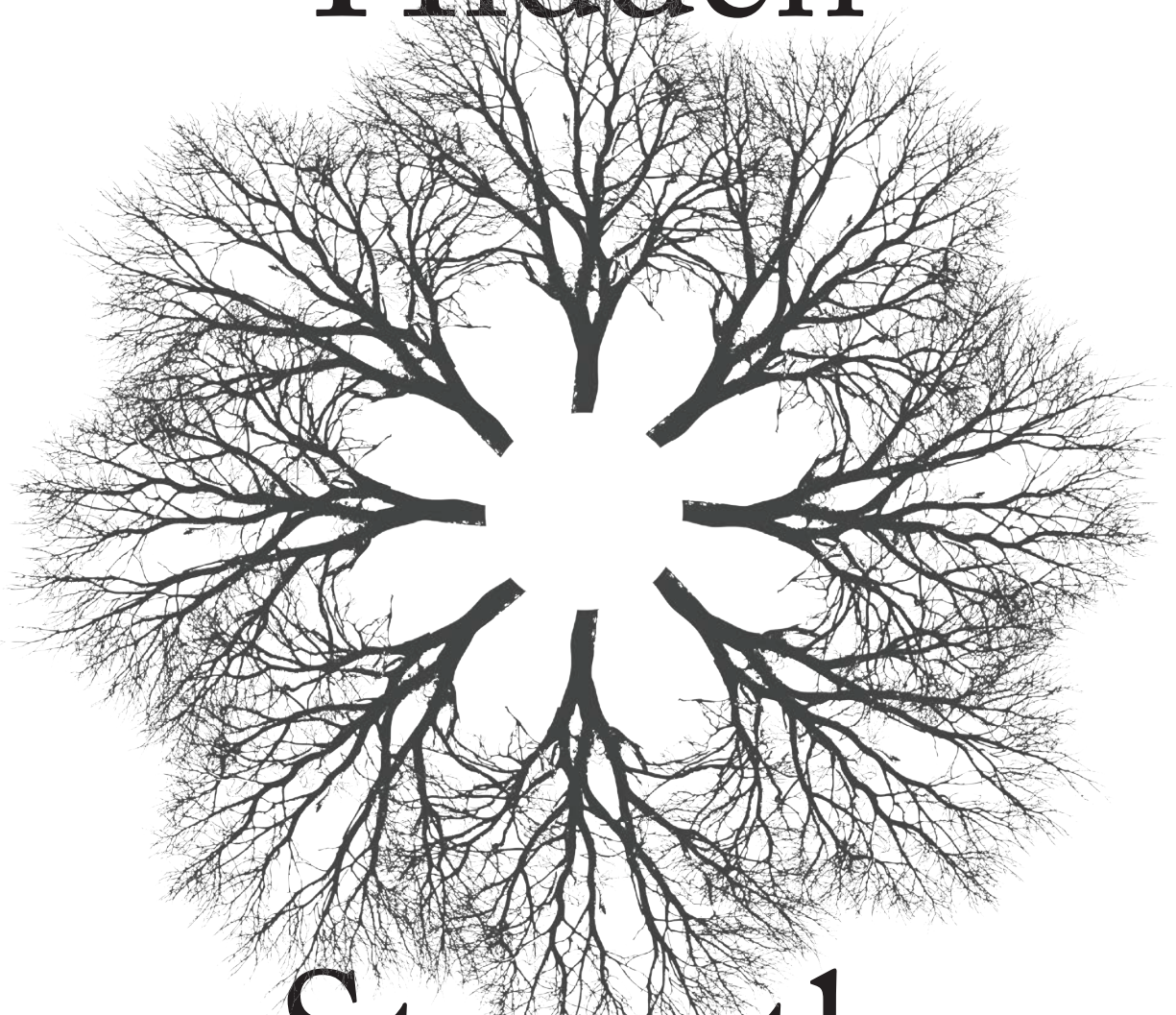
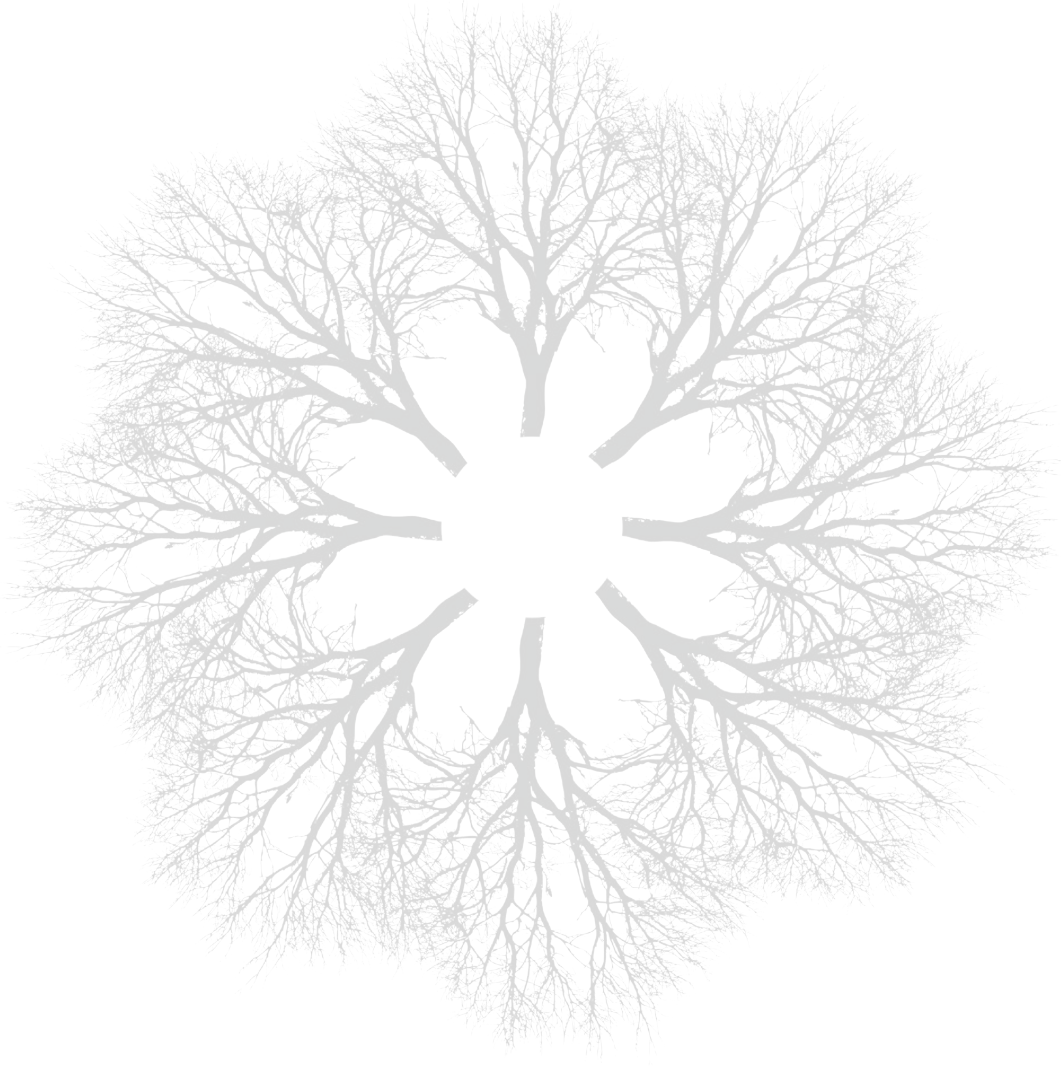


The
Hidden



Strength
of a
Leader

MARK POWER



Mindful Presence. Emotional Awareness. Powerful Results.

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About Mark Power



*“I welcome you to a
Mindful Presence journey where,
in our sessions, we’ll explore various
tools, thoughts and exercises.
Now, let’s get started.”*

MARK POWER

Now, looking through the slanting light of the morning window
toward the mountain presence of everything that can be
what urgency calls you to your one love?

What shape waits in the seed of you
to grow and spread its branches
against a future sky?

David Whyte, *What to Remember When Waking*

Introduction

Why Mindful Presence Is Relevant to Leadership

The poet David Whyte starts us on a journey with an aspirational challenge:

“What shape waits in the seed of you / to grow and spread its branches / against a future sky?” Each of us will answer this challenge differently. To prepare us for the journey, I’ll make some assumptions, I’ll test them with you, and together we’ll create exercises and practices to support you going forward.

My first assumption is that you have an interest in authentic leadership—that is, you want to lead with integrity. I also assume you are motivated by success—for yourself and for your team. And I assume that your work connects to meaning and purpose in your life.

As you step into this new challenge, you’ll need strengths, skills, and tools of another order. The methods you’ll be introduced to in this course are rooted in self-awareness and mindful presence, and they will help you build effective and inspired leadership qualities.

Developing Mindful Presence

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is commonly understood as observational, nonjudgmental attention. Mindfulness allows us to observe our experience with less interpretation and judgment—like saying, “I see the color red” versus “Red is beautiful, or ugly, or means such-and-such.” It allows us to take a short break from our strong opinions and emotional reactions, and it also builds mental clarity.

Attention

We begin with attention, which is available to us always, yet there are so many forces competing for this limited resource. When we’re stressed, our ability to direct and sustain attention is diminished. In this course, we’ll work with practices to strengthen our attention in changing circumstances. Focused, relaxed attention is what we’re aiming for—to facilitate purposeful action and to minimize reactivity.

Curiosity

Another aspect of mindfulness is curiosity, an attitude of openness to and interest in what might be revealed if we’re willing to pause, relax, and pay attention. Curiosity makes more information available to us—and supports better decision-making.

Relaxation

An attractive feature of mindfulness is relaxation, which is a natural outcome of a regular mindfulness practice. Relaxation happens when we intentionally shift from a stress reaction to observational attention, like shifting a car into neutral gear. When we observe the different facets of our experience in the present moment, without judgment, we naturally begin to release stress. The key is a willingness to release some amount of control. We can’t force relaxation; we have to make room for it. This happens when we combine focused attention and relaxed attention.

Mindful Presence

Our work will focus on developing mindful presence. With mindfulness, we’re attentive and curious; presence then readies us to act. We develop that readiness with what I call the Four Core Strengths of Presence: our physical, cognitive, emotional, and relational awarenesses.

The Four Core Strengths support our learning and growth by expanding our capacity for attention and our ability to seize the moment for purposeful, creative action. As we become aware of physical, cognitive, and emotional cues of stress, this awareness creates a moment where choice is possible—the choice to shift to positive alternatives. And as we become more familiar with our reactivity and style of holding back, creativity becomes more available, enabling exploration and innovation. To explore that creative capacity we’ll work with metaphors and images to map our vision of growth. In this way, the Four Core Strengths are building blocks of success.

Since mindfulness is a foundation of presence, one important way of developing a mindful state is meditation. The benefits of mindfulness are finding their way into business settings through research and experimentation in the workplace. The following quotation from INSEAD (Institut Européen d'Administration des Affaires) refers to mindfulness meditation to illustrate the moment of choice in a moment of pause: "The reduced negative emotion then facilitated their ability to let go of sunk costs."

Mindfulness Meditation Leads to Better Decisions

People have trouble cutting their losses: They hold on to losing stocks too long; stay in bad relationships; and continue to eat heavy desserts despite being full. Such behavior is driven by what behavioral economists call the "sunk cost bias" or "sunk cost fallacy." A more familiar expression to describe the phenomenon is "throwing good money after bad." New research from INSEAD and The Wharton School suggests a fresh solution to counter this bias: mindfulness meditation . . . We found that even a brief period of mindfulness meditation can encourage people to make more rational decisions by considering the information available in the present moment, while ignoring some of the other concerns that typically exacerbate the "sunk cost bias." . . . The results show that mindfulness meditation increased resistance to the sunk cost bias in each of the three experiments . . . First, meditation reduced how much people focused on the past and future, and this psychological shift led to less negative emotion. The reduced negative emotion then facilitated their ability to let go of sunk costs.

—INSEAD Research shows Mindfulness Meditation linked to better decisions;
Andrew C. Hafenbrack, Zoe Kinias, and Sigal G. Barsade

That shift also offers opportunity for building behaviors that align with purpose. The example of "deliberately developmental organizations" makes a compelling case for practices that align vision and action across an organization. Mindful presence, a lever of greater awareness, is such a practice.

Deliberately Developmental Organizations

In the book *An Everyone Culture*, Harvard psychologists Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey share their research with deliberately developmental organizations. The distinctive feature of these organizations is that they prioritize equally the internal culture of learning and profitability, seeing them as interdependent and indispensable. They emphasize buy-in at all levels of the organization to practices that reflect and sustain the company's values: commitments to rigorous communication and feedback, and accountability that is transparent across the hierarchy. These companies seriously walk their talk.

Home, Edge, Groove

Three key elements of deliberately developmental organizations, as defined by Kegan and Lahey, are “home,” “edge,” and “groove.” To paraphrase, *Home* is a community with explicit commitment to personal and organizational growth. *Edge* is one's personal growth and the developmental aspirations that motivate us. *Groove* is the developmental practices that define and manifest the organization's culture.

Whether or not we work in a deliberately developmental organization, we can apply these principles to individual and team growth. Having even one partner with whom to share a developmental commitment increases the odds of accountability. And, as leaders, your commitment to learning exerts a persuasive influence on your peers and those you lead.

Questions for Reflection

Considering your current situation, how would you define your home, edge, and groove?

Home – The community that shares your vision and commitment

Who are the people you trust and who support you while also holding you accountable?

Edge – The “stretch” vision that you and your community are committed to

What do you want to accomplish in the next 3-5 years, and what will that accomplishment allow you to build toward?

What's your learning edge, where you need more focus and intentionality to align with your purpose?

Groove – The practices you share in common with your community that drive accomplishment of that vision

Are you confident that your behaviors and current practices will deliver success? If “Yes”, then take some time to consider “How”. If “No” or “I don’t know” what is the most obvious challenge?

What additional practices and behaviors would you like to develop or strengthen?

Making Business Personal

These companies operate on the foundational assumptions that adults can grow; that not only is attention to the bottom line and the personal growth of all employees desirable, but the two are interdependent; that both profitability and individual development rely on structures that are built into every aspect of how the company operates; and that people grow through the proper combination of challenge and support, which includes recognizing and transcending their blind spots, limitations, and internal resistance to change. For this approach to succeed, employees (Deurion prefers to call them members) must be willing to reveal their inadequacies at work—not just their business-as-usual, got-it-all-together selves—and the organization must create a trustworthy and reliable community to make such exposure safe.

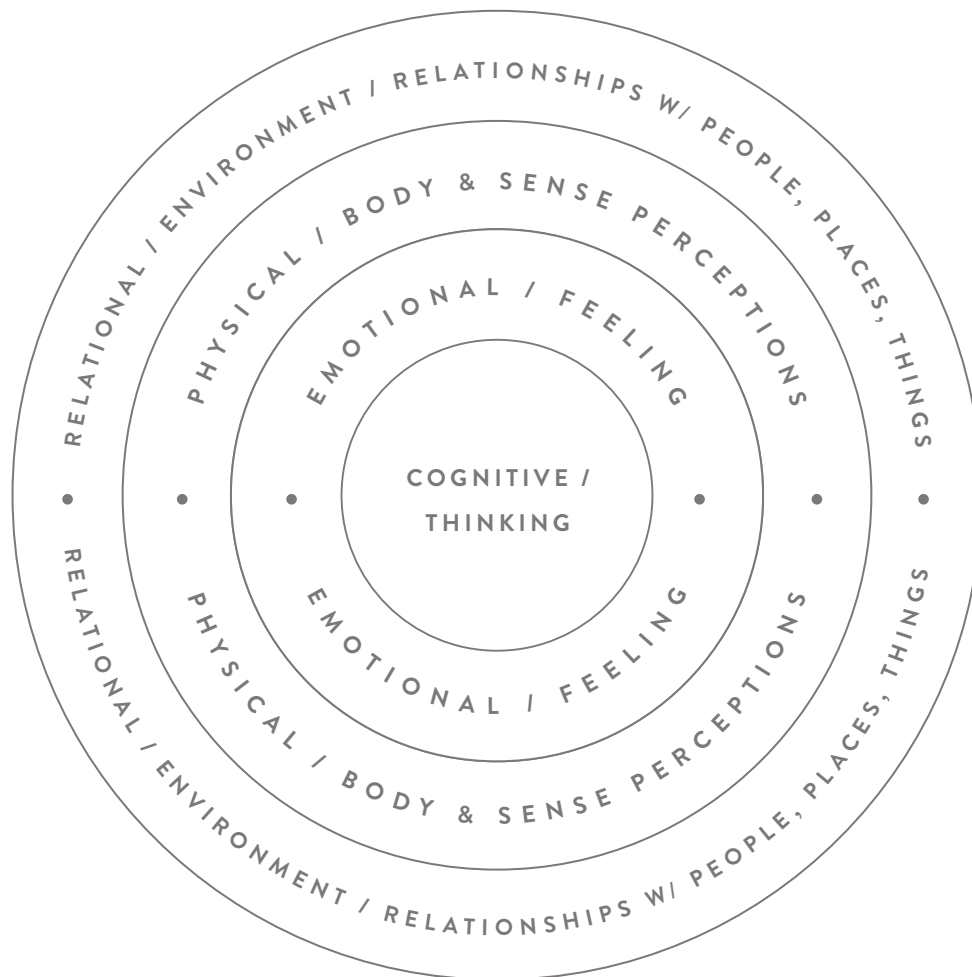
—Robert Kegan, Lisa Lahey, Andy Fleming, and Matthew Miller, *Making Business Personal*

The relevance of deliberate development, along with the individual satisfaction of personal growth, is engagement. In recent years, Gallup surveys have consistently shown that employee disengagement is a significant drain on organizational wellbeing. A recent survey cites more than 54% of employees feeling significantly disengaged. The obvious losses to business are compounded by a deterioration of a sense of meaningful work and a workforce that feels undervalued.

Committing to Deliberate Development

Whatever our objectives, accomplishing them requires us to act in alignment with our purpose and to sustain this commitment over time. While decisions, actions, and behaviors are the result of many factors, they unfailingly have something in common: they take place in the present. When we react emotionally, it's happening in the present moment—of stress. When we act and speak with intention, it also happens in the present moment—of choice. The concepts and practices we will work with in this course are designed to strengthen our responsiveness at the point of action, in the present moment.

Four Core Strengths of Presence





Will you ever bring a better gift for the world
than the breathing respect that you carry
wherever you go right now? Are you waiting
for time to show you some better thoughts?

William Stafford, *You Reading This, Be Ready*

Session One

Self-Awareness and Authentic Leadership

Pause, Relax, Reflect

Pause by bringing attention to physical sensations, then breathe several full breaths.

Relax as much you're able, release as you exhale.

Reflect:

Right now, how can I apply any amount of (insert leadership behavior)?

Right now, I'll bring (insert leadership behavior) to this situation.

What else can I notice/learn here?

How else might I think about this?

How to Become an Authentic Leader

First and most important, [authentic leaders] frame their life stories in ways that allow them to see themselves not as passive observers of their lives but rather as individuals who can develop self-awareness from their experiences. Authentic leaders act on that awareness by practicing their values and principles, sometimes at substantial risk to themselves. They are careful to balance their motivations so that they are driven by these inner values as much as by a desire for external rewards or recognition.

—Bill George et al., “Discovering Your Authentic Leadership”

Questions for Reflection: Am I Living My Values?

If any of the following questions isn't clear to you, skip it. You'll have other opportunities to consider your responses. Answer the questions that you can easily answer now. We'll refer to these responses throughout our sessions. Make sure to include at least one from each part.

PART ONE

What personal/professional objective will this course help me achieve?

Which of my values support this?

What other values/principles do I want to be guided by?

Which of my behaviors aligns with those values and principles?

What parts of my personality will support success?

PART TWO

What behavior gets in the way?

What parts of my personality get in the way?

Note 5 of Your Leadership Behaviors:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Note 5 of Your Limiting Behaviors:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Changing Ourselves

Individuals have their own inner lives, populated by their beliefs, priorities, aspirations, values and fears. These interior elements vary from one person to the next, directing people to take different actions.

Interestingly, many people aren't aware that the choices they make are extensions of the reality that operates in their hearts and minds. Indeed, you can live your whole life without understanding the inner dynamics that drive what you do and say. Yet it's crucial that those who seek to lead powerfully and effectively look at their internal experiences, precisely because they direct how you take action, whether you know it or not. Taking accountability as a leader today includes understanding your motivations and other inner drives.

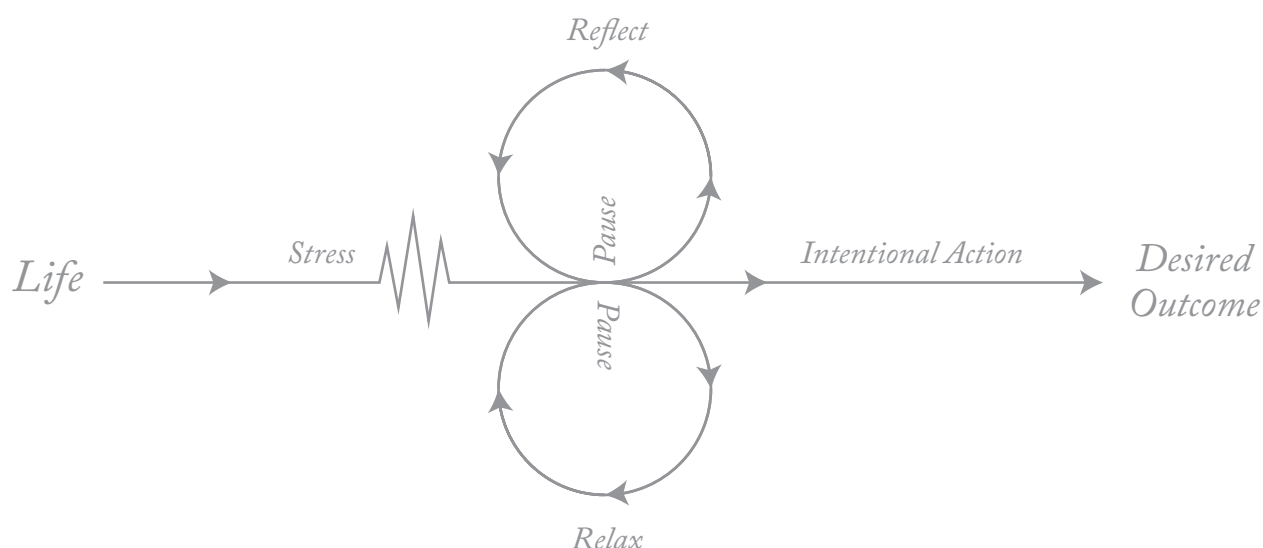
—Nate Boaz and Erica Ariel Fox, *Change Leader, Change Thyself*

Self-Awareness

Knowing our values, strengths, and limiting behaviors is an aspect of self-awareness. We're in touch with our emotions and narratives and can observe our impact on others. This opens a range of positive options in situations where emotions are charged and clear thinking is challenged. The goal in these sessions is to help you build and refine that awareness. You'll increase your ability to notice physical, cognitive, and emotional cues when your reactions compel you to act in conflict with your values. In that moment of noticing, with practice, it's possible to choose a different, productive path forward. Developing a capacity to observe reactivity versus being swallowed by it allows us choice, in two stages:

- *We release negative behaviors.*
- *We choose positive alternatives.*

Other benefits of these practices include stress management, an increased appetite for creative risk, and greater mental clarity.



Presence-Building Exercise: Pause, Relax, Reflect

Here, we employ attention as a building block for greater awareness and presence. Throughout this course, we will use this exercise to prepare ourselves for each session.

Pause

Presence-building exercises cultivate attention to the experience of the present moment. The most important aspect of this practice, and the simplest, is remembering to Pause. It's so simple that it can seem unimportant, and thus we forget. As a result, nothing changes in our behavior, relationships, or leadership. When we Pause, we're halfway to releasing negative behaviors.

To Pause is to notice your experience and step back, especially when you're feeling reactive. Use the moment to bring attention to your sensory experience. You're moving out of an active mode into an observational one. Take several full breaths. It's quick: just Pause and notice.

The best way to remember to Pause is to make a commitment in advance: "When such and such happens, I'll step back and Pause."

Relax

To Relax is to shift our attention to our felt experience—our physical sensations and our senses.

We breathe deeply and pay attention to the feeling of breathing. Our attention is focused and relaxed, anchored to the breath but not blocking other aspects of our experience. We will quickly discover that our thoughts don't stop, and this is where it's easy to get frustrated. But rather than making our thoughts an obstacle, we try for an attitude of impersonal observation, like we would watch the weather. For example, when driving in an intense rainstorm, we might pull off to the side of the road to let the storm pass.

The intensity continues, but we're not fighting with it.

To Relax, pay attention to the texture of your experience. Take time to be curious. Let your attention settle, like a stone slowly sinking through water. Breathe fully and easily.

Reflect

We Reflect by assessing our current alignment with the values and purpose that inspire us. I recommend experimenting with two approaches to Reflect: first, as a question and, second, as a declarative statement.

To summarize:

- Pause. Interrupt the momentum of current thoughts and feelings.
- Relax. Breathe and observe sensations, emotions, thoughts—without going into the storyline. Try simply observing your experience.
- Reflect. Reconnect with your purpose.
 - As a question: In this moment, how might I connect with any amount of (insert leadership behavior)?
 - As a declarative statement: In this moment, I will apply (insert leadership behavior).
 - What else can I notice/learn here?
 - How else might I think about this?

Exercise: Pause and Relax in a Presentation

- In the large group, brainstorm common stressors and issues in teams and the workplace. These quick examples may help participants identify specific issues for the next step.
- In a small group, one member stands and talks about a project they're involved with, describing a challenge they've encountered in making progress toward a goal.
- Other members of the group respond to the leader's remarks with slightly exaggerated responses, not playing for laughs, but not avoiding humor either.
- Each member monitors their own internal experience during the exercise, choosing when to Pause, Relax, and Reflect before responding and moving on. "How would I want my team to respond? What can I do to support that response?"
- In addition, one member of the group is appointed to randomly call for a moment of "Pause" during the discussion.
- Members of the group make observations about the ease or difficulty of pausing.

Exercise: “Yes, and...”: Improvising Pause and Relax

I’m not a performer of improvisation, but I admire the spirit of willing exploration it embodies. I see a natural connection between improv practices and Pause, Relax, and Reflect. Improv performers cultivate an attitude of openness and curiosity toward whatever they encounter in a scene, or whatever prompt they are offered by another performer. One way they do this is through the practice of “Yes, and . . .” where each new experience is an invitation to build on what’s been offered, rather than avoided or blocked. “Yes, and...” is the practice of observational awareness accompanied by curiosity. When “Yes, and . . .” is followed, it opens up situations that would otherwise become triggers for habits and reactivity.

The exercise here is literally saying “Yes, and . . .” to whatever statement your partner offers. First, pausing, you accept with “Yes, and...”, and then you build by offering a response that includes the last few words spoken by your partner. The intention of this exercise is to practice being open to whatever you encounter. If humor is the result, all the better!

While you’re having this conversation, also see if you can keep a light touch of awareness of your physical sensations, thoughts, and feelings.

- Take a seat opposite a partner, facing each other with knees about a foot apart.
- Take a neutral posture (not crossing arms or legs) with feet flat on the floor.
- Partner 1 (P1): Make a statement about something that captured your interest recently, for example, “I watched the news today, oh, boy . . .” Or, “I didn’t really understand the assignment from yesterday.” Or, “It was raining this morning, and my feet got wet . . .” Or, . . .
- Partner 2 (P2): Listen carefully, pause, and then respond to the last thing P1 said with “Yes, and . . . the news today, oh, boy, was a laundry list of unfinished business . . .”
- P1: Listen carefully, pause, and then respond to the last thing P2 said with “Yes, and . . . that laundry list of unfinished business reminded me that I’m out of laundry detergent and better go shopping. Thanks for the reminder!”
- Repeat this back-and-forth exchange for 6, 12, or more repetitions.

Practicing Pause, Relax, and Reflect One Step at a Time

Pause.

During the day, especially in moments between activities, take a minute or two to become familiar with each part of the practice. For example, Pause when you recognize you've been hijacked by anxiety or are preoccupied by random thoughts and concerns. Do this by consciously labeling your thoughts or emotions: "I'm anxious." "I'm overwhelmed." Just notice, without trying to change anything, and breathe.

By labeling your experience, you're making a small shift away from the disruptive activity of the emotional center of the brain (limbic center) and relying more on the area of the brain that governs executive function and creativity (prefrontal cortex).

Relax.

At another time, you might take a moment to Relax by paying closer attention to physical sensations and perceptions. Take several full breaths. Try focusing intently on something you see or hear, and then try to notice a little more. At the same time, see if you can relax into the feeling of being present. Let your shoulders drop.

This part of the exercise provides practice with "focused-relaxed attention." The two aspects seem at odds: focus requires holding attention, and relaxation requires letting go. Try toggling between attention as the mental aspect, and relaxation as sensation and feeling: focus, relax, focus, relax, focused-relaxed . . .

Reflect.

When you find yourself in a moment of tension and must make a decision about what action to take next, whether personally or professionally, briefly Reflect. (The decision may be relatively inconsequential, such as "Do I order dessert?" You're just practicing.) Ask: Does this decision/action align with my values and my underlying sense of purpose?

All of these are exercises, experiments. Be loose and playful.

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Start close in,
don't take the second step
or the third,
start with the first
thing
close in,
the step
you don't want to take.

David White, *Start Close In*

Session Two

The Four Core Strengths of Presence

Pause, Relax, Reflect

Pause by bringing attention to physical sensations, then breathe several full breaths.

Relax as much you're able, release as you exhale.

Reflect:

Right now, how can I apply any amount of (insert leadership behavior)?

Right now, I'll bring (insert leadership behavior) to this situation.

What else can I notice/learn here?

How else might I think about this?

Mindful Presence

Mindful presence is needed at the point of action. It has the quality of readiness—you are poised to act. Mindful presence is attention and intention joined with body, mind, emotions, and relationships. In moments both of stress and of strength, we're able to utilize more of our potential to realize our objectives. We're present, connected, and responsive.

Four Core Strengths of Presence

Our body, mind, emotions, and relationships are gateways to greater awareness and mindful presence. Each is a different way of learning and knowing the world.

Physical presence applies focused-relaxed attention to sense perceptions. Enhanced awareness of sensations allows us to identify early physical signs of reactivity and stress. This sensitivity also supports development of desirable qualities, such as confidence, integrity, and empathy. “What/How do I feel in my body when I’m stressed?” “When I’m confident?”

Cognitive presence applies focused-relaxed attention to thought processes and limiting narratives. Identifying faulty patterns of thinking can help us more clearly assess benefits and risks in decision making. We can also create positive, empowering narratives.

Emotional presence applies focused-relaxed attention to emotional reactivity and triggers. Knowing our own reactive style is key to identifying a positive alternative and cultivating emotional intelligence.

Relational presence applies focused-relaxed attention to interactions with others and our environment. This aspect of mindful presence builds self-awareness by refining our ability to see our impact in situations and relationships. It also makes us more sensitive to the impact of the environment on us (including body, mind, and emotions). We can more clearly assess how to engage.

Growth Mindset

By cultivating mindful presence, we gain clarity in relation to what we see, think and feel, including our reactivity and limiting behaviors. If we're too quick to judge our experience as good or bad, that clarity can feel like a liability, highlighting all that is undone, incorrect, or going down the wrong path. When we balance our clarity with curiosity, our observations become useful data for decision-making.

Clarity and curiosity support experimentation and innovation, whether in developing leadership behaviors or creating new products. When we intentionally cultivate these qualities, we're developing a growth mindset where mistakes, negative feedback, and difficult circumstances are simply data points for informed decision making and no longer are triggers of judgment, faulty narratives, and emotional reactivity.

With a growth mindset, the data from the Four Core Strengths of Presence act like a leadership GPS, aligning us with our chosen direction. *"Reconfiguring!"*



Curiosity and Premature Cognitive Commitments

Curiosity activates a growth mindset, and it is also at the heart of mindfulness. Curiosity finds opportunity when judgment and negative habits start to shut us down. Curiosity asks, “What else can I learn here?” This question is especially potent when we feel that we’ve reached our limit. In Harvard psychologist Ellen Langer’s research on mindfulness, she finds that most of what we think of as “limits” are rather “premature cognitive commitments.” We think we know all there is to know about a particular person, situation, or idea—and thus our interest is turned off and our judgment turned on.

Langer’s approach to mindfulness is secular and research-based. In her book, *Mindfulness*, she identifies three key qualities to be cultivated: “(1) creation of new categories; (2) openness to new information; and (3) awareness of more than one perspective.” In essence, each of these is a form of curiosity. In response to any encounter, we might ask, “What else can I learn here?” or “How else might I think about this?” especially when we feel blocked, limited, or exhausted.

Langer points to the example of 3M engineers, who took a failed product, an adhesive that “didn’t stick,” and instead of walking away from the unsuccessful experiment, turned the not-so-sticky glue into Post-It notes. “What else can I learn here?” resulted in an iconic and highly profitable product line.

Presence-Building Exercise: Body, Breath, Being

This is another approach to mindful presence. It puts us in contact with the present moment by being more deliberate with our attention to the sensations in our body, the simple act of breathing, and letting go. This practice helps us Relax and makes room for curiosity to notice more of what’s happening within and around us at any moment. The benefits include interrupting the stress response, increasing relaxation, and regaining focused attention.

Body. Turn your attention to physical sensations and your senses. You might start with “How am I feeling?” and then take it another step to “What am I feeling?” Notice the different kinds of sensation as you guide your attention from head to toe, or toe to head. Do the scan slowly enough to notice, but not so slowly as to cause you to lose interest.

Breath. After spending some time paying attention to your physical sensations, shift attention to your breathing, and again focus on sensations. Breathe slow, full breaths. This may make it easier to focus.

Option. As you breathe in, form a fist with your hands. Use enough tension to focus your attention but don’t be too forceful. Breathing out, extend your fingers and then relax them. Repeat a few times. Connecting tension and relaxation in this way can provide a target for your attention, especially when you’re stressed.

Being. When exhaling, allow yourself to relax any amount you can. You might focus on one area of your body at first, and then gently extend to include the whole. This is where you could also Reflect:

As a question: In this moment, how might I connect with any amount of (insert leadership behavior)?

As a declarative statement: In this moment I'll be (insert leadership behavior).

What else can I notice/learn here?

How else might I think about this?

Opportunities for Further Exploration

1. Identify one of your values and one of your behaviors you will commit to focusing on in our sessions.
Make the commitment; it'll enhance your experience and provide encouragement for continued practice.
2. Practice each of these presence-building exercises for 3 minutes.
Pause, Relax, Reflect
Body, Breath, Being
3. What questions do you have? Where do you get stuck?

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calm.com

Presence–Building Exercise Cards:

The materials for this course include cards with brief instructions to guide you in these practices in your life and work. On the reverse of each card, there’s room to record your own prompts and to note what you have found useful.



And you?

Either you're sunk in the past, half our walk,
thinking of what you never can bring back,

or else you're off in some fog concerning
—tomorrow, is that what you call it? My work:
to unsnare time's warp (and woof!), retrieving,
my haze-headed friend, you. This shining bark

a Zen master's bronzy gong, calls you here,
entirely, now: bow-wow, bow-wow, bow-wow.

Mark Doty, *Golden Retrievals*

Session Three

Say No to Say Yes

Pause, Relax, Reflect

Pause by bringing attention to physical sensations, then breathe several full breaths.

Relax as much you're able, release as you exhale.

Reflect:

In this moment, how might I connect with any amount of (leadership behavior)?

In this moment I'll be (leadership behavior).

What else can I notice/learn here?

How else might I think about this?

Exercise: Exploring Attention

I'm going to ask you to do something completely mundane: peel an orange. What's different about this instance is that you'll take 7 minutes in silence to peel the orange, paying close attention to all of your senses and holding the question, "What else can I notice?" "How else might I think about this?" Begin with a Pause to activate your mindful presence, and once you've completed the exercise consider the following questions:

- What was surprising?
- What did you notice that you hadn't noticed before?
- How did resistance show up?
- Can you connect resistance to "premature cognitive commitments"?
- Were you able to ask "What else can I notice/learn here?"

Opportunity for Further Exploration

Apply your attention and curiosity to a moment of boredom or impatience today. Before moving on, ask, "What else can I notice?" "How else might I think about this?"

Authentic Leadership

In my research on leadership transitions, I have observed that career advances require all of us to move way beyond our comfort zones. At the same time, however, they trigger a strong countervailing impulse to protect our identities: When we are unsure of ourselves or our ability to perform well or measure up in a new setting, we often retreat to familiar behaviors and styles.

But my research also demonstrates that the moments that most challenge our sense of self are the ones that can teach us the most about leading effectively. By viewing ourselves as works in progress and evolving our professional identities through trial and error, we can develop a personal style that feels right to us and suits our organizations' changing needs.

That takes courage, because learning, by definition, starts with unnatural, and often superficial, behaviors that can make us feel calculating instead of genuine and spontaneous. But the only way to avoid being pigeonholed and ultimately become better leaders is to do the things that a rigidly authentic sense of self would keep us from doing.

—Herminia Ibarra, *The Authenticity Paradox*



How we frame new learning directly impacts how we feel about it. Are we building skills and expanding opportunities, or compensating for a sense of lack, trying to avoid embarrassment? Our self-image, including how we think others will look at us, has a powerful influence on how we learn. So if, as Herminia Ibarra notes, “learning, by definition, starts with unnatural, and often superficial, behaviors,” and we have a strong inner narrative of self-criticism, our resistance to trying out new approaches and behaviors may also be strong, expressed as righteous indignation, avoidance, or fearful anxiety. As persuasive as our inner story might be, the deeper reasons for our resistance often go unexamined. Our lack of insight sustains the behavior and the narrative supporting it. When we find ourselves defending actions we know weren’t skillful, we’re under the sway of that internal critic.

The positive spin is to see resistance as our learning edge, our growing edge. It’s not that we have to eradicate the limiting narrative, but we do need to be aware of it and to be willing to consider that, at least in part, it may be a fiction. Then, when we encounter new information or a challenge, we can meet it with attention and curiosity. We can shift to a “What else can I learn?” stance and go a little bit further, a little bit deeper into knowing ourselves. This is the power of a growth mindset.

“Saying no to say yes” means saying no to resistance in order to say yes to intention. To say no is to Pause and acknowledge our resistance. We pay attention to how it feels and what we’re thinking. We get to know it, and then we choose words and behaviors that align with our purpose. The Four Core Strengths of Presence are the instrument for recognizing resistance as it arises—in our body, mind, emotions, and relationships. Then, having acknowledged resistance, we can say yes and step forward into the values and purpose we intend.

Reflection: Align with What’s Important

- When I’m out of alignment with my purpose, what do I notice in the Four Core Strengths?
- What helps me interrupt my limiting behaviors?
- Am I clear what I want to strengthen?
- What behavior will I cultivate?

Presence-Building Exercise: Anchoring Awareness

This exercise emphasizes physical sensations as a place to anchor mindful presence. It can help you to develop stability, especially when stressed and feeling off-balance.

Begin by standing.

Pause: Notice your physical sensations; feel your feet on the floor. Spend a few minutes settling and becoming familiar with the connection between the soles of your feet and the ground beneath you. Breathe deeply and briefly observe each of the senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch).

Option. *Relax:* Breathing in, lightly flex your muscles, taking the tension of stress and channeling it into a feeling of strength. Begin by isolating one part of the body, like your hands: flex, extend, and then relax with the breath. Next, start at the soles of your feet and gradually build, lightly flexing from the soles of your feet up to your hips. You can extend this flexing and releasing all the way to the top of your head. Light flexing is all that's needed, turning stress into strength.

Reflect:

Right now, how can I apply any amount of (insert leadership behavior)?

I'll be (insert leadership behavior) in this situation.

What else can I learn here?

How else might I think about this situation?

Opportunities for Further Exploration

Before retiring for the evening, take 3 minutes. First, Pause. Notice your physical sensations, the presence of emotion, and the movement of the breath.

- Take 3 full breaths and release as you exhale.

Option. Experiment with tension and relaxation as you breathe in (tense) and out (relax).

- Reflect on the quality or behavior you're building.

Bring to mind someone you respect who manifests this quality or behavior.

How does this impact you? What do you notice in the Four Core Strengths?

What else can you notice, learn, or be curious about?

- When rising in the morning, repeat.

Note what's challenging, both with the method and your resistance.

Note what's helpful.

- What's your experience like when recalling someone you respect?

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Wherever you are is called Here,
And you must treat it as a powerful stranger,
Must ask permission to know it and be known.
The forest breathes. Listen.

David Wagoner, *Lost*

Session Four

Mindful Presence, Chaos, and Creativity

Pause, Relax, Reflect

Pause by bringing attention to physical sensations, then breathe several full breaths.

Relax as much you're able, release as you exhale.

Reflect:

Right now, how can I apply any amount of (leadership behavior)?

Right now, I'll bring (leadership behavior) to this situation.

What else can I notice/learn here?

How else might I think about this?

Chaos and Leadership

The fundamental tension is that people want clear leadership, but what we're doing is inherently messy. We know, intellectually, that if we want to do something new, there will be some unpredictable problems. But if it gets too messy, it actually does fall apart. And adhering to the pure, original plan falls apart, too, because it doesn't represent reality. So you are always in this balance between clear leadership and chaos; in fact that's where you're supposed to be. Rather than thinking, "OK, my job is to prevent or avoid all the messes," I just try to say, "Well let's make sure it doesn't get too messy."

—Ed Catmull, *Creativity Inc.*

Attention and Self-Acceptance

Growth requires us to willingly step into uncertainty. In this unfamiliar place, one of our greatest allies is acceptance—which is different from resignation. Acceptance is recognition of what's happening here as a starting point. When we choose to enter uncertainty, to take creative risk at the beginning of new projects or in a process of innovation, it gets messy, and that can feel like a mistake, like it's wrong. The internal dimension of messiness is our judgments, faulty narratives, and reactivity. Externally, we're dealing with relationships, expectations, and resources. Chaos!

Acceptance opens a growth mindset, making it possible to reframe difficult personal traits as part of a creative process. This involves risk. We're at our learning edge, where we're testing and creating. In the words of Ed Catmull, "you are always in this balance between clear leadership and chaos; in fact that's where you're supposed to be." Adopting an attitude of self-acceptance softens the internal criticism we put on "mistakes," which fuels ideas of failure. We can anticipate resistance and judgment, and prepare ourselves with strategies, personal practices, and constructive alliances.

In this messiness it's inevitable there will be times we feel lost. The words of the poet are instructive, "Wherever you are is called Here, / And you must treat it as a powerful stranger." To say "Here" is to Pause and notice; "treat it as a powerful stranger" is to see potential. We don't just react to fear and panic, we observe the Four Core Strengths. Then we can shift to "What else can I see/hear/learn here?" These are powerful questions in the presence of uncertainty.

Presence-Building Exercise: Identify, Interrupt, Inspire

- When you're becoming reactive, first notice that you're triggered and then name it: "I'm getting angry." Identify it. Short and simple.

- Interrupt the reactivity by bringing your attention to physical sensations and your senses. Increase the strength of your observation. Look at the sensations as if you were collecting data in a science experiment. They are neither good nor bad. “My shirt is tight in the neck,” “It’s bright in the room,” “I can smell coffee . . . mmmm, coffee—oh, . . . there’s a smell of coffee,” “There’s heaviness in my eyelids.”
- Expand this observation slightly to include your feelings and thoughts: “I think I’m going to explode,” “I’m feeling curious,” “I’m feeling frustrated,” “I’m feeling _____.” Observe your sensations, feelings, and thoughts without judgment.
- Relax and breathe. Make the breath the focus of your attention. The sensations of breathing move to the foreground of your awareness, and other sensations, emotions, and thoughts shift to the background. Simply observe your experience.
- Inspire by recalling your purpose and intention. Invite your chosen leadership behavior/quality and observe its influence on your body, mind, emotions, and relationships:
 - In this moment, how might I express any amount of (leadership behavior)?
 - In this moment I will act with (leadership behavior).
 - What else can I learn here?
 - How else might I think about this?

Questions for Reflection

How do I experience the Four Core Strengths when I’m “lost”?

Body

Mind

Emotions

Relationships

What do I notice?

How can I use this information to return to “here”?

Appreciating Emergent Possibilities

Even seasoned leaders internalize the acute stress of such moments—so much so that their judgment and decision-making skills seem insufficient. The result? They fall back on old habits, which, unfortunately, are almost always out of sync with what the current context demands.

The problem isn't the problem; our relationship to the problem is the problem. In other words, we have many of the skills needed to handle what's being thrown at us. But when faced with continual complexity at unprecedented pace our survival instincts kick in. In a mental panic to regain control, we fight, flee, or freeze: we act before thinking (“We’ve got to make a decision, now!”), we analyze the situation to the point of paralysis, or we abdicate responsibility by ignoring the problem or shunting it off to a committee or task force. We need inner agility, but our brain instinctively seeks stasis. At the very time that visionary, empathetic, and creative leadership is needed, we fall into conservative, rigid old habits.

You can't steer your company through constant change if you are relying on the safety of your own cruise control. To spot opportunities—and threats—in this environment, we must teach ourselves how to have a more comfortable and creative relationship with uncertainty. That means learning how to relax at the edge of uncertainty, paying attention to subtle cues both in our environment and in how we experience the moment that may inform unconventional action.

... We need to recognize and appreciate emergent possibilities.

—Sam Bourton, Johanne Lavoie, and Tiffany Vogel, *Leading with Inner Agility*

Opportunities for Further Exploration

Think of a time you felt pushed to your limit in a relationship, in a test of endurance, in a project, etc.

- What's your usual reactive style (e.g., "I get angry and lash out!" "I take it as a challenge, as something to overcome." "I get quiet and withdraw")?
- What's one of the stories you tell yourself when you're at your limit (e.g., "This always happens to me." "That jerk keeps messing things up." "I'm afraid if I make a mistake, they'll know I'm incompetent.")?
- When you think of this particular instance, consider what might have happened if you had paused, relaxed, and asked yourself, "What else can I learn here?"

Test It in Your Life

Consider a collegial relationship where there is some tension. For the purpose of experimenting with new learning, commit to trying out the three steps of Identify, Interrupt, Inspire in this relationship. When you begin to feel triggered, ask "What else can I learn/observe here?" You don't need to wait for tension to build. Experimenting in situations of relatively low risk makes it easier to put these suggestions into practice as the risks increase.

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What shape waits in the seed of you
to grow and spread its branches
against a future sky?

David Whyte, *What to Remember When Waking*

Session Five

Leadership Presence

Pause, Relax, Reflect

Pause by bringing attention to physical sensations, then breathe several full breaths.

Relax as much you're able, release as you exhale.

Reflect:

Right now, how can I apply any amount of (insert leadership behavior)?

Right now, I'll be (insert leadership behavior).

What else can I notice/learn here?

How else might I think about this?

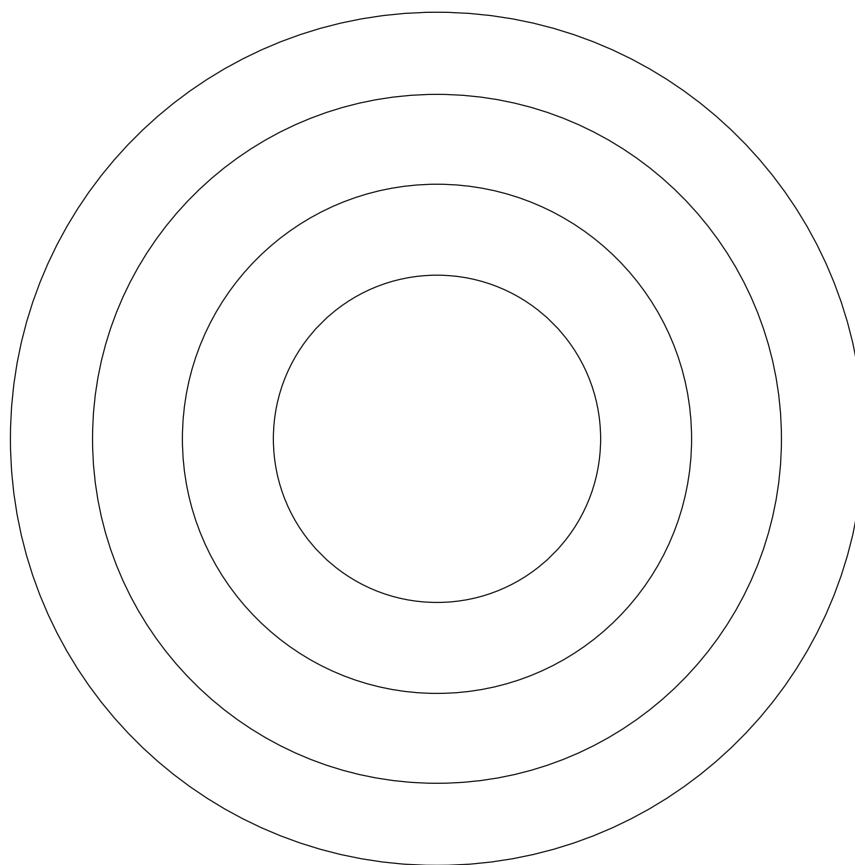
Leadership Embodiment

Our environment and thoughts continually prime our neural circuits, whether we're aware of it or not. We can make conscious use of this phenomenon by seeding our lives with objects and thoughts that prime with intentionality. When we follow the Leadership Embodiment practice of calling into mind a great and inspirational historical leader, we are priming the brain to activate the neural networks related to our associations with that person. We step out of our habitual ways of thought and allow these other networks to provide insight to the challenges that we face. The key here is to think of a figure, idea or thing, that will prime your brain to access its most expansive and effective networks. . . . By calling into mind an image that is accompanied by a powerful emotional state, we are not only activating the neural networks associated with that state, but we are also creating a positive disposition to action.

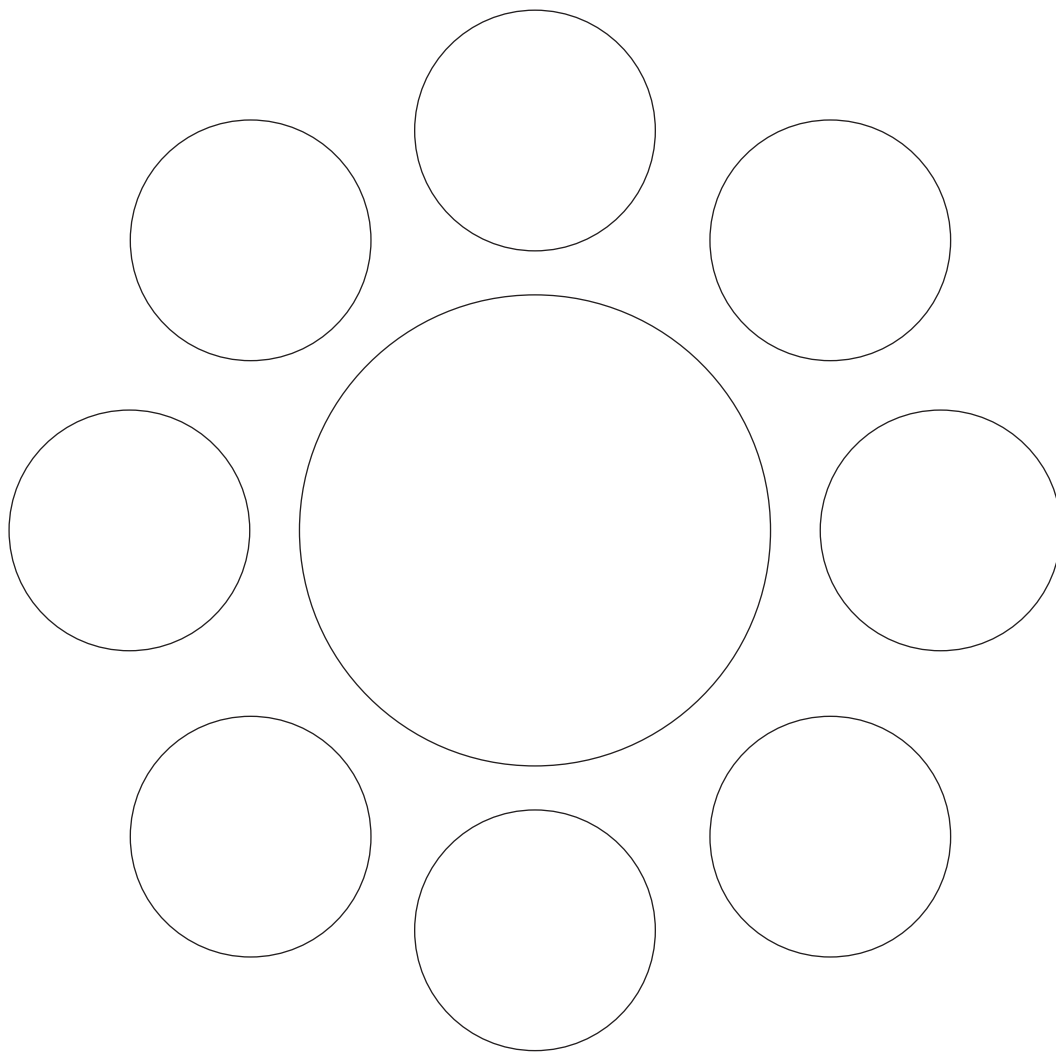
—Wendy Palmer and Janet Crawford, *Leadership Embodiment*

Priming for Strength

Put a word in the central circle representing something/someone that triggers negativity or resistance. In the radiating circles, insert other images, thoughts, memories, people, or things that come to mind.



Put a word in the central circle representing something/someone that inspires confidence. In the radiating circles, insert other images, thoughts, memories, people, or things that come to mind.



Exercise: Images to Activate Values and Purpose

What's one of my defining values?

What's an image that expresses the best of that?

What's a strength I'll need to manifest that value?

What's an image that expresses that?

Identify 6 images in your environment and 6 related strengths/qualities:

Images

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Strengths/Qualities

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Table Conversations

Select 2 images from the 6 you identified and their corresponding strengths. Discuss with a partner. How does each image connect you with the identified strength? Where could you place this image to remind you of your leadership strength/behavior (for example, on the wall of your office or near your computer monitor)?

Empowering Images

From the cards you've been given, select 2 images and explore how they express 2 of your identified strengths. Note on the back of these image cards anything you want to remember as you continue to practice.

Exercise: The Physical Presence of Leadership

With a partner, read aloud the following instructions, which will help you to guide each other through the exercise. Consider reading the instructions silently first to familiarize yourself.

- Discuss together how you understand integrity. Who are you when you manifest integrity (e.g., "I speak the truth." "I'm accountable." "I do the right thing.")?
Partner 2 (P2) makes note of Partner 1's (P1) comments.
Stand and Pause. Feel your feet in contact with the floor.
Relax and notice what else you're feeling.
Reflect on the qualities of integrity you identified. What's your image of integrity?
P1: Describe your image or impressions. Even if you don't have a clear image, are there aspects that you can describe visually?
P2: Reflect back: "Your image of integrity is _____, right?" "What about that image expresses integrity?"
P2: Make note of P1's comments.
- While holding your image of integrity in mind, explore the Four Core Strengths of Presence.
Observe what arises in your body, mind, and emotions and in relation to the environment.
What are you feeling physically?
What are you thinking now? Try to be a neutral observer of whatever story is bubbling.
What words/stories connect you to integrity? What's the story you want your words and actions to communicate to others? This could be even a single word or simple phrase.

- What emotions are present? With the same neutral observation, focus on what you're feeling. What's the feeling/emotion of integrity?
- How are you affected by the environment and people around you?
- Create a physical posture or gesture of integrity. For example, "Feeling my feet on the ground, I feel stable. Integrity is stable. I can remember this when standing to make presentations." Or, "Integrity is open to feedback. I feel open when I roll my shoulders back. I can roll my shoulders back as a way to prepare for giving and getting feedback." Or, "Focus is a quality of integrity. I can focus my gaze as a way of focusing my attention on a challenge."
- Switch roles and repeat the exercise.

Our posture communicates both ways: outwardly to others and inwardly to ourselves. As with any new exercise or practice, we have to find what works for us. You can experiment by exaggerating and minimizing the posture or movement. You can also explore opposites: in this case, what's the opposite of integrity, and what does that feel like?

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What I could not know then was how being a sifter
would help me all year long.

When bad days came

I would close my eyes and feel them passing
through the tiny holes.

When good days came

I would try to contain them gently
the way flour remains
in the sifter until you turn the handle.

Time, time. I was a sweet sifter in time
and no one ever knew.

Naomi Shihab Nye, *Sifter*

Session Six

Leadership as Metaphor

Pause, Relax, Reflect

Pause by bringing attention to physical sensations, then breathe several full breaths.

Relax as much you're able, release as you exhale.

Reflect:

Right now, how can I apply any amount of (insert leadership behavior)?

Right now, I'll bring (insert leadership behavior) to this situation.

What else can I notice/learn here?

How else might I think about this?

Metaphor: The Shape of Inspiration

We all know that good stories are anchored by powerful metaphors. Aristotle himself observed, “Ordinary words convey only what we know already; it is from metaphor that we can best get hold of something fresh.” In fact, he believed that mastery of metaphor was the key to rhetorical success: “To be a master of metaphor is the greatest thing by far. It is . . . a sign of genius,” he wrote. . . .

It is perhaps ironic that this proposition about an unscientific construct has been scientifically confirmed. Research in cognitive science has demonstrated that the core engine of creative synthesis is “associative fluency”—the mental ability to connect two concepts that are not usually linked and to forge them into a new idea. The more diverse the concepts, the more powerful the creative association and the more novel the new idea. . . .

You can’t chart a course for the future or bring about change merely by analyzing history. . . . The railroad, the motorcar and the telephone all introduced enormous behavioral and social shifts that an analysis of prior data could not have predicted.

To be sure, innovators often incorporate scientific discoveries in their creations, but their real genius lies in their ability to imagine products or processes that simply never existed before.

—Roger L. Martin and Tony Golsby-Smith, *Management Is Much More than a Science*

Metaphor Links the Four Core Strengths

Metaphors are stories, and stories affect how we think, feel, and act. They exist as images and narratives—but not in fact—and they are powerful. Metaphor is a creative frame for our experience. Think about how many times a day we use metaphor to communicate: “Time flies!” “I’m too busy putting out fires to get anything done!” “I’ve got a mountain of work on my desk!” “I’m stoked!” “LMAO” ;) These illustrate “associative fluency” inconspicuously at work in our lives. These images communicate volumes.

How we frame our experience predisposes us to action. Our personal stories of limitation, for example, are metaphors for how we believe ourselves to be incomplete. So if we’re shaping new behaviors to build leadership presence, the use of imagery and metaphors can quickly align us with our purpose. Branding and vision statements are metaphors that invite alignment. In deliberately developmental organizations, structures align with internal practices to manifest a culture of integrity. This can be applied to our personal development also. A clear, inspired metaphor can prompt integrity.

The following exercises are more than simply pretending. They build confidence in associative fluency and help us to see multiple possibilities for responding to any situation. They also prime us for creativity, for

thinking outside the box, joining the Four Core Strengths of Presence and a growth mindset to expand our notion of what's possible.

Exercise: Act Out a Metaphor

- Stand like a redwood
- Sit like a mountain
- Walk like a river
- Think like a leader
- Be patient like a _____
- Have courage like a _____
- And . . .

Find a Metaphor for Your Leadership Journey

Through the use of metaphor, tell the story of setting out on your journey of discovery.

- What is your destination? What does it look like? How do you feel when you're there?
- Who's with you? Who are your allies?
- What provisions do you need?
- What barriers do you anticipate?
- What will help you surmount them?

- Where are you now relative to your destination? What does it look like? What else do you notice?
- When you look around, what do you see, hear, feel, etc.?
- How will you measure progress along the way? How will you know when you've reached your destination?

Image, Emotion, Action, Repeat

Images are accompanied with an emotional connotation. When you think of a grand mountain in nature or a leader that you revere, the thought has an emotional component. From a brain perspective, emotions serve to move us into action. Feeling states are elegant shortcuts to action that bypass the thinking mind.

Just understanding and buying into the rationale, however, does little to alter the patterns that drive behavior. When we cognitively vow to react to a trigger differently next time, we rarely do. The part of the brain that consciously understands the need to change and can “just say no” has extremely limited resources, and stress diminishes that capability for response inhibition even further. The pre-encoded patterns are simply too strong for the relatively weak cognitive control processes of the pre-frontal cortex.

In order to shift our behavior to keep pace with our cognitive understanding, we have to rehearse a new pattern so that we automatically generate the right thoughts and body responses. We do that through attention and repeated practice.

—Wendy Palmer and Janet Crawford, *Leadership Embodiment*



“Visualize that a flower is opening...”

It does take patience. It takes a lot of failing and frustration. But also, what’s amazing about singing is that the muscles involved in it are involuntary. And so how do we control them? And the only answer is with imagery, really – with the mind. And you know, there’s a great book by, I think, Thomas Hemsley called “Singing And Imagination.” And he talks about how the mind fires a set of impulses, and they have an effect on the muscles. And then you have to sort of follow the Pavlovian principles, and you have to teach those muscles what you want them to do.

So when I’m singing a high note, my great teacher – a teacher I’ve been with 21 years might say in her very dramatic way – Anthony, imagine that a flower is opening when you hit that note. And so I would imagine, in the voice of Joan Patenaude-Yarnell, a rosebud opening. And that teaches my muscles to do a particular thing, that image. And so when I go onstage, if I’ve taught my muscles well, all I have to do is picture that.

—Anthony Roth Costanzo (Countertenor) interviewed by Terry Gross, October 2019

Exercise: Behavioral Change and the Four Core Strengths

- Stand. Pause and anchor your attention and presence.
- Relax.
- Reflect on your chosen leadership quality.

- Embody this quality through the Four Core Strengths:

Body. First, as you reflect on this quality, notice the feelings and thoughts that are present. Next consider, “What’s a gesture that expresses this quality (to me)?” Make it simple and discreet, only you need to know. For example, touch forefinger and thumb (to remember patience), form a fist (to focus), stand with hands on hips à la Wonder Woman or Superman (to trigger courage), cross and uncross your arms (to ease into presence), widen your stance (to strengthen stability), engage your core (to minimize reacting). These are just examples, what’s the gesture, stance, or movement that puts you in touch with the quality of strength you’re developing?

Mind and Emotion. What’s your empowered narrative? “I can win this...” (visualizing approaching the summit of a mountain); “Flexibility will deliver success here” (imagining the flexible strength of bamboo which bounces back with incredible resilience after having been battered); “I can accomplish this – it’ll take courage and patience...” (envisioning the fearless curiosity of a jungle cat); What are your key words? What feelings accompany those key words?

Relationships. Which objects or influences in your environment support you, and which challenge you? What object or image could you include in your work environment to remind you of this strength?

Physical Presence: Power and Posture

Although both adopting a powerful posture and adopting a powerful role increased conscious feelings of power, Huang found that only posture—but not role—affected the unconscious feelings of power. . . . As Huang notes, “Our experiments [showed] that posture actually has a stronger effect than role power on the behavioral and psychological manifestations of power [and] . . . further bolster the notion that power is embodied, or grounded in bodily states. To think and act like a powerful person, people do not need to possess role power or recall being in a powerful role.” In short, a simple bodily posture, held for just a couple of minutes, produces bigger feedback effects than being assigned to a powerful role. . . . That’s quite exciting.

—Amy Cuddy, *Presence*

Practice, Practice, Practice!

U.C.L.A. neuroscientist Jeffrey Schwartz states, “The mental act of focusing attention can hold in place brain circuits associated with what is focused on.” Focused practice, regularly sustained over time, leads to efficient rewiring of neural circuits. Intermittent and inconsistent practice allows the new circuits to destabilize causing the brain to revert to the more stable but less desirable older circuits. While the brain is not actually a muscle, in this sense, it acts like a muscle. Sporadic vigorous workouts do very little to produce stronger muscles. Progress rapidly degrades in the off periods. Only with regular focused workouts do you see consistent results.

—Wendy Palmer and Janet Crawford, *Leadership Embodiment*

Taking These Practices into Your Life

We've practiced strengthening attention, returning to curiosity, encouraging a growth mindset, developing the Four Core Strengths, imaging behavioral strengths, and creatively applying metaphor to frame our vision of leadership. Now we'll test ourselves in action.

Take an hour to wander and practice these methods with whatever you encounter: people, traffic, weather, food, sounds, the natural environment. Pause, Relax, Reflect. During the hour, practice at least three times, observing your experience, reflecting on your chosen behavioral strength, and exploring through the Four Core Strengths. This could be while you're waiting at a crosswalk (Anchoring Awareness exercise); walking with others (Identify, Interrupt, Inspire); or sitting alone and people watching (Body, Breath, Being). Mindful presence is a hidden strength. No one will know you're practicing.

Visit a museum or gallery: locate works of art that capture your attention and spend time with them. They may be pleasant or unpleasant pieces—each will provide a learning opportunity. Look until you feel the urge to move on and then, don't, rather Pause, Relax, observe the Four Core Strengths, and Reflect. "What else can I notice here?" "What else can I learn?" Challenge yourself to notice three more things—and then three more. Test what feels like the limit of your attention and interest. And see if you can respond by embodying your chosen leadership quality, using the simple gesture you experimented with earlier.

When pausing in front of an object, whether a work of art, a building, a flower, a tree, or anything else in our environment, regard it as a proxy for interactions with colleagues. As you reach the limit of your interest and begin to turn your attention away, catch yourself. Pause, Relax, Reflect, and become curious: "What else can I learn here?" "How can I apply any amount of (insert leadership behavior)?" As you become familiar with the Four Core Strengths, you'll begin to notice greater choice and feel more confidence to go beyond your habits. It's not quick, and sometimes it may go against the grain, but the process builds integrity.

Developing Agility

He learned to temper this derail by incorporating three behavioral changes into his routine. First, he started taking short walks before regularly scheduled team meetings to compose his thoughts and consider topics that might arise and trigger his emotions. Second, as group discussions began, he moved his watch from his left arm to his right as a reminder to maintain control. Third, he began using "information-seeking behaviors" with peers in team meetings—such as asking, "Can you tell me a bit more about your idea and how it might improve the situation?"

—Thomas Chamorro-Premuzic, *Could Your Personality Derail Your Career?*

Exercise: Identify Three Behavioral Shifts

If, for example, patience is something you'd like to have more of, think about situations and relationships that trigger your impatience. Think of 3 simple actions you could take in the moment to Interrupt your reaction, which the above quotation calls “derailers.” Use the Four Core Strengths to refine your awareness of cues for when impatience is building. Use an abbreviated form of Pause and Relax to Interrupt the momentum, then shift to one of your chosen behaviors.

Small Behavioral Shifts I Can Choose Instead:

Opportunities for Further Exploration

Continue to shape your behavior using the Four Core Strengths. Create a specific behavioral practice for each one:

- *Body.* Use a posture or gesture.
- *Mind.* Find an empowering narrative.
- *Emotions.* Create a metaphor for your intention.
- *Relationships.* Use images and other environmental prompts.

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Conclusion

Hidden Strengths Create Leadership Presence

The leadership journey is a metaphor: a flowing river, a powerfully stable mountain, or the expansive and protective canopy of a grand tree. It's an ever-evolving process that combines our unique personal values, choices, behaviors, and relationships to creatively build influence and successfully deliver results. The best and most inspiring leaders intentionally grow in their self-awareness and in the knowledge of their context to address the needs and to leverage the capacities of those they lead. The journey begins with and is supported by the simple art of paying attention and the skills of mindful presence.

Mindful presence is a result of our mind, body, and emotions being aligned with a specific purpose in the present moment. All of our choices and actions take place now. So if, in this moment, we can Pause and reclaim our attention; Relax and observe our experience; and Reflect, aligning with our purpose and intention, we can change disruptive patterns and the limiting narratives that hold us back. This will make

us more effective decision makers, better listeners, and thus more skilled communicators. We will embody leadership presence, walking our talk when facing the challenges and successes of the day, and inspiring others' trust.

The methods of mindful presence that have been explained in this course can be adapted to any situation. Their simplicity makes them easy to practice, but it can also cause us to overlook them. Mindful presence as an idea is nice, but without practice we won't see any change and will likely lose our motivation. So, as Herminia Ibarra suggests, we can bring a sense of play to new behaviors and practices, and lower our expectations. Then, we'll be more likely to enjoy the process, which will help us to sustain our efforts.

“Wax On, Wax Off!”

In the movie *The Karate Kid*, an unassuming Japanese man, Mr. Miyagi (Pat Morita), instructs a bullied high school student, Danny LaRusso (Ralph Macchio), in karate. His methods are unconventional and perplexing: first, he instructs Danny to wax his car using precisely choreographed, repetitive movements; and then to paint his house, again using precise, choreographed movements. Danny's frustration builds. He trusted Mr. Miyagi, and now feels he's been fooled and taken advantage of. It is at this point that Mr. Miyagi challenges Danny: “Show me wax on, wax off!” The scene evolves into a demonstration of how the mundane, repetitive actions of waxing and painting were laying the foundation for punches, blocks, and kicks, revealing to Danny that Mr. Miyagi has been skillfully teaching him all along.

The methods taught in this course, including Pause, Relax, Reflect and the Four Core Strengths of Presence, are like the repetitive, seemingly nonsensical tasks assigned by Mr. Miyagi: “Wax on, wax off!” After some practice, when a challenging situation arises, you will know immediately how to engage: Pause, Relax, Reflect!

Resources for Practice and Accountability

You might consider other helpful support, including a coaching relationship (whether peer, group, or professional) to encourage accountability and evolve a growth mindset. You can sample the many mindfulness and meditation apps to build confidence in managing your attention, and you can reap the benefits of well-produced online stress management resources. You'll find a number of options in the References and Resources sections throughout this workbook. Take one small step at a time, and you will slowly reframe challenges as opportunities for engagement and as signs of progress.

Making Change Stick

Trying to change our behavior (what is seen and judged) will fail—the old, hardwired patterns return when pressure mounts—unless we have first addressed internal patterns with conscious effort.

To make change stick, unwire and rewire from the inside. Start with self-awareness: seeing yourself as a viewer of your own “movie.” Once you see the pattern, you have a choice whether to change. Owning the choice creates enormous freedom. And as you exercise that freedom to change your mind-set and practice new behavior, you role-model a transformation—creating what does not exist today but should. And isn’t that what leaders do?

—Joanna Barsh and Johanne Lavoie, *Lead at Your Best*

About Mark Power

Mark Power has over 30 years of experience supporting, training and coaching people to bring their lives into alignment with their most important values. His approach uses his Four Core Strengths of Presence (physical, cognitive, emotional and relational) to develop self-awareness, deepen self-acceptance, and lead with self-confidence.

As young man he went “on the road” exploring North America. It was a formative experience of self-discovery, provoking a lasting desire to discover what it means to be authentic. Mark has studied with teachers of the Buddhist tradition who introduced him to contemplative methods that he has practiced throughout his life and that form a cornerstone for his transformational work with others.

Professionally, he has also served as a chaplain in hospice and palliative care. The depth of his experience has equipped him with exceptional skill and sensitivity for effectively guiding individuals to create strategies for living fully. His love of art and poetry, and writing add creative depth to his coaching and facilitation.

Mark is certified by the Hudson Institute of Coaching, and a partner in Life Positioning, Inc. in Shenzhen, China and North America. He serves as adjunct faculty at Indiana University’s Kelley School of Business where he teaches MBA students “Mindful Presence: The Hidden Strength of a Leader”. He has served as a leader and teacher with the Nalandabodhi Buddhist community for many years. And, Mark is a board-certified chaplain (BCC).

He lives with his wife in Red Hook, New York – in the heart of the Hudson Valley – and is the proud father of two talented daughters and an amazing granddaughter.

*“Let your desire for success be guided
by integrity, trust in your deep intentions,
a kind welcome of imperfect attempts, and
appreciation of your community. All of these
are available when you pause, relax and reflect!*

*Thank you for your exploration of this
journey of mindful-presence.”*

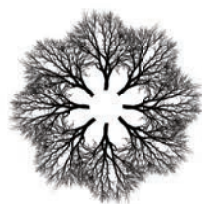
MARK POWER

Images of Leadership Strength

Feel free to draw and/or attach images that inspire leadership qualities.

Notes

Feel free to use this space as you'd like.



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