

How To Become A More Mindful Leader

Mindful Leadership is a practice. There are three pillars to mindful leadership – Clarity, Purpose and Wisdom. We can employ three practices to develop these three pillars: Reflection, Awareness and Wellbeing.

Mindful Leadership Pillars

1. Clarity

In order to lead others we must first lead ourselves. In order to lead ourselves we need first to have clarity on a few fundamental questions:

1. Who do I want to be as a person and as a leader? (What's my Vision for myself?)
2. Why do I want to be this person? (What's my Purpose?)
3. What do I already value in life that I want to maintain? (Keep values?), and what values do I want to develop (Get Values?)
4. What are my critical roles in life? (professional & personal)
5. Who do I want to be in each of these roles? (Aspiration for each role?)
6. What do I want to achieve within the next year? (Goals for roles)
7. What weekly action will I take to progress my roles towards my goals?

2. Purpose

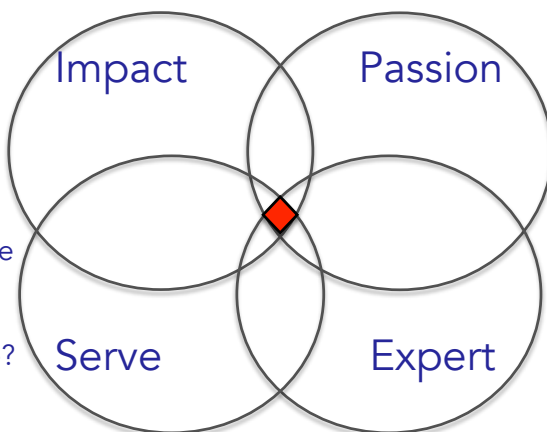
One view on purpose is that it's already within you. Your job is to identify it. If that's not clear for you right now you could say your temporary purpose is to discover your purpose within you. Here's an exercise that should help.



Write what comes to mind in the circles as you think about the questions.

What/who do you really want to impact on in your world? What frustrates you that you really want to improve/change?

What are you really passionate about? What do you love to spend time on, that you would miss if you were unable to?



Who do you want to serve most? Why? Who can benefit most/get most value from your expertise? Who is the best fit with your culture/philosophy/passion? Who could you serve best?

What are you expert at? what are your gifts? One rule - modesty is completely banned - it is dishonest. Think about things that just come easily to you, the kind of things that others get most benefit from?

It may take time to identify and develop your purpose, so be patient with yourself. Consider this your first draft that can be revisited for modification.

To live my (Passion) and use my (expertise) to (serve)so that I can (impact)

Now, keep refining this statement until you have something really meaningful for you. And easy to remember.

Remember, having a sense of purpose is infinitely more important than having a purpose statement.



3. Wisdom

Wisdom can be understood on many different levels.

In the context of mindful leadership we can understand wisdom to be the ability to know. To know the right decisions, the right direction for you and your followers, the right questions, etc.

Wisdom is interdependent with clarity & purpose. If you have a good clarity and a strong sense of purpose you will likely be able to answer the wisdom questions above. And in order to have clarity and know your purpose you need to have wisdom!

This can be developed by developing the following three supporting practices below.

Mindful Leadership Supporting Practices

1. Reflection

In order to be mindful of your leadership you need a reflection practice. It's up to you to find a reflection practice that works for you. Options to consider are:

- Reflective walk ([Thich Nhat Hanh](#) is expert in this area)
- Walk in nature
- Yoga nidra
- Meditation (my reflection practice) ([How to Meditate here](#))
- Sitting still
- Exercise/sport, e.g. gym, golf, fishing (for some)

A reflection practice gives you time to stop, thinking time to reflect on your narrative/story. Maybe even plan ahead.

For example I have a weekly reflective ritual practice that involves a seven minute walk to the pier. On my way down I reflect on all the positive things I have done in the past week that I planned to do in my six roles in my life. When I get to the pier I throw into the water one of my 1352 white pebbles (decreasing by the week) that I have in a jar in my wardrobe. Each pebble represents the number of precious weeks in my life left (on an expected age of 75). On the return trip I make intentions for each of my roles for the next week (and diary them when I get back to the house).



For me this works really well, keeps me moving in the right directions and on purpose. When I reflect over the past 15 years of being on this journey I see how much progress I have made towards who I want to be. Lots more to do!

I also meditate twice a day, early in the morning and in the evening. Meditation is my fuel for life. I get countless benefits from it. One of the greatest benefits is clarity and wisdom. I highly recommend you give it a try, join a group, find a teacher that works for you and try to develop this life changing habit every day, even if it's only for a few minutes to start with.

2. Awareness

Leadership development is primarily about developing self awareness. The above reflection practices are a great help to developing awareness. Furthermore mindfulness is a great way to develop awareness.

A definition of mindfulness is

"Paying attention in a particular way; On purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally." Jon Kabat-Zinn

Mindfulness has gathered a lot of popularity in recent years. Probably due to the increasing stress and distraction levels. Mindfulness comes from the Buddhist meditation tradition and is one of a few parts of the mind that help us meditate effectively, the others being alertness, conscientiousness, concentration and wisdom. The mindfulness part is the bit that helps us not to forget what we want to meditate on or remember. We can use mindfulness both in and outside meditation.

So the mindful leader will use their mindfulness to remember to keep a level of awareness of themselves, the other person(s), the relationship and the environment or situation.

I think of it like keeping a helicopter view of a meeting when I'm facilitating and at the same time an internal awareness of the feelings my body and mind are experiencing.



3. Well-being

In simple terms, well-being can be described as judging life positively and feeling good (mental well-being) and feeling very healthy and full of energy (physical well-being). From a mindful leadership point of view I would say spiritual wellbeing is also critically important.

Developing and maintaining healthy levels of well-being in the following areas will all contribute to more mindful leadership:

- Diet & nutrition
- Fitness
- Sleep
- Rest
- Holidays
- Reading
- Creativity
- Positive thinking
- Medical health
- Healthy relationships
- Healthy environment
- Spiritual practice

It's good to be conscious of these and to look at incorporating them into your life over a period of time. This is a great list to reference whenever you are doing some life or annual planning.

The best way to incorporate them is to develop a daily practice. Take for example positive thinking. You could practice when in the company of others 1:1 or in a group that you practice taking a positive perspective on the opinions and views even if you disagree with them. By doing this over time you will rewire your brain to think more positively, not to mention the improvement in your work and personal relationships (another item on the list above!).

And finally



A few tips that have helped me along the way.

- Don't travel this journey on your own, find a group of peers that can support and challenge you. This is why I started the Power of Seven. To act as a personal advisory board to ambitious business owners who want to be successful with business, family and self. www.po7.ie
- Listen. Learn how to listen to yourself, your body, others and the world around you.
- Look for feedback. How your leadership affects others is important, elicit feedback to see how you're getting on and how you can improve. Simply ask!

I hope you found the eBook useful and I would love to hear from you. Here are my contact details:



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