

## Mindful Co-Working Day: Working Together in Mindfulness

By Kai Romhardt

For many of us, it is not easy to maintain our mindfulness during the workday. This is particularly true when ...

- ... we work alone,
- ... we do not find reminders or support for the practice in our surroundings,
- ... a large part of our work takes place behind a screen or on the internet,
- ... we work on several projects at the same time,
- ... our tasks consist of a large number of smaller activities,
- ... we are regularly interrupted by phone calls, emails, or personal contact when we work.

If our mindfulness and concentration lessen, light, superficially interesting, or current matters often prevail over more uncomfortable, difficult, yet important affairs. As a result, we do not progress. We are pulled in by the internet. We get caught in mundane tasks and lose sight of what is essential. We are carried away by all kinds of distractions. We also lose our ability to critically observe our impulses before responding, and we become reactive. We fall back into old habits.

During retreats and Days of Mindfulness, we can lay a good foundation. Yet when we return into our everyday work life, we are easily confused. Mindfulness does not come easily, and it requires a lot of practice. It is easier to practice together than alone. We need to practice work meditation in the middle of our everyday lives to solidify our mindfulness.

In order to support our mindfulness training at the workplace, *The Network for Mindful Business* started organizing Mindful Co-Working Days two years ago. These are days of training in mindful work under real conditions. Our work meditations are concerned with our current professional projects and—as in classical retreats—with activities such as cleaning, cooking, or gardening. We are working on our current topics and projects, and writing emails and proposals. We leave the co-working area only to make phone calls, in order not to disturb others. In the meantime, over eighty Mindful Co-Working Days have taken place in Berlin, Vienna, Munich, and Cologne, and more and more regional groups have adopted this form of practice.

A typical Mindful Co-Working Day can proceed as follows:

8:20–8:30	Arrival
8:30–8:40	Sharing about what we will work on today
8:40–9:00	Silent sitting meditation together
9:00–12:30	Working together, everyone on their own in silence

12:30–13:00	Lunch (eating meditation for the first fifteen minutes in silence)
13:00–13:30	Break
13:30–14:00	Walking meditation outside
14:00–15:15	Working together, everyone on their own (speaking or collaborating only if necessary)
15:15–16:30	Working together on topics / projects and / or exchanging experiences about work meditation
16:30–16:45	Tea break
16:45–17:00	Silent sitting and departure

To start practicing Mindful Co-Working, you don't need a lot of resources: an office with internet access, a table, and chairs. Participants can bring a meditation cushion and a dish for the joint vegetarian lunch. You can start as soon as there are two of you. During the working periods, each participant can invite a mindfulness bell as well as invite the entire group to a collective "B-S-S pause": breathing, smiling, stopping. Alternatively, you can use a digital mindfulness bell. This is how we nourish our collective mindfulness during the day.

The experiences with working together in mindfulness are amazing. Here are some testimonials from the practice:

*"I was surprised. This has been one of my most effective work days in a long time."*

*"The presence of the others supported me."*

*"The regular co-work experience has changed my work style considerably."*

*"Now I know: meditation and work are not mutually exclusive."*

*"To work in the morning for myself and in the afternoon for the community, I like that."*

*"Working with others in mindfulness strengthens the sense of togetherness."*

*"I have rarely ever experienced so much joy and concentration at work."*

*"I have finished a task that I have been pushing ahead of me for months, and it was effortlessly."*

The format of the Mindful Co-Working seems to be particularly suitable for self-employed individuals because they can freely adjust their working hours. However, this form of mindfulness training is also possible in other working contexts. It is important to be creative and as previously mentioned: As long as there are two people, you are ready to start practicing for your well-being and the well-being of everyone.