

# Mindfulness for happier minds

## Ashok Soota's Turning To A Programme Popular At Google, Intel

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**Bengaluru:** With technology taking over our lives, people have less time for others. Add to this the hyper-paced work environment of goal attainment and you get a deadly cocktail. Incidents of early age burnouts, fatigue and extreme stress have become commonplace in corporate life.

Mindfulness practitioners know the importance of recharging in order to regain productivity. They step back a bit from their busy schedule, slow down and close their eyes to relax and think of the present rather than be weary thinking about the past and future. It may seem at odds with the speed of corporate culture, but the demand for such practices is on the rise around the world.

Google, Intel, health insurer Aetna, and retailer Target have long had structured programmes for employees on mindfulness. Ashok Soota's Happiest Minds Technologies has just become the first Indian IT services company to adopt this



“A growing awareness of the importance of our emotional fitness is mirroring the same journey of acceptance that physical exercise took in the last century

**Chade-Meng Tan** | GOOGLE'S FORMER HEAD OF MINDFULNESS, IN AN ARTICLE IN THE GUARDIAN IN 2014

concept that seeks to enlighten minds and open hearts.

“People in pursuit of their careers should also actively pursue holistic wellness—physical, spiritual and emotional,” said Soota, who previously co-founded Mindtree. Septuagenarian Soota says the company will dedicate an hour per week to inculcate mindfulness in its employees and build on the basic principle on which the company was founded – that ‘happiest people make happiest customers’.

In the US, new scientific studies emerge regularly that shows just how mindfulness, a concept that perhaps has its origins in Buddhism, can change the brain. Corporations and politicians are also jumping on board, and

learning how to simply be, in the present.

Many will recall London-based Bank of America intern, Moritz Erhardt, who died of epileptic seizure three years back in his home. Erhardt used to slog out 90-100 hours a week with hardly any time to sleep. The death turned the spotlight on the grueling hours of young Wall Streeters.

Companies say being mindful helps employees to live the moment, perform with purpose and reduce stress.

Google started its mindfulness courses almost a decade ago and ‘Search Inside Yourself’ is one of its most popular courses, having a wait list stretching six months. It had a head of mindfulness, Chade-Meng Tan, whose job was to

make employees aware and practice the importance of emotional fitness.

In an article in The Guardian two years ago, Tan said mindfulness opens the doorway to loving kindness, which is at the heart of business success. “In many situations, goodness is good for business,” he was quoted as saying. “If you, as the boss, are nice to your employees, they are happy, they treat their customers well, the customers are happy to spend more money, so everybody wins. Also if you treat everybody with kindness, they’ll like you even if they don’t really know why. And if they like you, they want to help you succeed. So it’s good for your soul and it’s good for your career,” said the Singapore-born engineer, who held the job title ‘Jolly Good Fellow’ at Google. He left Google last year to give more time to his meditation practice in order to master his mind and to devote more time to two charities he helps lead, both of which he thinks has the potential to create the conditions for world peace.