

# Mindfulness in the Workplace

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**Funding provided by NIOSH R01 OH03915 and the:**



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Development Fund  
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transformation

# “Take-Away”

- Research on the **beneficial health effects of mindfulness practices** well established
- Research on the benefits of establishing **workplace mindfulness offerings** more limited, but suggestive of **benefits to both employee and organization**
- **Resources** for establishing mindful workplaces particularly **strong in the UK**
- Don't overlook **expertise within your own organizations**

# What is Mindfulness?

**“Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally”**

– Jon Kabot-Zinn

■ **Mindfulness can be practiced in a variety of settings**

■ Sitting

■ Standing

■ Walking

■ Eating

■ Working

# What is Mindfulness?

## Key brain training activities:

- focusing attention on thoughts, emotions, and body sensations
- simply observing them as they arise and pass away without judgment

## Examples mindfulness practices:

- Meditation
- Progressive relaxation
- Yoga (some), Tai-Chi



# What are the Benefits of mindfulness?

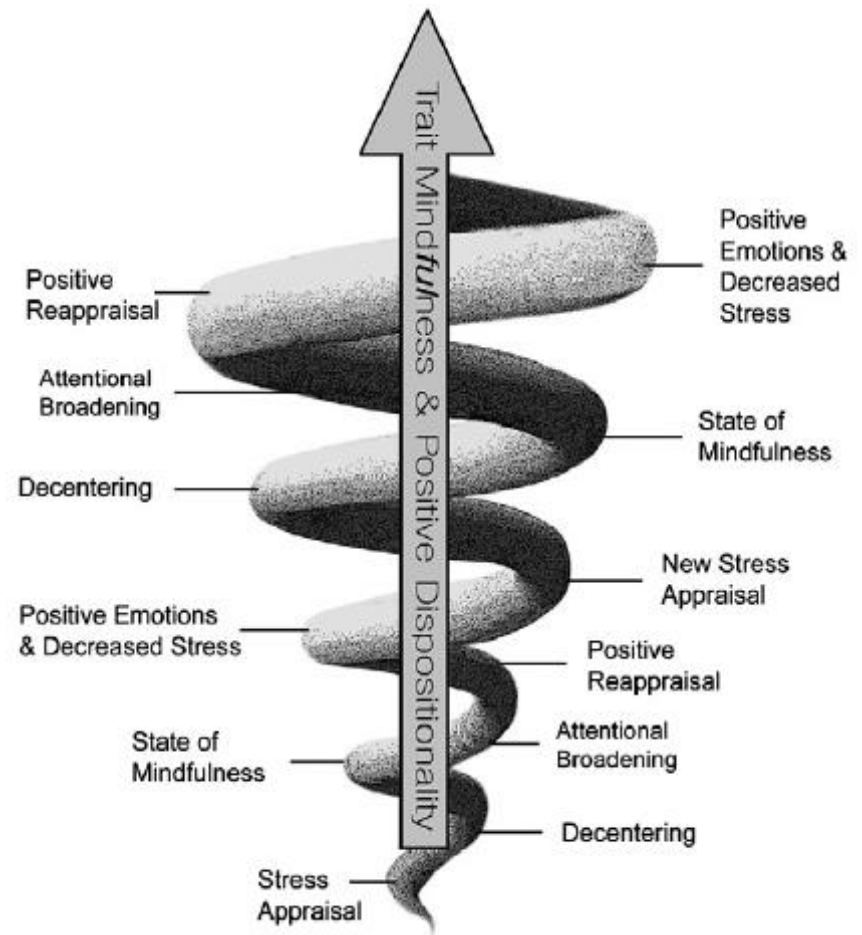
## Range of psychological benefits:

- Reduced psychological symptoms (depression, anxiety)
- Reduced emotional reactivity/enhanced behavioral regulation
- Increase in compassion and altruistic behavior

# What are the Benefits of mindfulness?

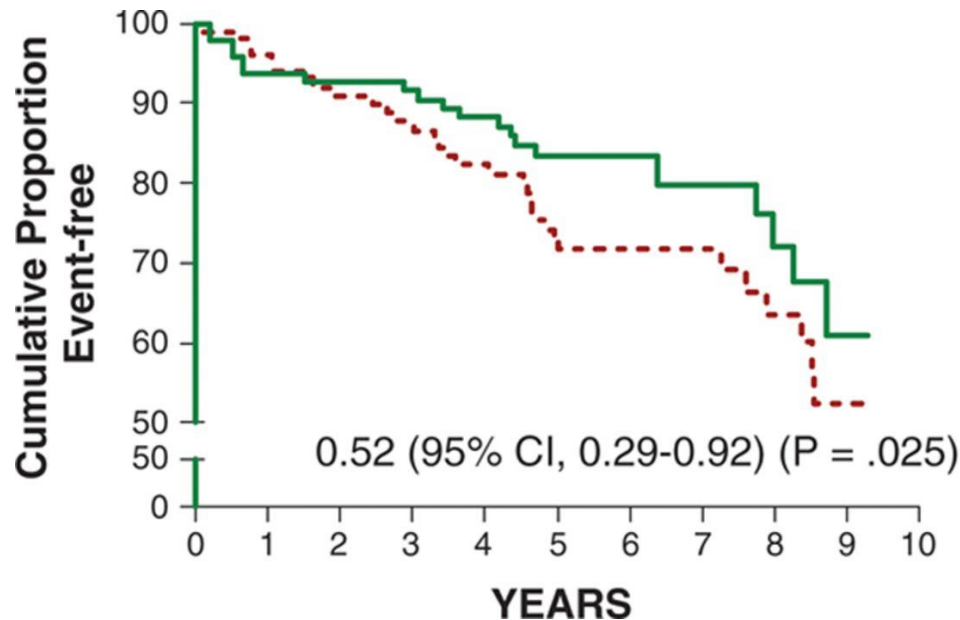
- Some evidence for enhanced coping in response to stressors

- May lead to enhanced **Resiliency**



# What are the Benefits of mindfulness?

Mindfulness may extend life in groups living with disease



- Practiced 8.5x/ week (recommended session= 20 minutes)

# What are the Benefits of mindfulness?

Mindfulness may extend life in the general population

- Those who report practicing yoga in previous 12 months had a **lower risk of mortality**

- Hazard Ratio=0.57  
(95% CI= 0.36-0.92)





# How does mindfulness work?

- Mindfulness changes brain structure (and function)

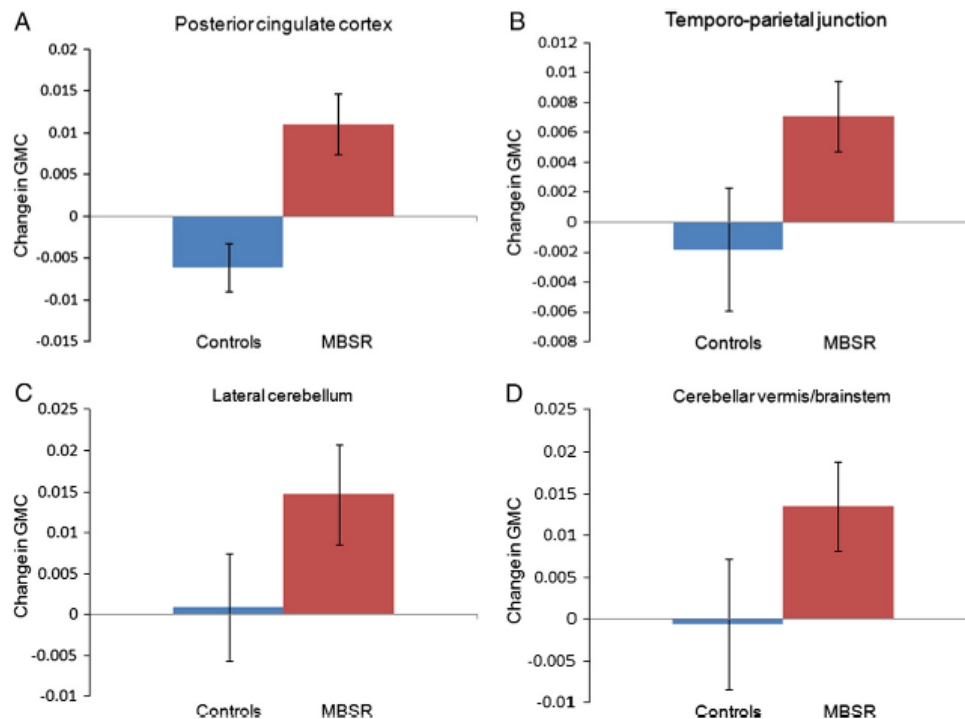


Fig. 3. Change in gray matter concentration (GMC) within the clusters in the posterior cingulate cortex (A), the temporo-parietal junction (B), the lateral cerebellum (C) and the cerebellar vermis/brainstem (D) in the MBSR and control group. Error bars show 95% confidence interval.

8 weeks of sustained practice (27 min/day) **increases grey matter density** in several regions of the brain

# How does mindfulness work?

Mindfulness changes short-term gene functioning



Energy metabolism,  
mitochondrial function,  
insulin secretion,  
telomere maintenance



Inflammatory  
response, stress-  
related pathways.



**DNA: The Double Helix**

Deoxyribonucleic Acid

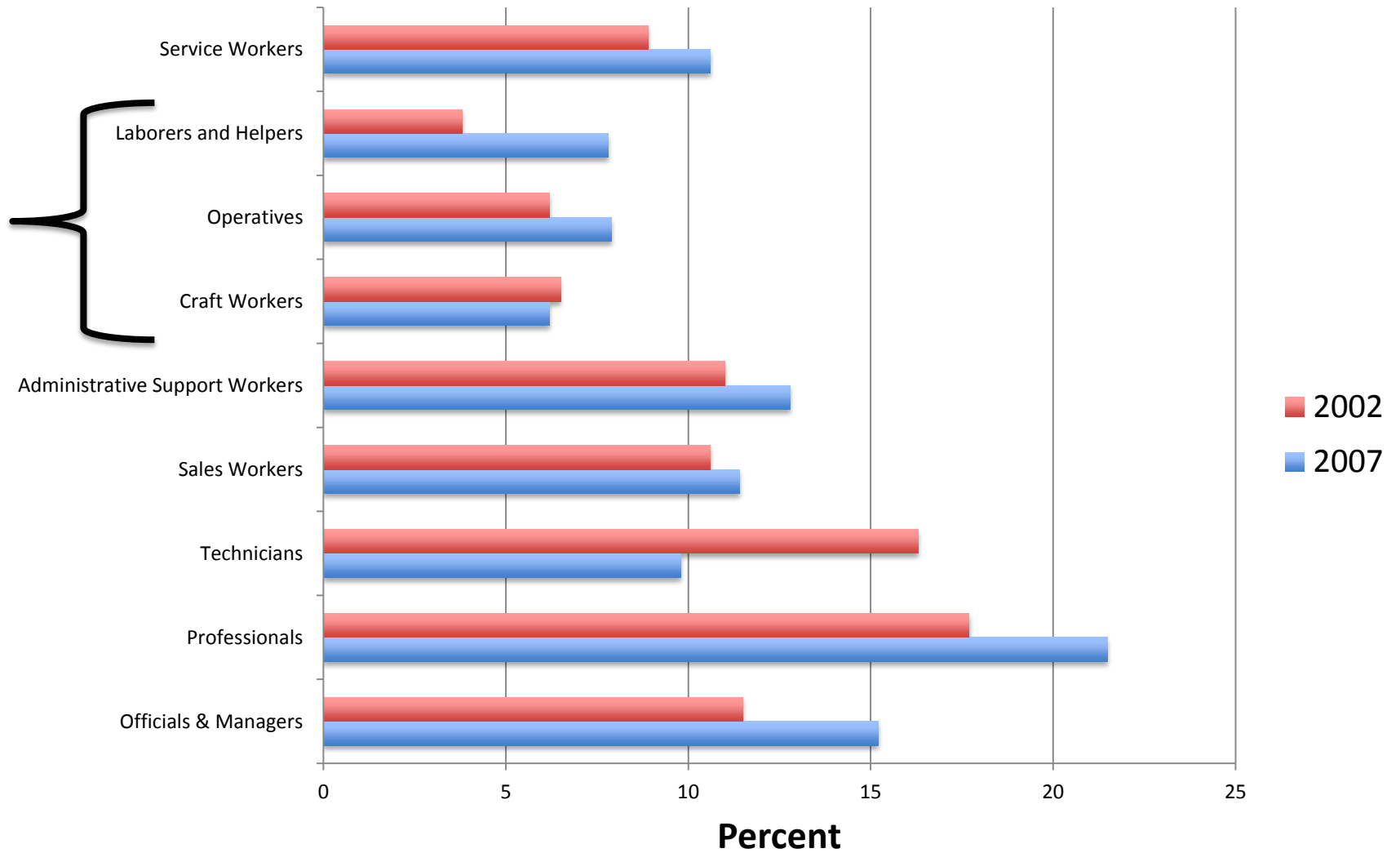
# Prevalence of worker mindfulness practices in the US

Mindfulness practices growing rapidly among workers in the US

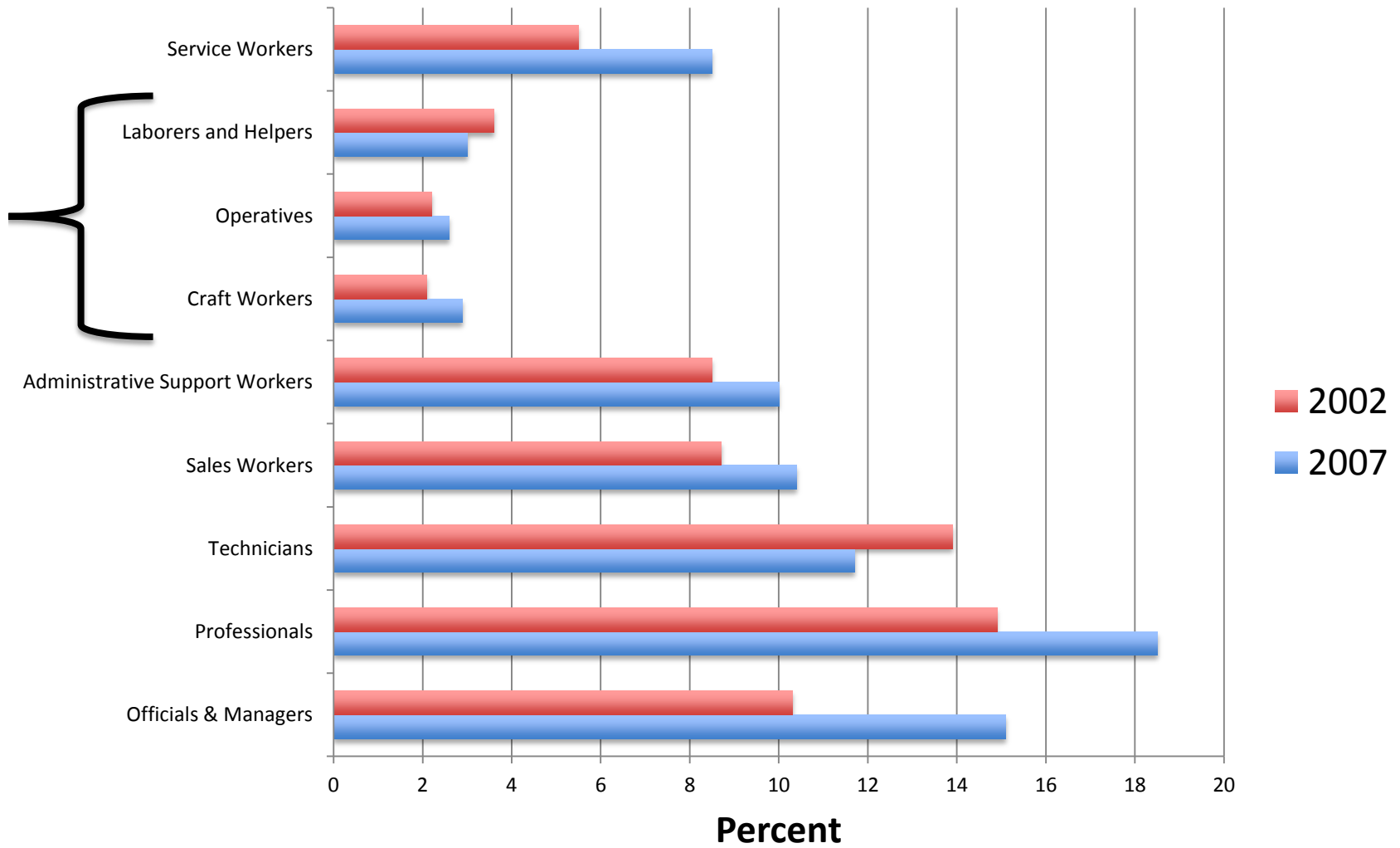
■ But not all workers are equally exposed.



# US Workers: Meditation



# US Workers: Yoga



# Prevalence of worker mindfulness practices in the US

**Workers in your company who are mindfulness practitioners!**

- Reaching out to these employees to inform the design of a more mindful workplace

- Potential pool for train-the-trainer intervention models.

- US-based questionnaire available online:

Download file: qalthealt.pdf at:

[ftp://ftp.cdc.gov/pub/Health\\_Statistics/NCHS/Survey\\_Questionnaires/NHIS/2012/English](ftp://ftp.cdc.gov/pub/Health_Statistics/NCHS/Survey_Questionnaires/NHIS/2012/English)

# **Proven (evidence-based) Mindfulness Interventions**

## **Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR)**

- Strongest evidence base for improving psychological health/reducing stress reactivity
- 8-week program effective in clinical & non-clinical populations

# **Proven (evidence-based) mindfulness Interventions**

## **Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)**

- UK/US intervention drawing from MBSR specifically designed to prevent relapse in those with a history of depression
- **NHS- approved intervention**
- Probably not a viable option for workplace delivery



# Benefits of Worker Mindfulness Practices

**Most of the available studies in literature limited:**

- number of subjects evaluated
- quality of the research designs

■ **MBSR**--- good candidate in workplace setting

■ ? Dose

■ ? Fomat

# One Good Workplace Example

	Control ( <i>n</i> = 53)	Mindfulness ( <i>n</i> = 96)	Yoga ( <i>n</i> = 90)
Outcome Measures	%	%	%
PSS			
Pre	23.52 (.52)	24.72 (.38)	24.93 (.40)
Post	19.34 (.86)	15.86 (.64)	16.74 (.66)

- Sophisticated research design comparing workplace-feasible mindfulness offerings (n=297)

## ■ Results

- Inconsistent results, but:

- 1 point PSS scale = \$100 increase in medical costs

# UK Resources for Bringing Mindfulness into the Workplace



<http://bemindful.co.uk/>

- Website sponsored by the Mental Health Foundation
- Search feature allowing users to locate local mindfulness offerings
- Online PSS test and
- Access to online mindfulness course with preliminary evidence of efficacy (Krusche, 2012)

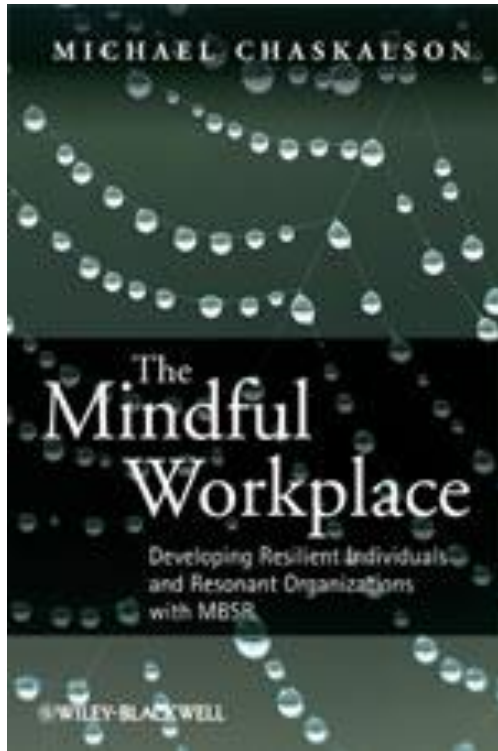
# UK Resources for Bringing Mindfulness into the Workplace



- Brings together:
  - Teacher training opportunities
  - Review of emerging mindfulness research
  - Listings for mindfulness courses offered to the public

<http://www.exeter-mindfulness-network.org/>

# UK Resources for Bringing Mindfulness into the Workplace



■ Brings MBSR into the workplace



<http://www.mindfulness-works.com/index.php>

# UK Resources for Bringing Mindfulness into the Workplace



**Breathworks specialises in helping people to:**

- reduce work related stress and the impact it has on health
- self-manage any health condition(s) they may have
- reduce the suffering associated with their health condition(s)
- return to work after periods of sickness
- transition back into activity, creativity and productivity.

**We also help people to:**

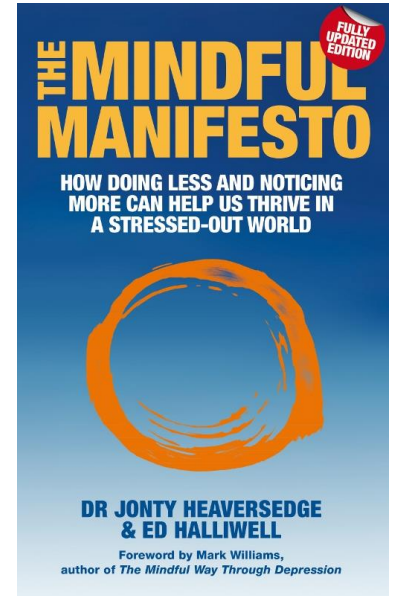
- stay at work with greater resilience and better self awareness
- return to work happily, willingly and voluntarily

<http://www.mindfulnessworks.co.uk/index.html>

# UK Resources for Bringing Mindfulness into the Workplace

## Work With Mindfulness

Tuning people to themselves and each other.



We offer [mindfulness training and consultancy for organisations](http://workwithmindfulness.com/index.htm) in the UK and internationally. Mindfulness is an awareness-based approach to life that helps people relate skilfully with circumstances. It means paying attention to thoughts, feelings, body sensations, others and the environment in a way that cultivates understanding, helps manage difficulties, and leads to wise choices. Rooted in ancient traditions of meditation, mindfulness has become the subject of increasing [scientific study](#) in recent years, and research is showing it helps people manage many situations more effectively, including at work.

<http://workwithmindfulness.com/index.htm>

# Research Issues & Challenges Building Mindful Workplaces

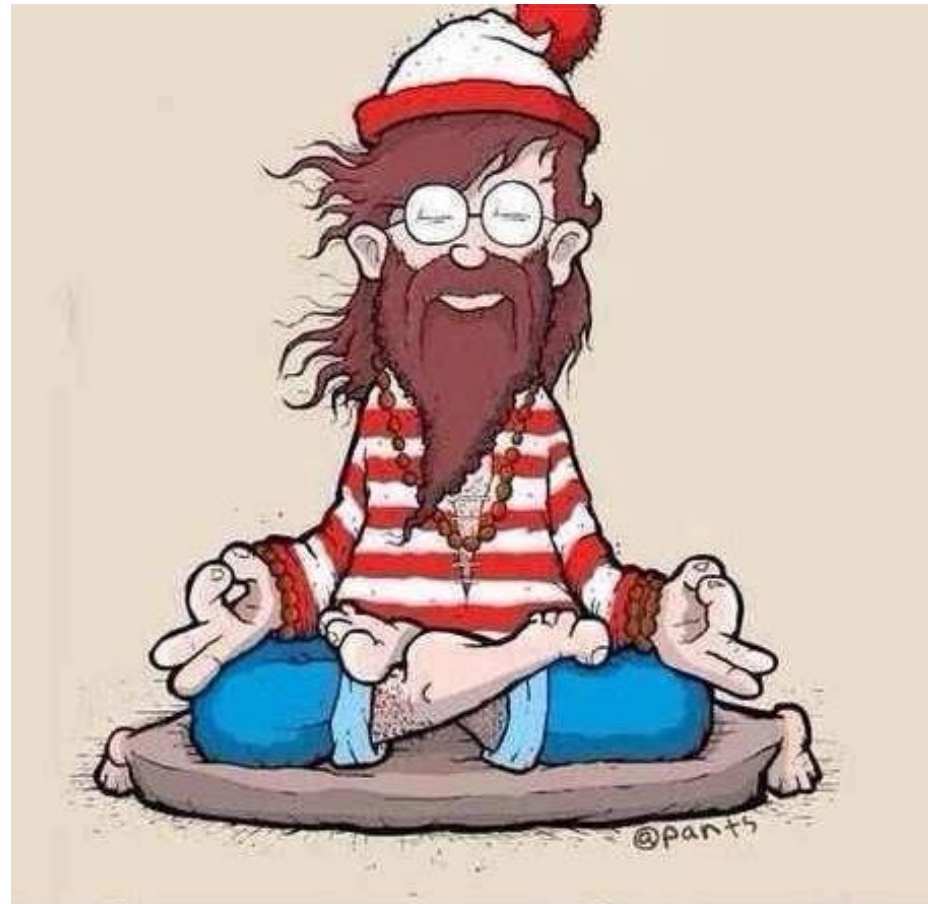
- Are workplace mindfulness interventions cost-effective?
  - Can they accelerate return-to-work (long term sick absence)?
  - Can they prevent cases of long term absence?
  - Can they improve productivity?
- What should offered on-site versus off-site?
  - Need scalability studies (e.g., online delivery)
  - Can we 'optimize' mindfulness practice?



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# Thank you



**Plot twist. Waldo finds himself.**