



# BusinessBite

Practice Management Information for Implant Dentists

## **Heal Their Minds (and Fill Your Coffers): How Rewiring Employees' Brains Can Alleviate Stress, Boost Innovation, and Supercharge Productivity**

Today, more than ever, your practice needs to be running like the proverbial well-oiled machine. If you're to make it to the other side of the economic recovery, it's critical that every member of your team is working at top capacity. Problem is, the same economic pressures that are putting the squeeze on your practice's profits are *also* heaping stress on your employees' psyches.

That's right. Not only do they face normal workplace stressors like conflict with coworkers and tight deadlines, they must also worry about being downsized while working longer hours to compensate for the absence of those who have already been axed. If they don't know how to manage this overload of stress—and chances are good they *don't*—your practice is sure to suffer, says brain expert Patt Lind-Kyle.

“Even during the best of times, America is a nation of stressed-out, anxious, and distracted people—and those high stress levels have a major impact not only on individuals' personal lives, but on the overall performances of their employers,” warns Lind-Kyle, author of *Heal Your Mind, Rewire Your Brain: Applying the Exciting New Science of Brain Synchrony for Creativity, Peace and Presence* (Energy Psychology Press, 2009, ISBN: 978-1-60415-056-8, \$26.95).

“The good news is that, with the right tools, you *can* help your employees manage their stress in healthy ways and break out of the automatic, unhealthy patterns that hold them back from peak performance, balance, and happiness,” she adds.

If you're dismissing this assertion with the rationale that chronic stress and dissatisfaction are an inescapable part of business—heck, of life itself—Lind-Kyle insists you're wrong. What's more, your complacency is costlier than you realize. Not only is employee stress recognized as a major drain on productivity and competitiveness, but studies by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health show that job burnout is experienced by 25-77 percent

of U.S. workers and that depression (often a symptom of stress) is predicted to be the leading occupational disease of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In addition to experiencing a loss of productivity, employers actually pick up the tab for workers' stress-related issues in the form of higher health insurance costs.

New scientific breakthroughs have shown that the brain itself is flexible and changeable; indeed, it constantly rewires itself in response to events in our lives. Therefore, our neuronal pathway can be altered—meaning that we can consciously and deliberately change the way we think, feel, and behave and how the body responds to stressful situations. The key? Mind training.

“Essentially, the mind is what the brain does,” explains Lind-Kyle. “When you exercise the mind, you are literally causing your brain to expand and grow. By using mind-training tools, it is possible to become aware of the mental patterns that keep us trapped in habitual and unproductive attitudes. Mind training helps us focus our attention, quiets a scattered mind, and brings flexibility and clarity that enable us to see other options and achieve a healthy work-life balance.”

Are you ready to arm your employees with an arsenal of mind management tools that will enable them to work in a constant state of “flow,” thereby helping your practice enjoy higher productivity, greater innovation, and a more positive, energetic culture? Then read on to learn about the benefits of mind training:

**Your team will learn to manage stress in healthy, productive ways.** “With meditative mind training, your employees can begin to identify and remove the unconscious thoughts and reactions that cause their stress,” Lind-Kyle says. “The mental focus that meditation requires activates the brain’s circuitry and literally promotes brain tissue growth. Furthermore, the awareness and self-knowledge that come from regularly meditating enables people to regulate their emotions in a more positive manner and respond to difficulties with greater ease.”

**Your team will reshape unhelpful habits.** Think about it: What holds you back from peak performance? Chances are, rather than a lack of potential, you are limited by inefficient habits, incomplete training, scattered thinking, unhelpful reactions to setbacks, and so forth. The same is true for your employees. “Human beings have a lot less free will than they think they do—in fact, many of us are essentially prisoners of the automatic reactions, thoughts, and habits that are encoded into our personalities,” explains Lind-Kyle. “Luckily for individuals and for employers, though, it’s quite possible for workers to break out of these ‘negative feedback loops.’ It’s all a matter of getting all four brainwaves to work in harmony—a state known as brain synchrony—which

produces a heightened sense of peace and awareness and lets you begin to consciously change the way you do things.”

**Your team will be able to rationally resolve conflicts and work together.** Every office has them: those people who make compromise, consensus, and group work difficult because it’s “their way or the highway.” And that isn’t good for productivity or for morale. In point of fact, whether through bullying or passive-aggressive behaviors, we’ve *all* been guilty of willful inflexibility at some point. In short, we are reluctant to let go of our opinions and stances because we mistakenly believe that we *are* our personalities and convictions, and that if we’re proven wrong, we’ll somehow be “less.”

“The truth is, we don’t see or react to situations as they truly exist because we’re experiencing them through the lens of our constructed personality-egos,” says Lind-Kyle. “We think that by conceding the point, we’ll be betraying ourselves. With practice, though, your team members will become conscious of such personality patterns, and they will be able to rationally investigate negative or combative feelings, embrace them, and then consciously shift their attention away to that place deep inside of themselves that I call ‘home base.’”

**Your team will make faster, smarter, better decisions.** Deciding what to do and how to proceed is half the battle. Trying to take into account all the variables—all the “what ifs”—can keep people so mentally self-absorbed that they can’t focus on and react to what’s *actually* happening around them. Their mental dialogues (you know, those conversations and arguments one has with oneself—you have them too!) are so strong that it’s easy for them to fall into distracted or even frantic states. The solution? Learning how to concentrate the mind.

“The brain likes direction and purpose,” says Lind-Kyle. “Every person on your team needs to learn to hone their concentration to a fine point. Once your team is able to combat the racing thoughts that speed their lives and distort focus, they’ll be able to focus more easily on the tasks in front of them and deal more effectively with challenges.”

**Your team will dramatically increase their capacities for productivity and creative thinking.** “Old dogs can’t learn new tricks.” It’s a timeless proverb, but Lind-Kyle insists that it’s just not true. Chances are, each member of your team has his or her own “old dog” excuses: “I’m just not young enough to figure out our new computer system.” Surprisingly, though, there exists strong evidence that the brain continues to evolve throughout adult life, long after we’ve put away the schoolbooks. Neuroscientists have termed this ability to continually change and adjust “neuroplasticity.”

“When you do something new (like learn a second language) or practice something repetitively (like delivering a convincing sales pitch), your brain’s neural networks fire up, and a tissue region is actually sculpted or increased in response to that activity,” explains Lind-Kyle. “In fact, the neuroplasticity of the brain is the leading edge of your own personal evolution. The more you train your mind, the more you change your brain.

The more your brain changes, the more your mind evolves. You can see how remodeling their brains could open up big possibilities for your employees and your company!”

**Your team will be able to achieve happier, healthier, and more balanced lives.** It’s a simple and undeniable concept: Happy employees are loyal and productive employees! Lind-Kyle promises that by practicing mind-training techniques, your team members will be more fulfilled and will experience healthier work-life balances. In short, they’ll be much more likely to be in “flow” (you know, that fleeting state in which you are “on fire,” mentally focused, engaged, and immersed in what you’re doing). Scientifically, “flow” moves in the direction of the prefrontal lobes, the area of self-awareness that gathers meaning from the external world. It’s a mental state that merges action with acute awareness, and it is usually accompanied by a sense of being alive and joyful. At such a time, brain functions and neural networks are working together optimally.

“Unfortunately, a person’s experience of flow can very easily be disrupted,” says Lind-Kyle. “Often, thoughts, emotions, and actions are stuck in automatic patterns that perpetuate stress, as well as its negative effects on your team members’ health. With mental training, though, your employees can begin to identify and remove the automatic thoughts and reactions that cause them stress. They can maximize their abilities to be aware and their potentials to be peaceful. When information is moving through their brains in an optimal manner, your employees will have flexible responses, be rational in their thinking, self-aware and reflective in their thought processes, intentional in their communication, and positive in their attitudes.”

At first glance, all of these promises might sound too good to be true. But Lind-Kyle stands by her assertions, because they’re backed by cutting-edge science and by her own experiences as a consultant and coach.

“By exposing your employees to the science of meditative mind training, you can reduce health problems and stress in your workforce, and you’ll also increase your team’s potential and success,” she promises. “It’s a tremendous investment in your practice’s present and its future. Essentially, meditative mind training will allow employees to reprogram and evolve their brains to higher states of consciousness and function. It’s one of the most valuable tools available to leaders—if only they would use it!”

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#### **About the Author:**

Patt Lind-Kyle is an author, therapist, speaker, trainer, and consultant. She is a former professor at Foothill College, and founder of a learning assessment company that applies neuro-monitoring tools for stress management, health, and peak performance.

Her research, writing, and teaching in the mind/brain field center on using an EEG brainwave monitoring system to help individuals maximize their brain-mind potentials.

Patt has written a chapter in *Audacious Aging: "Building Community from the Inside Out"* (Elite Books, 2009). She is also the author of *When Sleeping Beauty Wakes Up* (SwanRaven, 1994).

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