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Edited by Jochen Reb and Paul W. B. Atkins

Excerpt

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PART I

*Foundations***1** *Introduction*

JOCHEN REB AND PAUL W. B. ATKINS

Hardly a day goes by without a new media report on the benefits of mindfulness. In the corporate world mindfulness training programs are becoming increasingly popular. This trend is fuelled by highly visible organizations such as Google offering mindfulness-based programs for their employees. At the same time, many leaders, human resources and wellbeing professionals in organizations are probably still wondering what mindfulness is and whether mindfulness training would work in their organization. Organizational scholars, having taken note of research on mindfulness conducted mostly in medical and clinical psychology, are also wondering whether mindfulness is a valid research area for the organizational sciences or some wishy-washy, esoteric, or religious topic not qualifying for serious scholarship.

It is for these reasons that this edited volume on mindfulness in organizations is needed. Now that we have assembled all the contributions, we know that this book provides a treasure trove of information, knowledge, and insights into the role of mindfulness in organizations. And perhaps even more importantly, the contributors raise fascinating questions about mindfulness, thus providing countless valuable directions for future research and exploration.

To our knowledge, this is the first edited, scholarly book on mindfulness in organizations. We think this book will be useful for three main audiences. First, if you are a scholar, or Ph.D. student, interested in mindfulness, particularly in organizations, you will find this volume valuable because the chapters provide the most contemporary account of empirical and theoretical research on mindfulness in organizations, as well as providing helpful suggestions for promising areas of future

research. Our hope is that this volume will help scholars who are thinking of starting research in this relatively new area.

Second, and just as importantly, this volume will also help organizational practitioners and leaders who may be trying to incorporate mindfulness into their (work) lives or who may wonder whether they should make mindfulness training programs available to their employees. If this is you, you will find ideas about the design and implementation of mindfulness programs, traps to avoid, and ways to make such training relevant to staff who may never have heard of mindfulness.

Last but not least, we think this book will provide valuable material to those who work with mindfulness in other ways. These include mindfulness trainers offering mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) in organizations, business school instructors wanting to incorporate mindfulness into their teaching, and coaches working with mindfulness for themselves or their clients. If you are in this group, having a sense of the range of different perspectives and approaches to mindfulness, as well as the extent and limits of the research supporting its use in organizations, will help support you in delivering effective interventions.

The authors have done an excellent job in clarifying foundations, describing current debates, highlighting critical issues, advancing theorizing and research on mindfulness in organizations, and laying out directions for future research. We feel very fortunate to have been able to assemble such an outstanding group of chapter authors including many of the leading scholars working on mindfulness in organizations. The result has been, we believe, a volume that presents the cutting edge of research and thinking on the topic of mindfulness in organizations.

The chapters are grouped into three parts. Part I addresses such foundational issues as the history and conceptualization of mindfulness and MBIs, an overview of the role of mindfulness in the workplace, and an introduction and critical discussion of methods used in mindfulness research. Part II contains chapters exploring the role of mindfulness in various areas of organizational life, including identity, decision making, negotiations, work-life balance, and leadership. These chapters illustrate the broad contribution mindfulness can make to organizational scholarship and practice. Part III is on applications. We were keen to include this section because work on mindfulness traditionally and ultimately has a very pragmatic orientation: improving

the lives of mindfulness practitioners. Consistent with this aspiration, the chapters in this part discuss more applied issues, such as practical experiences in bringing mindfulness into organizations, teaching mindfulness to executives, and coaching with mindfulness.

In proposing this volume, we had the following goals in mind. First, to provide an overview of the theory and empirical research on mindfulness in an organizational context as well as situate this research into a broader context. Second, to provide an integration of different approaches to the study of mindfulness in organizations, as well as illustrate the diversity of approaches that have been pursued in order to remove some of the confusion that is created through the different approaches. Third, to act as a catalyst for future theoretical and empirical research on mindfulness in organizations. The book should suggest promising lines of future research, excite organizational researchers to embark on new projects involving mindfulness, and give confidence that the field is a legitimate and theoretically grounded area of investigation. And fourth, to inform the design of future research on mindfulness in organizations using methods such as mindfulness interventions, experiments, or surveys. We hope that readers will find these goals met.

Overview of chapters

In the next chapter, Shapiro, Wang and Peltason explore the foundational questions “What is mindfulness, and why should organizations care about it?” They unpack Shapiro and Carlson’s (2009) now widely cited and very useful definition of mindfulness in terms of intention, attention, and attitude. After highlighting the terrible costs of workplace stress, Shapiro *et al.* briefly review evidence that mindfulness helps not only in alleviating stress but also in enhancing decision making, perspective taking, resilience, positive organizational relationships and self-care. A fascinating aspect of this chapter is the exploration of the possibility of “mindfulness-informed business” – where mindfulness-inspired concepts and practices such as impermanence, no-self and acceptance are integrated into organizations without formally teaching meditation. Mindfulness is deeply counter-cultural to many organizational practices. This chapter explores the possibility that, in a world where individual achievement is often emphasized at the expense of self or others’ wellbeing,

mindfulness offers the promise of radical, transformational culture change for organizations.

In the third chapter, Chaskalson and Hadley examine the Buddhist origins of arguably the most widely used approach to mindfulness training, Jon Kabat-Zinn's eight-week mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) course. Their chapter explores the ways in which fundamental Buddhist language and techniques have been translated into Western contexts. This translation, they argue, has inevitably involved changes in emphasis and approach in order to accommodate a different cultural context. Three changes are notable. First, MBSR in the secular context aims to alleviate suffering, whereas Buddhism is a system for the complete elimination of suffering. Second, MBSR tends to emphasize mindfulness over concentrative states of absorption, and is taught within a different ethical framework than that offered by the Buddha. Finally, MBIs in organizations are demonstrating positive benefits even with lower-dose amounts of formal practice. Chaskalson and Hadley's chapter manages to skilfully blend an acknowledgement and honouring of the past with a recognition of the need for continual evolution and growth of mindfulness practices in the future.

In Chapter 4 Choi and Leroy address the question of *how* mindfulness is being studied in the workplace. Their chapter includes sections on conceptualization, operationalization, and construct validity issues related to mindfulness. They also review specific methods such as MBIs, and self-report scales of mindfulness (with a useful overview of such scales in Table 4.1), and directions for future research. Choi and Leroy provide not only a good overview of the major methods employed in mindfulness research, but also a thoughtful evaluation and critique of these methods. For example, they discuss limitations of different research designs as well as strengths and weaknesses in terms of internal and external validity. We believe that this chapter is an essential read not only for researchers, but also for intelligent consumers who want to be in a position to make judgments about the implications that can be drawn from mindfulness research.

In the fifth chapter, Alberts and Hülshager provide a very thorough review and discussion of different MBIs with a special focus on application in the context of work. The chapter first examines MBIs from the perspective of their different elements including formal practices, such as body scan and sitting meditation, and informal practices, such as awareness of routine activities and impulsive or reactive thought

and behavior patterns. It then examines differences among MBIs with respect to duration and delivery mode, reviewing and discussing empirical findings. One of the fascinating results from this review is that it appears that beneficial effects of MBIs have been found for various different programs. In the next section of the chapter, the authors review the effects of MBIs on a variety of work-relevant variables including task performance, stress, and emotion regulation. One of the particularly outstanding characteristics of this chapter is that Alberts and Hülshager not only review the literature, but also provide a very insightful discussion of the (mindfulness-based) mechanisms through which MBIs have beneficial effects at the workplace.

In Chapter 6 Atkins and Styles explore how mindfulness can affect one's sense of identity at work. Identity can be seen as a kind of filter through which all organizational activity occurs. Atkins and Styles use a theory of language and cognition called relational frame theory (Hayes, Barnes-Holmes, and Roche 2001) to construct a three-tiered understanding of identity as a conceptualized self, a knowing self and a more transcendent, observing sense of self as awareness. In a small pilot study, they find that an eight-week MBSR intervention decreases rigid conceptualizations about the self while increasing the extent to which the self is seen as an observer of experience. This study is fascinating for three main reasons. First, relational frame theory and its associated therapy (acceptance and commitment therapy – ACT) define mindfulness in behavioural terms (Hayes and Shenk 2004). This approach offers clarity and precision that is sometimes lacking in the Buddhist-inspired practices and concepts discussed in most of the other papers in this volume. Second, the Atkins and Styles system for coding the extent to which participants displayed a sense of self as an observer represents the beginnings of an entirely new, behavioral approach to measuring mindfulness that could potentially avoid some of the pitfalls of self-report measures of mindfulness. Finally, Atkins and Styles highlight the way in which identity is a critical determinant of workplace behavior that has hardly been studied in relation to mindfulness. Perhaps the biggest effect of MBSR and similar courses is to cause participants to redefine themselves less closely tied to any particular categorization of the self, and more closely tied to a sense of self as a container for observing the unfolding of any experience.

It has been said that life is a matter of making choices. Accordingly, in Chapter 7, Karelaia and Reb explore the potential influence of

mindfulness on the fundamental activity of making decisions. They organize their chapter around four stages of decision making: (1) framing the decision, (2) gathering and processing information, (3) coming to conclusions, and (4) learning from feedback; and explore for each stage how mindfulness may help (and sometimes interfere) with making good, and perhaps even wise, choices. Among other things, Karellaia and Reb discuss how being more mindful can lead to a greater awareness of choicefulness, of one's decision objectives, and of ethical conflicts; how it can reduce information processing-related judgment biases (de-biasing) and a better appreciation of uncertainty; how it can help in making tradeoffs and implementing decisions; and how mindfulness may support processes of learning from past decisions. Their chapter provides a wealth of ideas for anyone interested in studying mindfulness in workplace or leader decision making. It also provides many ideas for anyone trying to apply mindfulness with the intention of improving their own decision making.

In Chapter 8 Kudesia conducts a fascinating review of mindfulness and creativity in the workplace. He begins by describing contexts that support creativity and the cognitive processes involved. He then reviews a growing list of studies showing that mindfulness practice appears to improve the capacity to see problems in new ways, before speculating on how mindfulness “as a state characterized by decreased discursive thought, heightened meta-awareness, and goal-based regulation of attention” could feasibly improve creativity. Decreased discursive thought means relying more upon direct experience than one's conceptualizations of experience, heightened meta-awareness means being able to notice multiple aspects of one's own mental processes and goal-based regulation of attention simply means “the ability to modify the level of focus and breadth of attention to maximize goal-directed behaviour.” To the extent that we can flexibly hold our pre-existing assumptions and categorizations in mind while broadening or narrowing our attention at will, we are likely to enhance creativity. Overall, this chapter is very exciting as it provides a platform for future research in an area of high importance for modern organizations.

In Chapter 9 Allen and Layne Paddock turn our attention to a hugely important aspect of modern life: tensions between work and family life. This might seem like a surprising area of study for a mindfulness researcher, and certainly research on the effects of mindfulness upon the work-family interface is scant. But Allen and Paddock do a tremendous job first reviewing what relevant evidence there

is and then exploring why mindfulness might improve work-family balance. Allen and Kiburz (2012) found that those with higher trait mindfulness also reported greater work-family balance and that this relationship was mediated by sleep quality and by vitality. In subsequent research they showed that a relatively short mindfulness intervention reduced work interference with family life. Allen and Paddock detail four mechanisms whereby mindfulness might have positive effects. First, attentional training might, for example, reduce the time needed at work while also enhancing relations with significant others through enhanced connections. Second, improved emotion regulation might enhance wellbeing at work but also help people to not take negative emotional experiences home to their loved ones. Third, mindfulness might help people to optimize their allocation of resources to work and family; and, finally, mindfulness can alter perceptions of time such that more mindful individuals perceive that they have more time and thus appear to be less affected by time pressures. This is an entirely new area of study and so some of this is inevitably speculation. But such speculation is important to promote good research and suggest more effective interventions in this important aspect of modern life.

Chapter 10 is unique in that Boyatzis uses the real-life story of “Dimitrios”, the CEO of a company, away from and back towards mindfulness as a way of vividly demonstrating several principles of mindfulness. In so doing, Boyatzis elaborates on four main causes that disrupt the natural processes of being mindful with self, others, and the environment: (1) chronic stress; (2) life and career stages and cycles; (3) antagonistic neural networks; and (4) living and working around mindless others. These are followed by a discussion of processes that can help leaders move back towards mindfulness, including working with a personal vision, coaching with compassion, and developing resonant relationships. What makes this chapter a particularly captivating read is the interweaving of theory and story as well as the diverse set of topics covered, ranging from the micro (neural networks) to the macro (life stages). Readers may also find themselves inspired to reflect on their own journey away from and towards mindfulness. Also, read this chapter if you are curious to find out about the real person behind “Dimitrios”!

In Chapter 11, the second chapter on mindfulness in leadership, Reb, Sim, Chintakandanda, and Bhave start from the observation that both leadership and mindfulness are positively laden, “hot” topics.

Against this backdrop, they set themselves the goal of exploring the bright *and* the dark sides of mindfulness in leadership. They suggest that “being open to the complexities of mindfulness in leadership, rather than painting a perhaps unrealistically positive picture, will increase the chances of mindfulness surviving beyond the current buzz as a valid construct and training intervention that has implications for leadership research and practice.” For this purpose, they make three important distinctions: among several dimensions of mindfulness; between mindfulness as a construct and mindfulness as a practice; and finally between the more commonly researched *intrapersonal* effects of mindfulness and *interpersonal* effects that are particularly relevant in the context of leadership. Their exploration is organized around (1) leadership behaviors and outcomes, (2) leadership styles, and (3) leadership development. In each of the sections, they explore beneficial as well as detrimental effects. In so doing, they propose a number of interesting ideas for future research studies. One of the fascinating, albeit speculative, conclusions they draw is that mindfulness is often approached as a self-regulatory resource that could potentially be used in the service of both wholesome and unwholesome goals. They conclude that only a holistic approach to mindfulness, emphasizing not only focused attention but also witnessing awareness and other dimensions will allow leaders to realize the full potential of what mindfulness (practice) has to offer.

In Chapter 12, Kong takes on the topic of mindfulness in interpersonal negotiations. Negotiations are ubiquitous in organizations and some research suggests that being more mindful enables negotiators to achieve better outcomes (Reb and Narayanan 2014). Kong develops a mindful, relational self-regulation (MRSR) model of negotiation that views mindfulness as a moderating factor, influencing how negotiators “manage their relationships in negotiation settings.” To do so, Kong first delineates mindfulness from four nomologically related concepts: absorption, flow, emotional intelligence (EI), and intuition. He then develops his MRSR model and discusses its implications for negotiation theory and practice. The chapter also provides several interesting ideas for future research on mindfulness in negotiations. One of the main contributions of this chapter is to illustrate the vast unexplored potential of studying mindfulness in interpersonal contexts such as negotiation, as well as the benefits of integrating mindfulness into existing theories, such as the Gelfand *et al.*'s relational

negotiation theory(2006). The reader is both inspired and challenged to think in more complex ways about mindfulness.

Coming from a different theoretical tradition than most of the authors of this volume, Gärtner and Huber in Chapter 13 concern themselves with both individual mindfulness and mindful organizing. Mindful organizing refers to “fluid and fragile bottom-up processes of organizing” and, therefore, needs to be re-accomplished as an ongoing activity. Gärtner and Huber specifically examine the role of tools in this process of re-accomplishing mindfulness. Thereby, their chapter sheds light on how to understand the mechanisms that link individual and collective forms of mindfulness. In particular, they illustrate this process with the example of visual templates, such as those used in the ubiquitous PowerPoint presentations. In focusing on visual templates as *antecedents* of mindfulness, they provide a very welcome counterpart to the common focus on *consequences* of mindfulness. In addition, by examining both how such tools can induce and inhibit mindfulness, they provide an interesting, balanced discussion. Coming from a different theoretical perspective and linking mindfulness to visual templates – a very novel idea – this chapter challenges us to think more creatively and broadly about how processes of mindfulness can be enacted and enabled in organizations.

In Chapter 14, Bush invites us to reflect on her journey to bring mindfulness to organizations, with a particular emphasis on her experiences with Monsanto and Google. Her work was part of pioneering and path-breaking efforts by the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society to support the development of more *contemplative organizations*. Through her thoughtful reflections on these experiences, we learn not only about the benefits organizations derived from working with mindfulness, but also the obstacles faced, as well as the importance of being responsive to the context and culture of the organization in implementing MBIs. Acknowledging concerns about the instrumental use of mindfulness, Bush nevertheless concludes that “mindfulness and related practices can lead to insight and then to wisdom and compassion, encouraging new forms of inquiry and creativity, potentially taking organizations and their leaders from good to great and from great to wise and compassionate.” This chapter will be useful for both mindfulness researchers as well as practitioners implementing mindfulness-based programs in organizations.

Hunter, in Chapter 15, generously shares with us his experiences of the Executive Mind/Practice of Self-Management courses he developed and taught at the Peter F. Drucker School of Management from the early 2000s. The chapter describes the origins, methods, and motivations of the courses. Being strongly influenced by Drucker's work, Hunter argues that “[j]ust as leaders need tools to manage external realities, they also need tools to manage the internal ones. Effectiveness starts inside.” Hunter's courses are designed to help executives develop the ability to achieve greater balance and thus greater potential to “do well by doing good.” An important role is given to “the map” (see Fig. 15.1) as a guide to working with and ultimately overcoming rigid automatic responding. Hunter does a wonderful job in illustrating his teaching method and approach through concrete examples, “drawing from the lives of working executives” and shares with us invaluable “lessons learned” from his experience. The chapter ends by taking a broader perspective and briefly explores the role of mindfulness in the future of management (education). The chapter should appeal particularly to those interested in teaching mindfulness in a business context but also to anyone working with mindfulness.

Finally, in Chapter 16, Hall explores the ways in which mindfulness can help improve coaching. Her chapter is organized around two main themes: 1) the ways in which coaches can use their own mindfulness to coach more effectively and 2) the ways in which mindfulness can be taught to coaching clients to enhance their own outcomes. Her FEEL model (Focus, Explore, Embrace, and Let go/Let in) reflects the move away from simple goal setting-based formulations of coaching (such as the GROW model) toward coaching based more upon the evolving needs of the client. Hall then raises the important and interesting question of whether practices oriented toward being or “non-doing” can be useful in a culture of doing, concluding that it is possible to mindfully engage in doing. Mindfulness can potentially help coaches be more present and compassionate in relationships with their clients. Hall then explores how helpful it can be for coaches to teach mindfulness skills to their clients. This chapter is relevant not just for professional coaches, but for managers wanting to adopt a more coaching approach with their staff. Hall's FEEL model could just as easily apply to a performance appraisal meeting as it could to a formal coaching relationship.