

Virtual Nature Experiences Combined with Mindful Audio Can Boost Performance, Innovation & Creativity In The Workplace

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In Just SIX minutes, Your Virtual Mind Trainer Delivers Positive Mood-Related Benefits That Can Last For Several Hours

Watching videos of nature while listening to mindful audio can deliver positive mood-related benefits and increase productivity at work, research has shown.

According to a study by **Aston Business School**, part of Aston University, the combination can also help improve mood and energy, and boost creativity and innovation processes.

The research supports the launch of new online subscription service Your Virtual Mind Trainer (YVMT) – designed to encourage the development of noticing and focus through calming and training the mind with a boost of nature.

Developed by Hilary McLellan, a leading organisational behaviourist and executive coach, together with clinical psychologist Dr Ashleigh McLellan, YVMT offers a unique experience of six-minute 360° immersive nature videos that can be watched on any device – including Virtual Reality (VR) headsets – synchronised with audio recordings covering topics, such as confidence, observe the mind, reconnect to the body, patience and acceptance.

Although many people understand that mind training and mindfulness can focus the mind and help to create a more rational, capable and innovative self, this practice can often be dismissed as too time-consuming or inconvenient - especially in a work setting - where there is often also a somewhat half-hearted reaction to the discussion of mindfulness and meditation.

Research has shown that in just six minutes, YVMT can have a ‘significant’ effect on psychological energy and can drive task performance hours after being used.

Key highlights of the YVMT research study with Aston University include:

- YVMT can deliver an immediate boost to energy and mood
- Watching a video has a positive effect on task performance
- The benefits of the short break activity can last for as long as four to six hours
- Watching nature on virtual reality headsets has a significant positive effect on creativity and this continues throughout the day

Dr Wladislaw Rivkin, associate professor in organisational behaviour at Trinity Business School (and former lecturer at Aston Business School), comments: "Results from a field experiment across 15 days demonstrate that a six-minute immersive VR or video experience of YVMT benefits employees' energy levels and increases their mood. These psychological benefits carry over and help employees to maintain a high effectiveness and be creative throughout the day. In a very vast market of mindfulness-based apps YVMT stands out as its effectiveness is supported through empirical evidence."

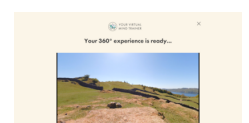
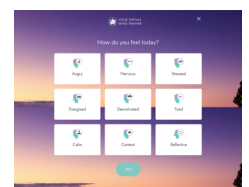
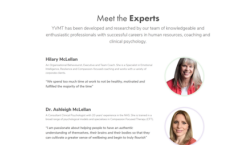
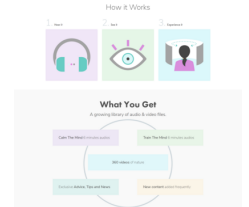
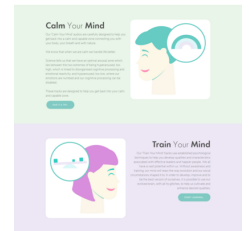
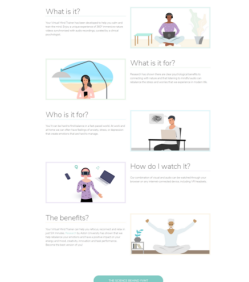
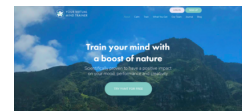
Hilary McLellan, co-founder and director of YVMT, explains: "Training our minds can lead to increased awareness and the capacity to give our full attention to everything we do. Yet, just like getting fit or stopping smoking, many of our behavioural habits can be hard to change. Setting goals and actions intellectually is one thing but emotions can make deep habitual behaviours difficult and scary to alter.

"Through the YVMT team's work in coaching and training both individuals and teams for successful behavioural change, the challenge we frequently encounter is that while many people understand what behaviours they need to change and recognise what is getting in the way of those behaviours changing, anxiety, fear or deep-set self-limiting behaviours will often stop them from actually making that change.

"We feel passionate about offering people short, accessible and positive interventions to help them be their best self at work and the introduction of Your Virtual Mind Trainer to support behavioural change with our coaching clients has shown real benefit in how they have developed self-awareness."

Dr Ashleigh McLellan, co-founder and director of YVMT, adds: "It can be hard to find balance in a

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fast-paced world. At work and at home we can often have feelings of anxiety, stress, or depression that create emotions that are hard to manage. While many people understand the benefits of taking time out to develop skills in mindfulness or to reflect and think about the person they want to be, it can be difficult to find the time to commit to this. That's why we have created these six-minute video and audio combinations to help people get something beneficial in just a short time. We're delighted that the research supports our premise that a little can go such a long way."

Following a soft launch with corporate focus groups and leadership teams in 2020, a new-look YVMT website catering for both individuals and corporate clients launched in 2021. The personalised experience includes recommendations on 'calming and training the mind' audios most appropriate to how users are feeling; a choice between a male and female coach voice; and an online journal with tips, techniques and expert blogs.

A new library of 'coaching' specific audios is also currently available to Hilary McLellan's Exec coaching clients. Scripted specifically for people leaders, Hilary curated these audios to include subjects requested by the corporate focus groups of perspective, self-awareness, empathy and ambiguity. These too can be synchronised with the YVMT videos of nature.

A free one-month trial is now available, with the service accessible on any internet-enabled device.



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