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The importance of creative and positive workplace culture: A case study on how creative initiatives foster better relationships, resilience and mindfulness at work for Special Education Teachers.

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Abstract

Positive workplace culture is vital in nurturing teamwork, increasing productivity, resilience and nurturing mindful individuals over time. This aligns with the essential nature of optimism and how crucial it is to have a career that emotionally and mentally fulfils, challenges and centres us; most of us do spend almost half of our time in the workplace after all. This notion is especially pivotal for Special Education teachers (both new and experienced) who encounter high levels of occupational stress which usually result in burnout, poor teaching, and attrition. Special Education Needs (SEN) teachers like DAS Educational Therapists are at a higher risk of burnout when compared with other professionals (Ram & Samsudin, 2019). The well-being of therapists and the quality of lessons delivered in the classrooms are closely related. Feelings of not belonging, and lack of support, meaning and motivation for the job will trample the performance of individuals in the Special Education Needs Industry. The evolution of challenges in the Education industry is inevitable. However, the opportunity to create a more holistic and healthy workplace platform can easily be achieved based on the approach of adopting fun at the workplace, born out of mindful initiatives. This study has been pieced together to create awareness on how creative and mindful initiatives like gathering for purposeful activities proved to enhance working experiences and camaraderie. In this descriptive case study, we will delve into how a particular group of Educational Therapists from centre 'X' seeded the culture of including fun at the workplace through one mission-based game. This initiative to welcome new colleagues into the workplace was developed to foster better relationships and enrich the workplace culture for this group of Educational Therapists. Eventually, it became a part of learning centre X's culture. The main cultural trend that binds this study is the increase in collective creative efforts and how this can lead to better productivity, rise in resilience through a better support system at work and, ultimately, the nurturing of mindfulness and well-being.

Keywords: Mindfulness, happiness, resilience, workplace culture, creativity, purpose and meaning, positive psychology, well-being.

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INTRODUCTION

Educators are frequently faced with the difficult task of meeting the academic, social, and emotional needs of diverse learners in their classrooms – a task of even greater difficulty in the present context of high-stakes testing and teacher accountability (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003).

Special Education teachers particularly are at high risk for burnout as their working conditions align with many factors associated with burnout. One of the most important challenges in the field of special education is developing a competent workforce and creating work environments that sustain special educators; involvement, passion and commitment.

As Educational Therapists from the Dyslexia Association of Singapore, our educators are guided through three weeks of intensive pre-service training that nurtures and prepares them for their roles as impeccable educators. Although the comprehensive training empowers our educators with the tools of the craft to cognise and apply on the ground, challenges beyond the educational nature do take centre stage, especially if you are a new teacher. A particular challenge for most Educational therapists at DAS lies in the unsocial working hours, with the majority of teaching in the evenings and weekends.

DAS generously caters to the needs of our students as much as possible and one of the efforts that is clearly apparent is to accommodate a student's schedule as far as possible. In view of this, lessons take place in the afternoon from 2 pm onwards. However, given the fact that most of our students attend extra-curricular activities after school, a large number of classes take place between 7 pm to 9 pm. The working hours are sensitive to the respective location a learning centre may be situated at. For instance, if a centre is located within a school premise, the last class ends at 6.30 pm. If a learning centre is located amidst a residential environment, classes end at 9 pm. This is the case in 9 out of our 14 learning centres, which includes learning centre X.

In a series of studies, low control over work hours was found to increase the risk of health problems (e.g., psychological distress and sickness absence), particularly for women (Ala-Mursula, Vahtera, Kivimäki, Kevin, & Pentti, 2002; Ala-Mursula, Vahtera & Pentti, 2004).

There is a strong correlation between working hours and the well-being of an individual. Large-scale longitudinal panel studies including objective mental health measures suggest that working long hours has negative consequences for health, well-being, leisure and families (Kivimäki et al., 2015). They impede an ability to care for oneself, leads to exhaustion, burnout, occupational stress, depression, anxiety and other mental health disorders (Bannai & Tamakoshi, 2014; Ng and Feldman, 2008; Theorell et al., 2015; Virtanen et al., 2018). In some studies the effects start at a lower working hours threshold for women than for men (Dinh et al., 2017; Virtanen et al., 2011). This is

especially a concern for the DAS as the majority of our therapists are females.

Besides grasping the unique design of the working hours at the DAS, new teachers are also faced with having to acquaint themselves with new work environments and a culture that involves forming new connections with their colleagues. Fostering a meaningful connection with others is one of the most important aspects of life and is linked with higher subjective well-being as it is one of our basic human needs (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005).

People thrive when they are happier. When our mood becomes brighter, we set higher goals and persist longer towards achieving them. We experience less stress and fatigue and show better team cooperation and problem-solving. Taylor (2008) argued that happiness consists in exercising creative intelligence.

But how do we make people happier?

A body of research on happiness states that our moods are contagious. This takes effect because of the mirror neurons in our brains.

The human brain is peppered with mirror neurons and they activate in us exactly what we see in the other person: their emotions, their movements, and even their intentions (Goleman, 2011).

So if we are surrounded by positive and nurturing conditions and individuals, our brain cells pick up on these signals and naturally act upon them by demonstrating complementary actions and behaviours.

It is clearly evident that there is a correlation between the climate of an environment and its impact on the eutheics of its populace. Meaning the science of improving the internal well-being of the human by improving the external factors of their environment.

The impact of our Educational Therapists at learning centre X fuelling the responsibility of conducting a holistic workplace culture through a spirited environment stands testament to the rich research base on well-being, happiness, positive psychology, mindfulness and resilience.

HAPPINESS

One of the strongest predictors (and not only correlates) of happiness is social relationships. In fact, to be happy we need to spend six to seven hours a day in social settings, and up to nine if our jobs are stressful (Rath & Harter, 2010). The Adaptation theory predicts that although happiness reacts to both negative and positive life event, it returns to baseline shortly afterwards. Theories on Hedonic and Eudaimonic well-being

clearly show that there is much significance in the coexistence of these respective theories. One adds value to the other. And one can only be realised if not for the other's existence. Hedonic well-being, for instance, strives for the maximisation of pleasure and minimisation of pain. Eudaimonia, on the other hand, encourages a deeper connection with subjects, searches for meaning and purpose and sustainable wellness. It is a belief in achieving happiness through prudence. Here, Hedonic well-being is subjective and Eudaimonic well-being is objective and purposeful. In the case of Learning centre X, there's a strong presence and flattering symphony of these well-being theories.

There were initiatives to create a pleasurable environment on designated days of the week, where during the term the mission-based games mentioned below were played. Whilst the momentary indulgence of the activities took over, it strengthened the relationships, bond and culture of the learning centre. It not only thrived on the hedonic nature of the activities where dopamine, endorphins, and oxytocin arousing symptoms were a consequence but evolved into the self-actualisation of the Educational Therapists. Furthermore, the initiatives sustained the spirit of this approach and eventually nurtured the seed of Eudaimonia driving wellness amongst the team. In summary, the outcome of the physical environment created to inject entertainment at the workplace yielded positive consequences that led the Educational Therapists to nurture a resilience This was possible through the identification and realisation that a moment's experience holds much more value when experienced with *deep connection and presence* in order to tap the feeling it evoked during trying times. An essential mindfulness-based trait.

MINDFULNESS AND RESILIENCE

Resilience is the process of effectively coping with adversity. It's about bouncing back from trying situations. Resilience is not a personality trait; it involves a way of paying attention, thinking, and behaving that anyone can learn. It is teachable and influential. Defined as "a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity" (Luthar et.al., 2000), empirical research shows that resilience can be shaped by how we interpret the adversities we face (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Meaning that it's neither purely a factor of our traits or our surroundings, but can be improved, developed, and nurtured (Kim-Cohen, 2007).

A study highlighting the link between mindfulness and resilience in the Journal of Personality and Individual Differences found that "Mindful people can better cope with difficult thoughts and emotions without becoming overwhelmed or shutting down emotionally (Bajaj & Pande, 2016). "Pausing and observing the mind may (help us) resist getting stuck in our story and as a result, empower us to move forward. Understanding the phenomena what resilience in itself is, we must not forget that it takes communal strength to raise and nurture resilience through effective activities, especially in the fast-paced and challenging environment that Special Needs Education teachers work in. It is this very quality that was apparent in the mission-based games that

identified and saw the dawn of our Educational Therapists' individual strengths; both hard or soft skills.

Knowing our strengths helps with greater vitality and motivation, a clearer sense of direction, higher self-confidence, productivity and a higher probability of goal attainment (Clifton & Anderson, 2001-2; Hodges & Clifton, 2004; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Positive psychology is a science of positive aspects of human life, such as happiness, well-being and flourishing. You will notice that these features appear to evidently encapsulate the foundation of this study- promoting positive workplace environment. It can be summarised in the words of its founder, Martin Seligman, as the 'scientific study of optimal human functioning that aims to discover and promote the factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive' (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

It is also notable that positive psychology focuses on potentials of individuals rather than the limitations well-known in a typical psychological study. Its aspiration is to bring solid empirical research into areas such as well-being, flow, personal strengths, wisdom, creativity, psychological health and characteristics of positive groups and institutions (Boniwell, 2012).

There are three main levels in the science of positive psychology. The subjective level, the individual level and the group level. This study is in identifies with the group level as we are dealing with a learning centre with 16 educational therapists. At the group or community level, the emphasis is on civic virtues, social responsibilities, nurturance, altruism, civility, tolerance, work ethics, positive institutions and other factors that contribute to the development of citizenship and communities and reaching beyond oneself (Boniwell, 2012). This theory complements the positive work culture of Centre X.

WHY SYNTHESISE THIS STUDY?

Amidst upholding the duties of an educator, some of the common factors that put teachers at risk of stress-related symptoms include: lack of administrative support (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007), paperwork (Billingsley, 2004), challenging student behaviours (Hastings & Brown, 2002), role overload (i.e., the experience of too many unique demands on one's time and resources; (Adera & Bullock, 2010), and expectation-reality mismatch, which occurs when the pre-service expectation of teaching does not align with the reality of what the teacher experiences in the classroom (Zabel, Boomer, & King, 1984).

Given the psychological resources, this requires, one of the principal drivers of passion for this craft comes from our educators' working environment. Having been new teachers

in the craft themselves, the senior teachers at learning centre X had the opportunity to gradually build on their experiences individually and bring these together collectively. This was achieved through regular conversations in the staff room, to welcome new staff, (whether teachers or administrative teams), warmly with a joyful culture in place.

The intention of this study was to create awareness of how creative and mindful initiatives of gathering for purposeful activities proved to enhance working experiences and camaraderie. Furthermore, this culture and attitude proved useful in many situations: these include, when a fellow educator is challenged with work-based or personal trials, encouraging one another with welcome gifts when a new school term starts, planning surprises for birthdays and farewells, and writing positive notes to one another during trying terms. Moreover, ensuring that the mental and emotional health of staff members not being shadowed by external factors, especially being situated at the void deck of a block of flats. This was achieved by injecting fun in the workplace through mission-based games.

The culture of any workplace stems from what the people working there have made out of it. Culture shapes our work enjoyment, work relationships, and work processes. Each learning centre's culture is unique to its people. It is made up of the various experiences and expertise people bring to the work premise. It is also shaped by various personalities and their individual cultural richness. Past research has also shown that workplace culture influences employee levels of emotional wellbeing (Hartel and Ashkanasy 2011). Other elements of culture, such as shared beliefs and collective behaviours may be influenced by embedding virtues in organisational behaviour, leadership (Cameron et al., 2011). It takes a great level of mindfulness to bring together the seams of a particular workplace culture. In mindfulness, awareness is a capital feature mentioned in many literatures and informational representations. Mindfulness is metacognitive in the sense that it involves a meta-level of awareness that monitors the content of consciousness itself (Nelson et al., 1999).

The observance and appraisal of certain events, emotions and outcomes helps us register and decide if we want to be part of the experience again or not. Cultures are also made up of events that bring about positive emotions in people. The strength of a culture prevails especially when work gets more demanding.

WORKPLACE CULTURE

Culture is the environment that surrounds us all the time. Workplace culture is the shared values, belief systems, attitudes and the set of assumptions that people in a workplace share. This is shaped by individual upbringing, social and cultural context. In a workplace, however, the leadership and the strategic organisational directions and management influences the workplace culture to a huge extent.

Fun is one of the positive phenomena in the workplace and includes social events, recognition of personal milestones, public celebrations, humour, games entertainment, opportunities for personal development, joy, play and fun titles (Ford, et al., 2003, Grant et al., 2014). As Owler and colleagues (2010) stated that everyone wants to have fun at work and it has positive consequences for employees. Having fun at work has far-reaching effects on employees and organisations. For example, fun positively affect employees' job satisfaction, commitment, creativity, energy, organisational citizenship behaviour, productivity and negatively affects absenteeism, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, turnover and burnout (Tews et al., 2012).

A positive workplace culture improves teamwork, raises the morale, increases productivity and efficiency, and enhances retention of the workforce. Job satisfaction, collaboration, and work performance are all enhanced. Furthermore, most importantly, a positive workplace environment reduces stress in employees. The fundamental belief that permeates environments such as learning centre X is that fun in the workplace is a central means to promote engagement, cohesive relationships, creativity, and better employee health. Caccamese (2012) argues that although engaging in fun at the workplace does not necessarily create a great workplace, it does help to boost employee camaraderie, build trust, and motivate people to be themselves. Good workplace culture should nurture and encourage its employees to flourish. This should also encourage us to deepen our understanding of sustainable happiness that comes from the practice of Eudaimonia, which is a Greek philosophical concept contributing to well-being, related to self-realisation, human flourishing, prosperity or blessing. Aristotle was the originator of eudaimonia (from daimon=true nature) (Boniwell, 2011). Aristotle (1985), in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, takes as a starting point that humans want the best possible life, and uses the term "eudaimonia" to refer to the type of life one thinks best, or most worthwhile, or most desirable (Ackrill, 1973). Sometimes it is translated from the original ancient Greek as welfare, sometimes flourishing, and sometimes as well-being (Kraut, 2018). Aristotle thought that true happiness is achieved by leading a virtuous life and doing what is worth doing. He argued that realising human potential is the ultimate human goal (Boniwell, 2011). This notion highlights the achievement of happiness through prudence. Eudaimonia well-being emboldens the need to find meaning, purpose and connection in our actions that can weather challenges and trying times, especially in a job that can be psychologically demanding. When we engage in meaningful activities, we find value in them and naturally will connect with the experience on a deeper level. For this to work, we must first understand hedonic pleasure which focuses on maximisation of pleasure and minimisation of pain. It is a concept of diminishing negativity completely and distracting oneself with fleeting activities that yield enjoyment. However, this may result in incompetency when expected to manage problems one may have dismissed in efforts to 'escape'.

Empirical demonstration of the distinctions between eudaimonia and hedonic happiness have important implications for research on psychological well-being (Diener, 1984,

Emmons, 1986, Ryff, 1989). Both eudaimonia and hedonic happiness have been found to be significantly correlated with a variety of cognitive-affective qualities associated with a positive emotional tone, with significant differences in the strength of the associations found for several of the qualities. Consistent with the distinctions drawn between the two subjective conditions, eudaimonia was found to be significantly more strongly correlated with having clear goals, feeling assertive, and investing a great deal of effort in an activity, while feeling happy, feeling relaxed, and forgetting one's personal problems were more strongly associated with hedonic enjoyment.

In relation to this, as much as learning centre X injected elements of fun at work, the Educational Therapist were observed to have not disregarded ongoing challenges. They mindfully acknowledged stressful periods, challenges or a 'bad day', and engaged in games, team bonding and gatherings as means of re-calibrating their energy levels and building resilience. This is a classic example of valuing and demonstrating eudaimonic well-being because of the responsibility the Educational Therapist had shown in managing their emotions, energy, work processes and striking a balance with breaks. This is closely related to 'human flourishing' tendencies. Studies show that challenges and obstacles can be reinterpreted as opportunities and strength-building experiences rather than as tragedies or problems (Gittell, Cameron, Lim, & Rivas, 2006; Lee, Caza, Edmondson, & Thomke, 2003; Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003). Since the days of Aristotle, happiness has been conceptualised as being composed of at least 2 aspects – hedonic (or pleasure) and eudaimonia (a sense that life is well-lived) (Kringelbach & Berridge, 2010).

"On a day-to-day basis most jobs can't fill the tall order of making the world better, but particular incidents at work have meaning because you make a valuable contribution or you are able to genuinely help someone in need" (Ciulla, 2000).

Additionally, a prevailing feature amongst the Educational Therapist at learning centre X was good human connection. The proximity, intensity and efforts made to make these connections was evident from the survey conducted on 'The relation between workplace culture and happiness', where the Educational Therapist were asked: 'Given the division of the centre's design (main office and annexe), do you make an effort to socialise with most of your colleagues at least once a day- even on a tight schedule?' (Figure 1).

Lieberman (2013) compiled extensive research evidence demonstrating the importance of human connections for human beings as a core element of human nature. According to Lieberman, human connections are an essential part of the welfare of our societies, due to their roles in the promotion of health and the prevention of physical and mental illness.

According to Dutton and Ragins (2007), too often work and work relationships are not included in lists of things that make life worth living. Paradoxically, people spend much

Given the division of the centre's design (main office and annex), do you make an effort to socialize with most of your

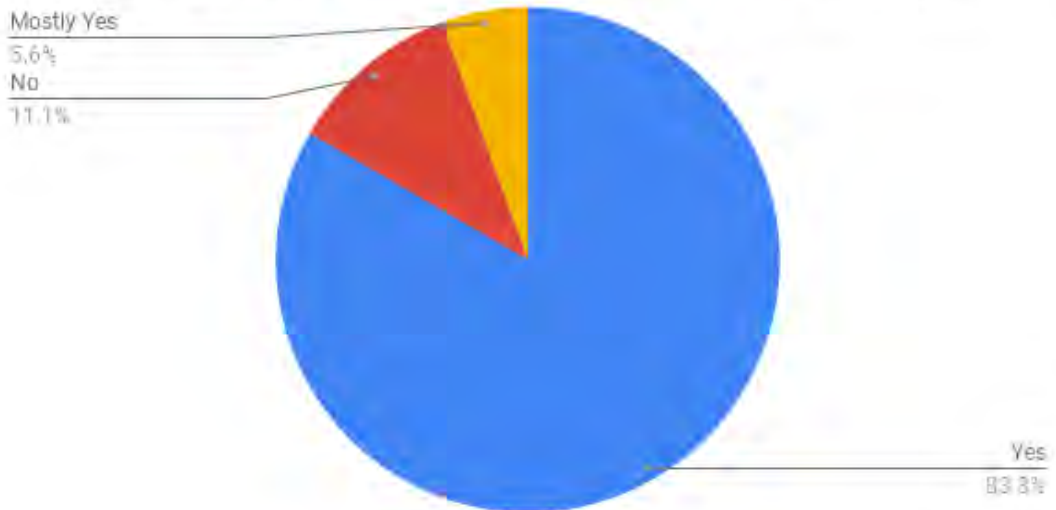


Figure 1: Measuring the readiness to connect amidst a busy schedule.

of their time at work and, consequently, work relationships become central, not only for how work gets done but also for the quality of their lives. In the words of these researchers, those relationships “can be a generative source of enrichment, vitality, and learning that helps individuals, groups, and organisations grow, thrive and flourish” (Dutton and Ragins, 2007, p. 3). Such relationships become even more meaningful when they develop in stressful situations.

Evolution has wired us to connect with others for survival. These connections have the power to affect how we feel. According to research on happiness, our moods are literally contagious. This happens because of mirror neurons in our brains, as mentioned above (Positive psychology, 2019). Therefore, the concept of culture at workplace is highly vital in nurturing passionate and contented individual, especially for educators who ration a large amount of their energy on making a difference in another individual's life.

By creating positive engagements, connections, meaning, and acknowledgement, it is evident through the spirit of learning centre X that we can create a motivated workforce which people want to be part of, and improve the organisation and themselves.

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness has been defined as, “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p.4).

A considerable body of evidence with adult populations indicates that mindfulness, a particular way of deploying attention and awareness in the present moment without emotional reaction or conceptual judgment, is instrumental in helping adults reduce stress, regulate emotions, and thereby improving their health and well-being (Carmody & Baer, 2008; Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004). In this sense, mindfulness is viewed as a state and not a trait, and while it might be promoted by certain practices or activities (e.g. meditation), it is not equivalent to or synonymous with them.

Mindfulness has similarities to other psychotherapy-related constructs. For example, mindfulness is similar to mentalisation (Bateman & Fonagy, 2004, 2006; Fonagy & Bateman, 2008), the developmental process of understanding one’s own and others’ behaviour in terms of individuals’ thoughts, feelings, and desires. Both constructs emphasise the temporary, subjective, and fluid nature of mental states and both are thought to enhance affect regulation and cognitive flexibility (Wallin, 2007). However, Mindfulness also differs from mentalising in that mindfulness is both being aware of the “reflective self” engaged in mentalising, and the practice of fully experiencing the rising and falling of mental states with acceptance and without attachment and judgment.

Considering this, the initiatives carried out by learning centre X cater to the idea of accepting the day to day challenges that come with the job, and how the Educational Therapist chose to initiate the mindful practice of creating awareness by injecting elements of fun and positivity at the workplace. Moreover, germane to the observer’s account of learning centre X, organisational research indicates that individual mindfulness is positively related to employee outcomes such as work engagement (Leroy et al., 2013) and job performance (Dane & Brummel 2014), suggesting that mindfulness contributes to an organisation’s bottom line. Essentially, individual mindfulness describes an individual’s state of consciousness, characterised by heightened awareness and attention, often accompanied by a sense of being ‘in the moment’ (Sutcliffe et al., 2016).

The communal efforts of the 16 Educational Therapists at learning centre X have collectively brought together a favourable outcome over a period of two years. It is also noteworthy that collective (or organisational) mindfulness, is a social phenomenon and refers to a state of shared awareness and attention that emerges from interactions between multiple actors, “a totality with intricately connected and interdependent components, from which organisational mindfulness emerges at the system level.” (Carlo et al., 2012:1102)

COLLECTIVE MINDFULNESS

Collective mindfulness was originally developed to explain how high-reliability organisations (HROs) avoid catastrophe and perform in a nearly error-free manner under trying conditions. Over time, the focus has expanded to include “organisations that pay close attention to what is going on around them, refusing to function on ‘auto-pilot’” (Ray et al., 2011, p. 188; also see Fiol & O’Connor, 2003).

Research on collective mindfulness exhibits greater definitional coherence than its individual analogue. This is primarily a function of Weick et al’s., (1999) highly influential work, which introduced the concept to organisational psychology and organisational behaviour and has continued to serve as the canonical conceptualisation. Their definition of collective mindfulness is alternatively referred to as mindful organising and originally builds on the individual-level work of Langer (1989) and her three aspects of mindfulness (Weick et al., 1999).

Table 1: Collective mindfulness

SOURCE	DEFINITION OF COLLECTIVE MINDFULNESS
Ausserhofer et al., (2013, p.157)	To stay mindful, despite hazardous environments, frontline employees consider constantly five principles: tracking small failures, resisting oversimplification, remaining sensitive to operations, maintaining capabilities for resilience, and taking advantage of shifting locations of expertise.
Hargadon & Bechky (2006, p. 486)	Describes the amount of attention and effort that individuals allocate to a particular task or interaction, and, through mindful interpretation by group members of ongoing experience and the mindful generation of appropriate actions, collective cognition connects individual ideas and experiences, both redefining and resolving the demands of emerging situations.
Valorinta (2009, p. 964)	Mindfulness refers to processes that keep organizations sensitive to their environment, open and curious to new information, and able to effectively contain and manage unexpected events in a prompt and flexible fashion.

The various definitions of collective mindfulness draws our attention to certain main key concepts: sensitivity, resilience, attention, effort, interaction, mindfulness, cognition and curiosity. In order to engage perceptively on the grounds of mindfulness, an individual needs empathy. The willingness to walk in the shoes of another. “Empathy involves an ability to perceive others’ feelings (and to recognise our own emotions), to imagine why

someone might be feeling a certain way, and to have concern for their welfare" (Reiss, 2018). The aptitude to bond empathically with others and feel with them, to care about their well-being, and to act with compassion, is critical to our lives, helping us to get along, work more effectively, and thrive as a society.

As relationships take a more primary role in organisational life, we need to be able to transform relationships from states of just "getting by" and surviving to states of thriving (Harvey & Pauwels, 2003; Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein, & Grant, 2005).

As Berscheid (1999) so eloquently observed, "relationships with other humans are both the foundation and the theme of the human condition: We are born into relationships, we live our lives in relationships with others, and when we die, the effects of our relationships survive in the lives of the living, reverberating throughout the tissue of their relationships"

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants involved in this case study are 16 Educational Therapists ranging between 2-7 years of service from a particular learning centre that brought about the trend of including mission-based games at the centre level. These group of Educational Therapists were particularly chosen because the observer articulating this case-study is a resident Educational Therapist at learning centre X and has developed a mindfulness-based well-being initiative for the DAS based on a concentrated fraction of inspiration drawn from the positive workplace culture cultivated at this learning centre.

A range of other mindful initiatives within this centre were team lunches, collaborative decision-making sessions to solve student or parent related challenges, positive note writing culture, termly gift exchanges to encourage one another, birthday surprises planned for the educational and administrative staffs, and communal get together in the staff room to ensure the team is performing well. Ultimately, this has also instantiated the nature of empathy, sharpened psychological capital and build resilience amongst the educators at this centre.

Research Design

This study will be taking the approach of a descriptive case study based on naturalistic observation which views participants in their natural environments for greater ecological validity. This ecological validity serves as a tool to use this case study in real-life situations. The given situation that describes the culture of the work environment, the people working in it, the mindful initiatives and the outcomes of how the Educational Therapists remain resilient during times of challenges.

Ethical Statement

Ethical considerations have been put in place right from the point of initial observation stages and development of this case study. Research participants will not be subjected to harm in any way whatsoever. Participants' dignity will be prioritised at all times and full consent will be obtained from the participants prior to surveys and interviews. The anonymity of individuals participating in the research will be ensured. Any deception or exaggeration about the aims and objectives of the research will be avoided. Any type of communication in relation to the research will be done with honesty and transparency.

The emotional and mental well-being of the participants will be taken very seriously as this research has the involvement of mental and emotional aspects. The results of this research will be independent and impartial and it will be shared with the participants.

All ethics will adhere in accordance to, Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research, Report of the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioural Research (1979) and the Singapore Statement of Research Integrity (2010).

Procedure

My study classifies the positive and productive outcomes of the mission-based games from 2016-2018. However, the inception of mission-based games came about in 2014 where we were paired with another colleague through random picking of names from a box and assigned to them as a 'mortal'. This makes the person picking the name an 'angel'. The mechanics of the game can be broken down to three significant levels. 1) To guard and fend for your designated mortal. This requires an angel to look out for the mortal, ensure they are coping well at work, buy small gifts or leave them notes of encouragement. 2) The code of secrecy. Angels will have to swear into the secrecy of their identity and ensure that their mortal is kept on their toes deciphering who their angel might be. This adds to the surprise element. 3) There were missions to be accomplished in order to earn a clue about your respective angel. The missions ranged from solving puzzles, accomplishing tasks like taking a selfie with your mortal without arousing suspicion or even taking a photo with an item that belongs to their mortal.

What was clearly observed here was the level of awareness and attention one must have to participate and conquer these missions. Awareness and attention are the fundamental concepts of mindfulness. Learning centre X was optimising these concepts to their best advantage and nurturing and regulating the hippocampus. As an important role player in the limbic system, the hippocampus is involved in the formation of new memories and is also associated with learning and emotions, the amygdala plays a key role in the processing of emotions, and forms part of the limbic system and the pre-frontal cortex which is implicated in planning complex cognitive behaviour,

personality expression, decision making, and moderating social behaviour.

The following e-mail data are the preliminary structure of this initiative.

Data collection and analysis

Besides the observation from the researcher, two fundamental surveys were undertaken.

- i. The relation between workplace culture and happiness and
- ii. The impact of a workplace setting that nurtures mindfulness through creativity, will be used to further accentuate the case study.

The surveys cover two main themes. The first being sustainable happiness through a culture which is born from enhancing the eutenics of individuals, and the second being how a well-nurtured environment invokes natural mindfulness in the day-to-day actions of the Educational Therapists at learning centre X. Additionally, text mining such as word frequency from responses and tabulation of the connection between the collective initiatives and mindfulness were drawn to understand the parallels and adaptability of mindfulness.

Objective Data was collected from 16 employees who work at the learning centre 'X'. We used questionnaires and data were collected through a survey. The survey composed of two main themes. The first being sustainable happiness through a culture which is born from enhancing the eutenics of individuals, and the second being, how a well-nurtured environment invokes natural mindfulness in the day-to-day actions of the Educational Therapists at learning centre X.

Questionnaires

The questionnaires were curated considering the climate of learning centre X's social environment and how evidently the relationship amongst colleagues have flourished as observed by the researcher. The types of questionnaires chosen for the survey are Open-ended, Likert scale and Dichotomous questions. The intentional design behind these questions was to extract the specific response that displayed evident connection amongst the Educational Therapists.

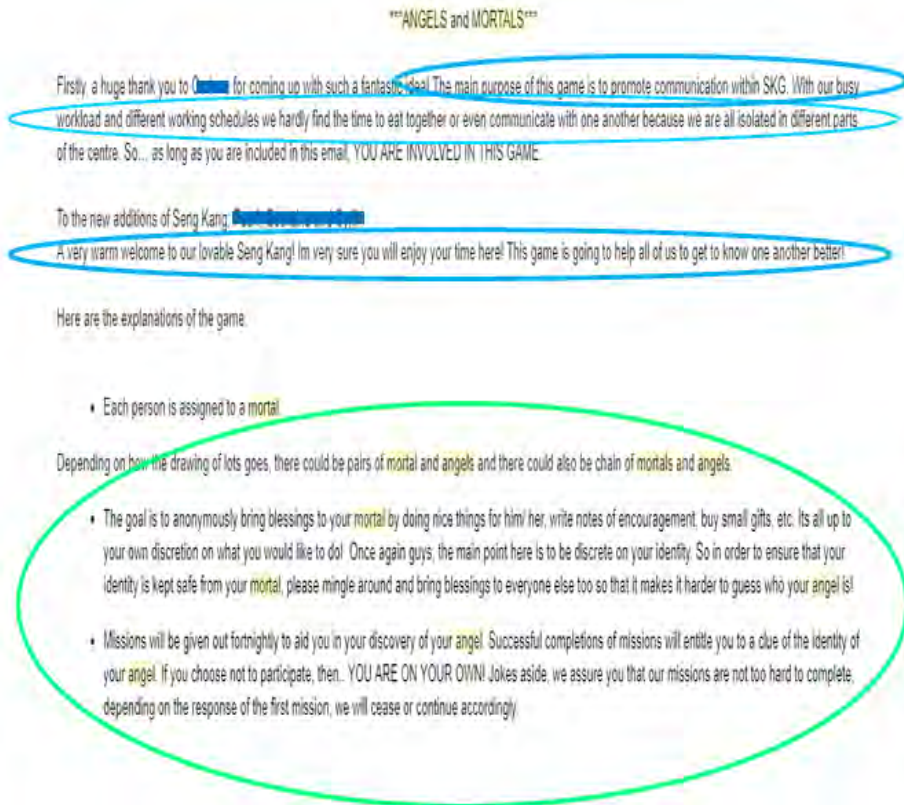


Figure 3. E-mail of initiation of Angels & Mortals game

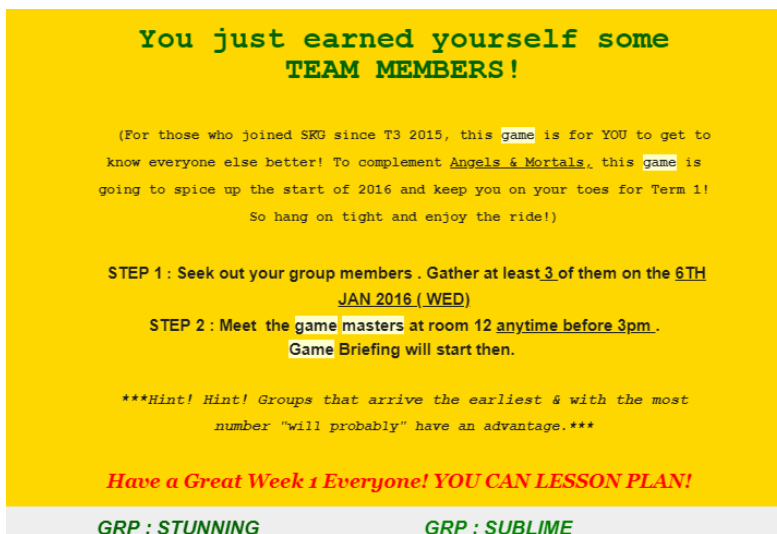


Figure 4: Mission-based game introduction

RESULTS

Analysis and Findings

Table 2: Identifying mindful elements from the activities the Educational Therapists of learning centre X engaged in.

INITIATIVE	ACTIVITY	OUTCOME	MINDFUL ELEMENT
Mission-Based Games	Attached to a particular colleague whom one takes care of and secretly has been assigned another Educational Therapist to	Curiosity and enthusiasm amidst demanding workload.	Attention, Breaking out of habits and patterns of a day-to-day-work routine.
Notes of encouragement	Educational Therapists writing each other notes of encouragement especially during	Looking out for each other besides an assigned buddy	Awareness and conscious choice.
Team Lunches	Educational Therapists gathered for lunch at least once a week.	Fostered stronger bonds and served as a great comfort to new full-time and sessional Educational Therapists.	Mindful eating through sharing food, reminders to take
Collective Decision-Making	Your problem is mine- If one has challenges scheduling a suitable class for students/parents, we sit and discuss and come up with the best possible solution/class for students.	There are fresh perspectives for the solution and team spirit is strengthened. Various strengths of the team prevail too.	Non-judgment, non-identification and conscious choice.
Acts of kindness and empathy	Origami with notes as a form of distraction during stressful terms.	Assurance of a healthy support system	Attention, Awareness and conscious choice.

The Educational Therapists of learning centre X were asked to participate in two surveys by responding with their opinions for three different measures: Happiness, workplace culture and empathy. These three elements are key indicators of this study because they represent the outcome of creativity in the workplace.

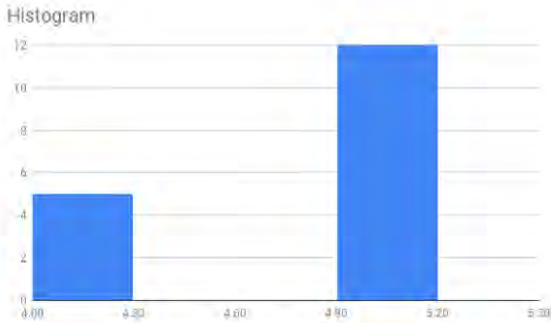


Figure 5: Evaluating the strength of workplace culture at learning centre X.

Figure 5, represents the strength of learning centre X's workplace culture post the communal activities. The Likert scale between 1-5, where 1 represents the least in strength and 5 being the strongest gauge, was used to measure how the Educational Therapist evaluated learning centre X's culture. 68.8% scored the strength of their workplace culture at '5' is the higher end of the scale and 31.3% scored '4' determining the closest to the highest measure of strength.



Figure 6: Level of mindfulness when connecting with colleagues.

In terms of empathy, the culture and contentment being a part of it have sparked the communal and humane essence of empathy amongst the Educational Therapists. It has been identified that the meaningful relationship these Educational Therapists have forged, has encouraged them to be more mindful and aware when communicating with their fellow colleagues. 85% of the Educational Therapists found themselves to have consciously taken the effort to be more mindful when connecting with their colleagues.

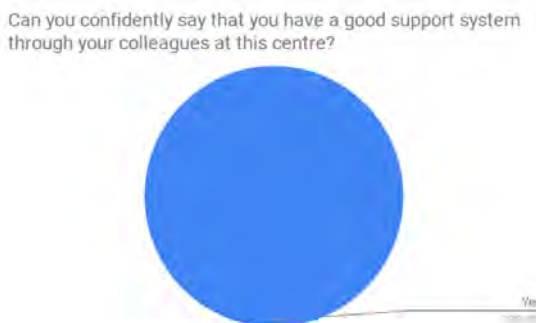


Figure 7: Measure of assurance concerning support system.

When it came to measuring the assurance of a good support system at work post the communal initiatives, all the Educational Therapist of learning centre X recorded that they feel the robust presence of it. This evidently shows how creative and mindful initiatives like gathering for purposeful

activities proved to enhance working experiences and foster meaning relationships. The field of positive relationships at work builds on the positive psychology view that relationships are a central source of life satisfaction, enrichment, development, and personal growth for individuals (Berscheid, 1999; Reis & Gable, 2003; Snyder & Lopez, 2002). It also builds on a positive sociological lens (Baker, Cross, & Wooten, 2003) that suggests that certain patterns of relationships are more generative, enriching, and enhancing than others.

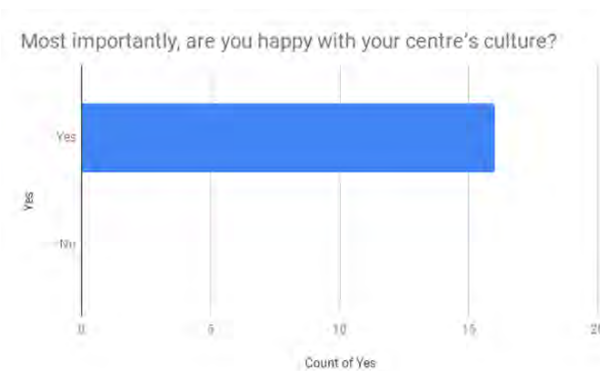


Figure 8. 100% Happiness

Happiness is a strong positive emotion and is a fundamental human experience (Diener and Diener, 1996).

The University of Warwick, UK, in one of their studies revealed that happy workers are up to 12% more productive than unhappy professionals.

They are more likely to be the proud owner of good health, have smooth flowing professional and personal relationships, and prove to be more beneficial for the organisation as a whole.

Delle, Fave and colleagues (2011) noted that happiness is also an ambiguous term which can have a number of meanings:

- ◆ A transient emotion (that is synonymous with joy)
- ◆ An experience of fulfilment and accomplishment (characterised by a cognitive evaluation)
- ◆ A long-term process of meaning-making and identity development through achieving one's potential and the pursuit of subjectively relevant goals.

In view of this, it is clear that the Educational Therapists of learning centre X have understood the transient nature of happiness and that it takes effort, practice and time to build on the sustainability of the emotion by creating conditions that encourage positive activities that bind them as one community. Over time, the communal activities had also helped the Educational Therapists experience meaningful connection in the presence of challenges or an intense term and identify their individual strengths.

Based on the analysis regarding the driving force that motivates the Educational Therapists to connect regularly, it is notable that the people and the positivity that embodies their bond proved to be the recurring responses. This is evident from the clear

Count of What drives you to make this effort especially on a busy day?

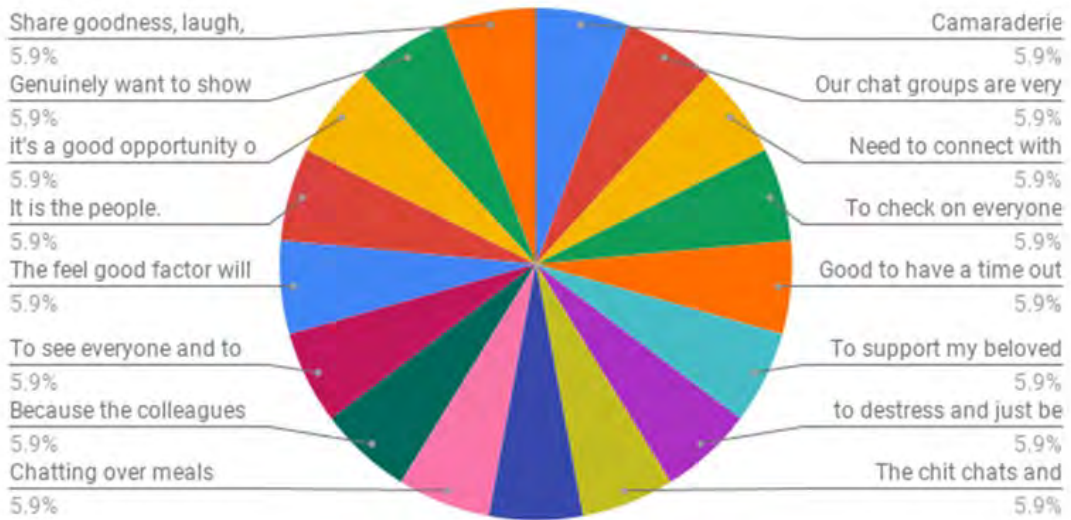


Figure 9: The driving force to make the effort to connect

balance shown in Figure 9 where there is a good spread of answers emphasising these keywords: colleagues, everyone, people, beloved friend, camaraderie, meals, destress, share goodness, laugh, chat, support, check on, time-out and feel-good factor.

The physical environment of a work place affects how employees interact, perform tasks, and are led. Physical environment as an aspect of the work environment have directly affected the human sense and subtly changed interpersonal interactions and thus productivity. A workplace may have the most colourful walls and artefacts, comfortable chairs and stocked up pantries, but it is the warmth of human connection that adds spirit

to the place. This is reined in through the culture and patterns of the residents. Moreover, the strong interpersonal relationship between the Educational therapists at centre X show that more than half of the population find the culture to be healthy and nurturing. The accompanying responses lean towards the agreement of this notion respectively.

Does your current centre embody a healthy and nurturing workplace culture?

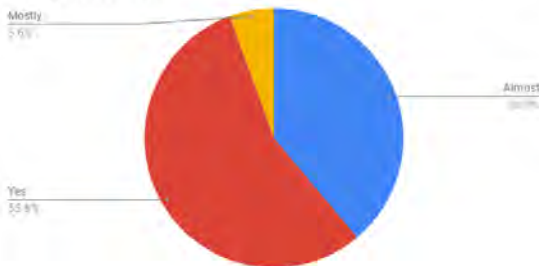


Figure 10. Conduciveness of workplace

Colleagues' personal preference

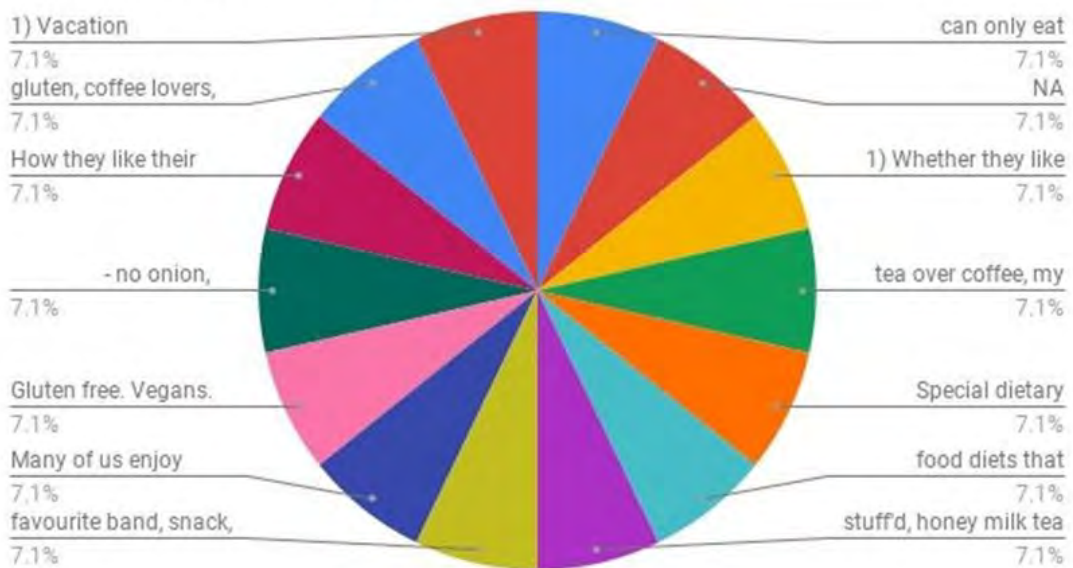


Figure 11. Colleagues' personal preference

Understanding an individual's personal preference defines the amount of respect individuals have for one another. It demonstrates the level of awareness, attention to detail and conscious choices the Educational Therapists at learning centre X possess. It is also notable that these are the core building blocks of mindfulness in an individual. In an age of distraction, it is easy to overlook significant details and rush through our day to day lives. But the essence of learning centre X serves as a lesson to many who rush through their day to day lives and forget to stop and relax to perform better. This balanced distribution suggest that the Educational therapist went the extra mile to observe and take note of their fellow colleague's preferences which either makes or breaks one's day. This was possible from the enriched bond they had developed from engaging in the games at their learning centre. Over time, the responsibility of learning about their designated 'mortal' and 'angel' helped them understand the nature of each other's predilections.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS:

The intention of this study was to create awareness of how creative and mindful initiatives of gathering for purposeful activities proved to enhance working experiences and camaraderie. In this descriptive case study, we delved into how a particular group of educators from centre 'X' nurtured the culture of including fun at the workplace through meaningful activities like (mission-based games, team bonding, team lunches, meeting to

discuss about student, parents or teaching-related challenges). This picked up based on the trend of one mission-based game initiated to welcome new colleagues into the workplace. It evolved to foster better relationships and refined the workplace culture where these group of Educational Therapists are stationed at predominantly. The main cultural trends in this study included the increase in contemplative team-decision making and how it leads to better productivity, increase in resilience through better support system at work and the nurturing of mindfulness and well-being.

This culture can be adapted at other learning centres and used in various schools and organisations to help their teachers maintain a healthy state of mind and strike a balance between work, play and life- which is vital for teaching, especially for those who are creating meaning for students amidst learning challenges. It is key for nurturing individuals to remain spirited and resilient especially in the special education industry.

This also highlights the importance of workplace culture and environment. Learning centre X ensured that the culture of flourishing through proactively designing a positive and safe environment for one another produced favourable outcomes. Under the umbrella of Positive Psychology, Positive Organisational Psychology strives to recognise motivations, enablers, and effects of the positive organisational patterns, understand how they are facilitated, and why they work in the first place, all in the attempt to find ways to capitalise on their existence. This new lens magnifies a remarkably positive phenomenon in many organisations that leads to the development of employee strengths, fosters resilience, and brings healing and restorative power to the work environment (Positive Psychology, 2019).

Positive Organisational Psychology is the scientific study of positive subjective experiences and traits in the workplace and positive organisations, and its application to improve the effectiveness and quality of life in organisations (Donaldson & Ko, 2010). Ideally, workplace culture supports a positive and productive environment. Happy employees are not necessarily productive employees, and productive employees are not necessarily happy employees. It is important to find aspects of the culture that will support each of these qualities for your employees. Learning centre X bred and found just that through integrating a sense of balance in their day-to-day processes and supported one another without prejudice. These Educational Therapists come from diverse backgrounds culturally, have different personalities, beliefs and educational specialisation. However, it is in the difference that all of them thrived and triumphed to become one community. There was not extravagance or gruelling efforts to make this happen. It all began with the intention of hospitality and acclimatising to one another. It did not deter anyone from their job responsibilities nor did it tire anyone out. It set out to be a reminder that perspectives and perceptions can be changed no matter how demanding work gets. Learning centre X created safe conditions for dialogues and collective work to take place. This also assured the Educational Therapists that they can count on one another and gained a sense of psychological safety in the process.

The limitations that this research might face is that the data collected will be based on surveys and the observer's point of view. Moreover, 1) this study is influenced by a specific group of Educational Therapist within one learning centre who as much as other Educational Therapists, share a fundamental purpose for the craft, are stationed at different learning centres, 2) it is special education teachers specific and may require tailoring when considered for other occupational setting.

However, a well-integrated theoretical framework of educator's well-being is needed, which effectively brings together positive psychology with educational knowledge and pedagogical practice, acknowledges the challenges of change within the educational environment, and stresses the significance of evaluation. Only then can the organisation put forth well-being as the heart of a new approach to education.

NEXT STEPS IN RESEARCH:

This study has greatly inspired me to explore the possibility of awakening and encouraging the essence of mindfulness amongst the educators at our organisation and guide them through identifying their strengths in the process. Having had the opportunity to experience the culture of collectiveness and mindfulness born out of the communal yet adaptable initiatives at learning centre X, it has been proven that mindful elements are present in a range of activities an individual is easily capable of performing on a daily basis. Furthermore, it has also stimulated an effort to design and render CalmEd- a mindfulness-based well-being initiative, as part of enriching this well-being extended to our EdTs.

Having established an understanding from this study on how mindfulness and Positive Psychology efficaciously impacts the eutenics of the Educational Therapists at learning centre X, CalmEd kicked off its pilot project with our board of Educational Advisors to investigate further on how else mindfulness-based approaches can bolster the well-being of educators.

Some of these approaches include sending weekly mindfulness reminders, encouraging deliberate mindfulness practices such as meditation and breathing techniques, conscious communication and even enjoying a nourishing snack mindfully. CalmEd is working towards gradually incorporating mindfulness training into the organisation's ecosystem. The first phase of this 11 months long training, trains Educational Advisors who are in a position to support and guide our Educational Therapists, through guiding them to integrate the five vital mindfulness-based elements: Attention, Awareness, Acceptance, Non-identification, Non-Judgement and Conscious Choice, into their personal and professional lives.

Well-being is a huge concern for both mentors and mentees.

In a way, our Educational Advisors are caregivers. Care translates into interventions that are in the best educational, emotional, and psychological interest of the students (Morgan, 1987). As an Educational Advisor myself, I am responsible to guide and educate educators on educational and administrative processes. Responsibly, as Advisors, it is also imperative in my role to help create opportunities for educators to evolve and grow in their career.

Our Educational Advisors need to be effectively supported through means of well-being initiatives in order to perform optimally and stand as a healthy spokesperson of the Educational Advisory team. The CalmEd mindfulness training for educators trains our Educational Advisors in integral aspects like mentoring, communication, psychological health, classroom approaches and executive functioning skills.

Research has shown that educators are more likely to experience occupational stress that results in occupational burnout (Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997). The results of this is usually a rise in teacher attrition. CalmEd aims to promote a positive working environment through Positive Psychology and mindfulness-based principles and help educators improve their overall well-being.

Finally, to drive mindfulness and educational well-being onward, CalmEd will continue to work closely with our Educators, considering how the concepts of positive psychology translates within the intricacies of various educational challenges within the organisation. This will be supported by distinct measurement, which incorporates both quantitative and qualitative data to support program development and evaluation.

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