



Our Thinking Series: **Should I be Mindful?**

by: Norman Buckley



If you have been alive for the past few years you have probably heard about “Mindfulness.” If you haven’t heard about it then it’s time you did because the concept is extremely popular in some circles. A good friend of mine, Richard, is completing a PhD on the concept right now. But what is it? And do you really need to know?

Wikipedia will tell you that according to Sgierska, “Mindfulness is “the intentional, accepting and non-judgmental focus of one’s attention on the emotions, thoughts and sensations occurring in the present moment”. Wiki will also tell you that there are numerous other definitions and suggests that the concept originated in Eastern meditation practices. In fact a colleague, Rob McMorrow, said that he didn’t think there was much to pick between Mindfulness and Meditation. Not sure about that but there is certainly an overlap.

The problem starts to arise when we are then told that Mindfulness is the answer to all the world’s ills. And that is pretty much what some of us were told by the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi a long time ago. And many people did pick up the concept. Not sure that I have noticed a reduction in the world’s ills. Perhaps it’s a great concept but not necessarily for everybody. And if not for everybody then for whom?

Well we have been given some help here. Mario Wenzel and his colleagues at the Institute of Psychology at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz in Germany, has published what could be a big step forward. The paper is titled “Curb your neuroticism – Mindfulness mediates the link between neuroticism and subjective well-being.” And buried in that title is a really important answer.

This paper is a beauty. In its eight pages of fine writing they describe a couple of studies that tried to find out just what Mindfulness does. And they look at how it interacts with two well-known concepts, “Subjective Well Being” (or SWB) and “Emotionality” (well they called it Neuroticism – same thing). SWB is basically how you feel about yourself. They looked at other research into Mindfulness and into the effect of Emotionality on a person’s life. And they found some simple things:

1. People who are more Emotional (Emotionality is higher) tend to have a lower sense of wellbeing (lower SWB)
2. Learning to be Mindful can improve your sense of wellbeing (SWB goes up)
3. Emotionality is linked to lower base levels of Mindfulness. i.e. Emotional people are, naturally, less Mindful.

But. Emotionality is not something we can change easily if at all. But Mindfulness is trainable. If we put these three together the result is that:

1. People with higher levels of Emotionality have a lower sense of wellbeing. That’s just life.
2. If we train people in Mindfulness techniques then the impact of Emotionality is reduced significantly and their sense of wellbeing improves
3. And from there we do know that people with a better sense of wellbeing (higher SWB) also tend to be more engaged, more satisfied, happier at work and less likely to suffer burnout or workaholism. And there’s lots of other things that just get better.

What does it mean from a Facet5 perspective?

If you are working with a person who has high Emotionality then you can be pretty sure that one of symptoms of this is that they tend to underrate themselves. Their “SWB” will almost certainly be lower. And as a result they will probably not perform as well as they might.

But if you can teach them basic Mindfulness skills (and you don't need to get deeply into some of the pseudo-psycho-spiritual stuff that some seem to espouse) then this will help them to feel better about themselves (SWB goes up) and the world is suddenly a better and more successful place.

If they have low Emotionality then remember that they may already think they are pretty hot stuff and in control of the world and their place in it, so I would question whether they are going to get much benefit from the Mindfulness concept.

Would you like to talk more about mindfulness in your business? [Contact us](#) to begin a conversation.

*Mario Wenzel, Christina von Versen, Sarah Hirschmüller,
Thomas Kubiak, Curb your neuroticism – Mindfulness mediates
the link between neuroticism and subjective well-being,
Personality and Individual Differences, Volume 80, July 2015,
Pages 68-75, ISSN 0191-8869
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2015.02.020>*

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