

LISA HOFFMAN • COACH • CONSULTANT

255-A DOWNEY ST • SAN FRANCISCO CA 94117
v. 415- 370-7667 • lisa@lisahoffman.net • www.lisahoffman.net

HELPING PEOPLE & NONPROFITS THRIVE!

Mindfulness in the Workplace

Self-Care and Mindfulness

▪ **Mindfulness:**

- Is the awareness I bring to my entire life.
- Is direct experience that penetrates thoughts, feelings, and ideas about what's in front of me.
- Is complete engagement with the task or person at hand. Stress at work is so often caused by projecting into the future, anticipating problems or mistakes, writing a to-do list and suddenly feeling like I have to do everything all at once.
- Focuses me on the singular person or activity right here, right now. Thoughts, anxieties and fears about what might happen, everything else I need to do are simply noticed as they arise and dissipate.

▪ **The Four Foundations of Mindfulness:**

- Are areas of awareness we can cultivate...
 - **Body:** what is my physical experience?
 - **Emotions:** what is my feeling experience -- positive, negative or neutral? Am I grasping at experiences I like, pushing away experiences I don't like, or lulled into delusion by experiences that seem inconsequential?
 - **States of mind:** am I having a direct experience, or am I caught by thoughts and feelings about my experience? And am I aware of what underpins my thoughts and feelings, which in Buddhism is typically greed, hate, delusion?
 - **People and things:** my particular focus -- another person, a sound, a meal -- also known as phenomena. Am I experiencing what's in front of me or my ideas about it?

▪ **Mindfulness Encourages:**

- **Spaciousness:** for my physical experience, thoughts, feelings and the person in front of me.
- **Skillful means:** the possibility to distinguish between my anger and frustration about someone I am dealing with and what's actually happening, so that my actions and communication are less likely to be dictated by my emotional and mind state.
- **Awareness of what I am doing:** holding on, letting go, projecting anger from someone else when I actually need to deal with my own anger, making up stories or problems when there are none.
- **Choices:** I might be able to deal with a difficult colleague with compassion and curiosity rather than irritation and impatience. Most people who are difficult are suffering in some way, if nothing else because they have to live with themselves.
- **Presence:** The satisfaction, even pleasure, of complete engagement with the only thing I need to do at this very moment.

▪ **Mental Qualities and Skills Needed to Cultivate Mindfulness:**

- **Diligence:** Commitment and vow. How do I really want to live my life?
- **Clearly knowing:** What is it? Conscious and intentional practice to distinguish between direct experience and my point of view.
- **Free from desires and discontent:** Awareness of preferences and creating separation from self, from others, from the direct experience that is life.
- **Require the skill of focusing at will:** Developed by meditation and practice, this skill is the ability to notice my state of being, and choose my focus rather than being constantly distracted by thoughts, feelings and concepts.

A simple way to focus at will is to ask: What is my direct experience? What is really happening?

▪ **Self-Care and Mindfulness:**

Mindfulness is important to self-care because...

- I need to know how I am to take care of myself; it's easy to be in denial about exhaustion and burnout.
- I need to know what I need to take care of myself; without awareness and connection to body, motions, feeling, and people places and things it is very difficult to know what I need.
- Mindfulness is a powerful tool for addressing the incredible stress created by living in the future and regretting the past.
- Shutting down to the pain around me, to my clients' dire situations, to a dysfunctional work environment, is not an effective burnout prevention strategy.
- Mindfulness helps me notice the impact of the pain around me and develop the ability and skills for it to flow through me, and for me to notice when I'm overwhelmed, when I need to do something different.
- Mindfulness helps me deal with others and myself with compassion and curiosity, which are surefire stress reducers.
- Through mindfulness, knowing my values, noticing when I need to speak up, I can try to change the culture at my nonprofit to encourage and support self-care.

▪ **Bibliography:**

- The Art of Happiness at Work, The Dalai Lama
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- No Time to Lose, Pema Chodron
- The Miracle of Mindfulness, Thich Nhat Hanh
- The One Who Is Not Busy, Darlene Cohen
- A Path with Heart, Jack Kornfield
- Turning Suffering Inside Out, Darlene Cohen
- When Things Fall Apart, Pema Chodron