



WORDWISE COACHING PODCAST

TRANSCRIPT – SERIES 1 EPISODE 5

Mindfulness with Susan Peacock

Rachel:

This episode was recorded in August, 2020 during the COVID 19 pandemic, it includes a short meditation practice. So don't engage with that if you're driving

Rachel:

Hello and welcome to the Wordwise Coaching Podcast. I'm Rachel Goodwin, an executive coach and for this series I've chosen some of the most common areas I focus on with clients and have invited fellow coaches to join me, to explore them. In our work with clients we aim to help them improve their performance in the workplace. It's really rewarding to see the difference our coaching can make and we're now excited about reaching a wider audience, sharing our experience and advice and hearing your thoughts. So please do subscribe at www.wordwisecoaching.co.uk. and we can then share any materials or suggested reading around today's podcast and our top tips summary. By subscribing, you can be sure that you'll never miss an episode, we can update you on events, new resources. You can even give us ideas about what you want to hear about today. I'm joined by Susan Peacock, a chartered psychologist and founder of Livework. Well, she's an expert on resilience and mindfulness in the workplace. In this episode, Susan and I are going to be discussing mindfulness. We'll explore the concept in how, how it can help you as ever. We'll share examples of how we've worked with clients around this

Susan:

Right now, if you are breathing, there's more right with you than wrong with you.

Rachel:

Life becomes a sea of serenity and you never feel anxious or were read or angry again.

Susan:

And one of the qualities that underpins mindfulness is this ability to be curious, because as soon as you are curious, you are more open

Rachel:

It's about noticing and often it will be all my mind is all over the place just now. Hi, Susan. Thanks so much for joining me today.

Susan:

Hi, Rachel. It's just wonderful to be here with you.

Rachel:

I'm really, really looking forward to this conversation because you are the person that introduced me to mindfulness. Oh yeah. And I have to say it's had a really profound influence on my work and life. You know, I'm quite looking forward to revisiting the journey.



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Susan:

Great. I remember that. And I remember how it just really resonated.

Rachel:

I remember you told me about a book and reading it and just thinking this really works. You know, I can really see this. And then we continued the journey and I did my first mindfulness course with you. Do you want to tell us a bit about your journey with mindfulness and how you use it now?

Susan:

It's wonderful hearing how it's resonated with you. And that's something that I find is so often the case that people recognise the benefit in their professional life, but boy does it ripple into their personal life. And I think my introduction to mindfulness was very much a coming together of being aware of your body, your mind, and that sense of kind of coming home to who you are. I think a lot of people initially think of mindfulness as conjuring up someone sitting on a mountain top and yet it's how do you navigate your life on busy tubes? And as you connect with people on zoom, it's coming back to this moment.

Rachel:

I absolutely agree. And I think the initial practices were hugely helpful, but it's then very much how you weave it into your day to day life. I would say a day, doesn't go by without me thinking of it in some form or other.

Susan:

Yeah. Brilliant. And I think what you touch on is so important because it's that formal practice, and we can talk a little bit more about that, but then also, how do you weave it in, in amongst all the busyness and it's the ability to remember to draw on it. That then becomes second nature with time.

Rachel:

Absolutely building in the habit. Another interesting aspect is that when I started working with you around this, you were already working with organisations, businesses, et cetera. And I was quite tentative about people in the corporate world really going to engage with this. Does it sound a bit far out? Yeah, yeah, yeah. We've come a long way since then. We're talking maybe seven years. Yeah,

Susan:

No, it's amazing. I remember when I set up Live Work Well, because basically I'd worked in advertising. I then trained as a psychologist because of my interest in resilience, worked at the university of Surrey for 10 years in their Centre for Wellbeing and it was there that I was introduced to mindfulness and people finding it so helpful and I thought, and this was in 2011. I thought this makes sense to people in all areas of life and where is there a huge population who could benefit from it, the workplace. And that then led to me on a bit of a wing and a prayer setting this and 2011, 2012, you know, there were some organisations who were just tentatively exploring this. In less than 10 years it's become mainstream. Yeah.





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Rachel:

Yeah.

Susan:

So really interesting. And I think it's because people are demystifying it. And one of the considerations is in a world where our most valuable resource is our attention we allow that to be very scattered. You know, we on our devices, I wouldn't wanna be without my phone, but it's getting back into the driver's seat and we've got notifications pinging in. We've got all sorts of distractions, but what we need is this ability to focus and that's what mindfulness really supports you in being able to do that.

Rachel:

And I think businesses have recognised that yes, it supports wellbeing, you know, and they're looking after their people. It also makes people more effective crucially. And I, I think that's a huge driver because I think in a conversation we had recently, you were talking about a large organisation that now has a Chief Mindfulness Officer.

Susan:

Yes. Yeah, yeah. It's amazing. And in fact, it's not only one, it's happening more and more often now, that organisation is a global law firm and now has a chief mindfulness officer. And increasingly I speak to organisations where there are thousands of people around the world connecting in different countries, different locations, where there is a mindfulness champion and that then ripples out and then it starts to spread. And you raised such an interesting point when you say it supports resilience and wellbeing, but a conversation that's often happening in organisations now is, is this about resilience? Is it about mental health? Is it about focus and productivity? So it's not a question of, is mindfulness gonna be helpful? It's how do we, weave it in, yeah. Where do we weave it in?

Rachel:

And I think also organisations are now recognizing that if they want to attract top talent, the fact that people are being looked after and that there is this consideration of how they work is attractive,

Susan:

The culture of the organisation. Absolutely. And I think in the midst of, of a huge amount of change and uncertainty, what I'm noticing, which is fascinating is the organisations who've been able to ride this period out well, seem to have invested in the culture of their organisation so that people are able to be agile, able to focus, navigate the complexity of work life integration. And how do you put boundaries in place? And mindfulness really supports you in knowing where you are right now and where you want to place your attention.

Rachel:

I suppose, at this point, it would be helpful to talk about what is, is, what is mindfulness? How do we define it?





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Susan:

Mindfulness is something a little bit like when you get the menu in a restaurant in those days that we were going to restaurants, you could have a sense of what this dish tastes like, but it's only in eating it that you actually get to experience it. And the same is true with mindfulness, you can read about it, you can talk about it, but it's practising it. A commonly accepted definition of mindfulness is present moment awareness, accessed through the body and senses. I think the best way of doing that is for us to do a very brief practice.

You know, I'm sure many of you have had busy days. You may have been sitting a while. What can be really helpful is to just get comfortable just to feel your feet on the floor, really noticing those points of contact. So it may be the underside of the feet connecting with the surface beneath you, perhaps it's the points of contact of where your body is held by the surface beneath you, and rather than becoming aware of thoughts, really feeling the sensations.

So noticing where the weight is evenly balanced, perhaps noticing the fabric of your clothes against your skin. It may be an awareness of your hands resting on your thighs. So these contact points, feet on the floor, body held in the chair, the weight of your hands resting on your thighs or in your lap, or perhaps it's an awareness of your breath, really noticing the sensations of breathing. And it's not about trying to force anything, but it's just noticing what is showing up right now. And it's highly likely that your mind will wander. That's perfectly natural, perfectly normal. If you have a mind it will wander and just bring the focus of awareness back, back to the sensations in your body right now. And, and now is this very brief practice draws to a close, just coming back to an awareness of us connecting in this way. You may have chosen to have closed your eyes, or you may have them open, but just taking a moment now to open your eyes, to really listen to your body, perhaps stretch and take a moment just to reflect on what you noticed as we did that.

Rachel:

I do find it just so, so helpful to really take that time to connect. And there's always something to notice.

Susan:

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. Yeah.

Rachel:

Sometimes it can be, you're noticing something rather uncomfortable, but that doesn't matter. I think at the beginning, when I first started, I was striving for relaxation. You know, I was striving for an empty mind and would judge, did I do that well? Was that a good practice? There is still that little hint, you know, it's about noticing and often it will be, oh, my mind is all over the place just now.

Susan:

Wonderful. And that's what it's about. You know, there's no such thing as a bad practice because every practice, as you've just said, there's always something to notice. And it may be noticing that, oh, I notice that in my body or my mind is really busy, need to do my to-do list. And I'm sure you know, that that's very common for people to experience, but it's then acknowledging that. And then I'd say two key qualities that underpin mindfulness awareness, but then kindness. And you've just touched on that. wW





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are so quick to be harsh with ourselves. Yeah. And as soon as you notice that you can just come back to experiencing, okay, come back to what grounds centres and roots me in this moment.

Rachel:

I think one of the things I noticed straight away was how easy it is for a single thought to trigger a whole story. For example, you feel a bit of a twinge in your back and then you think, oh no, no, that pains back. and I'm gonna have to go to the osteopath and I wonder if I'll get an appointment and maybe I could squeeze it in. And before you know where you are, you've kind of gone off down a stress path or planning path or, and then something else kicks in and you are, you've taken yourself off to a place that is really not very productive and so far away from the present moment. And I was astonished at how that was a consistent habit for me.

Susan:

Well, it makes huge sense. And there's a lot, you know, we are in our infancy at understanding how the brain operates and how mindfulness impacts that. But quite a few points that you've just touched on. The one is we are designed to respond to triggers. So is that twinge in my back a real problem and something I need to attend to, we also, as a species have what's known as a negativity bias. So before we know it, we've gone down a path that this is a disaster and versus being able to say, okay, it's, can I be curious about this? And one of the qualities that underpins mindfulness is this ability to be curious, because as soon as you are curious, you are more open to judging it versus good or bad. So that curiosity, okay, I noticed this, can I lean into it? Can I explore it a bit is really important.

Susan:

And the other point you make, which is so relevant. And it's one of the things that I think is so helpful to become aware of is in our brain, we've got these different neural pathways and different neural modes operating. And the one is what's known as the narrative network, which is exactly what you were talking about, those stories we create, the other one is the direct experiential network, so noticing the sensation and our brain engages with either one. And if you can notice, oh, my breathing's really shallow, ok, well, let me be curious about that, let me take a deep breath and really connect with the breath. You are then engaging with what I always think of as the sensing that direct experiential network and you calm the thinking down.

Rachel:

Even now, I really notice that in some of the practices I do, they'll often say, put your hand on your stomach and even though I feel I was already focusing on my breath, just that sensation, the physical movement, really centres your focus and you can't focus on whether you've done your online shop or the email that you've forgot to send last night. If you've got that level of connection and it frees you up in the most amazing way to let go of all the shoulds and the to-dos and the why didn't I, and how can I, and all of those thoughts just go. I think the big lesson for me was I always felt like I had a lot of plates spinning and if I didn't keep an eye on them all the time, they were all gonna crash to the floor. Whereas really switching off and focusing on the breath and the present moment meant that I could close down all of those tabs, but they would reopen at the right time for me to deal with them. So life didn't descend into chaos, but I wasn't exhausted by this play of all of those thoughts going through my mind the whole time.





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Susan:

I like what you were saying, spinning plates and another analogy that people find quite helpful as a computer and having too many windows open. Yeah. And I think a lot of us think, oh, I just need to keep these thoughts, this window open. And yet what it does is it distracts you and that ability to shut some of them down. And often when you are taking a bit of a pause, that's when you have your aha moments, that's when there's some real creativity and innovation that appears because you've given it some space.

Rachel:

And another time when I find mindfulness, particularly helpful as if dropping off to sleep, maybe if my mind is rather busy to kind of connect with the body. And if I wake up in the middle of the night, it's a great thing to do to just bring that focus back. And I'm constantly amazed that often I'll start with a body scan, start feeling sensation in my toes, my feet. And I think by the time I get to my knees, I've gone back to sleep, but it's a very, very effective tool.

Susan:

That's brilliant. And that ties in so well with what we were just talking about, the narrative network and the direct experiential network. So as soon as you are connecting with the sensations in your body, you quieten the thinking part down

Rachel:

In terms of coaching, I've also found mindfulness felt like it was the missing piece of the jigsaw for me, because in coaching with clients, you are always looking at helping them with self-awareness, which is crucially important. And the whole noticing things really builds and supports self-awareness. But for me, often clients, especially quite senior experienced clients have a fairly good idea of what their struggles are, where they aren't as skillful as they might want to be, especially under stress so it's the self-management piece, that is the thing that they really need to crack with mindfulness. I feel like it's the how of that. It's that telling people to pause and, you know, think of a different way of doing things is helpful, but giving them a real concrete means of doing it is the missing piece that can make the massive difference to them.

Susan:

And I think that that's where the neuroscience really helps. And as we were saying earlier, you know, we need a lot more data on this and a lot more randomised controls, particularly in the workplace, because it was, you know, came out of a clinical population. But I think that what people are finding is in a world where there are more and more demands, it's become more and more complex, this ability to come home to who you are. And how are you in this moment? Are you arriving like a bit of a black thundercloud? Because as we know, emotions are contagious, that then impact the people around you. You know, whether it's connecting remotely or in person, and as you become more self-aware, you are better equipped to pick up from others and to read the situation for what it is and what I always hope. I'm sure it's the same with you. But with the people I work with is that they get a taste of what this is like, because for as long as it's an intellectual exercise, it's very different to, yeah, this really impacts how I show up at work, how I show up at home, how I perform.





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Rachel:

And it's those, if you can identify the trigger points with people about, you know, where are the situations where you look back and think, mm, I could have done better there, or that escalated in a way that it probably didn't have to, you, you then introduce this idea of even just taking one breath and grounding feet on the floor. It makes a massive difference. Often I work with people who are maybe going to be giving a presentation, or there's some element of performance in what they need to do and just taking that moment to centre and connect really transforms their experience and their ability to communicate as effectively as they can.

Susan:

And I want to add just that because I think weaving it, it informally, as we've just been saying is so important. Doing a practice, a formal practice can be hugely valuable and there's so many apps out there there's so many ways of connecting with mindfulness with meditation, carving out 10 to 14 minutes of your day is 1% of your day. And as you were saying, this is the missing link so this ability to really become aware of how your mind operates is key. And when you do those practices, you notice your mind wandering you notice that criticism, that judgment, and when you've built up that muscle, which is a little bit like becoming physically fit, then become fitter mentally. In the moment that you're about to do a presentation or something's not going the way you had planned it to in a meeting, you've got the experience to deal with those criticisms, that mental chatter that kicks in automatically more skillfully.

Rachel:

And it gives you confidence because you kind of, you know, are I sometimes say to clients, it feels like you've got a pill in your pocket that you can pop and you know, you're going to elevate your performance, or you're going to be able to find a stillness and a confidence that will support you. I think the other important thing that I do say to clients is in talking about it. It can sound like if you crack mindfulness, then life becomes the sea of serenity and you never feel anxious or worried or angry ever again. But sadly, we can't make that claim. You know, it definitely helps

Susan:

It equips you with tools yeah. To navigate those times. And I think this ability to, there's a wonderful quote. It, you know, you and I both know from John Kabatt Zin, you can't control the waves, but you can learn to surf. Yeah. And we are all gonna be triggered. You know, that is part of being a human being, but it's that ability to respond skillfully versus a knee jerk, automatic reaction, and let's face it, you have those automatic outbursts. It usually requires a huge amount of time to sort out, of trying to then appease situations and people yeah and get it back on track. So to respond, a lovely image is you get an angry email and, you know, lots of exclamation marks possibly caps. Before, you know, it, you can be about to hit send. And what mindfulness does is it gives you that ability to just pause, perhaps put it in your draft box, perhaps get away, you know, get up, go for a quick walk and then come back. And invariably, you respond very differently.

Rachel:

Yeah. And that whole response / react side of things was another point that really resonated with me at the outset, because looking back on situations and thinking, oh, if only, you know, hindsight is a



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wonderful thing and just buying yourself that time to reflect a little bit can completely transform. And also I think it's incredibly impressive. Mm I've been in meetings where I've seen somebody be triggered by often some very unskillful behavior and if you see somebody just take that moment and not bite back and come back with a very considered response, it's really impressive because then you don't get situations escalating and going completely off track where neither party are at their best. Having that ability to respond skillfully can mean that you elevate the performance of everyone in the room, not just yourself

Susan:

I actually remember a client who was a senior partner in a law firm saying he had been in a meeting that had become quite adversarial and this was in the middle of a mindfulness program. And he remembered just putting his feet on the floor and altering his posture. And he said, the meeting just changed. So I think we underestimate the power of, as you've just said, awareness, oh, what's going on? What am I feeling in my body right now? And then how do I respond with kindness, kindness to myself and that happens in a nanosecond.

You choose a more skillful response, and then you feel far better about it. And as you say, the energy in the room shifts and it takes a different direction.

Rachel:

And I think clients who may come to coaching and they've had some feedback about being rather tough and reacting strongly to situations, and potentially, that sort of behavior can derail careers, it really can. And the more senior you get, the more of a shadow you're casting over the organization and so the bigger impact you're having and often clients who've come with that kind of feedback, they're terribly motivated and passionate about what they do. So those reactions are driven from a place of wanting to do the best job, but the result doesn't work out so well. Being able to really feel the physical sensation of when they're being triggered, 'cause that's often the first sign, isn't it? Yeah, there'll be, I know my stomach flips. And so you get that early warning sign and if you are tuned into your body, then you are ready to think, okay. Right. **Let's just this in**, let's just calm this down and it can transform how people are perceived

Susan:

The phrase I really like is emotions are thoughts as they show up in the body. So sticking with your example of your stomach, kind of churning, you know, when you think of one of the things that is so commonly feared by people is presenting and yet so many of us are having to do it. So in that situation it might be, oh, I can feel tension in my shoulders. I can feel my stomach churning that is communicating that there's a thought saying, this is out of my comfort zone this is a real stretch and the emotion is that this is evoking some anxiety. And when you're able to see it and break it down into those building blocks, people find it really helpful. And I was talking to somebody just yesterday about something they do. I mean, they've been doing it for years. They're super at it.

Susan:

And yet they get anxious about it. And this person was just saying to me, he was breaking it down into, okay so what is the thought? And is that an accurate thought? You know, there's a lovely saying in mindfulness, which is thoughts are not facts. And when you become aware of that, you can then engage



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with it more skillfully. And is this anxiety being fueled by a sense of awe and excitement and this is a bit out of my comfort zone, but it's appropriate or is it absolute terror? And when you can break it down, you can work with it very differently.

Rachel:

Yet it all comes back to this whole idea that as a human race, we are always looking for threat. And our brain is kind of stuck back in the age where there could be a tiger coming at us and that's how it responds. And that's how it fuels our body with that reaction. But we are not escaping wild animals so much these days.

Susan:

And as you talk about that, it's so useful to recognize that a species, we have a predisposition to noticing the problems we are constantly scanning for that those neural pathways become a little bit like the M 25, that ring road, those ring roads around big cities, well worn pathways. What we are starting to do through mindfulness is notice right now, if you are breathing, there's more right with you than wrong with you. We often notice the part of our body that's really sore, not the rest of our body. That's actually fine. So it's this ability to tune into what is going well and that is something that we do in mindfulness is we start to notice what is good. And that becomes almost like developing the B roads, the back roads. So that negativity bias serves us well as a species but as you say, hundreds of years ago, we were needing to scan all the time. One of our greatest abilities as a species is I can just invite you to call to mind something that evokes stress you immediately feel it in your body that serves us well, it enables us to prepare for the cold to take good care of ourselves, but it can tip. Yeah. And it's being aware of that.

Rachel:

And when you're under stress or you're tired, it tips and then if you don't head it off, it takes over. And that's when you end up just spotting everything is a problem. You **could win the lottery in it to be a problem.**

Susan:

Exactly, exactly. That is so helpful for you to comment on that because there's a great acronym. Halt. Am I hungry? Am I angry? Am I lonely? Or am I tired? And if you are feeling one of those, you are more likely to react rather than respond skillfully.

Rachel:

I mean, we are quite basic in many ways, really and getting back to the basics of really looking after ourselves and being aware of what's going on for us in the moment makes so much sense.

Susan:

And I would agree with you we are basic. **You know, we have species,** but one of our greatest assets is what goes on in that prefrontal cortex, that very precious resource and mindfulness has been found to be like a good workout for that part of your brain. And our prefrontal cortex is the part of our brain that's doing all our executive functioning. You know, it's really enabling us to see that person looking at you in a way that you hadn't expected and then to be able to process it and think it through. So you do get triggered, but then you're able to manage those strong emotions. You're able to empathise with the



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fact that they may be having a tough day. You're able to prioritise and think, right, I'm gonna finish these tasks and then get on with that task. And you're able to respond skillfully versus that automatic reaction.

Rachel:

Exactly. And I think so much of it and I think this is particularly true in a coaching scenario with a client. is really being able to step back and work out what's me and what's them. So if I'm starting to feel anxious, is it because there is something going on for me, or is it that just I'm picking up on their anxiety and that's crucially important in coaching, but it's important in life because we can't assume that everyone else is completely in control and behaving in an entirely logical way. And if we build that into our interactions, it means that we can bring things back to a more positive platform.

Susan:

Self-Awareness as you said earlier, is key. It underpins it all. And as you become more self aware, you then are engaging in a very different way.

Rachel:

Do you want to tell us a bit about your work with individuals and teams and organisations and how you bring mindfulness to those audiences?

Susan:

I feel very fortunate in that I've worked with so many different individuals, teams, organisations, and in this last, nearly 11 years now, it's been amazing seeing how you will often get somebody who's in quite a senior role and they realise that this is something that could support them. It may be that work is becoming all consuming, it may be that they're wanting to manage their team in a slightly different way. And what I've been struck with with very senior people is how they commit to weaving in the practice. And I started noticing this again and again, and being slightly surprised that they were giving it the priority and carving out the time to experience it. And I usually say to people it's a little bit like planting a seed and when you plant a seed, give it the right conditions, don't keep digging it up and then see how it's developed.

Susan:

So with mindfulness, it can be very helpful if you're wanting to introduce it into an organisation, having some people who are in a senior role who really buy into this and support it, but then also offering it to individuals who are interested, offering a program where you've got at least four weeks, ideally six or even eight weeks is fantastic because like getting fit, you know, you go out once for a jog and don't feel particularly fit you don't particularly like it, but it's that ongoing experience of it and then doing it in a team enables you to embed behaviors. So I've had, you know, and I'm just thinking of so many different examples where people have both the leader in a team, but also team members who've said, this has made such a difference to me. Let's start our meetings with a one minute practice.

Susan:

So let's just feel our feet on the floor, connect with where we are and why we are here. Because what that does is it then firstly brings everyone into the room, connects everybody, and then what is our focus? So I can think of a couple of organisations who now have meetings that are 25 minutes versus 30



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and 50 versus an hour so there's a bit of time left for people to prepare for the next meeting. It also allows at the start of a meeting, let's be focused let's acknowledge why we are here, what we're wanting to achieve that back to the little practice we did earlier is about placing your focus in this space right now. So it's about embedding behaviors. And as we all know, behavioral change is the hardest thing of the lot. So it's, how do you create a culture that then supports that? And I found that one of the really effective ways of doing this is to let it ripple. So you'll see other people who come along to the next program or sign up for a coaching program and they say, I didn't know that so and so was doing a mindfulness training, but I just noticed that they were engaging in life very differently. So I chatted to them and this is why I've signed up for the group training or this coaching program.

Rachel:

I mean, that's fantastic for it to advertise itself.

Susan:

Exactly. That's what you want. Yeah. I remember somebody saying to me years ago, don't ever be charismatic about this, and that's what I say to people, embody it. And another phrase with mindfulness is it's not taught it's caught.

Rachel:

Yeah, and it's interesting, you know, I've had a client get in touch recently, who I worked with probably four or five years ago and he was interested at that stage in mindfulness. But you know, as most clients are incredibly busy and it didn't quite take, but he's now got in touch to say that in this period where he isn't commuting, he wants to pick up with mindfulness and has asked about mindfulness courses and reading. So this idea of planting a seed, it might not be the right time, but it's there and it's a resource that people can call on when they want to.

Susan:

And you never know where that seed goes. It's just been amazing, a few years ago, I was contacted by a client who had done a course with me years ago and she then dropped me an email to say, my son has done this at school. My husband's been offered it in his workplace so as a family, we've got this little unit, mindfulness is just now part of life. And I so agree with you that may not be the right timing and if somebody's going through a major life transition, that may not be the right time. So if you ever have reservations, you know, if somebody's considering it, but they're going through something particularly tricky, have a conversation with the person who's offering the mindfulness training to ask, is this the right timing?

Rachel:

And I think it is important that if coaches or anyone for that matter is thinking about helping clients with mindfulness or guiding a practice, it is important that mindfulness has to be embedded in the individual. They have to have a, a practice and have had real experience of it in order to help other people engage with it. As you point out, it's not about reading in a book and then you're off, it has to be something that really is embedded in part of your everyday life.





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Susan:

Mm and it takes time.

Rachel:

Yeah. Yeah. I think being present as a coach is absolutely central to being effective. And mindfulness definitely brings that the ability to really bring that focus is so important. And mindfulness has definitely helped me with that.

Susan:

There's a lovely quote from Stephen Covey and he says, the greatest gift you can ever give anyone is your full attention. And to me, mindfulness, you know, you need to start at home with yourself. Yeah. And then you can really engage with someone else

Rachel:

We've talked about. Ideally you want to be building in a daily practice and people can find different ways of doing that. I did several eight week courses. I did the first course with you and I did a few other eight week courses. And I really enjoyed that as part of a group because the learning that you get from, in an environment with other people going through it is very, very rich. So I would highly recommend that but also I think those moments of building it into everyday life. So what recommendations do you make to people about that?

Susan:

I mean, I remember my first ever mindfulness training, which was in 2005 with Mark Williams, who's written that great book, Finding Peace in a Frantic World. And at that training, he spoke of when you're in the shower, be in the shower, be aware of the water on your skin, the smell of the shower gel. If you forget, then when you dry yourself or when you brush your teeth, what's it like to be fully present with that? Some I love coffee. So my first cup of coffee of the day, I just savor that. And it's that ability to connect with your senses, the smell, the whole process that goes into making that cup of coffee. Transitions are a lovely opportunity. Whether it's working from home, going to the space that you work in, whether it's commuting to another location, using that as an opportunity to really connect with what's going on around you, and then to show up when you arrive there, because I'm sure we've all had experience of either going from one meeting to the next or one call to the next and your body is in one place, but your mind is somewhere else.

Susan:

You haven't yet let go of that conversation so it's just taking a moment, feeling your feet on the floor, the air on your skin, a mouthful of food, doesn't have to be the whole meal, just stopping. I've been staggered at how people then become more connected to where this has come from, the look of the food, the taste, rather than just sitting wolfing down at your computer, you know, without having even tasted what you've eaten. So there are endless opportunities. I'm thinking of people talking about how they weave it in when they go for a walk with a dog. Yeah. So it's such a simple thing. And yet it's so powerfully profound this showing up for what's going on and what we were talking about earlier that 14 minutes being 1% of your day. I often think I can only speak for myself, but I know I spend at least 14 minutes either on the internet or WhatsApp or something, perhaps watching TV, if you could use those



WORDWISE COACHING PODCAST

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Mindfulness with Susan Peacock

10 to 14 minutes in really enabling your brain to be as fit as possible. What a wonderful resource to equip yourself

Rachel:

With the coffee thing really resonated with me, 'cause even just taking that moment to sniff the coffee grounds before you start the process, it just brings you back to the present moment. And especially in the morning, I think when we tend to be rushing to give yourself that time is really valuable. I remember, I dunno if you told me this, but I remember hearing about someone who walked to work and after they'd done a mindfulness course, they realized that they'd spent several years walking past an amazing stained glass window that they'd, never noticed before, it's those sorts of little things that I think make such a massive difference. And even when you wake up in the morning, just before you leap out of bed, just kind of checking in with your body, just for a few breaths. Yeah. It really can make a massive difference. Another thing I try and do, I'm not always very successful is if I'm feeling like my mind is really whizzing or I think I haven't got enough time to do what I need to do and that's the very time when you wouldn't take a pause, I force myself to take a pause. It can just be 30 seconds, I almost have that conversation in my head. Well, I haven't really got 30 seconds, but you take it and you realise that you are back on a much more effective track.

Susan:

It reminds me of when I was working with students at the university of Surrey and at exam time, you'd have students coming in in the middle of a panic attack, you know, I can't. And I used to say, place your hand on your belly, on your abdomen and just breathe. I can't do that. I can't do that. And yet if they did it and they did, and they'd taken, you know, 2, 3, 4 deep breaths, it just calms everything down because what it does is it evokes the relaxation response. And when we are under threat, our thinking narrows, so we aren't able to see the different options. We aren't able to be innovative and creative, so lovely example. And I think it is becoming familiar with the fact of, yes, I can do this. I can just feel my feet on the floor, take a breath. Okay. How do I choose to respond?

Rachel:

It's opening up that choice because when we're stressed, we feel like we don't have options. And that just increases this stress. Whereas if we open out that choice and the options, then we are kind of bringing ourselves back down again, out of that slightly panicky reaction.

Susan:

I loved what you were saying now about waking up and being aware of that whole process. And I was listening to a meditation last week and they were talking about how breakfast is a really important meal. They then went on to say, be aware of the thoughts you have in your mind first thing in the day. And I was thinking what a great opportunity to start the day just thinking of three things right now that I feel appreciative of in my life. And you just incline your mind to noticing what is good. And as we were saying earlier, we are, are species who are constantly scanning for threat so this ability to notice what's good can just set you up in a very different way.





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Rachel:

Susan and I have put together some top tips from the conversation that we've been having today. So hopefully you can take these away and act on them.

Firstly, if you are interested in mindfulness, really try and make the time to invest in a regular practice. And once you start feeling the benefit of that, it will get so much easier and become a habit. And it may be that you have a, a bit of a start and stop relationship with this and that's fine, but you can find that time. It's really, really helpful. And a great foundation.

Mindfulness is so much about self-awareness and noticing, taking a step back and observing what's going on and crucially with our inbuilt negativity bias, really trying to notice what's good and savoring it allow yourself to be really focused on the task at hand. So try and avoid multitasking and feeling that you are achieving huge amounts. If you can really focus on the one task skin hand, you'll be so much more effective and feel a lot calmer.

Practise taking a pause, just three deep breaths between meetings or phone calls or if you're feeling agitated, so that you can really engage with the next moment of your day and be fully present and effective.

Watch out for using devices, make sure that you do carve out time during the day when you are away from them and really keep devices out of the bedroom at night so that they're not interrupting your sleep.

There's a huge range of apps you can use to help support your mindfulness practice. And we'll give details about some of their on the resources page on the wordwise coaching website. And also some of the reading that we've referred to and any other resources that we think may help you explore mindfulness or deepen your mindfulness practice. So please do subscribe to www.wordwisecoaching.co.uk, so that you can access all of those resources and let us know your thoughts, your experiences, what you'd like to hear more about, because we really do want to engage and for you to join in the conversation.

Susan, it's been fantastic. I feel like we could have gone on for ages and I'm sure we'll come back to a lot of these topics in future podcasts, but thank you so much for your time and sharing your experience, it has been amazing.

Susan:

It's just lovely. It's such a great topic to explore and as we've both experienced, it makes a difference. So thank you. Thank you for inviting me to join you in this discussion.

Rachel:

Thank you. And it'll be really interesting to hear what the audience makes all. Yeah. I

Susan:

Look forward to that.

Rachel:

Thanks a lot.

