

Wisdom at Work: mini ABC guide to resilience

The burdens of workloads, deadlines and organisational complexity can lead to chronic stress and burnout. The antidote lies in developing a balanced, sustainable approach to life at work – cultivated best through mindfulness: the practice of skillful awareness. This mini guide sets out – in three simple ABC steps – how to learn and apply mindfulness at work, and gives a taste of our workplace resilience programmes.

Step 1: Awareness

Stress is often made worse by the 'autopilot' or 'doing' mode of the mind, which evolved in our prehistoric past to keep us safe. Autopilot wants to fix problems instantly. But some problems are complicated, and our attempts to fix them quickly can lead to a vicious cycle of over-exertion, self-blame and poor self-care. The first step out of this bind is to pause, step back and get clear about what's really going on. The exercise below shows you how. Familiarise yourself with it so you can put it to one side and do it. Or [listen to the online audio](#).

- Find a quiet moment and place where you won't be disturbed for a few minutes.
- Sit on a chair and compose yourself. Place both feet firmly on the floor, and allow your back to be straight without being rigid. Rest your hands on your lap. Gently close your eyes or lower your gaze.
- Notice the contact your body makes with the chair and floor. Now take your awareness throughout your body bit by bit, starting with your feet and gradually moving up to your torso, arms, shoulders, neck and head. Just notice all the sensations you find in each part of your body. Do this for a few minutes.
- Your mind will almost certainly get distracted at times by all sorts of things, including problems and challenges at work. Each time this happens, rather than trying to 'fix' anything, just notice where your mind has gone – and any associated thoughts and emotions. Then simply return to your body scan.
- Now take your awareness to your breathing. Allow it to happen naturally, and just notice what it feels like in your body. If your mind gets distracted, again notice where it's gone and any associated thoughts and emotions. Then simply come back to your breathing. Do this for a few minutes.
- Now become aware of your whole body and, opening your eyes, gently come out of this mini meditation.
- In the 'Awareness' column on page 2 jot down a few distractions and associated thoughts and emotions.

Step 2: Being with your experience

The good news is that there's another mode of your mind that is far better equipped than autopilot to deal with tough challenges: 'being' or 'reflective' mode, which approaches things with curiosity, and gives them space to be as they are. It sees things as they really are, and isn't afraid of facing and accepting short-term difficulty for the bigger prize of long-term resolutions. Mindfulness is the best way to cultivate this mode. You've already started to do this in the exercise in step 1. Now, let's apply this reflective/being mode to the reality of your work challenges:

- Read through what you wrote in the table for each distraction/problem and associated thoughts and emotions.
- For each example, spend a moment reflecting on any difficulties or challenges in this situation that are beyond your control and you need to accept. Jot down any thoughts in the 'Being with' column.

Step 3: Choosing wise responses

When you give yourself more time and space to understand and accept your experience, it's usually much easier to choose wise responses that provide real solutions to tough challenges. This ability is what mindfulness enables. So let's go back to your examples in the table and see what wise, resilient responses emerge:

- For each line in turn, read through what you've written, then put it to one side and sit quietly for a moment.
- Bring to mind the difficulties in the 'Being with' column. As you do so, notice any tension or discomfort in your body. In your imagination, breathe into these areas and invite them to soften. Spend a moment imagining what it would be like to let go of whatever you're struggling to control, and to accept things as they are.
- When you feel ready, ask yourself what new or different ways there might be to respond wisely in this situation.
- Write your responses in the 'Choosing wise responses column'. Review these, and summarise them in the space provided – noticing in particular any common themes. This is your personalised guide to resilience.

Found this mini guide helpful? Contact us to find out more about our workplace resilience programmes: info@risingminds.org.uk or call 07866 566496

<u>A</u> wareness			<u>B</u> eing with	<u>C</u> hoice
Distraction/ problem <i>Where did my mind go?</i>	Thoughts <i>What automatic thoughts came up?</i>	Emotions <i>What emotions came up?</i>	<i>What difficulties are out of my control and I need to accept?</i>	<i>Having accepted what I need to, what positive choices are available to me?</i>

My guide to resilience