

What is a mindful leader?

A mindful leader is defined by three primary characteristics:

Self-awareness

Awareness of others

Ability to focus on what's important

These three traits are vital to successful leadership in the coming years. Technology advances are accelerating, time and attention are scarce, and our world faces complex challenges. In the midst of all that, human interaction is still at the core of our being.

What is mindfulness?

Being aware of what's going on -- in our minds, in our bodies and around us -- and accepting it without trying to change it

(because trying to change it will most likely drive us crazy)!

Mindfulness practices teach us to pay attention. And one step further, they teach us to pay attention to what we're paying attention to. When we're present, we're able to observe our thoughts, feelings and environment as they are and accept them without judgment.



Self-Awareness

When we're self-aware we're aware of our own:

Thoughts

Beliefs

Emotions

Motivations

Strengths

Weaknesses

Personality

Self-awareness allows us to see things as they are and to choose our behaviors instead of falling back on habitual reactions. It is the foundation upon which we grow the other two characteristics of mindful leadership; it is also a process that is never complete because we're always changing and adapting. As we become more self-aware, we can connect more with others and better focus on the things that fulfill our own mission.

Tools for developing self-awareness

Mindfulness Meditation:

5 minute guided mindfulness meditation [\[link\]](#)

Body Scan:

Guided body scan meditation [\[link\]](#)

Gratitude Practices:

A daily gratitude practice [\[link\]](#)



Awareness of others

When we're aware of others, we can express empathy and compassion toward their thoughts, feelings, behaviors and situation. Because we are aware of our own internal patterns, we can recognize them in others. We also understand what motivates others and can clearly communicate expectations in a way they understand. Finally, we can express more patience because we recognize that everyone is doing the best they're able at any given time.

Tools for developing other awareness

Loving Kindness Meditation:

Guided loving kindness meditations [\[link\]](#)

Mindful Listening:

How to practice mindful listening [\[link\]](#)

Thank You Notes:

Creating a grateful workplace [\[link\]](#)

How to beat stress and burnout [\[link\]](#)



Focus on What's Important

There are two aspects to this trait:

1. Identifying what's important
2. Focusing the mind on one thing at a time

Leaders set the tone and direction for their team, organization, family, etc. They must be aware of their own values so that they can tie them to those of the larger group and chart a course for success based on what's important to them. Creating a larger mission for everyone is vital to keeping focused and achieving success.

Once priorities are set, the work needs to be done. Successful leaders lead by example, demonstrating control over their internal monkey mind. Distractions abound but they remain steadfast and calm, leading the way.

Tools for Developing Focus

Walking Meditation

Guide to walking meditation [\[link\]](#)

WAIT

Ask yourself: Why am I talking / What am I thinking? [\[link\]](#)

Daily Journaling

The benefits of daily journaling [\[link\]](#)

