

# Mindful leadership and reflective practice in higher education

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- What is mindfulness?
- Why is it relevant in Higher Education?
- What's it got to do with leadership?
- What can I do?

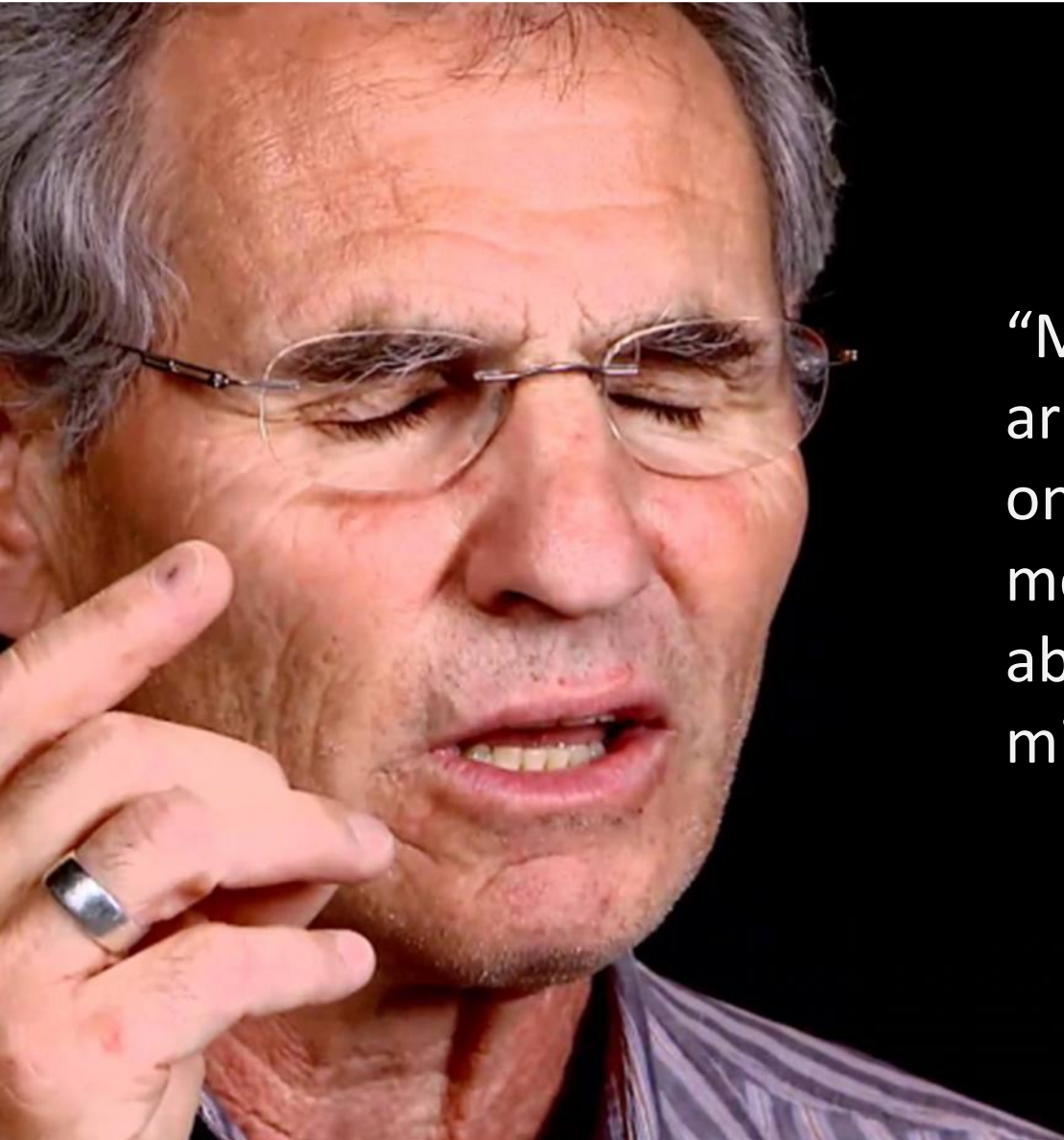


- **What is mindfulness?**



## The age of mindfulness

- **One minute** mindfulness
- Mindfulness: an eight week course for **finding peace in a frantic world**
- The mindful **dog owner**
- Mindful **knitting**
- Mindful **horsemanship**: daily inspirations for better communications with your horse
- **Everyday blessings**: the inner work of mindful **parenting**
- **Eating the moment**: 141 mindful practices to overcoming **overeating one meal at a time**
- The mindful couple: how acceptance and mindfulness can lead you to **the love you want**
- The mindful leader: awakening your **natural management skills** through mindfulness meditation



“Mindfulness is awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgementally. It’s about knowing what is on your mind.”

John Kabat-Zin

“Mindfulness helps us get better at seeing the difference between what’s happening and the stories we tell ourselves about what’s happening, stories that get in the way of direct experience. Often such stories treat a fleeting state of mind as if it were our entire and permanent self.”



Sharon Salzberg

## Attention

- Focused concentration
- Open Awareness

## Insight

- Exploration of awareness

## Intention

- Heart and mind

# Suite of practices

- Breath meditation
- Walking meditation
- Body scan
- Compassion practices
- Body practices – yoga, tai chi
- Journaling
- Art practices
- Ritual
- Prayer

# Suite of practices

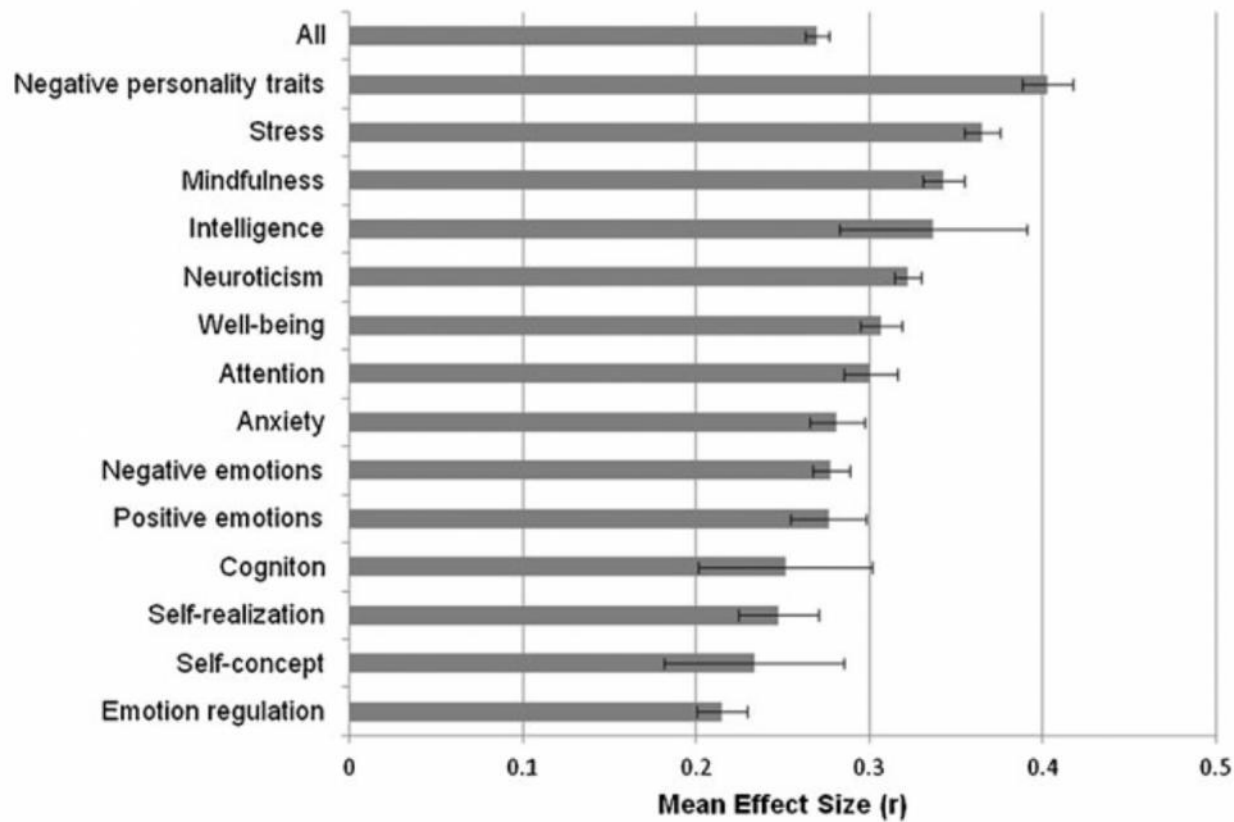




## Mindfulness effects

- **Health & medical: stress-reduction and pain tolerance programs (Kabat-Zinn 1982; Grant 2014)**
- **Psychological interventions and therapy (Grossman & Van Dam 2011)**
- **Business and leadership programs (Purser & Millio 2015)**
- **Big corporations such as Google, Facebook, Target and Ford (Wilson 2014).**
- **Schools & educational practices (Barbezat & Bush 2013)**

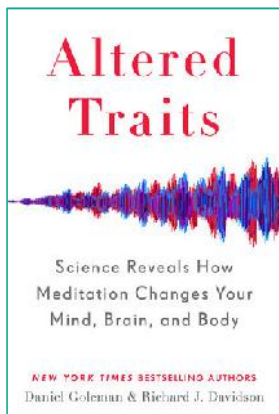
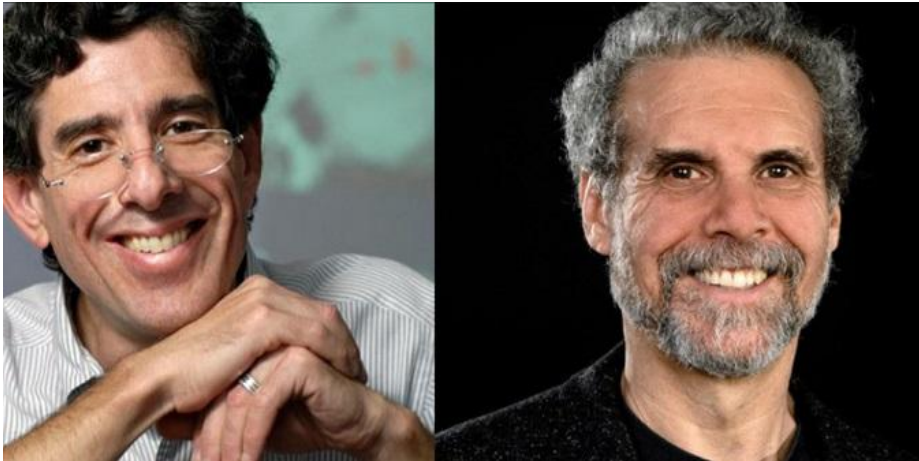
# Mindfulness effects



Eberth, J. & Sedlmeier, P. (2012) The Effects of Mindfulness Meditation: A Meta-Analysis  
Mindfulness 3: 174.



# Mindfulness effects



They point to four areas where they can now show convincing links between meditative practice and changes in brain systems or neural pathways:

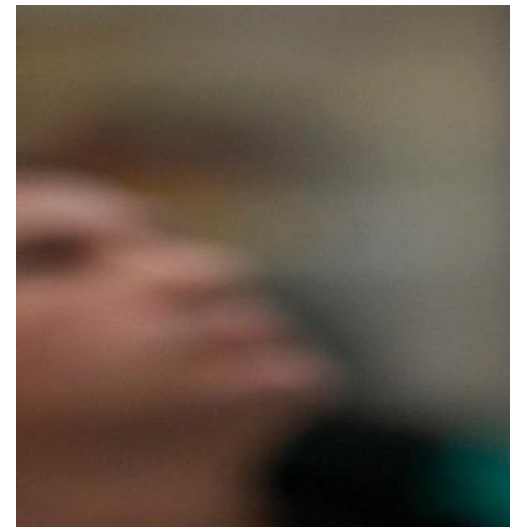
- Reactions to stress, trauma and disturbing events
- Development of compassion and empathy
- Deepening of focus and attention
- Changes in our sense of self

- **What's this got to do with higher education?**

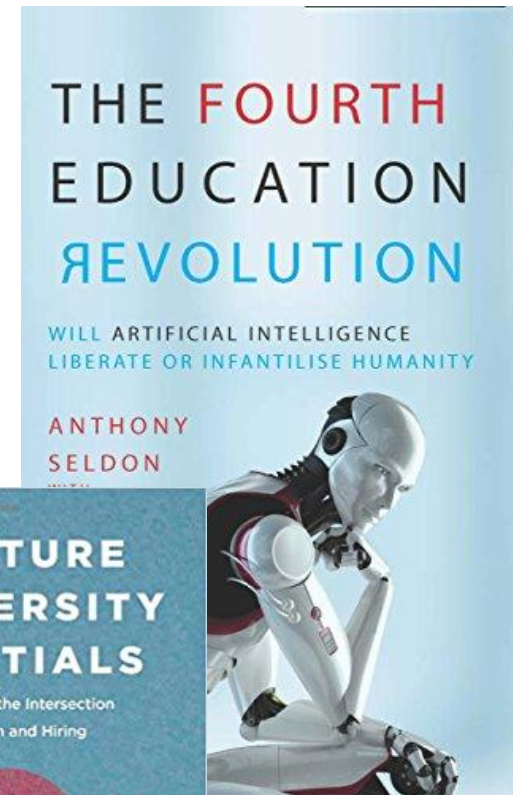
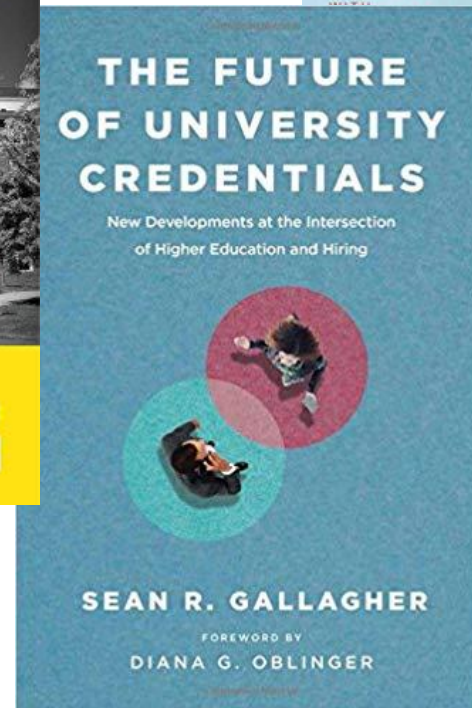
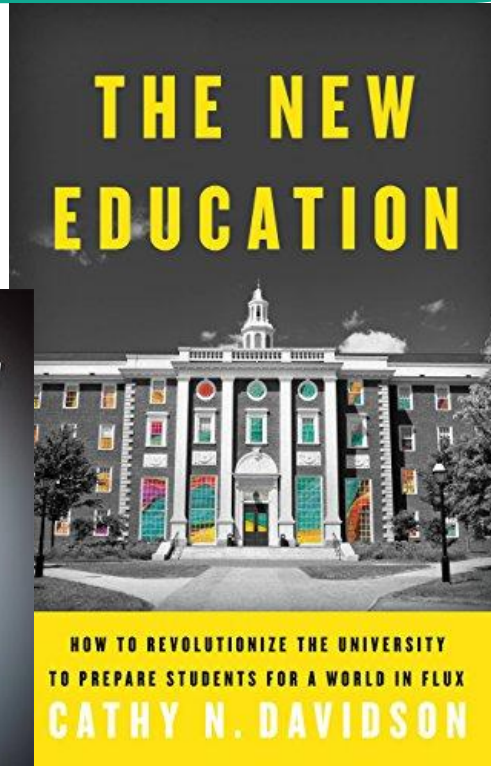
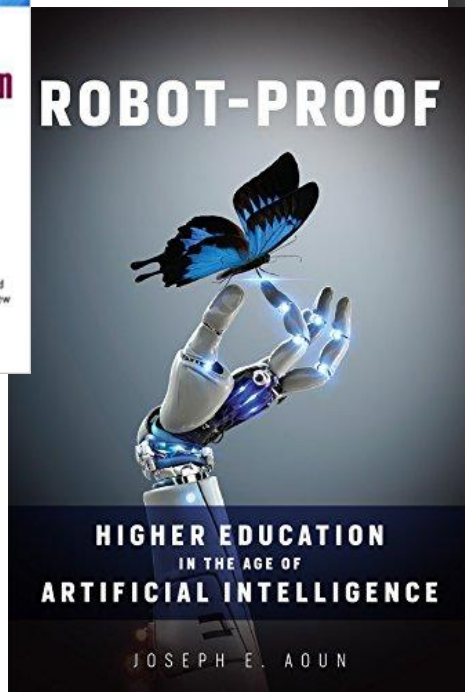
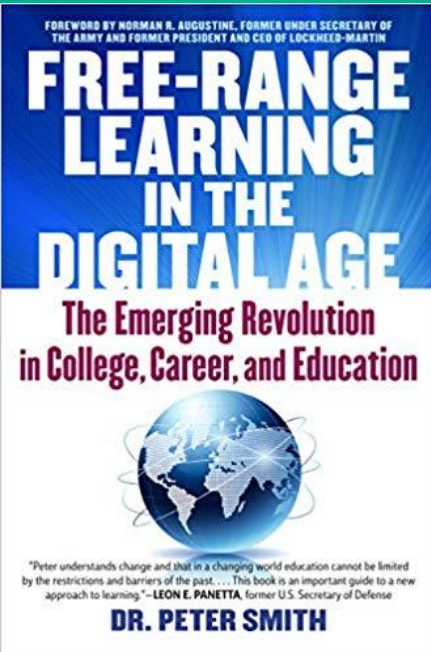


# Disruption and change within the sector

- Australian Qualifications Framework Review
- National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy
- Performance-Based Funding for the Commonwealth Grant Scheme
- Review into University Freedom of Speech
- Review of the Higher Education Provider Category Standards
- Tackling contract cheating – Draft Legislation

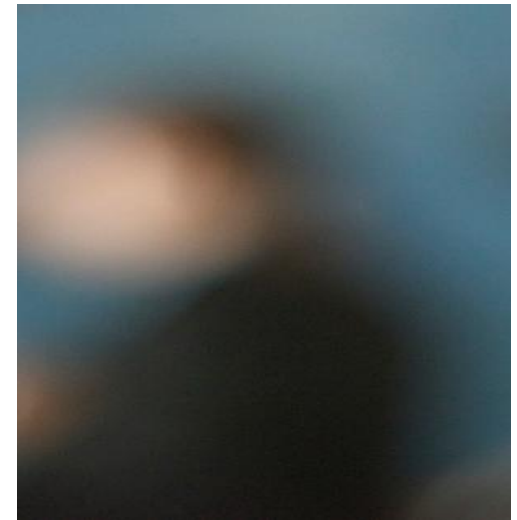


# Disruption and change within the sector



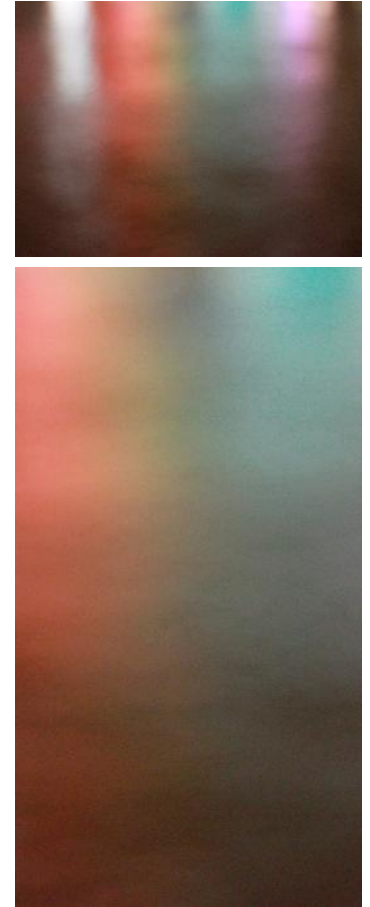
# Disruption and change within academic workforce

- Casualisation
- Short-term contracts
- Divisional restructures
- Emergence of third space professionals
- Rebalancing academic and professional roles
- Audit culture



# The age of supercomplexity

A complex world is one in which we are assailed by more facts, data, evidence, tasks and arguments than we can easily handle within the frameworks in which we have our being. By contrast, a supercomplex world is one in which the very frameworks by which we orient ourselves to the world are themselves contested. Supercomplexity denotes a fragile world but it is a fragility brought on not merely by social and technological change; it is a fragility in the way that we understand the world, in the way in which we understand ourselves and in the ways in which we feel secure about acting in the world. (Barnett 2000b: 257)

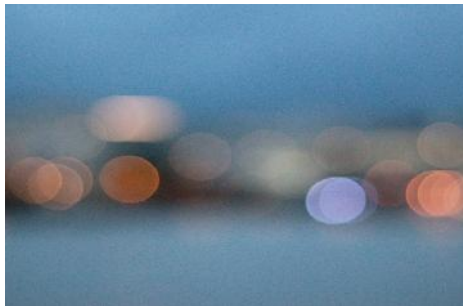




# The idea of the university

- The adaptive university
- The borderless university
- The bureaucratic university
- The civic university
- The digital university
- The distributed university
- The global university
- The liquid university
- The managed university
- The performative university
- The schizophrenic university
- The therapeutic university

Barnett 2011 *Imagining the University*



## The triple challenge

This “constellation of fragility” is marked according to Barnett by

- uncertainty,
- unpredictability,
- challengeability and contestability

(Barnett 2000a: 63).

It presents a “triple set of challenges”

- challenges in the domain of understanding and knowledge,
  - in the domain of action and professional work and
  - challenges to self-identity and being-in-the-world.
- (Barnett 2000b: 257)



- **Mindful leadership for supercomplexity**



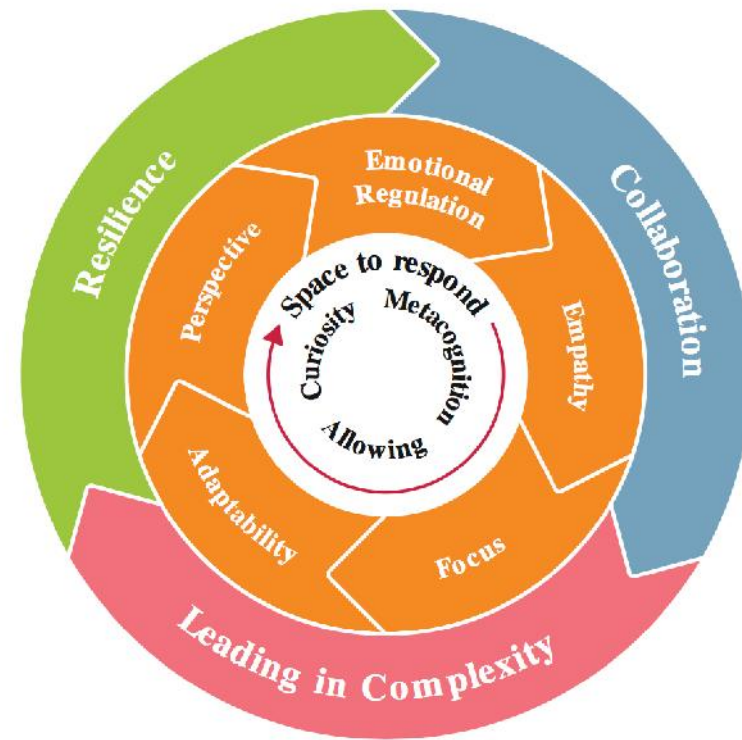
# Leadership

Transformational Leadership	Authentic Leadership	Servant Leadership	Emotional Intelligence
idealized influence	internalised moral perspective	listening	self-awareness,
inspirational motivation	self-awareness	awareness	self-management,
intellectual stimulation	balanced processing	empathy	social awareness
individualized consideration	relational transparency	commitment to the growth of others	social/relationship management
	positive psychological capital	persuasion	
	authentic behavior	foresight	
		stewardship	
		healing	
		building community	
		conceptualization	

# Emerging connections: ambiguity

“These results indicate a strong connection between increased **self-care practices during times of ambiguity** and a sense of presence and self-awareness, advising leaders to select personal practices to develop mindfulness and to take care of their own well-being during change. Mindfulness helps change leaders embrace ambiguity, and therefore be more effective at leading transformational organizational change.”

*Julie Chesley & Avonlie Wylson (2016) Ambiguity: the emerging impact of mindfulness for change leaders*



*Megan Reitz, Michael Chaskalson, Sharon Olivier and Lee Waller, The Mindful Leader*



## Emerging connections: communication

We identify a behavioral mechanism – **mindfulness in communication** – which explains the interpersonal effect of leaders' mindfulness. The high agreement of multiple followers in their ratings of the leaders' mindfulness in communication that we found in our data..suggests that mindfulness fosters a specific communication style, which is relatively stable across situations and followers.

*Arendt JFW, Pircher Verdorfer A and Kugler KG (2019) Mindfulness and Leadership: Communication as a Behavioral Correlate of Leader Mindfulness and Its Effect on Follower Satisfaction.*

Leader  
Mindfulness

Respectful  
Communication

Follower  
satisfaction



## Emerging connections: feedback

Paying attention (i.e. to fixed mindset triggers) and working to identify, then accept one's thoughts and feelings are benefits of mindfulness practice that might enhance a growth mindset. Awareness of fixed mindset triggers can increase an individual's ability to **openly receive, accept and use critical feedback.**

*Danette V. Day, Jess L. Gregory, 2017, Mindfulness as a Prerequisite to Effective Leadership; Exploring the Constructs that Foster Productive Use of Feedback for Professional Learning*

# Mindful Practice

## Self-care

Meditation  
Pause Practices  
Gratitude  
Self-compassion

Curiosity  
Pause Practices  
Conscious reframing

## Relational

Deep Listening  
Pause Practices  
Compassion



# Leading mindfully

**Pause**

You could meditate:	And you could be mindful:
when waiting	whilst walking
whilst commuting	whilst talking
at your desk	when eating
at the gym	when you're irritated or upset
when you're put on hold	preparing a meal
during ads on TV	listening to music
during meetings	playing sport

Melbourne Meditation Centre

Choose everyday triggers and use structured pauses to manage transitions

# Leading mindfully

## Beginners mind

**Let go of the need to add value.** Many people, especially high achievers, have an overwhelming need to provide value to the people around them.

**Let go of the need to win every argument.** “Others don't need to lose for me to win.” If you're having a conversation and someone makes a statement that you disagree with, try releasing the urge to correct them.

**Tell me more about that.** Every now and then, I'll challenge myself to stay quiet and pour all of my energy into listening to someone else. My favorite strategy is to ask someone to, “Tell me more about that.”

James Clear

“In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert’s there are few.” - Shunryo Suzuki

# Leading mindfully

## Retell the story

**The first step is to turn positive events into positive experiences.** All kinds of good things happen in our daily life that we hardly notice at all, and if we do, we don't feel it.

**Second, really savor it.** In other words, the way to remember something is to make it intense, felt in the body, and lasting. So rather than noticing it and feeling good for a couple of seconds, stay with it. Relish it, enjoy it, for 10, 20, or 30 seconds, so it really starts developing neural structure.

**The third step is to sense and intend that this positive experience is sinking into you** and becoming a part of you. In other words, it's becoming woven into the fabric of your brain and yourself.

Rick Hansen

*“The brain is like Velcro for negative experiences and Teflon for positives ones.” – Rick Hansen*

## Putting things in perspective

*“Mindfulness is not a ‘silver bullet’ solution as many books and courses would have one believe. Seen in context, as a gradual increase in awareness of these aspects in ones’ life, it is however essential and a great help in interacting with collaborators, managing a team, decision making and putting things in perspective.”*

*Megan Reitz, Michael Chaskalson, Sharon Olivier and Lee Waller , The Mindful Leader*