to move the physical body and helps one always wake up and reengage. At *Search Inside Yourself*, the start to a session began with a "Minute to Arrive," a short meditation. As the *MeQuilibrium* training, the program also suggests this for business leaders to do before meetings. Each session begins with a short meditation practice to focus on the present moment and gives time to step away from the workload. Next, the facilitator will discuss the new topic with simple language and bring personal examples to make him or her relatable to the participants. Next in the layout, the participants will then reflect in either discussion groups or journaling and then end with another meditation. This format has been successful through a pilot training, as it leaves the participants not overloaded with information or have much time to get distracted.

As for the course's content, the material shapes around the master’s program of Mindfulness at Lesley University as well as the help from a colleague named Criss Cuervo. Each piece of the training builds off the next and is designed to slowly bring awareness to the more challenging parts of one's self. The training begins with the power of focus and preparation of meditation to then dive into the Triangle of Awareness, which focuses on sensations in the body, thoughts, and emotions. Each week, the sessions review the past and integrate new material. The first sessions begin with the body an accessible piece of the human to feel and connect to as it is physically here to the more challenging concepts such as the emotions and the thoughts. Lastly, focusing on compassion is an essential part of mindfulness in the workspace. Thus, I took it upon myself to gain more knowledge of answering the research question of whether a mindfulness training
FOUR-WEEK FOUNDATIONAL MINDFULNESS CURRICULUM

would benefit employees by decreasing burnout symptoms by training a small business in Boston, M.A. via Zoom.
References


social engagement. Switzerland: Springer.


Appendix A – Pre-Course Survey
April 16, 2020

1. When you hear the word mindfulness, what comes to mind?

2. What topics seem most interesting to you (i.e. focus practices, self-care routines, creating a daily meditation practice, screen fatigue strategies, how to bring mindfulness into the workplace, how to manage stress, etc.?)

3. Have you ever meditated before, or do you have a meditation practice? If yes, please elaborate on what you enjoy or dislike about it.

4. Are you finding yourself easily distracted during the workday?
   a. Yes
   b. No

5. Do you have a self-care routine? If so, what does that look like for you (i.e. go for walks, read a book, exercise, allow yourself to nap, etc?)

Appendix B – Post-Course Survey
May 18, 2020

1. How often are you meditating a week?
   a. Everyday
   b. Mostly every day
   c. Only during the sessions

2. What do you like about the mindfulness sessions?

3. Is there anything that you do not like about the sessions?

4. Do you find yourself being more mindful during your day to day since the training?
   If so, please share how.

5. What would you like more of in the sessions (i.e. longer meditations, more discussions, specific topics?)
Appendix C: Detailed Session Activity Layout

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-1 minutes</td>
<td>Stretch</td>
<td>Intention to move the body to help transition into the session. Free style (up to them how they want to stretch).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 minutes</td>
<td>Short Arrival Meditation</td>
<td>Guide a short meditation focusing on feeling body, breath, connecting to the anchor. This will allow them to see the benefits of a short meditation before beginning something like a meeting or conversation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 minutes</td>
<td>Layout of the session</td>
<td>Allow them to feel relaxed knowing what is coming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 minutes</td>
<td>Explain today’s concept</td>
<td>Gain knowledge on mindfulness/science behind meditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12 minutes</td>
<td>Longer Meditation</td>
<td>Practice the meditation that goes along with the topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 minutes</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Dyad discussion (breakout rooms), Journaling, Group Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 minutes</td>
<td>Questions + Comments</td>
<td>Ask if anyone has any questions or comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-1 minutes</td>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>Invite them to practice outside of the sessions and journaling prompts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix D: Manual for Mindfulness Facilitators

The four-week foundational mindfulness course manual for small businesses is broken up in two thirty-minute Zoom sessions a week (preferably at the beginning of the week and at the end of the week). There are photos of slides and then speaking notes of various topics to discuss and simple suggestions on what to talk about per session. Each week builds off the previous week and gives an overview of how to implement mindfulness into all aspects of one’s life. Below is each week’s topic.
Week 1: Introduction to Mindfulness and Meditation
Week 2: Mindfulness and the Body
Week 3: Mindfulness and Emotions
Week 4: Mindfulness, Compassion and Empathy

**Appendix D: Creative Project Slides for Four Week Mindfulness Course**

**Week 1, First Session**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaking Notes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Explain that we begin with a stretch to shift our attention onto our bodies (option to teach them chair yoga poses/stretches or have them do it on their own, if you take them through stretches invite them to turn off their camera)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Then the facilitator will introduce themselves and go into the ground rules of how the sessions will go.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ground Rules: All are an invitation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Make Zoom screen full screen to eliminate distractions like emails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Put the phone away (invite them to turn it off or put it upside down and out of site)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discuss how doing multiple things/multi-tasking is wasteful energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Safe Space, perhaps by saying, “whatever happens in this space, stays in this space, and this is a space of no judgment.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Explain that they do not need to speak if they do not want to and that everything is only an offering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Explain that they know themselves best and to take care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discuss how they can reach out via chat box and privately message the facilitator if they have a private question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ask open-ended questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Speaking Notes:**

- Start by explaining Mindfulness. Then Meditation. Then the differences between the two.
- Example: meditation, is an activity, it’s a thing you do. If mindfulness is like strength or flexibility, meditation is like running or going to the gym.
- Explain how we all have had a moment of mindfulness. That beginner’s mindset, when you are fully aware and curious.
- Give examples of Moments of mindfulness for you personally (cooking, walking in nature, running)
### Short Activity:
Invite them to close their eyes and think of a moment you were mindful this week or month, then invite them to unmute themselves and share.

### Speaking Notes:
- Explain the breath is the anchor
- Take them through some deep breaths to demonstrate the anchor
- Teach sighing calms down the nervous system

### Speaking Notes:
- Teach Take 5 Breathing Exercise (google if you are unaware of this meditation)
- It can take you less than thirty seconds, you can do it anywhere
- Great practice to help you re-center yourself if you feel overwhelmed, distracted, bored, or anxious

### Short Activity:
Invite them to follow along with you, take them through a guided practice, and then have them do it on their own
- Reiterate that this is a safe space, and everyone is focusing on themselves

### Feedback:
**How did that feel? Unmute yourself and share.**

### Speaking Notes:
- Mindfulness is being aware, but where is our awareness when we are not present?
- Discuss where our attention is: feeling, sensations or thoughts?
- Give multiple examples to bring clarity to each
- Then give an everyday example of not being present
- Introduce Dan Sigel

### Short Activity:
Invite them to think about where their awareness is throughout a typical day. What percentage is your awareness on thoughts, feelings/emotions, and sensations in the body?
- Explain from research the percentages
- Then perhaps give a personal example of you not being present (i.e. on autopilot, in traffic)
- As we practice, you will learn and experience the three components of the triangle while meditating
**FOUR-WEEK FOUNDATIONAL MINDFULNESS CURRICULUM**

**Speaking Notes:**
- "I am going to show you a short video explaining meditation. Dan Harris, a famous ABC news reporter, is speaking in it and found meditation after having a panic attack on national news."
- Tell more of Dan Harris’ story
- Show this short clip: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6T02g5hnT4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6T02g5hnT4)

**Feedback:** What are your immediate impressions of the video? Feel free to unmute yourself.
- Meditations is like the exercise you do for your brain. Through meditation, we can build up areas of our brain and rewire it called neuroplasticity to enhance positive traits like focus and decision making. Most importantly, this means there is a possibility to change your brain for the better in a long-lasting way.

**Speaking Notes:**
- Go into detail to the bullet points

**Speaking Notes:**
- Research shows that we all face these challenges (if pandemic is current bring that in as well)
- Bring in studies on percentage of people are stressed, burn-out, etc.

**Activity:** I invite you to share in the chat-box a few of these challenges that are listed or maybe another challenge that you are currently facing, remember that this is a safe place.
- From the chat box, we can see that we all have challenges, this is a reminder that you are not alone
- Seeing each other’s challenges can also bring us together, instead of driving us apart and feeling isolated.
### Speaking Notes:
- Go into detail of each benefit of meditation

### Speaking Notes:
- Discuss various places, postures, times of day to meditate
- Get curious and explore
- In the beginning we tend to force the breath but do your best to keep it natural
- It can also feel strange to meditate on Zoom, but it will become normal after some time.

### Speaking Notes:
- Take them through a simple meditation
- Inhale say 1 silently, Exhale say 2 silently
- Normalize the mind wandering

### Speaking Notes:
- Explain that they have to be consistent with showing up (i.e. working out at the gym)
- Download Insight, Headspace, Ten percent Happier
- Invite them to meditate daily

### Speaking Notes:
- Explain what is to come next

---

#### Pros to Meditations

- Cope with stress
- Increase focus
- Prevent burnout
- Increase productivity
- Enhance sleep
- Deepen connection
- Enhance mental health

#### How to meditate?

- Multiple postures
- Anywhere but find a consistent spot
- Anytime

---

**Short Guided Meditation**

Focal: Growth Style 1, Cycle Octave 2

---

**Optional Practice**

- Journal
- Meditation
- Practice a meditation app
- Monitor only 5% of minutes
- Mindfulness meditation

---

**What is to Come**

- What Is Mindfulness and Meditation?
- Mindfulness and the Body
- Mindfulness and Emotions
- Compassion, Empathy, and Mindfulness
## Week 1, Second Session

### Speaking Notes:
- Invite them to stretch for one minute
- Remind them that this is a safe space, make zoom full screen, and put your phone out of sight or turn it off
- Also explain that this is a time for you to connect to yourself, learn some tools on mindfulness and self-care, and guide and support you, so please share if there is anything you need.

### Speaking Notes:
- Take them for a minute of meditation. Call it a minute to arrive.
- Play a bell in the beginning and at the end.

### Speaking Notes:
- Show a short clip from Headspace explaining the Monkey Mind
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxyVCjp48S4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxyVCjp48S4)
- Explain the Monkey Mind
- Explain monkey mind during stress
- Go through the common obstacles and go into detail on a few of them.

### Activity:
Now I invite you to write in the chat-box if you have any obstacles coming up for you with meditation?
WHY?

**Speaking Notes:**
- Reiterate the benefits to help them not be stuck in challenge or feel unmotivated to meditate.
- Give an example of spending the day in the head, going from activity to activity.
- We live in a world with many distractions and are being told to do multiple things at once.
- That is why we are practicing mindfulness, to notice when the mind is off track and bring it back to the activity.

---

![How often do you check your phone?](image)

**Speaking Notes:**
- Activity: Ask yourself, how often do you check your phone a day?
  - Studies show that we check out phones every twelve minutes, often just after waking up.
  - Always on behavior is harmful to long-term mental health, and we need to learn to hit the pause button.
  - Repeated unintentional interruptions can affect our concentration and impact our ability to fully perform at our utmost potential.
  - Talk about how the News websites, social media apps are designed to get our attention and stimulate the brain and get us hooked.
  - These external distractions cause the brain to release dopamine when we engage in them, which is why it is hard to resist.

---

**Speaking Notes:**
- Time to write and to reflect. What is distracting you during the day or what habits keep you from concentrating?
  - Is it social media notifications? Is it friends texting you? Is it multiple tabs open on your screen? Is it the news notifications?
  - Take a moment and write them down for yourself in your journal and hold onto that.
  - Give a person example.

---

As concentration strengthens through meditation, the body and mind begin to settle and relax.

**Speaking Notes:**
- Meditation is a way to help us not give into these external distractions.
- Remind them of the Monkey Mind and having an untamed monkey can lead to fatigue.
- For the mind to become steady, settled in the present moment amid so much change, it is helpful to develop concentration. Concentration is the art of calming and steadying our attention.
• One way we can practice this is by bringing our attention to our breath.

**Speaking Notes:**

- Guide them through a breathing exercise
- Belly Breathing

---

**Speaking Notes:**

- Essential to dedicate time for yourself and create boundaries.
- We can begin to eliminate and create boundaries with the external distraction by being more mindful where we put our phones or what tabs we have open
- Also, it is important to take intentional breaks during your workday, stand up and stretch, meditate for a minute.
- Or find a mindfulness space, every time you walk past it remember to breath
- Now I invite you to go back to your list of distractions and answer how you could change or bring into your daily routine to help you stay focused?
- Spend about three minutes on this question
- Remember that this is just a suggestion, you know yourself best
- Now circle one or two that you will focus on this week

**Feedback:** Feel free to unmute yourself and share what you have started to implement, so others can get inspired
Speaking Notes:
- Take them through a guided meditation
- Introduce the word anchor and invite them to focus on the breath unless it feels challenging
- Other options are stomach or hands

Week 2, First Session

Speaking Notes:
- Invite them to take a minute to stretch

Speaking Notes:
- Guide a meditation focusing on the breath as the anchor
Speaking Notes:
- We are going to talk about mindfulness and the body today and I wanted to dive deeper into what mindfulness means.
- Read definition
- Give a deeper background of Jon Kabat-Zinn

Speaking Notes:
- Define Autopilot and give examples.

Activity: Ask yourself, are you the person who has a mind full of thoughts, worries, tasks to check off, and sometimes forgetting what you were just about to do next? Or are you the person who notices, appreciates, and enjoys your surroundings and focused on your current activity?

- Many of us spend, me included at times, a large part of our lives on auto pilot, not aware of what we are experiencing, missing out on all the sights, sounds, smells, connections, and joys we could appreciate.
- Give a personal example.
- Explain why it is important to be mindful and not on autopilot. (i.e. deeper connections in life, truly taste food, and see nature)

Speaking Notes:
- Shauna Shapiro, a mindfulness researcher frames mindfulness with three concepts: Attention, Intention and Attitude

- For example: Why do we brush our teeth? Because we don’t want cavities and bad teeth. Or why do we try and go to bed at a decent hour? To be more rested and perform at our best

- Setting an intention is the first characteristic of mindfulness. Simply knowing why, we are doing what we are doing. It reminds us again and again why we are practicing mindfulness and meditation.

- Go back to benefits of meditation.

- Setting an intention, sets you up for success. The more we develop mindfulness, the more we consciously pursue what we value.

- Give an example of what your intentions have been with meditation (i.e. in college it was to manage stress as my practice has deepened it has shifted for self-exploration to understand
**Activity:** I invite you now to full out your journals and write down why do you want to meditate? What is your intention? (i.e. enhance health, performance, self-exploration).

**Speaking Notes:**
- The second characteristic is attention
- We are bringing attention to what is occurring in the present moment by simply observing thoughts, feelings, sensations as they arise
- Bring in the Monkey Mind concept and how often our mind wanders (scientific study)
- Having clear attention teaches us how to rest in the present moment

**Speaking Notes:**
- Attitude is the last characteristic
- Bring in an example of when you were not kind to yourself in meditation (judging the thoughts)
- In meditation it is essential to have a kind attitude and many people leave this part out of the process of meditation.
- We are not going to want to meditate if we are going to judge the thoughts, emotions, and sensations that arise
- Discuss how the attitude we have will only grow stronger if we continue to practice that way.
- Instead, we need to be open, caring, curious, nonjudgmental

**Speaking Notes:**
- Refresh on all three characteristics

**Speaking Notes:**
- Show this Headspace video describing Noting - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fj9vVYwZY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fj9vVYwZY)
- Explain how noting can help us have a kinder attitude, keep our attention on the anchor, and remember our intention
### Speaking Notes:
- Teach Noting using these words to frame the thoughts, sensations, or feelings that arise and then return to the anchor

### Speaking Notes:
- Set them up for a body scan
- Attention is on the body
- Since this is over Zoom, offer for them to lay down
- Remind them of noting during the meditation

### Speaking Notes:
- Discuss optional homework; meditate daily for 5 to 15 minutes and to do a body scan
- Optional journal sent out through email

---

#### Week 2, Second Session
Speaking Notes:
- Invite them to stretch for one minute
- Remind them that this is a safe space, make zoom full screen, and put your phone out of sight or turn it off
- Also explain that this is a time for you to connect to yourself, learn some tools on mindfulness and self-care, and guide and support you, so please share if there is anything you need.

Speaking Notes:
- Take them for a minute of meditation. Call it a minute to arrive.
- Play a bell in the beginning and at the end.

Speaking Notes:
- Show a short clip from Headspace explaining the Monkey Mind - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxyVCjp48S4
- Explain the Monkey Mind after and also refer it to a training a puppy
- Explain monkey mind during stress
- Go through the common obstacles and go into detail on a few of them.

Activity: Now I invite you to write in the chat-box if you have any obstacles coming up for you with meditation?

Speaking Notes:
- Discuss Impermanence and give examples (i.e. weather, society, emotions, bodies, meditation with thoughts, even breath)
- Currently big change with pandemic
- Discuss reactions to change (i.e. stress, reaching for external distractions)

Speaking Notes:
- Invite them to journal on the following prompts
- Give them a personal example (i.e. going to the grocery store during COVID-19, doing the take-five while waiting in the line outside of the store)
- Open it up to share after.
Speaking Notes:
- Do a short breathing meditation

Speaking Notes:
- Discuss the Second Arrow and how it relates to impermanence
- Give a personal example
- Discuss how we do have control over the second arrow, just like how we how control over how we respond to impermanence
- We can see this more easily in the body

Speaking Notes:
- Take them through this step by step exercise

Speaking Notes:
- Explain walking meditation
- Demonstrate walking meditation
- Then take them through a walking meditation
Week 3, First Session

Speaking Notes:
- Go over why they are here and that this not a quick fix. It is a lifelong practice.

Speaking Notes:
- Short arrival meditation
Activity: Have them take a poll on Zoom
- “I invite you to check in with yourself and ask yourself these questions, take a breath, this is anonymous”
- How are you feeling?
- A. Feeling great and rested, B. I’m feeling okay, but I am really tired, C. I’m struggling emotionally, 4. I’m having a really bad day.

Speaking Notes:
- Discuss how checking-in with themselves is a way to bring awareness to emotions. Then do a mindfulness practice that can help you cope with that emotion.
Speaking Notes:
- Tell who Eckart Tolle is, read the quote, and explain it regarding our emotions.
- We often escape pain and negative emotions.

Speaking Notes:
- These are the underlying emotions that we feel.
- We started today by acknowledging how we are doing which pauses the monkey mind and being on autopilot.

Activity: Go through these steps for the meditation: Posture alignment, deep breaths, ask them how are you feeling at this moment? Explore, we can think of these emotions as positive or negative. Is it good, bad, or neutral? Now identify with what emotion is there. Is it happiness, sadness, fear…? If you are feeling multiple emotions, which is most prominent, pick the strongest one, bring in impermanence, guide deep breaths and bring them back to the screen.

Speaking Notes:
- By identifying the emotion that is present, you are taking to minimize a fall out from a negative emotion that could lead to a prolonged negative mood.

Speaking Notes:
- Teach them mindful listening.
- Letting go of fixing the person.
- Noticing if you have the urge to speak and see if you can let that go.
- Pick who is person A and B (i.e., person A goes first and is the person with the shortest hair or brightest color shirt).
- Create Breakout rooms, send the prompt to each breakout room, and remind them when to switch roles.

Speaking Notes:
- Guide them through a body scan, practicing noting thoughts, emotions, and sensations that arise.
**Week 3, Second Session**

**Speaking Notes:**
- Short meditation to arrive.

**Speaking Notes:**
- Negative emotions can hinder our ability to see clearly or stay focused. We all experience them.
- Fear is a significant negative emotion that we may all have felt during the pandemic.
- In the journaling exercise today, we will have our concentration point be on fear from a specific event that trigged us into feeling fear.
- We must have an attitude of friendliness and a nonjudgmental relationship with fear and any other negative emotions for the meditation to work.

**Activity:** Reflect on a moment that you experienced fear. On a scale of 1-10 with ten being too fearful, pick a 5. Examples: going to the grocery store during COVID, switching from working from home, about to give a presentation, having a challenging conversation with a co-worker or family member

**Speaking Notes:**
- Give a background of Tara Brach who came up with RAIN and why we are doing this activity
- Before we begin the activity, explain that we need to relax and calm down our nervous system intentionally. We need to reduce the activation of the sympathetic nervous the fight-flight-freeze
  - Discuss how there are several ways to do this (i.e., counting the breath, grounding meditation, walking meditation, listening to the sounds around you)
- Guide them through one of these to help them feel relaxed
- If this gets too much take a break and take some deep breaths

**Speaking Notes:**
(set up the slide, so you do not see the next line until you explain it.)
- Take them through the recognize part of the exercise for 2 minutes
- Play calming meditative music
- After 2 minutes, show accept and explain this step (i.e., we resist fearful feelings, this fear is your vehicle for mindfulness to become present because you are with what is here, we have the power to shift our attitude with fear, we do not have to like the situation, but this step is just giving us a way to drop our mental resistance to what is happening, write down a phrase that feels most natural to you)

**Speaking Notes:**
- 2 Minutes on the investigation; ask yourself these questions, get into your body and explore
- 2 Minutes on Non-identify
  - Now each of us needs our phrases or ways of helping us through these moments not to allow it to be an emotion that comes and goes
- You can also physically put a hand on your heart space, shoulder to nurture yourself
- If it is challenging to say these phrases to yourself, imagine a good friend, spiritual figure saying the phrase to you.

**Speaking Notes:**
- short guided meditation on joy

**Speaking Notes:**
- Guide them through a mindful listening activity using breakout rooms

**What is to Come**

- Mindfulness and the Body
- Mindfulness and Emotions
- Compassion, Empathy and Mindfulness

**Optional Practices**
- Music:
  - Soundtrack for meditation
  - Guided meditation
  - Music for relaxation

**Questions or Comments**
**Week 4, First Session** (After the last session and before this session send out in email [https://www.tenpercent.com/tph-live/14-kristin-neff](https://www.tenpercent.com/tph-live/14-kristin-neff), a video by Dan Harris and Kristen Neff speaking about compassion)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaking Notes:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Triangle of Awareness Poll Check-in</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Speaking Notes:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Arrival meditation practice.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Speaking Notes:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Discuss empathy</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Empathy is to feel what others are experiencing and resonate with them</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Talk about how mindfulness and meditation get used interchangeably like compassion and empathy, but they differ</td>
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<td>- Perhaps discuss the science of stress and how it is contagious</td>
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**Speaking Notes:**
- Discuss compassion (i.e., strong motivation to support)
- Compassion, unlike empathy, can elicit a positive emotional response
- Speak to the science and brain when compassion is practiced

**Ask the question:** How can we best deal with others' pain in a way that benefits them and does not deplete us?
- Discuss too much empathy can lead to burnout, so we need empathy with compassion.

**Speaking Notes:**
- Introduce who Sharon Salzburg is and show this video by Happify on compassion ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4a66aFalME](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4a66aFalME))

**Feedback:** Ask what others thought of the video, open it up to discussion
### Speaking Notes:
- Explain empathy can be trained like compassion
- Empathy is not agreeing but understanding other’s perspective (give a personal example)
- Explain we are going to do an empathetic listening activity and how this is beneficial for your work and your relationships (give examples that relate to their professions and industry)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empathetic Listening</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- What are some challenges that you have faced during the pandemic?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- What are some things you have learned from this pandemic?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Anything you want to talk about that feels meaningful to you in some way.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journaling</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How did it feel to try and understand someone?</td>
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<td>2. Write yourself some kind, understanding, words of comfort.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loving-Kindness (Metta) Meditation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meta is also known as meditation of compassion or friendliness and its benefits include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Increase in empathy</td>
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<tr>
<td>- A greater understanding of ourselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- M一面itation</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Deep connection with life, self, and others</td>
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### Speaking Notes:
- Invite them to close their eyes, take them through a short meditation and ask them to reflect on the questions and then invite them to open their eyes.
- Explain how to respond with empathy
- Split them up into breakout rooms
- Send out alerts when to switch roles and to breathe and relax

### Speaking Notes:
- Review what we have learned (i.e., we have been connecting with ourselves, we have identified what we feel, R.A.I.N., the more we practice R.A.I.N. we will be able to identify what is happening, we can see what ways are better to respond with empathy or compassion)
- Give a work experience – difficult client
- Then have them journal on the listening activity and empathy
- Invite them to the journal for five minutes and play music

### Speaking Notes:
- Mention Dan Harris who was skeptical of loving-kindness and now is a believer in it (he was in the video that was sent out before this session)
- Bring in Attention, Intention, and Attitude, and it is essential to have a kind attitude for this meditation
- Explain that this is not an easy practice, it will take time
- Oxygen mask example: need to put on our oxygen mask first
- Discuss the benefits of the practice
Speaking Notes:
- Discuss how metta meditation works with the phrases
- Bring it back to the journaling with the kind words you wrote to yourself
- Go into more detail about each step (starting with the self to difficult person)
- Then take them through a Metta Meditation, invite to lay down in they wish too. Only take them to a distant person and invite them to imagine them at a different age sending themselves loving kindness

After Meditation: Explain that the meditation may feel strange at first but to keep practicing
Feedback: How did it feel? Open up for discussion.
Week 4, Second Session

Speaking Notes:
- Triangle of Awareness, Poll Check-In (i.e., how is my mind? Busy, calm, neutral, scattered, how is my body? Tired, tense, relaxed, rested, how is my emotion? Positive, negative, neutral)

Speaking Notes:
- Arrival meditation

Speaking Notes:
- Go back over the current challenges and why we are here, and we are learning how to use mindfulness to cope with our challenges
- The beginning of the week, we learned how vital compassion and empathy is in our relationships and when interacting with other people
- Now we are going to focus on self-compassion

Speaking Notes:
- Remind everyone who Kristen Neff is and how she defines self-compassion with three components
- Go into detail on the three concepts (i.e., mindfulness, self-kindness is the conscious decision to turn toward yourself with love and kindness as opposed to being self-critical, common humanity is ultimately the recognition that everyone makes mistakes and feeling pains)
- Give personal and universal examples

Speaking Notes:
- Discuss interdependence and how Western culture values individuals so much, we sometimes ignore that fact
- Discuss the powers of interconnectedness
- Bring into the group you are working with and how each one helps the other in some way
- How we are impacts how those around us are, this is why self-compassion is critical.
  - Many of us know that what we do impacts outcomes at work, but perhaps how you are also doing, such as your attitude and support to others, is also contributing.
FOUR-WEEK FOUNDATIONAL MINDFULNESS CURRICULUM

Speaking Notes:
- Explain that this is video that demonstrates interconnectedness
  ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LTN61bC5C5A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LTN61bC5C5A))

Speaking Notes:
- Explain the mindful listening activity
- Assign A’s and B’s (i.e., A went to sleep earlier, has more siblings)
  - (send out a message to switch roles after two minutes per prompt)

Speaking Notes:
- Introduce Pema Chodron, read the quote and explain it in your own words

Speaking Notes:
- Guide a self-compassion meditation

Activity:
- Have each person share 1 or 2 words on how this course was for them. You start with an example