

Sponsor: Waseda Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies (WIAPS), Waseda University

Moderator: Assistant Professor Nguyen Anh Hao, WIAPS, Waseda University

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THE ASPIRIN METAPHOR: USING MINDFULNESS MEDITATION ON-THE-SPOT WHEN NEEDED TO REDUCE ANXIETY AND STRESS

WIAPS COLLOQUIUM SERIES

Date and Time: 16:00 – 17:30; August 12, 2026

Location: Room 710, Building 19, Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies (GSAPS), Waseda University



Free and open to the public

Please register [here](#)

Assoc. Prof. Andrew Hafenbrack



ABSTRACT

Long-term mindfulness practice – which prescribes that people meditate each day for at least eight weeks to increase trait mindfulness – is the dominant approach. We propose a new on-the-spot state approach to mindfulness in which meditation is used contingently when people notice they are highly stressed. We first present Study 1, which showed that people believe mindfulness is a long-term trait practice that requires sustained effort over time to obtain benefits. We then challenge that belief. Studies 2a-5 validate the effectiveness of using mindfulness as a short on-the-spot state practice. Studies 2a-4 were experiments that measured long-term mindfulness practice, manipulated state mindfulness, and tested whether long-term mindfulness practice would moderate the effects of state mindfulness on reduced anxiety and stress.

Studies 2, 3, and 4 examined both outcomes while controlling for baseline (i.e., pre-induction) mindfulness, anxiety, or stress. Studies 3 and 4 examined our ideas against the backdrop of real-world anxiety and stress-inducing events, such as the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 (Study 3) generally for participants and the aftermath of the US Presidential Election in November 2024 (Study 4) for Black participants. Finally, Study 5 was a field experiment in which participants were instructed to engage in on-the-spot mindfulness meditation whenever highly stressed over a 4-week period (i.e., meditating when needed). We also included a regular daily practice mindfulness condition and a dual-practice condition combining both mindfulness approaches. Our results indicate that the benefits of mindfulness (reduced anxiety and stress) can be attained with short on-the-spot meditations in stressful situations, even in the absence of long-term meditation practice. People can meditate like popping an aspirin when they have a headache.

About the speaker

- *Associate Professor of Management & Organization at the University of Washington's Foster School of Business.*
- *As an organizational psychologist, he is a leading expert on when and how to use mindfulness meditation in the workplace, as well as the challenges and rewards of cross-cultural interactions.*