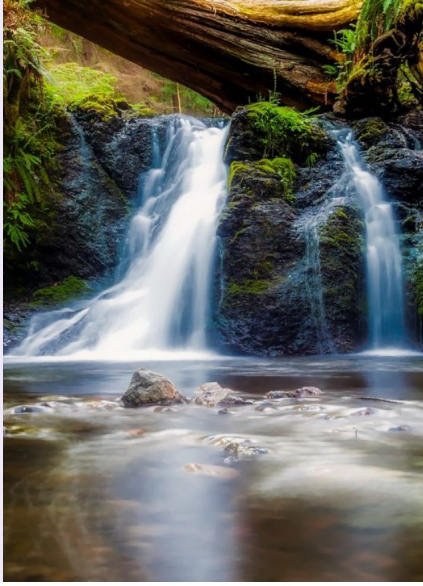
Activate Success

KEY INSIGHTS · WORKPLACE WELLBEING AND RESILIENCE

# Practical Mindfulness at Work

From the training *Mindfulness Strategies for Workplace Wellbeing and Resilience* with John M. O'Brien, Ph.D.



## Why it matters

**40%**
of employees worldwide felt a lot of stress the previous day.
Gallup, 2026

**46.9%**
of waking hours, our minds are on something other than what we're doing.
Killingsworth & Gilbert, 2010

**5,161**
employees in 50+ workplace trials: mindfulness lowered stress and raised wellbeing.
Vonderlin et al., 2020

## Why we react before we think

Your brain's alarm registers a threat in under a tenth of a second. Conscious awareness arrives later, around a quarter to half a second. By the time you notice, the reaction has often already started.

**Trigger** A sharp email lands → **Auto-routine** It starts anyway → **Notice** "I'm in it." → **Redirect** Choose what works

### Two kinds of memory

The plan you make when calm lives in explicit memory. Under stress, implicit habits take over.

### Auto-routines

Most of the day runs on autopilot, including how we handle conflict and criticism.

### The real skill

Practice won't stop every reaction. It shortens the time until you notice, so you can choose.

> *We all have stress-related negative behaviors. The question is not if we have them, but which ones, and how they impact us and those around us.*
>
> **John M. O'Brien, Ph.D.**

# Five practices you can use today

Practice on calm days, so the skill is there when you need it.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | **The physiological sigh**<br>Settle your body fast | Inhale through the nose until almost full, take a second short inhale, then exhale slowly through the mouth. One to three rounds. |
| 2 | **30-second resets**<br>Interrupt the urge to react | Feel your feet on the floor. Notice your back against the chair. Observe one object without words. WAIT before you type, speak or send. |
| 3 | **Describe, don't judge**<br>Cool down your thinking | Swap "He's so incompetent" for "The report was due Friday and arrived Tuesday." Watch for *always*, *never* and *should*. |
| 4 | **The wise mind check**<br>Balance facts and feelings | Ask two questions: Which state of mind am I in right now? Which one would be most effective right now? Naming the feeling is a step toward the facts. |
| 5 | **DEAR**<br>Speak up without attacking | **D**escribe the facts. **E**xpress your feeling or opinion. **A**ssert what you need. **R**einforce what's in it for them. |

### When you slip, MEND

**M**ean you're sorry, with no "but." **E**ase their hurt. **N**otice what you'd do differently. **D**rop it and move forward.

### Your next seven days

Pick one practice and one calm moment each day. Write it as one sentence: "When I ___, I will ___."

Sources: Gallup, State of the Global Workplace 2026; Killingsworth & Gilbert, Science 2010; Vonderlin et al., Mindfulness 2020; Méndez-Bértolo et al., Nature Neuroscience 2016; Sergent et al., Nature Neuroscience 2005; Schwabe & Wolf, Trends in Cognitive Sciences 2013; Balban et al., Cell Reports Medicine 2023. Wise mind and DEAR are skills from Dialectical Behavior Therapy (Linehan).

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