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978-1-107-06480-5 - Mindfulness in Organizations: Foundations, Research, and Applications

Edited by Jochen Reb and Paul W. B. Atkins

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Mindfulness in Organizations

Mindfulness techniques, having long played an important role in contemplative traditions around the world, are now recognized as having the potential to transform workplaces. As interest in the role of mindfulness in organizational settings continues to increase, this timely book fills a gap in the literature by providing an overview of the latest theoretical and empirical research on workplace mindfulness. It brings together world-leading scholars to explore the foundations, key discussions, diversity of approaches and applications of mindfulness in organizations. It acts as a catalyst for future research on the topic by suggesting research directions and stimulating organizational researchers to embark on new projects involving mindfulness. Furthermore, it provides valuable ideas for implementing mindfulness programs in organizations, for teaching mindfulness in business contexts, and for coaching with mindfulness. This must-read book will appeal to researchers and professionals in the fields of organizational behavior, organizational psychology, human resources and employee well-being.

JOCHEN REB is Associate Professor of Organisational Behaviour and Human Resources at the Lee Kong Chian School of Business, Singapore Management University (SMU), where he also serves as the Director of the SMU Mindfulness Initiative. He conducts research and training on mindfulness with a particular interest in interpersonal effects of mindfulness and mindful leadership.

PAUL W. B. ATKINS is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Psychology, Australian Catholic University and researcher with the ACU Institute for Positive Psychology and Education. He regularly teaches mindfulness courses, as well as conducting research on the effects of mindfulness, values and meditation training upon identity, perspective taking, empathy, and relationships.

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HUGO J. E. M. ALBERTS is Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience, department of Clinical Psychological Science in Maastricht, the Netherlands. His field of expertise is mindfulness and self-regulation. His research is focused on the effects of mindfulness in different contexts as well as uncovering the underlying mechanisms responsible for the effects. Besides his role as Assistant Professor, Hugo is a mindfulness trainer and coach.

TAMMY D. ALLEN is Professor of Psychology at the University of South Florida. Her research interests include work-family issues, career development, and occupational health. She is Past President of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology and former Associate Editor for the *Journal of Applied Psychology* and *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*.

PAUL W. B. ATKINS teaches and conducts research with the Psychology Department and the Institute for Positive Psychology and Education at the Australian Catholic University. His research interests include studying the effects of mindfulness, values and meditation training upon identity, perspective taking, empathy and relationships. He regularly teaches both meditation and Acceptance and Commitment Training (ACT) courses. He is President-elect of the Australia and New Zealand Association for Contextual Behavioural Science.

DEVASHEESH P. BHAVE is Assistant Professor of Organisational Behaviour and Human Resources in the Lee Kong Chian School of Business at Singapore Management University. His research interests include dynamic processes of affect and performance, interpersonal relationships at work, and customer service. His research has been published in *Personnel Psychology*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Academy of Management Journal*, and other outlets.

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RICHARD E. BOYATZIS is Distinguished University Professor, and Professor in the Departments of Organizational Behavior, Psychology, and Cognitive Science at Case Western Reserve University and People and Organization at ESADE. Ranked ninth Most Influential International Thinker by HR Magazine in 2012 and 2014, he is the author of more than 150 articles on leadership, competencies, emotional intelligence, competency development, coaching, and management education.

MIRABAI BUSH is a Senior Fellow and Founding Director of the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society. Under her direction, the center introduced contemplative practices into the fields of higher education, law, business, journalism, social justice activism, and the military. A key contributor to Google's Search Inside Yourself curriculum, she has taught mindfulness in organizations including AMEX, Hearst Publications, Mind and Life Institute, Smith College, Amherst College, and Fetzer Institute.

MICHAEL CHASKALSON is an Honorary Lecturer in the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice at Bangor University and an Adjunct Professor at IE Business School in Madrid. His work mainly focuses on mindfulness training in organizations. He is the author of *The Mindful Workplace* and *Mindfulness in Eight Weeks* as well as various articles in peer-reviewed journals.

KRAIVIN CHINTAKANANDA is a Ph.D. student in the Organisational Behaviour and Human Resources area at Singapore Management University. He holds a Master's Degree in Organisational Behaviour from London School of Economics and Political Science and a Bachelor's Degree in Economics from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His research focuses on mindfulness, prosocial motivation and behavior, compassion, and ethics.

ELLEN CHOI is an organizational behavior doctoral student at the Ivey School of Business, University of Western Ontario. She completed her Master's Degree in Organizational Psychology at the London School of Economics. Ellen's research looks at the effects of mindfulness in the workplace. Specifically she studies mindfulness in conjunction with emotion regulation, resilience, self-regulation, productivity, and performance.

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CHRISTIAN GÄRTNER is Assistant Professor of Organization Theory at Helmut Schmidt University, Germany. His research covers organizational design and change with a focus on mindful organizing and knowledge-intensive service work as well as the tools that are used to cope within these complex and uncertain work settings. He has authored articles in international and national academic journals as well as practitioner outlets.

SHARON GRACE HADLEY is a business manager and researcher working in the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice (CMRP) at Bangor University. Sharon is leading the CMRP's workplace research which is currently investigating the cost-benefit analysis of mindfulness training in the workplace. With an interest in government policy, Sharon contributes to various forums including a UK All Party Parliamentary Group set up to study the benefits of bringing mindfulness into public policy.

LIZ HALL is the Editor of *Coaching at Work* magazine and a Senior Practitioner coach (accredited by the European Mentoring & Coaching Council). She is the author of *Mindful Coaching* (Kogan Page, 2013). She runs mindfulness programmes for individuals and corporates. She is an award-winning journalist with 27 years' experience, writing for publications including *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, *The Financial Times*, and *People Management*.

CHRISTIAN HUBER is an assistant professor at the Helmut Schmidt University – University of the Federal Armed Forces – in Hamburg, Germany. His work has been published in journals such as *Human Relations*, *Management Accounting Research*, *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* and the *Journal of Business Ethics*. His research interests include management accounting, risk management, public sector organizations, financial regulation, valuation, and the use of literature in organizational theory.

UTE R. HÜLSHEGER is Associate Professor of Work and Organizational Psychology at the Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience, Maastricht University, The Netherlands. Her research primarily focuses on occupational health-related topics, including emotional labor and employee mindfulness, as well as personnel selection and innovation in organizations. She serves on the editorial boards of the

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Journal of Applied Psychology, Journal of Personnel Psychology, and Journal of Business and Psychology.

JEREMY HUNTER serves as Assistant Professor of Practice at the Peter F. Drucker Graduate School of Management at Claremont Graduate University. He has more than a decade's experience helping leaders to relentlessly develop themselves while retaining their humanity in the face of monumental change and challenge. He has been featured in the *Wall Street Journal*, *The Economist*, the *Los Angeles Times* and National Public Radio's *Morning Edition*.

NATALIA KARELAIA is an assistant professor of Decision Sciences at INSEAD where she teaches Managerial Decision Making and Negotiations. Her research, which focuses on how people make decisions and how their decision making can be improved, has been presented at numerous international conferences and published in leading academic journals including *Organization Science*, *Psychological Review*, *Management Science*, and *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*.

DEJUN TONY KONG PH.D. is Assistant Professor of Leadership Studies and Management in the Jepson School of Leadership Studies and the Robins School of Business at the University of Richmond, USA. His research largely focuses on trust in various contexts and the psychology of social relationships. His work has appeared in the *Academy of Management Journal*, the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, the *Journal of Positive Psychology*, and *Small Group Research* among others.

RAVI S. KUDESIA is a doctoral candidate of Organizational Behavior at the Olin Business School at Washington University in St. Louis. His research focuses on attention, sensemaking, and managerial metacognition. Prior to joining academia, Ravi founded an Internet startup company and ran frequent mindfulness seminars for fellow entrepreneurs. His ideas have been featured on CNN.com, *Integral Yoga Magazine*, and the *Huffington Post*.

HANNES LEROY is a visiting assistant professor at Cornell University, Johnson Graduate School of Management. His research interests include the study of authenticity and its value to organizations, especially its leadership implications. He holds a Ph.D. in management

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from the University of Leuven in Belgium and was a visiting doctoral student at Cornell University.

E. LAYNE PADDOCK is Assistant Professor of Organisational Behaviour and Human Resources at Singapore Management University. She holds a B.S. and M.A. from the College of William & Mary and an M.Sc. and Ph.D. from the University of Arizona. Her research interests include organisational justice and gender at work, including the work-family interface. Her work on these topics is published in high-ranking, peer-reviewed journals.

EMILY H. PELTASON is a graduate student in counseling psychology at Santa Clara University. Prior to enrolling at Santa Clara, Emily was a member of the research and writing team at the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University. She received her B.A. in political science from Stanford University.

JOCHEN REB is Associate Professor of Organisational Behaviour and Human Resources and Director of the Mindfulness Initiative @ SMU, Singapore Management University. His research focuses on the role of mindfulness in organizational contexts such as leadership and performance and on judgment and decision making in organizations. He currently serves on the editorial boards of *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, the *Journal of Management*, and the *Journal of Business and Psychology*.

SHAUNA L. SHAPIRO PH.D. is a professor at Santa Clara University, a licensed clinical psychologist, and an internationally recognized expert in mindfulness. Dr. Shapiro has conducted extensive clinical research investigating the effects of mindfulness training across a wide range of populations and has published over 100 peer-reviewed journal articles. Dr. Shapiro is the recipient of the American Council of Learned Societies teaching award, acknowledging her outstanding contributions to graduate education.

SAMANTHA SIM is a doctoral candidate in Organisational Behaviour and Human Resources at the Lee Kong Chian School of Business, Singapore Management University (SMU). Her research interests include mindfulness, compassion at the workplace and organizational justice. She is also part of the Mindfulness Initiative @ SMU, a group

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dedicated to research, education, and outreach to the SMU community and beyond on secular mindfulness in all spheres of life.

ROBERT STYLES is the Director of Organisational Leadership and Performance at ANUedge, the commercial arm of the Australian National University. He advises corporations and public sector agencies on mindfulness/wellbeing approaches in human capital development. His Ph.D. research focus is on self and identity in the field of Contextual Behavioural Science.

MARGARET C. WANG is a graduate student in the Counseling Psychology program at Santa Clara University. Her past research at the Harvard Psychology Department has included areas related to moral judgment, attraction, and culture. She holds a B.A. in Psychology from Harvard University.

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Foreword

Scholarly and practical interest in mindfulness has exploded in recent years, bringing with it questions about what mindfulness is, how it differs from related concepts in organization and management, and on the effectiveness of organizational mindfulness interventions. Professors Jochen Reb and Paul W. B. Atkins have gathered together the leading scholars and practitioners into a collection that seeks to address these questions and to demonstrate the theoretical and practical richness of mindfulness. This collection is deeply based in scholarship, taking care to discuss the history of mindfulness research, methodological challenges and critical debates; yet, it also includes several chapters by mindfulness teachers and practitioners. Thus, scholars interested in mindfulness can read rich descriptions of mindfulness interventions, and practitioners can better understand the empirical and theoretical basis of mindfulness research.

While mindfulness has traditionally centered on stress reduction, here the concept is applied to new areas of management scholarship, helping to further our understanding of negotiation, decision making, work-life balance, creativity and leadership, among others. It is a resource for those already conducting research on mindfulness as well as those considering moving into this exciting new area of organizational scholarship. This collection will also be useful to practitioners and educators who would like to know what others have done that has been effective and what has not worked so well. Overall we anticipate that this collection will help establish mindfulness in organizations as an important topic within management research and practice.

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Preface

This work started as the idea of bringing together pioneering scholars for a state-of-the-art edited volume on mindfulness in organizations. The goal was to help put this novel area of research “on the map” of organizational scholarship. Seeing the quality of the various chapters, we are hopeful that this goal will be achieved. Along the way, it has been a wonderful journey to help this book develop from a simple idea to reality. This journey would not have been possible without the help of our editorial team. We would like to thank Paula Parish for supporting the idea of this book from the beginning and offering crucial guidance throughout. We are also grateful to Claire Wood, Rob Wilkinson and Deborah Renshaw for their excellent editorial work.

For Jochen, it has been an extraordinary experience working with such a dedicated and professional group of contributors. I had been warned by experienced editors about uncooperative chapter authors and the need to chase after them. It turned out to be much easier than expected. I can only speculate that this was because of the passion the contributors have for mindfulness. I also feel fortunate that Paul came on board as editor; we complemented each other in a variety of ways. Many thanks go to Samantha Sim, Jocelyn Ho, and Jolylynn Tan for their help with formatting the chapters. The idea of this edited volume originally emerged from conversations with my colleague at National University of Singapore, Jayanth Narayanan. Jay, thank you for the many, many enjoyable conversations on mindfulness and related topics.

I believe that individuals, organizations, and societies can benefit from the practice of mindfulness in many ways. Research such as that presented in this book can support informed practice. Ultimately, I believe that the “miracle” of mindfulness needs to be experienced personally. This book will have served its purpose if it inspires more scholars and organizations to not only study, but also practically experiment with mindfulness.

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For Paul, one of the great pleasures of conducting research and practice among the mindfulness community is that just about everybody I have met in the community is someone I would love to invite for dinner and count as a friend. Although Jochen and I hardly knew one another before starting this book, I have found working with him, and with all the contributors to this volume, to be a genuine pleasure. I love working in a field that produces this kind of collaboration.

I also feel a huge debt of gratitude to all the mindfulness teachers and scholars who have helped shape my understanding and practice of mindfulness. Most notably I would like to thank Tim Goddard, Sue Hayes, Patrick Kearney, Gregory Kramer, S. N. Goenka, Jon Kabat-Zinn and Steve Hayes. When I teach mindfulness, I feel a sense of ease that I do not feel teaching my university classes. I think that ease comes from knowing that in some other important way, all I need to do is get myself out of the way enough to allow the timeless wisdom and truth of the practice to work through me. So I would like to thank also the wise ones through the ages whose compassion for the human condition led to this great flowering of mindfulness we see in the world today.