



In the **Erasmus+ project 'Mindful Managers'** we spent 3 years developing training, reflective practice and an online game to **support managers in the public sector** in strengthening their own mental resilience to be cascaded to **strengthen the mental resilience** of their employees and team and to work more ethically and productively using a mindful approach within their organisation.

First it is important to understand how stress works biologically. The **fight-flight-freeze response**<sup>1</sup> is your body's natural reaction to danger. It is a type of stress response that helps you react to perceived threats, like an oncoming car or growling dog. The response instantly causes hormonal and physiological changes. Stress is a very natural reaction of your body to tension. It does not have to be unhealthy. Stress is **negative** if it blocks you and makes you perform less well. Stress also becomes unhealthy when it lasts too long.

Employees have their own **responsibility**, but there is certainly also a role for the organisation to take steps in this aspect and in particular, recognition of the important role managers play in ensuring wellbeing in the workplace is addressed. The **mindful management programme** could be your first step. The programme consists of: a 5 module training programme, reflection rounds and a game.

First, we have developed a **training programme** with reflection rounds, based on the 5 wellbeing<sup>2</sup> habits:

1. **Connect:** With the people around you. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.
2. **Be active:** Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good.
3. **Take notice:** Be curious. This includes the idea of Mindfulness.
4. **Keep learning:** Try something new.
5. **Give:** Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger.

In the **reflection rounds**, participants of the training programme come together with a facilitator to share personal thoughts, action plans and cases in order to practice on the themes of the training days.

You can find all the **materials, tutorials and tools** on [our website](#). In that way, your trainers can easily implement the training programme in your organisation.

Second, we developed a **game**. The Mindful Managers Game is designed to provide players with the opportunity to improve their managerial skills. The game consists of 10 levels which cover 5 main themes (Connect, Take notice, Keep learning, Be active, and Give). The game is designed as a collection of mini-stories in which the player participates as a manager. In particular stories, he/she gets familiar with the situations and then is provided with options regarding the solution of each situation. The player is asked to choose one solution which he/she finds as the optimal management of the situation. After the choice,

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<sup>1</sup> Stress Management for Health Course. "[The Fight Flight Response](#)".

<sup>2</sup> A Review of Workplace Interventions that Promote Mental Wellbeing in the Workplace Graveling RA, Crawford JO, Cowie, Amati, Vohra, Institute of Occupational Medicine, Edinburgh, The Keil Centre, Edinburgh

the player sees the evaluation of his/her pick. The game can be perfectly combined with the training and support the skills development and reflections throughout a training course.

When **implementing** 'Mindful Management' and furthermore: the mindful management training programme and game, it is useful to follow an **evidence based framework**. We have chosen the theoretical framework of **the 8 step plan of Kotter**: summarised in the article 'Leading Change<sup>3</sup>'. He developed an 8 step plan to implement a programme (planned change) in your organisation. In that way you can have a long term impact. Mindful management is not just a training programme: it is a vision, a culture that you should create in your organisation, in order to see positive results in the behaviour of employees. In the guide for policy makers, you can find suggestions on how to use these steps when implementing a mindful management culture.



This summary has shared the benefits of working collectively to implement a **mindful approach** in the workplace and of course there will always be challenges. The current global situation with the COVID pandemic has led to many managers and their teams working from home, creating additional challenges for managers introducing a mindful approach. However at the same time, it highlights the need for training and interventions that can support people to stay healthy and to remain mindful.

Implementing the above steps, will allow you to reap the **rewards** of using a mindful approach in your organisation and we wish you luck with introducing a mindful management culture to your organisation.

*"This short version Policy Guide supports you with major decision making. The full version of the guide explores in further detail ways to implement the many benefits of the Mindful Managers Programme and to help spread the word of successful Mindful Management"*

<sup>3</sup> Harvard Business Review, Leading Change, Why Transformation Efforts Fail, John P. Kotter.