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Vol. 25 No. 12 December 2016

How to Succeed in Business: Meditate For increased creativity and productivity

By JENNIFER COBURN

We've all heard about meditation, the practice of carving out time to be calm and present. As a business person, though, perhaps you think it's a nice idea, but not very realistic. You're way too busy to add another thing to your to-do list. You may even think meditation is only for hippy dippy types who work part-time at a food co-op or yoga studio.

The reality is that people who have the most stress in their lives also have the most to gain from meditation. Practicing meditation not only reduces stress, but it changes the composition of the brain. The result: increased creativity and productivity. And that's just for the individual. When incorporated into the workplace, meditation can impact employee retention, agility, and innovation.

According to the Harvard Business Review, the popularity of meditation is growing among CEOs and senior executives. Julie Potiker, founder of the La Jolla-based Balanced Mind Meditation Center, says she can understand why. "Meditation lowers your heart rate, decreases cortisol levels, and creates a sense of calm that helps manage the stressful situations business people face ten times a day, sometimes ten times an hour,"

she says from the studio, located at the Lawrence Family Jewish Community Center. "Not only do you feel better, but because you are less reactive, you are better able to think clearly and make sound decisions that affect your bottom line."

Potiker has held several workshops for business people around the country, from nonprofit staff to pharmaceutical executives, and though their workplace environments differ greatly, the common denominator is stress. "If you aren't taking an active role in reducing and managing stress for your workers and yourself, your business is losing money," Potiker explains. She rattles off the names of meditating executives, such as Ray Dalio, founder and CEO of Bridgewater Associates, one of the world's largest hedge funds, who says meditation has given him greater centeredness and creativity. She continues, "There's Bill Ford, executive chairman at Ford Motor Company, who's a huge proponent of meditation in the business world; Robert Stiller, CEO of Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, who has a dedicated meditation room at corporate headquarters because he says people are much more effective in meetings when they practice meditation."

Potiker adds, "There are so many, but the one that really strikes me is Alak Vasa, who is now the founder of Elements Truffles, but started meditating when she was a trader at Goldman Sachs. She tells this great story about a day the market tanked and there was chaos at the trading desk, but she stayed calm, and was able to propose solutions to reduce the impact of the crash. That's the kind of bottom line benefit meditation can offer."

When launching her Balanced Mind Meditation Center last fall, Potiker decided to go where the need was greatest. "This region contributes so much to the health and well-being of the community – and the world – that I want to be close by to serve the needs of those who live and work in the area," she says. "The Balanced Mind Meditation Center welcomes the community to join us for free 30-minute drop-in meditation classes, or sign up for a longer, more in-depth evidenced based courses in mindful eating, mindfulness based stress reduction, mindful self-compassion, and even dog/human meditation 101. Loosen your tie, kick off your high heels, set aside your briefcase and get ready to recharge and reboot your productivity."



Julie Potiker, founder of the Balanced Mind Meditation Center says meditation can give busy executive leave of mind while helping their bottom line.