

What are the benefits of mindfulness?

When we use and integrate mindfulness-based techniques into our day to day lives, we can achieve a higher state of awareness and focus that brings us into the present moment. This present moment awareness supports and nurtures a sense of calm in our thoughts, emotions and body which allows us to see, feel and understand what's happening in our moment-to-moment experience, accepting things just as they are without judgement but with kindness and compassion.

But can we apply these tools and experiences into today's place of work and why would learning to be mindful as a leader of teams make a difference? To answer this question, we need to understand what makes a leader more effective and what the current workplace landscape looks like.

What are the challenges that today's leaders face?

Leadership has changed. Today it is all about building engagement and connections, as most teams have adapted and are now working remotely. Working life has simply become more complex and to a certain degree faster. In the past 14 months the majority of us have stopped working face to face turning the professional life for some into a myriad of continuous online meetings and making us at times to become more distant. We tend to go into autopilot, happily settled into established routines, yet feeling exhausted and uninspired so everything just becomes another task that needs completing. We disengage from the work and from our lives, falling into familiarity and drifting between past and future worries. This inevitably increases stress and anxiety and makes us less efficient at what we do.

This more complex workplace landscape means that leaders are facing different challenges and therefore need to adapt their style accordingly. Turning up and tuning into the present moment can help to break these routines, reduce stress, stop procrastination, start

to rebuild resilience, and increase motivation.

How can mindfulness support today's leaders?

Leading from a place of compassion and understanding improves the ability to connect to yourself and others in a way that will keep people inspired and help with leading change effectively.

According to the [Mindfulness Edge by Matt Tenney and Tim Guard](#), leaders who practice mindful leadership are seen to have higher levels of emotional intelligence, have better decision-making skills and business acumen. They are also often more innovative and have improved strategic thinking compared to their peers.

Mindful leaders are able to build stronger teams and long-lasting relationships as they engage their audiences by being authentic in leadership style that encourages and creates greatness in others.

In short, Mindfulness is an essential skill for effective leadership as it significantly improves both the 'soft' and 'hard' skills of emotional intelligence and business acumen. The discussion on emotional intelligence and the skills required to develop a deep understanding of one's level of emotional connection with others are now seen to be, by definition, leadership skills.

Different from management skills, as the Mindfulness Edge explains, the leadership skills are about inspiring high levels of performance across teams and businesses so it's fair to say that the competencies required in inspiring, engaging and driving high performance in others is truly connected to those skills identified as being emotionally intelligent. In practical terms mindfulness is 'awareness training,' so it is no wonder that mindful leadership is now being seen as a great way to develop emotional intelligence. Mindfulness practices help to sharpen a few fundamental tools that will certainly make leadership effective.

How does mindful leadership translate into the day-to-day?

[Stephanie Unthank, Director at MindfulnessUK At Work](#) says “through the **practice of awareness**, mindful leaders are able to create space in their thinking by tuning into and noticing what is happening around them. This building of awareness sharpens the mind to focus on the present and sustain the attention when we are solving problems. You can easily spot the leaders who practice mindfulness as they stay in the focused zone listening deeply, without interruption.”

Mindful leaders show up in other ways too and this comes in the form of **compassion, deep empathy and understanding**, so that your actions as a leader no longer cause or continue suffering. This develops both through showing compassion for self and others. For instance, they may say no to something or decline an invitation to an extra meeting that could compromise personal selfcare. As well as the personal effect on the leader, these actions may also have a downstream impact on their team in several ways, for example: better role modelling through leading a more balanced lifestyle by avoiding late working or working through unsociable hours

Being an effective mindful leader will heighten conversational skills, allowing engagement in a conversation to come through eye contact and body language and giving moment to moment interaction a priority with minimal or no distraction. This brings much needed **clarity** both from what needs to be done but also clarity of understanding without judgement, conditioning, or biases as you approach each problem with a beginner’s mind. It is no longer about “what **if**” but more about “what **is** in front of me”. Being in a present moment with clarity wastes less of resources and **creates space for opportunities and creativity** because everything becomes possible, we are no longer held ransom to old schemes and models.

Mindfulness also heightens our awareness and compassion for others . Being the employee on the receiving end of communication, objective setting, task and project introduction, even bad news can feel quite personal, sometimes even punishing. Mindfulness nurtures a sense of awareness that supports a more empathetic approach to leadership. It moves leaders away from transactional relationships

and towards a more compassionate and importantly human relationship where communication, language and engagement with kindness and a sense of understanding become the norm.

Let's not confuse compassionate and mindful leadership with being a soft touch, often frowned upon in the corporate world. Think of it more as seeing the world through the eyes of an employee and being mindful that your actions as a leader do not cause pain and suffering on individuals. Leaders can still lead, manage underperformance, and drive delivery of outputs in a compassionate and mindful way, it is possible. Like most things it takes practice, skill, and continued development.

The core competency of emotional intelligence is self-awareness. There are many [studies](#) that support this thinking. We highlighted the benefits of mindfulness in our blog - [Why Mindfulness Isn't Just a Buzzword](#) but it is also worth noting that [mindful leadership](#) is not a new concept but with increasing pressures and with most of the workforce now adopting a new a more remote way of working the need for good leadership has become increasingly vital.

To find out more about how we can help you integrate mindful leadership then why not get in [touch](#) for a chat.

References:

[6 Steps Towards Mindful Leadership | Psychology Today](#)

[Mindful Leadership: A Simple Way to Lead Better | CCL](#)