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Meditation Without Expectations™ : A novel meditation program

Research Objectives

Evaluate the effectiveness of a meditation-based program on employee wellbeing and propose a framework that makes mental and emotional interventions effective.

References

Weisbrod, A, Bohman, L, Ramdial, K, (2023) From theory to practice: a novel meditation program at a global corporation. *Current Psychology*, 43, 4266–4283. doi.org/10.1007/s12144-023-04516-1

Detail

Bio

Anne V Weisbrod, PhD is a global sustainability expert & master meditation teacher. She has more than 20,000 hours of experience and has taught thousands of people in the life sciences, meditation, lifestyle medicine, stress resiliency, bioenergy, advanced yoga, fitness, interpersonal communication, and more. She developed the Meditation Without Expectations™ course in 2020.

Funding

Procter & Gamble

Collaborators

- Lisa Bohman
- Dr. Krystyn Ramdial

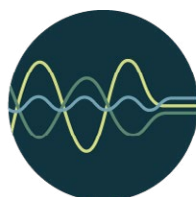
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Competing interest statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest. At the time of the study, Dr. Anne V Weisbrod, Lisa C Bohman, and Dr. Krystyn J Ramdial were

employed by The Procter & Gamble Company, where the program and study were developed. They received minor support through article publishing charges, software license fees, statistical analyses, and encouragement from thousands of colleagues around the world. Annie also reports she is a certified health coach, teacher of meditation, yoga, and reiki energy healing in private practice.



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Meditation Without Expectations™

A novel meditation program

Levels of stress and worry have increased globally in recent years. This emotional strain paired with workplace pressures can negatively affect employee wellbeing and be detrimental to an organization's performance. Developed by Dr. Annie Weisbrod, Meditation Without Expectations™ (MWE) is an eight-week live-streaming meditation program that has been scientifically proven to positively impact employee wellbeing. By offering access to the MWE program, organizations can empower workers to build resilience, empathy, focus, and stress management skills – all of which are crucial to an organization's success.

Meditation refers to a wide range of practices, including techniques that promote relaxation and exercises that increase physical, emotional, and mental awareness. Thousands of scientific studies demonstrate that there are many benefits of regular meditation, including improving focus, preventing and relieving stress, enhancing kindness and intuition, and promoting relaxation and balance.

Mindfulness is a style of focussed attention meditation, in which a person focuses nonjudgemental awareness on one aspect in the present moment. Through such practices, participants can achieve an improved attention span and an increased awareness of emotions.

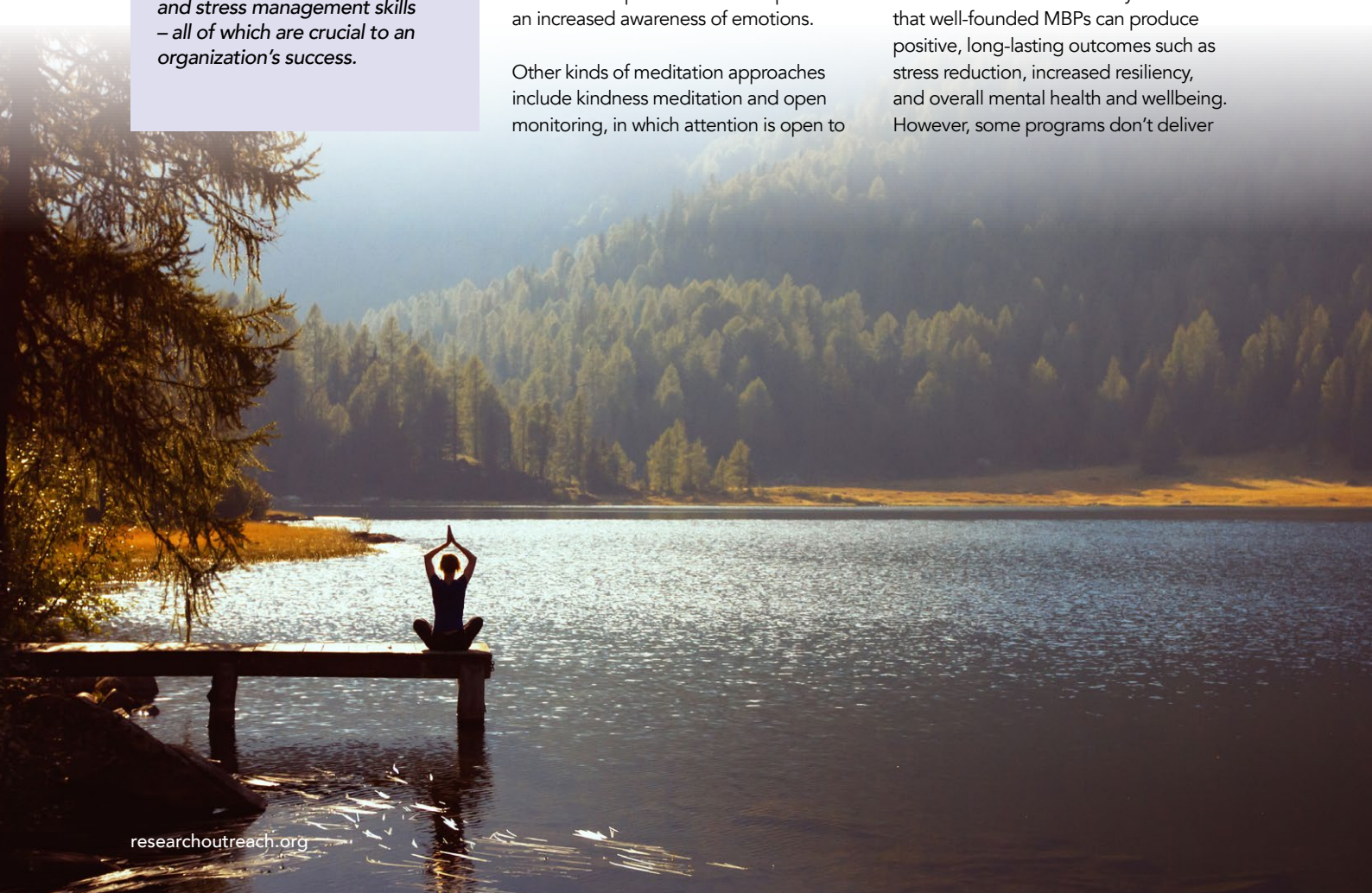
Other kinds of meditation approaches include kindness meditation and open monitoring, in which attention is open to

all experiences. Examples are listening to all sounds in the present moment and noticing inner speech without focusing on it.

THE 'MINDFULNESS REVOLUTION'

Research shows that health and wellness coaching appears to be a promising intervention strategy for driving lifestyle and workplace behavior changes. The increasing trend is to train employees in meditation, sometimes alongside physical exercise and more typical business leadership development programs.

The success of Mindfulness-Based Programs (MBPs) depends on their content and execution. Analysis shows that well-founded MBPs can produce positive, long-lasting outcomes such as stress reduction, increased resiliency, and overall mental health and wellbeing. However, some programs don't deliver



the desired results because they are poorly informed and/or implemented in ways that miss the point of mental or emotional health and development.

MEDITATION WITHOUT EXPECTATIONS™

Meditation Without Expectations™ (MWE) is an eight-week live-streaming course that has been scientifically demonstrated to reduce stress and increase focus, empathy, and resilience. The course was developed by a highly experienced meditator, health coach, and scientist, and is designed to be effective within different cultures and as a virtual platform. MWE integrates important health coaching, adult learning, behavior change, and meditation techniques and perspectives. It does so via simple, ancient, evidence-based techniques that enable participants to find relief from anxiety, distraction, and negativity.

MWE was initially designed to support busy, stressed employees of a Fortune 100 company. It directly addresses problems that the employees identified, which is a key factor for effective adult learning. They said they wanted to:

- Reduce anxiety, distraction, and negativity about self and world
- Increase adoption of essential mental and emotional wellbeing skills
- Improve quality of life and work performance (e.g. increased focus, patience)
- Be reassured of participation by having a company-supported program offered during the workday
- Feel understood and trust a competent credible teacher in their corporate culture
- Be part of a regular practice community for encouragement, accountability, insight, and friendship

EIGHT MEDITATION TECHNIQUES

The MWE program teaches eight meditation techniques in a specific order for optimum efficacy. These techniques include being present with awareness, dealing with distractions, compassion and healing, and reflection and gratitude.

Over the course of two months, participants gain insights and develop new habits by practicing the eight

Measure	Effects on an individual or organization
Stress	The physiological and/or psychological response to external stimuli perceived as a threat or unexpected negative change.
Overloaded	Capacity filled to excess so that function is impaired.
Uncontrollable	Incapable of being managed or corrected, implying turbulence, disorder, or threat.
Mindfulness	Ability to clarify goals, accept negative thoughts but not react to them, cultivate openness and awareness of mind and body, deal with stress and adversities, express and regulate emotions, solve problems and make decisions, and nurture positive relationships.
Observation	The ways we see, feel, and perceive the internal and external world around us and select the stimuli that require attention and focus.
Description	How we label our experiences and express them in words to ourselves and others.
Acting with awareness	Whether we can act without judgement and get out of the autopilot mode before responding to a situation.
Non-judgement of inner experience	Whether we let the inner critic take a toll on our happiness and positive state of mind.
Non-reactivity to inner experience	Active detachment from negative thoughts and emotions so that we can accept their existence and choose not to react to them to make way for emotional resilience and restore mental balance.
Empathy	The capacity of an individual to understand, feel, and react to the observed experiences of another person the capacity to place oneself in another's position and to respond with an appropriate (productive) emotion.
Perspective taking	The tendency to spontaneously adopt another persons' psychological point of view.
Empathetic concern	'Other-oriented' feelings of sympathy, concern, and compassion.
Resilience	The ability to bounce back or recover from stress.

Figure 1. Ten measures used in the quantitative study.

“This was a life-changing course. I am not sure why were weren’t taught this in school. It’s primal living 101 stuff...”

meditation techniques in class and on their own. MWE is appropriate for people with any level of experience with meditation or other heart and mind training practices.

A NOVEL STUDY

What makes this innovative study stand apart from the thousands of previous studies on meditation-related wellbeing programs is its sample size and advanced

	Group/ Domain	Pre-Course Mean	Post-Course Mean	Mean Difference	Paired t-test
Test Group (N=234)	Empathy	3.77	3.88	0.12	P<0.0001 *
	Stress	2.95	3.2	0.28	P<0.0001 *
	Resiliency	3.17	3.43	0.29	P<0.0001 *
	Mindfulness	3.17	3.42	0.26	P<0.0001 *
Comparison Group (N=34)	Empathy	3.84	3.87	0.03	P=0.488
	Stress	2.86	2.96	0.1	P=0.215
	Resiliency	3.02	3.1	0.07	P=0.4015
	Mindfulness	3.22	3.4	0.18	P=0.0055

Figure 2. Meditation Without Expectations™ pre- and post-session means, mean differences, and paired t-tests by domain for two panellist groups. The asterisk (*) denotes significant improvement.

“This is the best course I ever did in my career... I was touched and my life changed. Keep offering it as most employees need it but never realize it.”

assessment. More than 1,000 people working in over 30 different countries participated in the study, making it the largest sample size of any published meditation-based program and the first to use a multi-national population. Moreover, this research pioneers the use of advanced consumer research techniques to an occupational health and performance intervention to find out if a wellbeing program works.

During 2021 and 2022, MWE was offered via a virtual platform to employees across North America, Latin

America, Southeast Asia, Europe, China, India, Africa, and the Middle East. Of these employees, 1,079 took part in the MWE program’s efficacy evaluation. This involved their answering standardised questions from five established research tools: The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ), the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), and the brief resilience scale (BRS).

Participants completed identical questionnaires both before and after the MWE course. They received the pre-

course survey a week before they started the course and an identical post-course survey after their last class in week 8. The unstructured text from the pre- and post-course survey were also analysed using Word clouds and Topic analysis with JMP® Pro software. In addition, Procter & Gamble’s proprietary AI models for consumer feedback were used on the unstructured text from the post-course feedback. These captured valuable insights from the participants comments and provided statistics demonstrating that MWE works very well to reduce stress and increase mindfulness/focus, empathy, and resilience.

A PROVEN SUCCESS

Meditation Without Expectations™ is proven to be highly successful. Past participants call MWE ‘a life-changing course’, and subjects completing more than four classes had significant improvements in their empathy, stress, resilience, and mindfulness. This was reported across genders, geographies, and durations of employment. Figure 1 explains each measure in more detail.

Looking more closely at the study’s results, the statistical analysis comparing the pre- and post-program survey responses, summarised in Figure 2, shows significant improvement in all four domains. At the same time, this offers insights linked to Kirkpatrick Level 2 evaluation and reveals the changes experienced by MWE participants in managing stress and increasing mindfulness, resiliency, and empathy. Moreover, these improvements are observed throughout the program regardless of participants’ gender, tenure with the company, region of employment, and whether they already practice meditation.

The extent of improvement is also shown to increase with the number of classes taken. Figure 3 shows that subjects completing four or fewer classes, i.e. the comparison group, have lower mean changes in every domain. On the other hand, employees who completed more than four classes see significant improvement in all four domains. These participants also reported feeling empowered to adapt and take different actions based on their new awareness. They felt reassured having

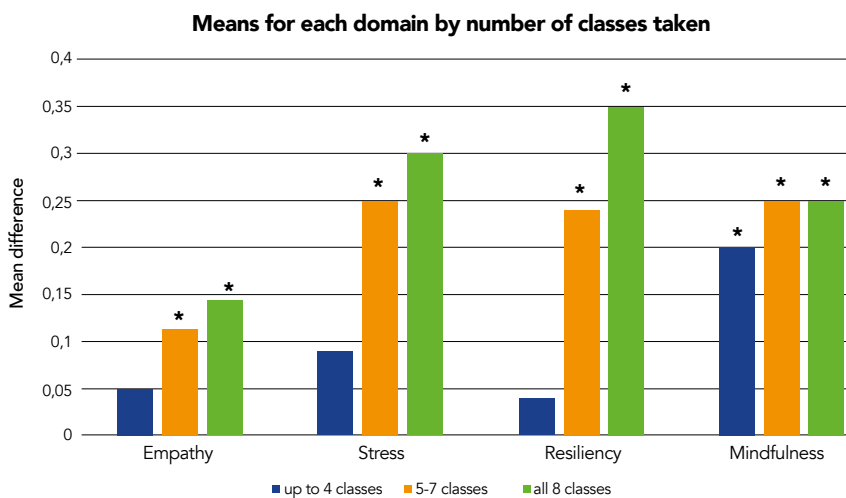


Figure 3. Means for each domain by number of classes taken. The asterisk (*) denotes significant improvement.



Participants completing more than four classes had significant improvements in their empathy, stress, resilience, and mindfulness.

an experienced and trusted teacher and have developed an appreciation for the global MWE community committed to learning together.

MWE DEMONSTRATES BEST PRACTICES OF MBPs

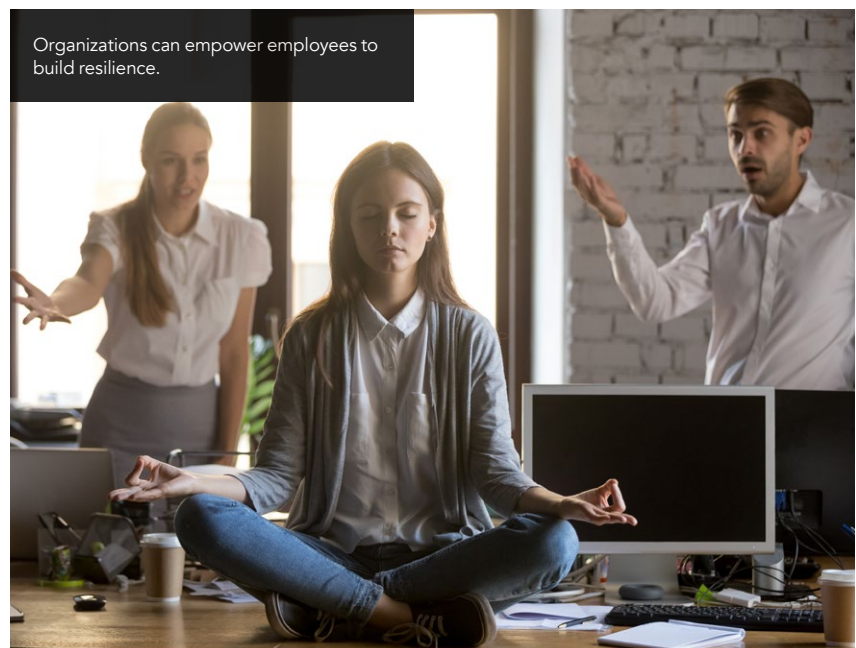
Employee wellbeing is a necessary focus in response to increasing levels of stress, worry, sadness, and anger around the world. Encouraging and enabling consistent employee participation is a crucial factor for developing and maintaining a successful work environment. For example, an employee who is coping insufficiently with chronic stress may feel depressed, anxious, irritable, and helpless. They may exhibit poor judgement and self-efficacy, and avoid responsibility. This could also exacerbate bodily harm via insufficient self-care, cardiovascular disease, or accidents caused by lapses in memory and focus.

By offering MWE, organizations can empower employees to build resilience, which improves their ability to adapt, thrive, and be accountable during times of adversity. Empathy among colleagues may also increase, which enables the teamwork that is crucial to an organization's success.

Successful intervention relies on encouraging and enabling consistent

employee participation. The MWE program specifically addresses what employees know they want or need to learn, as established with an introductory survey. MWE is effective because it encompasses adult learning principles, health coaching strategies, and practices that increase participant awareness, discipline, compassion, and insight. Also, MWE and other successful MBPs work best when they target a specific behavior change stage. For example, MWE focused on people in Preparation (preparing for change, exploring)

and Action (ready to act) stages, as described by the Transtheoretical Model of behavior change. Also, effective MBPs like MWE build a sense of community and trust among participants. MWE was sponsored and endorsed by the employer, and led by a trusted and experienced coach seen as part of the organization. Finally, the MWE study demonstrates that the Kirkpatrick Model is an indispensable framework to evaluate the immediate reactions and long-term outcomes of wellbeing training programs.



Organizations can empower employees to build resilience.



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