

# Rexlaxation + Mindfulness for Corporate Creatives

## The FatChix Guide to Letting All That Sh\*t Go

By Michelle Brandt

### **What is a “Corporate Creative”?**

I do not limit this audience only to those who identify as artists who have found themselves in a corporate workspace to generate capital for their artistic pursuits. Though this manual is for you, too - calling all creatives supporting themselves to make their art!

But the term “corporate creative” is larger than that. This is for the people who seek to connect to their creative expression as momentum for higher quality output in their corporate place of work. This is for people who have proudly built their careers in a corporate framework and desire more mindfulness in their day-to-day. This is for people who need more creative energy to sustain the work week and beyond.

**This is for all people working in a corporate environment, for we are all “creative”.**

All of humanity craves to be understood, to be peaceful, to create something wonderful in our lives, to produce work that we’re proud of. By connecting with ourselves, our needs, and fueling our bodies and minds, we are capable of accessing our full potential, our creative energy.

### **What is “Mindfulness”?**

I think of “mindfulness” as a practice of self-observation.

Have you ever stopped yourself mid-thought because you realized that you're clenching your jaw or holding tension in your shoulders? You stop what you're doing and say, “Woah, I’m tense. Let me relax that.” This is mindfulness on the physical level. Expanding your awareness, identifying and addressing the needs of the body.

**Practicing mindfulness means turning your attention inward to assess your needs**, and that starts in the physical body. Sometimes it begins with a realization that we're holding tension, or it begins with the decision to pay attention, look within and see what's going on. If the body is uncomfortable or suffering from basic needs, our ability to look deeper within is diminished. This is when we extend basic kindness to ourselves. Drink water. Eat something nourishing. Stretch the body. Put your legs up on the wall. Rest or sleep. Many of these basic needs can be addressed in the office space, though not all.

When the body's basic needs have been addressed and we feel comfortable in our surroundings, we can look inward to the needs of our mental, emotional and energetic self.

## **Ergonomics at Your Desk**

If you've been in the corporate workspace long enough, you have likely taken a compulsory HR course on office ergonomics. Generally, these are video courses that relay a lot of common sense best practices - lift from the legs, not with your back. Adjust your office chair for proper posture. Place pencils pointy side down in the cup to avoid potential injuries.

Setting up your desk space properly for your body, however, is not common sense and not a one-size-fits-all prescription. The ramifications of a unproductive physical working space goes beyond a paper cut or puncturing your hand with a pencil. Sitting improperly for long periods of time can be very damaging. If you spend 8 hours a day at your desk, take ownership of the space you take up there. Here are my key take aways from my yogic education, and the hours of HR video trainings that I've personally sat through:

- While sitting at your desk, **ideal position of the legs is 90 degrees**, meaning your thighs are parallel to the floor when your feet are flat off the ground. **If you're tall**, raise your seat or add a cushion underneath to give you height. **If you're short**, lower your seat or place something under your feet, like a bolster or a small step-stool.
- Screen usage: Bring your screen to your face, not your face to the screen. This goes for laptops, monitors, and phones. Keep your head held high - emotionally and literally.
- Take breaks regularly. Every hour, check-in with the small kindnesses below. What small actions can you take to prepare the body and mind to power through your next task?

## Mindful Practices at the Office

### Hourly - Basic Kindnesses

- Check-in. Ask yourself - What do you need? What small kindness can you give to yourself?
- Are you **hungry**? Eat a piece of fruit or a handful of nuts. Plan lunch or dinner.
- **Water**. Straight up, hold the bubbles. Keep it close, sip regularly.
- Rest your **eyes**. Let your eyes look away from all screens and gaze at something in the distance for 30 seconds. If you have a few minutes, try the eye exercises. (page 5)
- Stretch your **hands**, especially if you spend a lot of time typing or writing.
  - Sitting down, let your arms hover over the keyboard, palms facing down, keeping a slight bend in the elbow.
  - Keep the shoulders relaxed and the forearm through the palms parallel to the floor.
  - Inhale to spread the fingertips wide. Exhale to make soft fists with the thumb inside.
  - Repeat 5-10 times.
- **Stand Up** - stand or walk around for one minute. If Apple Watch has taught me anything, it's that standing or walking for at least one minute out of every hour is important enough to build into personal fitness technology. If a standing desk is an option in your office space, try to dedicate 1 hour daily of working while standing up.

### Daily - Large Kindnesses

- **What can you add to your work space that will cultivate joy, creativity and/or productivity?** Examples include a plant for your desk, some art or quotes, framed pictures, a dope calendar, or a lamp to bring a softer light, perhaps even investing in a therapy lamp that generates a spectrum similar to sunlight... Keep your desk space clean and organized.
- **Vitamins**. Try setting a time of day at work to always take your vitamins. Probiotics, B-12, vitamin C for immune health, vitamin D if you spend most of the daylight indoors during the week day...whatever serves your body. If you're already in the habit of taking vitamins, make it a daily ritual. If you're not, consult your doctor the next time you do blood work to find out what vitamin supplements you would benefit from taking regularly.
- Take 1 - 3 minutes during the day for a proper **mindful break**. It can be helpful to set a time of day for a "meditative moment" - perhaps you take time before lunch or in the mid-afternoon lull. See next page.

## Meditative Moments, 1 - 3 minutes

Below are a few options to take a “mindful break” at work. All of these practices can be done at your desk and they all start the same - with the decision to take a moment to check-in with yourself. One does not half-ass or multi-task in a mindful moment.

Make the choice to take a moment and prepare. Seated at your desk, come to sit toward the edge of your chair. Not too far on the edge, especially if you're in a rolling chair. Just enough to get your spine off the back of the chair and your feet flat on the ground. Sit up tall. Find a place for your hands to rest on top of the thighs or knees.

**Take a moment to find your comfortable seat and begin:**

- **Body Scan: Toes to Head**

- Bring your attention to your **feet**. Plant them firmly. Press into the feet and feel that connection to the ground.
- Let the awareness move up into your **legs**. As you mentally scan through each part, ask yourself, “Where can I invite more ease in the body? What is holding tension that can be released?”
- As the awareness moves up the body and into the **hips**, make slow & tiny movements in the hips. Tilt the pelvis forward and back, feel the gentle movements in the curves of your spine. Find a place to land in the center where the bones in your pelvis feel secure and rooted into the chair. Find comfortable stillness.
- From the rooting in the hips, scan up the **spine**. Let the shoulders stack on top of the hips. Find space and relaxation in the **mid-spine** and **abdominal area**.
- Scan through your **chest**. Open your **heart space**, let the **shoulder blades** relax on the back body.
- Bring the awareness into your **fingertips**, the **palms** of your hands, your **wrists**. Let the awareness and relaxation move through your **arms** and back into your **shoulders**. With each exhale, release all tension that does not support you in sitting up tall.
- Scan through the muscles of the **neck** into the **head**. Invite ease into the **temples**, the **eyes**, the **jaw**, the **brow**.

After, take a moment to observe the body in alignment, in a relaxed state. If you are experiencing discomfort in any part of the body, continue to send your breath and energy to that place and send a mental message to invite a release or more comfort. Watch the breath as it moves in and out of the strong and relaxed framework of the body. Synthesize all of the information you acquired from the body scan- where you're holding tension, what you need. End the body scan practice with a positive affirmation - "I am listening to my body. I am curious about my needs. I am finding more peace and ease with each cycle of breath." Step into your next activity or project with more awareness and kindness toward yourself.

- **Eye Exercises**

If you're wearing glasses, remove them for the eye exercises.

Visualize a circular clock. Bring your eyes to the center of the clock where the hands are fixed. Let the eyes find the center and hold the gaze.

- VERTICAL MOVEMENTS - 30 seconds.
  - From the center point of the eyes, draw them up to the 12:00 position on the clock at the top of the vision.
  - Slow and controlled, draw the eyes down to the bottom of the vision, 6:00.
  - Continue to move the eyes up and down between 12:00 and 6:00. Perhaps moving the eyes with the breath, inhale eyes up, exhale eyes down.
- HORIZONTAL MOVEMENTS - 30 seconds.
  - Bring the eyes to center and hold before moving the eyes to the far right, 3:00 on your clock.
  - Sweep the eyes across a horizon line to 9:00
  - Continue to move the eyes back and forth between 3:00 and 9:00. Perhaps moving the eyes with the breath, inhale eyes right, exhale eyes left.

End the eye movements by bringing the eyes back to center. Close them for a moment and take one deep breath, letting your exhale release any tension behind the eyes.

- **Deep breathing: Three Part Breath**

In all yogic breathing, students are encouraged to breathe through the nose.

Deep breathing in three parts, or *dirgha svasam* in Hatha yoga, is a calming breath.

The three parts that the breath moves through are: belly, ribs, chest.

Begin with an exhale, empty the bottom of the lungs by pulling the abdomen in.

Inhale slowly.

1. Fill the bottom of the lungs, allowing the abdomen to move forward.
2. Allow the breath to fill the rib cage, letting it expand.
3. Breath moves into the chest, perhaps the collarbones rise slightly.

Exhale slowly. Let the air move out of the chest first, then the ribs, then pull the abdomen in to complete the breath.

Continue deep breathing for 1 - 3 minutes. If you get dizzy or light-headed at any point, release the breath work and let your breath return to its natural rhythm. Take a few natural breaths before returning to the day's activities.

- **Meditation**

The preliminary objective in order to meditate is to concentrate on one thing. That one thing is your object of meditation. Allow your object of meditation to be your breath. Each time thoughts arise, take note of them, but redirect your attention back to the breath.

In a comfortable seated position, we are able to examine the state of the body & mind with ease. Take a few minutes to sit in stillness with yourself. Let the gaze soften, casting the eyes downward. Notice the breath. Where is it sitting in the body?

Watch the thoughts pass through the mind,

be a witness to them,  
observe them.

Examine them passing through the mind without getting involved in any individual thought. Release them one at a time, or make note if a thought continues to circle back.

This is all valuable information for you. When you take a moment for meditation or mindfulness, you peer into yourself with curiosity for your current state.

Without judgement, seek to know what is on your mind and how it is effecting you.

Whatever you find is not "right" or "wrong", it is information about you, for you.

## About the Author

Michelle Brandt is a Registered Yoga Teacher, certified in Integral and accessible yoga. She studied Droznin movement for actors, an alignment based system, and spent many years training in classical ballet, the Cecchetti Method, and modern dance.

Concurrently, Michelle has 10 years of demonstrated success as an administrative coordinator. She is currently residing in New York City, where she teaches at Integral Yoga Institute and works at Grubhub as an executive assistant.

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