

Headspace for Work

# Stress in the Workplace

How mindfulness can help



# Intro

## **1 in 3 employees is stressed at work.**

Work is a leading source of stress for adults, impacting both employee well-being and business outcomes.

In fact, a third of employees report being stressed at work. Research has shown that stressed workers are less engaged, have reduced productivity, and have higher levels of absenteeism and turnover. What's more, stressed employees have higher healthcare costs than their less-stressed peers. From depression to heart disease, the consequences of stress-related illnesses cost U.S. businesses **nearly \$200 billion a year.**

If you or your employees have experienced stress, many of these statistics won't come as a surprise. Businesses are increasingly taking note and investing in employee wellness solutions, including science-backed mindfulness training.

# Meditation can reduce stress in the workplace

Research shows that mindfulness meditation can reduce stress and can have a significant impact in the workplace. How? Meditation works by helping people regulate emotions, changing the brain to be more resilient to stress, and improving stress biomarkers. Workers in many high-stress occupations, such as healthcare professionals, call-center employees, and bankers, have experienced health benefits such as decreased stress after mindfulness training.

- One study found that after 8 weeks of mindfulness training, nurses had **significantly decreased stress levels and improvement in general health**. The same improvements were sustained 4 months after the training.\*
- Employees of a call center working for a financial institution **experienced decreased stress** after listening to two short meditation sessions daily for 5 weeks. Bonus: The clients of these employees actually had increased satisfaction levels over time.\*
- A European study looked at a diverse sample of workers, including industrial clerks, bankers, hospitality service employees, retail salespersons, nurses, teachers, social workers, and psychologists. After 10 days of self-guided mindfulness exercises, **participants reported decreased levels of emotional exhaustion**.\*

# Meditation reverses the impacts of stress on our mind and body

## Emotional Regulation

Stress can cause us to have less control over our emotions and make it difficult to handle challenging situations. Mindfulness training can help employees learn to shift their perception and regulate emotions, specifically reducing negative emotions like anger and frustration. Meditation can also improve happiness and well-being by strengthening our ability to cope with stressors in the future.\*

## Brain Changes

Regular meditation has been proven to change our brain physiology. The amygdala, also called our “fight or flight” center, is the part of the brain involved in anxiety, fear, and stress. MRI scans show that after 8 weeks of mindfulness practice, the amygdala shrinks in size. As the amygdala shrinks, the prefrontal cortex (associated with skills like concentration and decision-making) gets bigger. This retraining and restructuring of the brain means the learned benefits of meditation, like reducing stress, can become innate and permanent.\*

## Stress Biomarkers

The benefit of meditation is not just in our heads. Studies show mindfulness meditation can positively affect a range of stress-related biomarkers, including a reduction in blood pressure and heart rate. When we are stressed, certain hormones can become imbalanced and affect the way we feel mentally and physically. Studies show meditation can impact a stress hormone called cortisol, which helps with stress regulation and hormone balance for stress resilience.\*

A recent study found that eight weeks of mindfulness training can help lower inflammatory molecules and stress hormones by around 15%. The meditation intervention in the study was shown to work better than a non-meditation stress management course.\*

15%

reduction in inflammatory molecules and stress hormones after eight weeks of mindfulness training

# Mindfulness training is a growing tool for corporate wellness

Businesses have a history of investing in measures that support employee well-being and business outcomes: **From anti-smoking initiatives, to nutrition, to programs focused on physical fitness.**

Today, companies across diverse industries are investing in mental health and using mindfulness training as an efficient and effective way to improve employee well-being.



Mindfulness training is especially compelling as a wellness initiative because it can have an impact on stress almost immediately, while also maintaining positive effects long-term.

→ In a study with young adults who meditated for 3 days, participants reported **lower stress and showed increased cortisol reactivity to social evaluative stress**, which indicates a greater ability to cope with stressors.\*

→ A Harvard study showed that meditation can have a longer-lasting effect on reducing stress levels than a vacation. After 10 months, the vacationers' stress levels returned to baseline, while the meditators' **reduced stress levels persisted**.\*

What's more, mindfulness training can be done online or through a mobile app. In comparison to traditional face-to-face interventions, studies have shown that online mindfulness training can be a more convenient and cost-effective strategy to reach busy, digitally accessible populations.

The Headspace science team is committed to studying our product and proving its efficacy on a variety of mental and physical health outcomes. We have clinical trials in progress to measure the clinical impact of Headspace on stress in diverse populations. The following are two preliminary studies on Headspace and stress:

→ In an internally led unpublished pilot study, Headspace reduced participants' stress by a third in 30 days.\*\* **After 10 days, participants' stress had decreased by 11.8%** and after 30 days of Headspace, stress had **even further decreased to 32%.**

→ In a published study using Headspace as an intervention, a brief experience with Headspace significantly reduced stress. **After only 10 days of using Headspace, participants had a 14% reduction in stress.\*\***

The Headspace science team works with our customers to develop research tools and processes to evaluate and measure the effectiveness of Headspace.

# 32%

reduction in stress after 30 days of Headspace

# 14%

reduction in stress after only 10 days of using Headspace\*\*



With increasing stress in the workplace and a need for convenient and effective solutions, digital mindfulness training is the right approach for many companies.

EXPLORE THE APP

Visit [headspace.com/work](https://headspace.com/work) to explore the research behind bringing mindfulness into the workplace.

GET STARTED

[Contact us](#) or [schedule a demo](#) to see how Headspace for Work can transform your organization.



# References

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