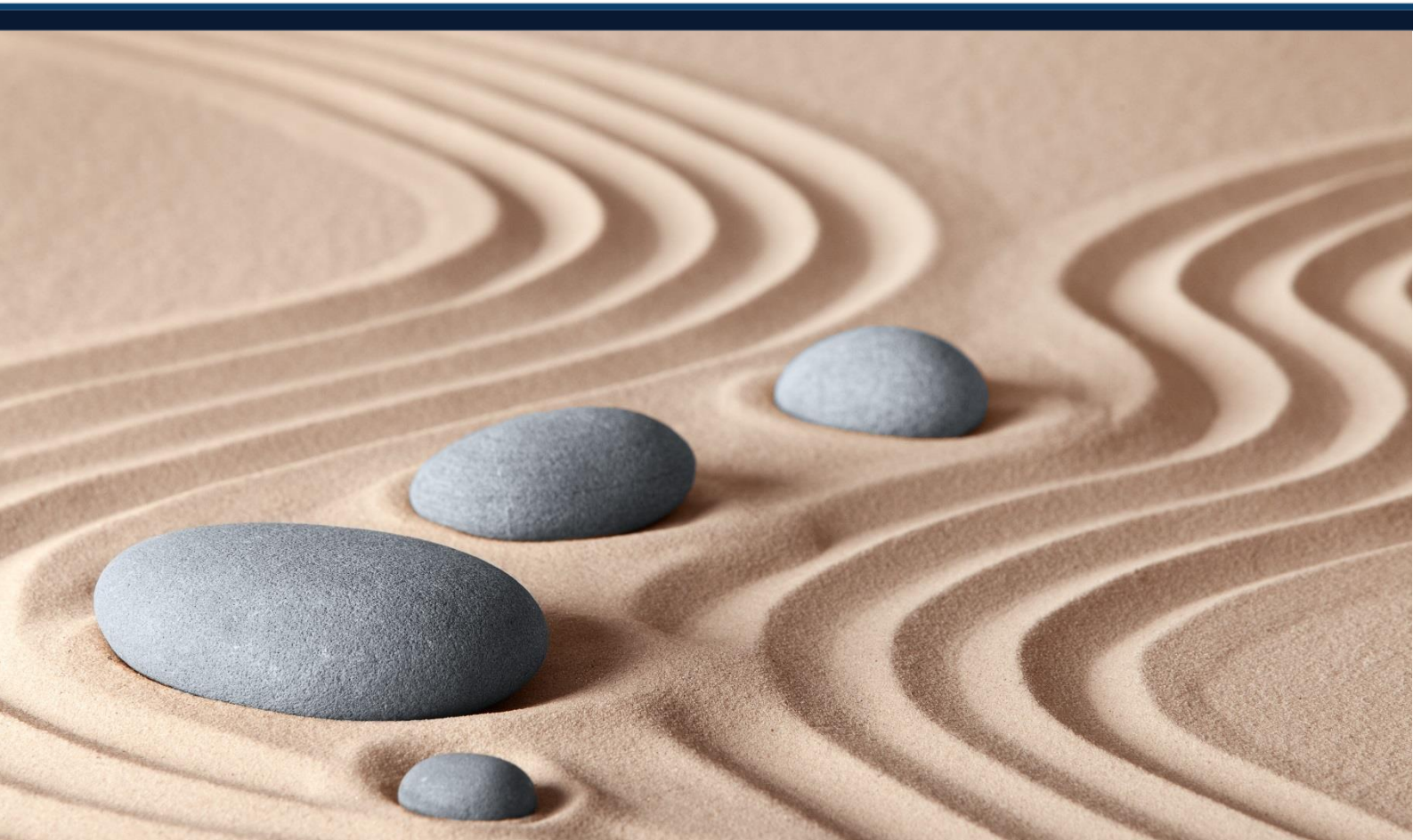




# Mindful breaks inventory

Improve your productivity and decision making with mindful breaks





# Improve your productivity and decision making with mindful breaks

**Many of us are not aware of the necessary mental space needed to multitask and constantly tackle several priorities simultaneously. But the result of not having that mental space is that it makes you feel stressed, and paradoxically, less effective.**

Interest in mindfulness at work has been growing exponentially in recent years, in the global business world as well as in the scientific community. As a result mindfulness training programmes are en vogue in forward-looking workplaces.

Mindfulness is about more than meditating. It's about people's ability to focus their attention on the subject or situation at hand so they can manage their own awareness and make decisions in the most productive way. Developing this learnable skill helps you step away from autopilot responses and see the context and different perspectives more clearly, enabling you to make better judgement calls.

*"The good news about mindfulness: the more we cultivate it, the better we feel and the more our brains become sharper."*

Dr Jutta Tobias

Mindful breaks are part of a mindful leadership practice that helps create balance in your work life, protect against illness and prevent burnout.

## **Mindful breaks inventory**

Use the mindful breaks inventory on the following page to assess the quality of your mental breaks, and how suitable these are in helping you restore energy, resilience and mental capacity.

## Mindful breaks inventory

Please give yourself a tick in the box for each of the “mental switching off” activities listed below that you regularly engage in. In other words, tick any box that lists an activity that you use as a mental break from work. You can read what your score means on the following page.

**There are no right or wrong answers!**

### “I do this regularly to take a mental break from work:”

Column A	Column B	Bonus Column
<input type="checkbox"/> Drink a cup of tea or coffee.	<input type="checkbox"/> Disconnect from electronics at regular times.	Do you have any “keystone habits” (Duhigg 2012)?  A “keystone habit” is a positive habit that noticeably fuels people’s energy in other areas of their life, and is linked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sleep (e.g. regularly sleeping 7+ hours)</li> <li>• Physical or mental exercise (e.g. working out 1+ times/week)</li> <li>• Food and drink (e.g. drinking 1+ litres of water/day)</li> </ul> If you have a keystone habit in any of the areas below, please tick the relevant box: <input type="checkbox"/> Sleep <input type="checkbox"/> Physical / Mental Exercise <input type="checkbox"/> Food / Drink
<input type="checkbox"/> Have a snack.	<input type="checkbox"/> Have a clear demarcation between work and leisure.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Listen to music, podcasts, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/> Make sure that I’m fully present when with family or loved ones.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Take time out to talk with someone at work about leisure-related topics.	<input type="checkbox"/> Take an annual holiday of at least one week or more at a time.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Take a break from work by surfing the web.	<input type="checkbox"/> Get enough sleep.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Interrupt work to check email inbox or other messaging device.	<input type="checkbox"/> Engage in leisure interests that fully absorb me.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Make a purchase (online or in person).	<input type="checkbox"/> Engage in leisure interests that re-energise me noticeably.	
<b>Total =</b>	<b>Total =</b> <b>Now multiply x 2 =</b>	

**TOTAL score (sum of all three columns) =**

Based on ideas by Buckner et al. (2008); Immordino-Yang et al. (2012); Duhigg (2012); and Seltzer (2015).  
 If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Jutta Tobias at Cranfield University School of Management at +44 (0)1234 751122 or [jutta.tobias@cranfield.ac.uk](mailto:jutta.tobias@cranfield.ac.uk)

## Mindful break score analysis: what it means

The survey assesses the quality of your mental breaks, and how suitable these are to help you restore energy, resilience and mental capacity. So what does it mean?

### **You scored 0 to 10**

A score of 0-10 could be an indication that the quality of your mental breaks may be low. This could manifest itself by remaining somewhat distracted even after taking short breaks from work, rather than returning to work feeling refreshed.

Consider making more space for yourself during your working day, even if this means only doing one thing slightly differently. Take a look at Column B and especially the Bonus Column: Does any action or behaviour come to mind that you could (re)commit to?

### **You scored 11 to 20**

A score of 11-20 generally indicates average quality mental breaks. In other words, if the quality of your mental breaks is neither high nor low, you would have scored around that mark.

People in this category typically experience palpable improvements in energy and resilience when they increase their focus on taking care of themselves in one or more of the three “keystone habit” areas sleep, exercise, and nutrition. In which of these areas could you (re)commit to improving the quality of your mental breaks?

### **You scored 21 or above**

A score of 21 or above suggests that you are above average in your capacity to engage in high-quality mental breaks.

Well done! If you were to help someone else improve their capacity in this area, it will help you consolidate this score and further boost your own mental resilience. How could you help people in your team do one thing differently to improve their energy, resilience and mental capacity?

**Use the space below to write down the actions, behaviours and areas you could (re)commit to:**

# Are your business challenges causing you stress?

Burnout, a type of psychological stress, has been called the epidemic of the modern workplace. It can leave you feeling exhausted and depleted - as if there's nothing left in the tank.

## Put the gas back in your tank.

Cranfield's Mindful Leadership Practice programme has been developed based on our extensive expertise of using mindful leadership practices in organisational settings ranging from corporate environments to the military.

It provides you with the space and time for you to clarify your priorities, and return to your workplace refreshed, galvanised for action and confident to tackle your current business challenges.

By attending this programme you can:

- Slow down, take stock and reflect on personal and business challenges.
- Learn how to support yourself and others in the face of ongoing volatility and uncertainty.
- Find practical ways to solve problems and make decisions in high-pressure situations.
- Create balance in your work life, protect against illness and prevent burnout.

*"Mindfulness is a skill that can be learned, rather than a personality trait or mindset that only few people possess. And it doesn't necessarily involve meditation either, despite the current surge of interest in mindfulness meditation - labelled by some as "meditation madness"."*

Dr Jutta Tobias

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