

# The Mindful Workplace Study

*Conducted by Joy Rains*



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## The Study

I worked with a program evaluation consultant to measure the effectiveness of workplace mindfulness programs. After we designed the materials, I implemented mindfulness programs in four companies from varying industries. Participants learned skills to reduce stress, focus, think positively, listen attentively, and gain awareness—through a combination of instruction, experiential practices, group discussion, and role playing. A total of 23 sales representatives participated, self-reporting ratings of mindfulness skills in pre-program and post-program assessments. We met over a one-month period for three one-hour sessions, with “homework” between sessions to reinforce learning. All but one group had a one-hour follow-up session approximately four weeks later.

## The Statistical Analysis

A paired t-test was run to determine whether there was a statistically significant mean difference between participants’ rating of variables before and after participating in the program.

## The Results

There was statistically significant evidence ( $p$ -value is less than or equal to .05) that participants’ scores increased from pre-program to post-program. A  $p$ -value less than or equal to .05 indicates that it's very likely the difference in ratings is not due to chance.

Participants reported statistically significant differences in the ability to:

- Reduce stress ( $p = .0005$ ),
- Recognize and release negative self-talk ( $p = .0007$ ),
- Envision positive outcomes ( $p = .0116$ ),
- Feel confident ( $p = .03$ ),
- Recognize new opportunities ( $p = .04$ ), and
- Identify sources of motivation ( $p = .005$ ).

Most notable were stress management skills, where participants showed a 35% increase in **ability to reduce stress** from pre-program to post-program, increasing from a mean pre-program score of 5.83 to a mean post-program score of 7.87 on a 1-10 scale.

## Participants' Comments

Participants reported positive outcomes from the program, including feeling more relaxed, learning to develop a positive mindset, and realizing the importance of truly listening to customers. A majority of participants reported the intention to use the skills learned going forward.

Here's a sample of participant responses from the evaluation questions:

*What benefits did you gain from the program?*

*How will you use the skills you learned going forward?*

- I feel very relaxed and positive
- I gained several methods to go to for focus and relaxation
- It was so great to realize how meditation can be a part of my business life and benefit it!
- It reinforced listening to me, reminded me I have to stop talking as much
- Putting yourself in customer's "shoes" & compassion for what they are going through
- I will use the meditation to keep me more upbeat and not frustrated
- I will focus more on keeping my thoughts on the conversation and not letting them wander
- Learning to dissolve preconceived notions that may get in your way of making sales
- I am going to start using affirmations to keep myself positive
- How to relax my mind—very helpful when trying to sleep or in a stressful environment
- The discussion about truly listening to the customer's needs was a great benefit
- The power of positive thinking.