Chapter 9

Spirituality in the Workplace:
Mindfulness-Inspired Strategies for Productivity and Self-Management

Stephanie Bianchi
Mindful Guatemala Foundation, Guatemala

ABSTRACT

The importance of approaching life in an interconnected way seems to be on the rise. Interconnectedness, a concept that lies in the heart of many spiritual practices, stems from the realization that we inter-are with one another and everything in the universe. Just as our view of life undergoes profound evolution, the emergence of spirituality in the workplace advances at rapid speed. Today, more people are finding fulfillment, inspiration, and purpose in their jobs by bringing spirituality into their activities. This chapter addresses the increasing necessity of allowing spirituality to flourish in the workplace in the quest for better understanding our role as a whole. Furthermore, this chapter aims to provide organizations practical mindfulness-based strategies for enhancing self-management, productivity, and inside-out leadership in the workplace. Reinforcing an inside-out approach though the chapter, the author exposes the need for leaders to adopt an interconnected view into their workplaces in order to contribute in building a more sustainable and harmonious world.

INTRODUCTION

Interconnected View of Life

In many ways, our perspective on life is profoundly different than it has been at any other time in human history. At present, we are undergoing a fundamental shift in perspective from the notion of separation to the concept of interconnectedness that encompasses all aspects of our humanity. As we awaken to the notion of interconnection and interdependence, we recognize there are essentially two ways of perceiving and approaching life.

The first view is that all beings and things exist independently from one another and that the world is a collection of independent events. According to this perspective, the existence of beings, things and circumstances is unrelated to the existence of others.

On the contrary, the second world view posits that everything in the Universe, rather than existing independently, exists in relation to one another. To expose the latter and the concept of *"inter-being"*, renowned Zen Master and poet Thich Nhat Hanh (1992) explains: "...*you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist. If the cloud is not here, the sheet of paper cannot be here either. So we can say that the cloud and the paper inter-are*." (p.100).

Thus, from a narrow perspective, we perceive ourselves as being independent from the sun, the air and other beings, due to the fact that we are clearly separate in material terms. However, from a wider stance, we are able to recognize that what comprises us as human beings is in fact interconnected, even when each component seems inextricably different from one another. Without the sun to stay warm, the air to breath and the earth to live from, our bodies cannot exist. Likewise, without our mind and consciousness to notice the sun, the air and the earth, these elements could not take their shape and form, as everything is interdependent and relative to each other.

As Thich Nhat Hanh (1992) explains further "*Looking even more deeply, we can see we are in it too. This is not difficult to see, because when we look at a sheet of paper, the sheet of paper is part of our perception. Your mind is in here and mine is also. So we can say that everything is in here with this sheet of paper. You cannot point out one thing that is not here - time, space, the earth, the rain, the minerals in the soil, the sunshine, the cloud, the river,*

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