

Researchers studying motivational aspects of mindfulness find quality differs by situation

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What makes people more or less mindful from one situation to the next? Researchers have found that mindfulness is not entirely something an individual brings to a situation and rather is partly shaped by the situations they encounter.

"As mindfulness has become prevalent within organizational practice and [scholarly research](#) on organizations, there is a growing need to situate mindfulness more fully within organizational contexts," said Christopher S. Reina, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Virginia Commonwealth University Department of Management and Entrepreneurship in the School of Business.

In "Wherever you go, there you become: How mindfulness arises in everyday situations," published in the journal *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, Reina and co-author Ravi S. Kudesia, Ph.D., assistant professor at the Temple University Fox School of Business, introduce a [theoretical framework](#) that explains how mindfulness arises based on an individual's capacity for [self-regulation](#) as well as three motivational forces: their metacognitive beliefs, their mental fatigue and how they appraise the situations they experience.

While metacognitive beliefs aid individuals in higher levels of self-regulation, mental fatigue draws resources away from self-regulation. Meanwhile, how individuals appraise a situation influence how much self-regulation is needed to maintain mindfulness.

"These motivational aspects of mindfulness have received little attention to date," Reina said. "Despite the increasing prevalence of mindfulness in organizational research, we have yet to seriously consider its antecedents: how and why people become more or less mindful from one situation to the next." In other words, while researchers have previously explored what mindfulness predicts, little to no research has studied what predicts mindfulness, which represents the core contribution of Reina's study.

The research comprises over 558 participants and 9,390 responses from across three separate studies.

If mindfulness indeed produces [positive outcomes](#), it seems important to identify what situational features can increase or decrease mindfulness. Understanding this can help managers better design organizational situations that enhance mindfulness, Reina said.

"Mindfulness is often assumed to be something that people bring with them into situations, some stable psychological property that is inherent to them," the study concludes. "The present research helps nuance this assumption. If we instead see mindfulness as arising from the coming together of people and their situations, we can better conceptualize [mindfulness](#) and design organizational situations that enhance it."

More information: Christopher S. Reina et al, Wherever you go, there you become: How mindfulness arises in everyday situations, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* (2020). [DOI: 10.1016/j.obhdp.2019.11.008](#)

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