

Speaker 1: [\(00:03\)](#)

Welcome to the Vandennack Weaver Truhlsen legal visionaries podcast brought to you by interactive legal here's your host Mary Vandennack

Speaker 2: [\(00:12\)](#)

Welcome

Speaker 3: [\(00:13\)](#)

To today's episode of Vandennack Weaver Truhlsen visionaries, a weekly podcast discussing updated legal, new news, as well as evolving methods of providing legal service. My name is Mary Vandennack, founder, CEO, and managing partner at Vanek Weaver, LLC. I will be your host as we talk to experts from around the country about closely held businesses, tax trust, and estates, legal technology, law, firm leadership, and wellbeing for lawyers. Before we start today's episode, I want to thank our sponsor. Here is a message from interactive legal.

Speaker 4: [\(00:52\)](#)

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Speaker 3: [\(01:42\)](#)

Today's episode. My guest is Inna Khazan PhD, a faculty member at Harvard medical school. Dr. Khazan is a clinical psychologist, pioneer, an expert on mindfulness, biofeedback, and performance excellence. Dr. Khazan has published several books on these topics and is a sought-after speaker trainer. Dr. Khazan has agreed to participate in two episodes of the podcast. Today, we are going to discuss mindfulness. Generally, our purpose will be to lay the groundwork for the second episode in which we'll discuss biofeedback and mindfulness. Welcome Inna

Speaker 5: [\(02:20\)](#)

Thanks so much for having me Mary.

Speaker 3: [\(02:23\)](#)

So Inna can you maybe start off by just providing us a working definition of mindfulness?

Speaker 5: [\(02:30\)](#)

Certainly there are lots of definitions of mindfulness, so I will give you my favorite one and the one that works best in a context of biofeedback since we're framing for another episode, the idea of mindfulness is being in a present moment before giving it evaluations before judgments come into play. So present moment, the way it is letting go of judgment.

Speaker 3: [\(02:59\)](#)

And I really like that definition because it's kind of focused on being in the present as the primary thing. I have read a lot of definitions. That will include other things that are kind of in my mind results that you have to get to, which sometimes for me, mindfulness is just about, I'm aware that I'm really upset today, and I haven't maybe accepted or got okay with that yet. Or somebody's just got a cancer diagnosis and it's like, wow, this is really, and being in that present moment and aware that this is really hard as opposed to going somewhere else, is that

Speaker 5: [\(03:34\)](#)

That's, that's exactly right. You know, the primary the only requirement of the be mindful is to be meaning to be in the present before and you know, without going off into what does this mean and what do I do about it and how do I get rid of this and how do I fix it? I know all of these are, you know, natural inclinations, especially when a present moment is hard but it is imperative for us to be able to stay in the present and to allow our experience to be as it is that pre-verbal awareness, of the present moment is incredibly important because it gives us the ability to pause long enough to then figure out what to do next but in order to make a mindful choice of what to do next, we have to first being a present.

Speaker 3: [\(04:22\)](#)

And there's a fair amount of science behind mindfulness practice in relation to a whole lot of things, is that absolutely. And so if somebody hasn't really engaged in what we call a mindfulness practice, how does somebody get started on that path

Speaker 5: [\(04:40\)](#)

Again? Because the only thing that required is to be you can be mindful with, with absolutely anything, for people who are super busy which, you know, I would say is most of us and you know, where the idea of carving out a bunch of time for yet another thing may sound completely impossible. I encourage people to start with an informal, my practice attending mindfully to something that you already do on a regular basis so let us say, you know, most of us brush our teeth in the morning and in the evening. So, brushing our teeth mindfully or taking a mindful shower or drinking your morning, beverage of choice mindfully, something like that, you know, taking that morning, you know, walk, mindfully. So, whatever it is that you do on a regular basis already, so you don't have to put extra time into this but bringing in mindful awareness to that action.

Speaker 3: [\(05:33\)](#)

So could you just elaborate that on one of those examples? Cause those are really great examples of things that you can do, cuz I think some people think of my mindfulness and means that means they need to get out and sit on a mat or something like that. But what you are saying is you can build mindfulness into what you are already doing during the day. And so, let us say you get up and the first thing you do is brush your teeth. What would look, what would mindful brushing of my teeth look like?

Speaker 5: [\(06:02\)](#)

it would start with, you know, what can you see? You know, what does your toothbrush look like? you

know, what are the colors, what are the textures that you can see? You know, what does a tube of toothpaste look like? So just seeing, you know, what, what you can observe with your eyes at that moment and then you know, what does it, what does a toothbrush feel like, in your hands? What does a, you know, the tube of toothpaste feel like in your hands the mindfully observing the movement of putting the, toothpaste on the toothbrush and then, you know, noticing what it feels like to just stray is a toothbrush to your face, you know, to, towards your teeth before the toothbrush even goes in your mouth, what do you smell?

Speaker 5: [\(06:45\)](#)

You know, what is the fragrance of the toothpaste? You know, is it minty? Is it fruity? What is it that you can notice and then, you know, noticing the first sensation off the toothpaste and, you know, tell you hitting your mouth what is, what is that flavor like? And just, you know, letting it sit there for a second before you start brushing, just noticing that the taste of the toothpaste and then mindfully observing the sensations of the toothbrush going back and forth and you know, what does it feel like? What does the texture, uh, of the toothbrush, you know, does it feel in your teeth? What does the movement feel like? Do you know what, again, you know, what is the, uh, sensation of the, flavor of the toothpaste, et cetera. Just, you know, doing everything you would normally do, but really paying attention to what does each one of these steps feel like without rushing, without going to it?

Speaker 5: [\(07:37\)](#)

What do we do next and noticing when you mind tries to go, okay, you know, I'm almost done with this and then, you know, my next thing is, you know, I got to prepare for this meeting and I got to think about this phone call and what am I gonna have for dinner so that I'm noticing your mind trying to go there, gently acknowledging that, and then bring your attention back, bringing your mind back to the toothbrush and the toothpaste in whatever action you are doing at that moment. So, it is okay for extra thoughts to come into your mind cuz you have a human mind and that's what our human minds do. But the idea is rather than going off with that noticing the extraneous thoughts and then bringing your mind back to the brushing of the teeth.

Speaker 3: [\(08:20\)](#)

And so one of the benefits of just mindful teeth brushing might be that you improve your brushing so that you have less cavities or oral health issues. Right. But by the same token, and I would say that's actually, I hit on that practice cuz that's one of the ones that I like is because that's one of the first things I do in the morning. And I am one of those who tends to go off thinking about the day. So, I find that particularly a beneficial practice to take. But what I personally do is find some different part of my morning routine every day to be the focus of the mindful activity. But can we talk about some of the benefits of mindfulness and particularly for lawyers because lawyers, you know, I, I think a lot of times they might be brushing their teeth and they are thinking I have got this case, I got to return this call. I did not check these, you know, I am gonna have 2000 emails in my inbox this morning. And so, staying focused on that can be a really a challenge. But if we can shift that to mindfulness, what are some of the benefits that we might see?

Speaker 5: [\(09:22\)](#)

Absolutely. There is two types of benefits. One is the immediate, like, you know, what do you get, you

know, from that, you know, mindful toothbrushing or mindful coffee or whatever it is that you do and it gives you an opportunity you need to, to center it gives you an opportunity to quiet your mind and prepare it, you know, for the day it gives you sort of a mindset of, you know, let's take our time and do things in a more purposeful, in a more meaningful way and then the longer term benefit is that a mindfulness practice over time changes the structure and the function of your brain. Now that it, it obviously happens over time. It does not happen at any one individual practice and practicing mindfulness once is not gonna give you the benefit.

Speaker 5: ([10:13](#))

it doesn't take a huge amount of time either. Or, you know, research shows that after about eight weeks of regular mindfulness practice that there are certain parts of the brain that actually add gray matter, right? So, the three more neurons that are growing in your brain, so certain parts of the brain get, get bigger and then those in other parts brain become more active. So for example, you know, parts of the brain responsible for emotion, regulation learning memory ability to pay attention ability to problem, solve ability to make decisions ability to understand other people's perspective, ability to understand whether other people are coming from all of these functions improve in inside inside the brain. so with, you know, a couple of months of mindfulness practice, people tend to notice, that, you know, it's easier to face a challenging, situation. maybe it's a little bit easier to remember things, you know, maybe it's a little bit easier to figure out how to respond, when something unexpected comes your way and, and, you know, these benefits have been shown time and time again, u with brain imaging studies and people report them in subjective reports as well.

Speaker 3: ([11:29](#))

So I'm gonna just talk a little bit more about, I asked how you start a mindfulness practice, but what a regular mindfulness practice looks like, because that's really, when you have you see you have eight weeks of regular, does that mean I need to get out mat and sit down and meditate for 30 minutes in my front room in the morning to engage in mindfulness? Or is this something I can build out? So, if I want to say, make a commitment to the next eight weeks, I am gonna really engage in this mindfulness practice. I like the idea of making some changes to my brain how would I do that? What does that look like?

Speaker 5: ([12:05](#))

I say it, it certainly does not need to be a you know, on your, you know, back your backyard, just sitting still for 30 minutes, although you could absolutely do that but it does not have to be that there is a variety of different mindfulness practices, and I think it's important to on the one hand choose what works for you. And on the other hand, also start with the kinds of practice that are more likely going to be comfortable, you know, for a beginner. You do not want to eye, you know, right into, you know, a very deep practice focused and difficult in notions. That is likely going to be too much. So, I, I do recommend starting with these more informal mindfulness practices, like, you know, brushing your teeth or drinking a morning cup of coffee mindfully in the, maybe that's gonna be only three or five minutes.

Speaker 5: ([12:54](#))

Then building up from there, you know, fairly quickly, you know within the first week maybe moving to something that's going to be more like, you know, seven or 10 minutes and starting to set aside time

for formal mindfulness practice. So, as you feel like, okay, I can make this work. I can take some time, you know, in my day and just do something mindfully. This feels good. I like going to be easier to then set aside some time for more formal, uh, practice. Um, and initially I suggest for people to practice with something that's a little bit more externally focused so it might be mindfulness of sounds just sitting and listening. What, what do you hear, uh, you know, there is no particular goal? There is no particular, uh, sound that you're trying to look for, but just noticing what, what you hear and paying attention to the sound itself without naming it without judging it and without figuring out where it's coming from, it might be holding something in your hand.

Speaker 5: ([13:55](#))

It be a smooth stone you know, or really another object, you know, with like one of those stress balls and just noticing what that feels like. It can be more nature focused, you know, if you're going out for a walk, do it mindfully, you know what do you see? What do you hear? you know, what do you smell? You know, things like that more externally focused that tends to be a little bit easier, especially for folks who tend to have you know more trouble with paying attention to certain thoughts and certain emotions and certain physiological sensations starting with external focus is a really good way to go. And then gradually bringing that focus more internally. So perhaps doing a practice of, you know, something called body scan where you're just paying attention what does your body feel like starting either the top of your head or the bottom of your feet, doesn't matter, going, you know, in way one direction or the other, just, you know, going, you know, what is, you know, what do my feet feel like?

Speaker 5: ([14:50](#))

What do my ankles feel like? What do my calves feel like, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera and just observing, I guess, with no particular goal or, you know, you can do mindfulness breath not thinking about feels like, but actually noticing the sensations of the breath, any inhaling, what is an I feel like, , open awareness practices where you're just noticing whatever comes to mind you know, it might be thoughts, it might be feelings, it might be site sites. It might be sounds it might be various sensations and just allowing, you know, all of that to come and go and noticing a particular thought or sensation and letting it go and coming back with your breath as an anchor those are, you know, more, I guess, more advanced practices and that I recommend getting into those as you have a bit of practice and some comfort with, with mindfulness and finding in compassion and self-compassion practices.

Speaker 5: ([15:54](#))

And you can start with those much earlier on as well, um, with the idea of just bringing kindness to yourself, um, sending kindness out, uh, to the world, um, and we can all certainly use more of that these days,

Speaker 3: ([16:10](#))

A lot more of that, right?

Speaker 5: ([16:12](#))

Absolutely.

Speaker 3: ([16:13](#))

We are going to take a brief break from our episode for a word from one of our sponsors, Carson, private client

Speaker 6: [\(16:20\)](#)

Wealth planning focuses on liquidity management and charges you a fee based on a percentage of your assets, but entrepreneurs typically invest in their business resulting in light liquidity, that it requires a unique strategy at Carson private client. We provide a proactive and holistic strategy for building and protecting your wealth. Our mission is to alleviate the stresses and the burdens of coordinating all those financial strategies. Carson, private client will work with your current team of advisors to customize a strategy that manages all aspects of your life and wealth, giving you back the time to focus on what matters most complex needs require sophisticated solutions. Reach out to our office at 4 0 2 7 7 9 8 9 8 9. To schedule your consultation. Investment advisory services offered through CWM, L L C an S E registered investment advisor.

Speaker 3: [\(17:20\)](#)

Okay, let's continue our episode. So, if I were gonna like take, because that was a lot. So, I'm gonna say if I were somebody who had never practiced, mindfulness said, I want to just do one of those things tomorrow. It might be. I picked like the toothbrush pro practice. Mm-hmm mm-hmm then my other question is so especially for lawyers, but I think this is true of a lot of people, not just lawyers is I know that we got super busy through our days and you catch yourself going at this mock pace, trying to do what a lot of people refer to as multitasking, which I, I don't really believe that many of us can do that and do it effectively. And I think it is more like adrenaline rather than real when we get there. But I know I catch myself like all of a sudden talking fast and blah, blah, blah. And how can you get yourself to do have any ideas on how you just get yourself to build mindfulness, to catch yourself? Cuz that is what I always find. The difficult part is all of a sudden, I'm on a roll down a path. And even though I engage in mindfulness practice, I am like, oh, go down this path. How can you get those practices through your day?

Speaker 5: [\(18:27\)](#)

initially probably just schedule a link them or putting reminders in your phone until it becomes a habit that you're right. It's hard and we're so used to going you know, 10 miles a minute, like just going, going, going on for one thing to the next and we, you know, we feel so much pressure, you know, busy lawyers feel, you know, so much pressure, you know, there's so much that needs to happen and you're absolutely right. Multitasking is not, not actually possible. you know, your brain is not, is not capable of attending to two things at once the way we think it does so people who are who think they're good at multitasking, their brains are actually pretty quick from, in switching from one test to the other. But there is definitely switching going on your brain is not doing two things at once.

Speaker 5: [\(19:11\)](#)

And people who think they're bad at multitasking, the brain takes longer to switch from one thing to the other. And we notice that gap but none of us are terribly efficient when we try to multitask. I think that's just important to know and remember that if we're trying to do two things at once and we think that's increasing our efficiency, it's actually decreasing the efficiency because even know you know, the time that it takes to switch from one task to another may not be noticeable. It's there, there is a lag and we'll

lose efficiency that way so it's in our best interest to do one thing at a time setting a site time you know, for whatever it is that we're doing and mindfulness practice improves efficient and see in the long term because it helps the brain focus on that one thing.

Speaker 5: ([19:55](#))

Over time our ability to pay attention and ability to focus improves and I think the only way to remind ourselves to do that in the beginning is a decide, this is what I'm going to do. I trust that this is going to be helpful let's start with just a few minute at a time, you know, five minutes. Well at a time, people are maybe more willing, more willing to set aside a little bit of time rather than a lot of time and when you notice that, you know, those, those five minutes make a difference in how you feel right in this moment, it might be easier to set aside five minutes the next day, and then maybe a little bit more time, you know, the following days, et cetera. But it initially just has to be intentional.

Speaker 3: ([20:38](#))

I say, I have my apple watch on and on that it has like the newest version of the watch actually has a mindfulness app that every 90 minutes reminds me to stop and breathe for a minute. And when it first at first was every 30, I'm like, I'm gonna do this every 30 minute and that was too much, but I said it to 90 and most of the time, then I will do that. So sometimes it can be just finding a tool like that.

Speaker 5: ([21:02](#))

Yeah. absolutely. And it is nice that it's so easily available now and, you know, just buzzes on your wrists, right. To remind you and you know what it means, and you can take a few mindful breaths. You can, you know, do some mindful stretches, you can do some other movement. It doesn't have to be any one particular thing as long as you attend to whatever it is, you're doing mindful.

Speaker 3: ([21:23](#))

I was introduced to mindfulness that one of those really tough moments in, in my life and somebody gave me the book. The first book I read on mindfulness was the, I think it is the catastrophe of living. Are you familiar with

Speaker 5: ([21:33](#))

Full, full catastrophe,

Speaker 3: ([21:34](#))

Which is like quite the book. Right? And so it was given to me and somebody said, well, read this chapter. I, of course like you have to read this whole ginormous book, but it does talk a lot about, you know, how mindfulness works when we're in a really tough spot. So how would you describe how mindfulness can really help us develop the skills to meet challenges in life

Speaker 5: ([21:57](#))

With mindfulness? We learn to allow , the parts of the difficult experience that are not under our control to be there. So difficult thoughts, difficult, feel things we are trained to believe that we can control them. Right. We hear this all the time. Oh, get a grip on yourself, stop worrying right. You know, oh, don't be anxious, things like that and that's not actually possible ton of research showing , that, you

know, if you were to tell somebody, stop thinking about it, the, the last thing that's gonna happen is not thinking about it. Right. Most likely they're gonna think about it more and more. So we, we don't have the ability to control our thoughts and the idea that we can just change our feelings, you know, sounds nice, but again, not actually possible. So we end up wasting our internal resources, um, and actually our physiological resources, you know, research shows at we waste blood glucose, which is the basic fuel basic source of energy for the body in the brain.

Speaker 5: [\(22:57\)](#)

We end up wasting that on futile attempts to change. What's not under our control and that's our thoughts and our emotions. And some, our physiological sensations with mindfulness, we learn to let go of the attempts to control. What's not under our control and then focus our efforts of things that actually are under our control, which is the response to those thoughts and feelings. So when you find yourself in a difficult situation with mindfulness training, with what you find yourself doing is, uh, figuring out what is under your control. What's not, uh, and then not spending as much time trying to not feel anxious or trying to, you know, get yourself together and things like that, but rather, okay, this is what I'm noticing. This is what I'm feeling. Um, you know, I'm feeling discomfort, I'm noticing fear, I'm noticing uncertainty. It's okay. It's okay to feel this way. How do I respond to that? What do I do with this? And you know, what action is in my best interest. So the focus becomes on what is actually under your control.

Speaker 3: [\(23:58\)](#)

And so with any catastrophe that you suddenly have, I mean, somebody finds that they have a cancer diagnosis, they lost their job. Their spouse is filed for divorce. Those are there really tough moments. Mm-hmm, , they're smaller, tough moments too, though. Correct. And so that applies any, but sometimes it's those big ones. Does it help to have developed that mindfulness practice before you get there?

Speaker 5: [\(24:21\)](#)

It certainly does. Uh, you know, uh, it's just like, uh, you know, if you've learned, you know, CPR and you've never practiced that you probably don't want to be practicing CPR when somebody's having a heart attack in front of you, right. You want to have some practice on a dummy first. Um, so it's, uh, with mindfulness, uh, really with any new skill, uh, you'd lay, you know, you want to have some practice in, uh, low, uh, pressure moments, uh, and, uh, be able to transfer that skill to, uh, real catastrophes, um, that, that you described, uh, when the mind and the body are in that, you know, full catastrophe mode, uh, without previous practice, it's gonna be really hard to suddenly become mindful.

Speaker 3: [\(25:04\)](#)

Well, thank you. We are at the ti end of our, for this podcast. Do you have any last thoughts?

Speaker 5: [\(25:10\)](#)

Um, I would say if you are at all wondering about mindfulness and thinking whether it's, uh, whether it's for you, just give it a try, you know, spend a few minutes, uh, commit to a week off, you know, three minute practice, uh, each morning and see what happens, uh, and decide for yourself. Um, there is no such thing as it's impossible, or I can't, uh, do it. You might, you might decide it's not for you. You're not

willing to do it, but there is not a, not a personnel there who can't, um, and keep in mind that you won't be able to keep your mind completely blank. That's not a necessity. Uh, and it's very much a mess of meditation. We do not need to have a blank mind. You just need to keep bringing your mind back to whatever it is that you are focusing on. And then be kind when you mind wonders off

Speaker 3: ([25:59](#))
To yourself. Right?

Speaker 5: ([26:01](#))
Absolutely. Mm-hmm

Speaker 3: ([26:02](#))
thank you so much for being with us today. That is all for now. I want to thank our sponsors, interactive, legal and Carson wealth. Thanks for listening to today's episode and stay tuned for our weekly releases.

Speaker 1: ([26:19](#))
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Speaker 7: ([26:56](#))
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