

October, 2018 In The Know Summary

The Mind of the Leader

How to Lead Yourself, Your People, and Your Organization for Extraordinary Results

by Rasmus Hougaard & Jacqueline Carter

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About the Book

The Mind of the Leader opens by presenting data on the our workplace culture today. It paints an alarming picture of a leadership crisis. For example:

- Lack of engagement: 13% global workforce is engaged
- Suffering: 65% of employees would forgo a pay raise to see their leader fired
- Lack of Leadership: 77% of leaders think they are doing well; 82% disagree
- \$46 billion/year is spent of leadership training

The central premise of the book is that leadership starts with the mind, including:

- **Mindfulness:** Being present, fully focused and fully aware. Learning to manage your attention. All things considered, if time and skills are all equal, those who have a greater capacity for attention will out-perform everyone else. If you can increase your focus by 1% or 5%, you will do better personally and as an organization. Mindfulness is both a practice AND a state of mind. If we are distracted and on autopilot we are not present with our people. As leaders, we can't expect our teams to be engaged and feel supported if we are not present.
- **Selflessness:** Not letting our ego impulses rule us, seeing the bigger picture. Service vs. self-centeredness; humility vs. arrogance. How do you cultivate the notion of humility, and why does it matter?
- **Compassion:** The intent to be of benefit to others. We have a desire to act. Acting could be a thought, wish, or behavioral reaction. Reference: [Tania Singer](#), Max Planck Institute.
 - **Empathy** = We feel with others. Risk: When we are empathetic, we can feel burnout. We feel with others and bring on their troubles (emotional contagion).

The book includes resources to (1) Build self-awareness, manage your habit patterns. (2) Understand your people, and take time to understand their needs, and (3) Understand the organization and organizational needs. The approach is to teach leaders patience, acceptance, and techniques for letting go. Then, look at how you bring this into everyday issues at work such as prioritization, digital communication, and interpersonal communication.

Recommended Activities

Mindfulness Activity #1 (Focus)

- Purpose: This technique helps build awareness of the challenges associated with quieting your mind and focusing.

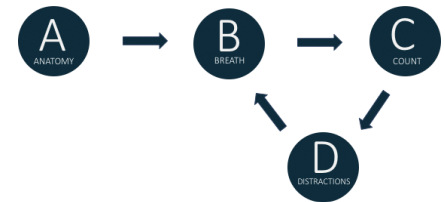
- Activity: Focus on one thing for 45 seconds and see what arises. Pick one thing (only one thing), e.g., color blue, sandwich. You can close your eyes or not.
- Debrief: How many of us were able to do it successfully? (Vast majority of us are unable to focus. Almost half of the time, our minds are wandering.)

Activity #2 (Identifying Habitual Patterns)

- Purpose: This activity is guided and therefore useful to anyone who is new to meditation. It helps build self-awareness—in particular, it helps you identify your own habitual patterns, or distractions.
- Activity: Sit still. Draw your awareness of whatever comes to your mind. Notice it. It could be a sound, a physical sensation, a thought. Notice what is present for you. Let go of any inner commentary about this exercise.
- Debrief: What was your experience?
 - Helpful to “label” what I am thinking. That helps an idea or thought go away, so you can clear your head.
 - Helpful to equate thoughts of “to do list items” with sensations in the body or sounds in the room.
- Start to identify your habitual thought pattern, e.g., Planning, Worry.
 - Next step: Think about whether that behavior is useful to you, how it serves you. For example: I think about decisions I need to make in the future (what to wear three days from now) and that is bringing me stress.
 - Next step: Name it, so you can let it go.

Activity #3 (“ABCD”)

- This activity has four parts:
 - A – Anatomy: Look at your body. Get into a relaxed, yet alert position. Sit up straight. Close your eyes (or not). Soften your gaze; look at the floor.
 - B – Breath: Focus on breath and belly. Find your breath wherever you notice it most easily.
 - C – Count: Count and start over when you get distracted.
 - D – Distractions: Name any distractions, including thoughts. Return to the breath and counting as you are distracted.
- Goal is not to clear your mind. It’s to notice when you get distracted and build mental muscle when you are distracted. Long term, this will train you to improve your focus.



Activity #4 (Gratitude/Selflessness)

- Background: We all have egos, and they get in our way. Research shows that the more we use “I,” “me,” and “mine,” the greater the risk for health issues. Ego gets in our way. What is the risk for leaders? As leaders rise in the ranks of an organizations, the less feedback they get, and the less candid the feedback.
- Activity Idea: Have a conversation with someone and for one minute, do not say “I,” “me,” or “mine.” (Very hard to do this for one minute.)
- Activity Idea: Discuss who made being here (e.g., at this meeting, or at this office, etc.) today possible for you? (Selflessness practice.)

Ways to have compassion for yourself

- Get enough sleep
- Disconnect from screen time

- Take mental breaks during the day

Related Resources

- [Related Blog post](#) by Laura Mendelow
- Mindfulness apps: The Mind of the Leader, Calm, HeadSpace, Insight Timer
- Mindful Leadership Summit, November 1-4, 2018 (Washington, DC)
<http://leadershipsummit.mindfulleader.org/>
- Harvard Business Review Assessment [How Mindful Are You?](#)
- Esther Perel's Podcast, Where Should We Begin? (Couples Therapy) <https://www.estherperel.com/podcast>
- World Business & Executive Coach Summit (Frequent webinars) <http://www.wbecs.com/wbecs2018/>

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