

*Part 1*

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# Mindfulness

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## Chapter 1

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# Overview

*Since the fall of 2008* we have seen trillions of dollars disappear from the global economy, causing a substantial restructuring. Indeed, few economies, organizations, or institutions in the world have been spared. Never in recent history have we had so much and lost so much. This is resulting in new realities for, and new expectations from, the global population. Through this economic crisis and its aftermath, many people have experienced disappointment in their leaders, whether they are business leaders, government leaders, celebrities, or top athletes.

During difficult times, anyone in a leadership position is scrutinized more closely. And it seems as if the demands of this new world order are beyond the experience of many who occupy leadership positions. The new reality requires all leaders to have an unprecedented presence of mind as a starting point from which to lead. Success hinges on the ability to effectively work with constant change and a state of impermanence. Ultimately, it will be mindful leadership that will help you navigate through these demanding times and unfamiliar waters.

The biggest difference that mindfulness has made for me is that I now operate from a place of equanimity. I no longer live on a roller coaster. In the past, I was very much attached to outcomes, whether it was winning the deal, increasing sales, or hiring the very best staff. When I won it felt great, and when I didn't it was tough. Now I do the best I can, as I did in the past, but I let the chips fall where they may. Ironically, things work out better. Not trying to control every outcome allows me to learn from each situation. Mindfulness has given me far better balance. That's how I see equanimity, as balance. And because I don't ride the roller coaster anymore, I can sustain performance and feel more resilient. I'm a better leader and run a better business.

—Financial services firm CEO

The strict definition of a leader as the person who heads up an organization or a nation is no longer a useful definition. A leader is anyone who is in a position to influence another person. This may be a CEO, the leader of a nation, the head of a government agency or department, the head of a professional services firm, a department head in a university or a hospital, a call center manager, a sports coach, an athlete, or any celebrity who has the potential to influence others. Indeed, every one of us is a leader. Leadership is much less a role than an activity.

To be an effective leader of others, you must first start with self-leadership. One of the keys to self-leadership is being mindful. Mindfulness is simply noticing the way things are.

By being mindful you can transform your life, your organization, and even your community. The first step is to transform yourself.

One of the biggest lessons for me was what actually happens when you are present, right here right now. I used to delude myself that I could do several things at the same time. I would always multitask. I would be in a meeting and I would be on my BlackBerry answering e-mails and preparing for the next meeting. I thought that I was being efficient. But I was really being impatient. With mindfulness, however, I realized that I was missing fabulous opportunities to learn something about a client, the competition, or a business rival in any given meeting. By being present and mindfully listening, I learn a great deal that I would previously have missed. I hear what is actually being said and, potentially, what is being withheld. It's invaluable. Being present makes me more effective. An added bonus is that it also shortens my meetings. When I'm present, it takes less time to do everything, things don't get repeated, and we accomplish much more in less time.

—Manufacturing company COO

My experience coaching and teaching mindfulness to hundreds of business leaders and professionals is that the following ways of being are key determinants of professional and personal success. Mindful leaders behave coherently and consistently, and exhibit nine specific ways of being:

1. They are *present*. This means that they are in the moment. They aim to be right here right now, rather than thinking about the past or worrying about the future.
2. They are *aware*. They know exactly what is arising within them at any given moment. This means they won't be blindsided by their emotions or negative patterns.
3. They are *calm*. Being calm allows them to keep their wits about them and increases the likelihood that those around them won't panic. Regardless of circumstances, they are able to face any situation without losing control.
4. They are *focused*. When leaders are focused, they deliberately channel resources to accomplish priorities, rather than being scattered. They are able to concentrate on whatever they deem important in any given moment.
5. They are *clear*. Being clear is critical in order to make the best possible decisions. Mindful leaders understand what motivates them and why they are drawn to take certain action. They know what is important.
6. They are *equanimous*. Equanimity is the ability to accept "what is" without resistance. To be equanimous is to truly have inner peace, because you do not waste time fighting what you can't change and you do not fight yourself. There is coherence in your being. You do not need for everything to be ideal in order to be content or even happy.

7. They are *positive*. This means that they are positive forces in their lives, organizations, families, and communities. And in so doing, they become an inspiration to those around them. They understand that the role of a leader is to be of service.
8. They are *compassionate*. Leaders who are compassionate have deep caring without attachment. They do their best each and every moment of the day, under the circumstances. They understand the importance and value of self-compassion, because they know that without taking care of themselves, their ability to serve and to perform at a high level is not sustainable.
9. They are *impeccable*. Mindful leaders are impeccable in their words and deeds. (But being impeccable should never be confused with being perfect.) They have integrity, are honest and courageous. They accept responsibility for their actions and do not blame others for honest mistakes.

There are countless resources advocating different leadership styles, but those styles tend to be faddish. Leaders searching for solutions often adopt whatever style is currently in vogue; however, then they cease to be authentic. This inevitably leads to inconsistent decisions, confusion, and dissatisfied stakeholders who recognize that the leader is hiding behind a facade. On the other hand, mindfulness can help leaders to remain focused on what really matters to them and to their companies and stakeholders. This allows them to lead from a place of authenticity.

Mindful leadership entails being aware of one's internal compass. It enables a leader to respond to a situation as it arises, to respond to the reality of constant change from a place of deep calm and focus, and to have the presence of mind to face the reality of any situation. A mindful leader is clear in his or her communication, and those he or she leads know that decisions are made from a place of awareness, integrity, and courage. A mindful leader inspires others to greatness, to achieve beyond their expectations.

Mindfulness has changed my leadership so that I am not so focused on the short term. In the past, I might have done what was most expedient, and sometimes that meant exercising power inappropriately by bullying someone or berating them publicly to get the results I wanted. It may have worked in the short term, but in the long term it created resentment. It got in the way of long-term sustainable relationships. Now my main interest is to draw out the best in people. Sometimes it takes a bit more time, but you generate much more goodwill and trust, and people perform better and feel better about working on the team. In the long run, everyone wins.

—Technology company executive

Mindfulness meditation and mindfulness principles provide leaders with a way to incorporate mindfulness into every aspect of their lives, allowing them to reduce stress, to maintain



awareness and focus, and to optimize their effectiveness and decision making, both personally and professionally.

People sometimes worry that meditation is too New Agey for them or that it has religious connotations. Not so with Mindfulness meditation. It is simple, secular, and completely accessible to the mainstream. It's a tool that you can use anytime, anywhere—no chanting or patchouli required. This book will help you learn how to use mindfulness to transform your life and your business.

Phil Jackson, the coach of the Los Angeles Lakers—and noted as the coach with the greatest number of NBA Championship titles—is well known for his meditation practice. Many business leaders practice meditation as a way to become more effective, including Robert Shapiro, former Monsanto chief executive; William George, supervisory board member of the Goldman Sachs Group; William Ford, chairman of the Ford Motor Company; Steve Jobs, the late cofounder of Apple; and Robert Stiller, chairman of Green Mountain Coffee Roasters. Google began offering its staff Mindfulness meditation classes in 2007. Fred Shoemaker, the highly regarded golf coach, successfully applies mindfulness principles to coaching pros and new players alike. Since 1991, I have been applying Mindfulness meditation to every aspect of my business, including developing strategy, creating joint ventures and mergers and acquisitions, and negotiating deals around the world.

Mindfulness is not a technique, it's a skill—one that you can learn. Mindfulness meditation helps to train your mind to become more aware and to stay in the present moment.

Benefits of Mindfulness meditation in the worlds of business and leadership include:

- Greater focus and concentration
- Improved time management
- Improved judgment and decision making
- An enhanced ability to anticipate and serve stakeholder needs
- Increased ability to deal with conflict
- Enhanced team effectiveness
- Greater innovation and inspiration
- Greater productivity
- Increased ability to deal effectively with stress

Mindfulness begins with the simple act of being present in any given moment. Here are some easy ways to incorporate it into your life:

- When dealing with a challenging investment analyst meeting, use mindfulness in action to really listen. Rather than refuting or defending what is being said, simply become present and listen. This reduces the potential defensiveness that can easily occur when we feel criticized. You can then formulate a more coherent and less defensive response, so you and your organization will be in greater control.
- When making a presentation, become aware of the cues in the audience so you can determine if you need to clarify

your message on the spot. Allow information to move freely from you to the audience and back again as a feedback loop even without them speaking to you.

- Before you get out of bed each morning, take the time to become aware of your body and your surroundings. Be present in that moment and allow yourself to be still; this is how inspiration arises. It will also make you feel more in control of your day.
- When the phone rings, use it as a cue to really listen. Take a deep breath before answering it, and focus on what the caller is saying. Do not multitask and answer e-mail at the same time; you will end up having to redo the e-mails or ask callers to repeat themselves.
- While in a meeting, you may find yourself drifting off. Try to really concentrate on the voice of the speaker; become aware of both the voice and the tone. You will gain insight into what the speaker is saying and not saying, and you will also be more alert and less stressed.

*Mindful Leadership* is a guide for businesspeople, leaders in the public service, professionals, anyone in a position to influence others, and those who aspire to be in a formal leadership position. Essentially, it will help anyone looking for a better way to lead. To be optimally effective, leaders must be clear about who and what they are and how they can best be of service to those they lead. Leaders cannot do it all on their own. They need to capture the imaginations and gain the support of those around them in order to be truly successful.

This includes clearly communicating an organization's vision, strategic direction, and goals, as well as how it will serve and compete in the marketplace. After all, without clarity, there is only confusion. This book will guide you to achieve clarity about what is truly important to you and to your business. *Mindful Leadership* will show you how to avoid loss of clarity by reducing the stresses in your life and effectively managing whatever ones remain so that you can be optimally effective regardless of circumstances. You'll also learn how to become resilient and to sustain high performance over the long term.

My goal is to help you experience greater fulfillment and success. Mindfulness is a learnable skill that can be used by anyone who wishes to become a more effective leader. The strategies in this book will help you to increase mindfulness in every aspect of your life, both professional and personal. By becoming calm and focused, being clear and applying equanimity, you'll be able to successfully lead your organization and your team—competing effectively today and successfully positioning yourself and your organization for tomorrow.