

The Ultimate  
Mindfulness  
Guide  
for  
Busy People

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BY RATNA JUITA & STUART TAN

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# About The Mindgem

The Mindgem is a mission-driven organization that aims to empower individuals and organizations to build a sustainable well-being and resilience strategy for success and fulfilment.

We help people and organizations to :

- Better manage stress and burnout
- Have more energy to do what they love
- Be more productive at work
- Take charge of their well-being
- Live life more purposefully and intentionally

We facilitate the following training programs :

- Mindful Communication
- Mindful Leadership
- Resilience & Well-Being
- Energy and Emotional Management
- Emotional Intelligence



# About the Authors

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Ratna is a TEDx speaker, facilitator and trainer. She facilitates training in the area of Workplace Mental Health, Mindfulness, Well-Being, Emotional Intelligence, Personal Mastery and Presentation. She co-authored Book “Women Empowered: Personal Journeys to Become Empowered Women”.



She is passionate about supporting individuals and organizations to rise above stress, build resilience and find their inner strengths to overcome challenges. Recently she is recognized as LinkedIn Top Voice 2022 for Mental Health. She was featured by Channel News Asia 938, and Nu You Magazine.



## STUART TAN

Stuart is an executive coach, international speaker, organizational psychologist, and Executive Leadership Coach. He has been a trainer since 1994, over 500,000 individuals and dozens of organisations across 11 different countries.

He has been teaching aspects of neurological impact ever since his involvement with training, particularly in areas of resilience, mindfulness, leadership and personal mastery. He has coached successful leaders to further improve their performance in leadership by acquiring new capabilities to synergize their Life Dimensions.



# Hello and Welcome!

Thank you for your interest in being a Mindful leader of your own life.

It's rare these days to see someone who is concerned and taking action toward improving their mental and emotional well-being even though work results within your business setting is crucial.

Your results depend on your overall health and well-being. Mindfulness is a preventative approach. Just like maintaining a beautiful home, we need to maintain our inner selves. Also, if we are under pressure, mindfulness supports us to recover far faster.

We hope that the content within inspires you to have a regular mindfulness practice for you and your organisation!

# What is Mindfulness?



## Definition of Mindfulness

*Mindfulness is awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgementally.*

*Jon Kabat-Zinn*

Mindfulness is a state of active, open attention on the present. When you're mindful, you observe your thoughts and feelings from a distance, without judging them good or bad. Instead of letting your life pass you by, mindfulness means living in the moment and awakening to experience. It is often described as a form of meditation, and is practiced in many different ways.

Mindfulness can help to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, and can also improve focus and concentration.

# What are some common misconceptions about Mindfulness?

## MYTH #1 - MINDFULNESS IS A RELIGIOUS PRACTICE.

Mindfulness is a religious practice. Mindfulness is our capacity to notice, in the present moment, all that we are experiencing with an open awareness. It is a basic human capability that can be developed with training, through practice and patience. The practice is usually found in many contemplative traditions including Buddhism, however, in the context of the workplace, mindfulness practice is a form of mental training that is entirely secular and does not require commitment to any spiritual tradition.

## MYTH #2 - MINDFULNESS IS ABOUT EMPTYING YOUR MIND.

Mindfulness practice is not about zoning out or stopping our thoughts. This form of mental training is about becoming more aware of the unique patterns of your mind, and that includes the nature of your thoughts. With sustained and disciplined practice we can develop our ability to notice what draws our attention away from the task, whether that task be a mindfulness exercise or a workplace activity. By recognising distraction and coming back to the desired object of our awareness, we both strengthen our ability to stay focused and learn about the nature of the thoughts that distract us.



# What are some common misconceptions about Mindfulness?

## MYTH #3 - MINDFULNESS MAKES EMPLOYEES PASSIVE AND IT DOESN'T LEAD TO CHANGE ORGANIZATION CULTURE

One of the key criticisms of implementing workplace mindfulness courses is that it doesn't change the poor practices of toxic leaders or organisational cultures, but can instead be applied like a 'sticking plaster'.

Whilst it is early days in terms of an evidence base, some research has shown that implementing mindfulness, along with coaching, makes a difference to leadership behaviours, helping managers to act with greater emotional intelligence, compassion and social responsibility.

According to Alexandra Crosswell, assistant professor, University of California, San Francisco, instead of just providing individuals with better tools so that they can cope with work stress, leadership can create a culture that supports the physical and mental well-being of all employees, which will ultimately enable productivity as a final result.

As companies increasingly begin to realize the benefits of having happy, healthy employees, it's clear that mindfulness is key to successful workplaces of the future.

*Company leadership needs to create a culture that doesn't overwork their employees, which includes implementing policies that support the physical and mental well-being of all employees.*

*- ALEXANDRA  
CROSWELL*

# 8 Ways Mindfulness can be attained

1. Start with baby steps – even a minute of mindfulness can make a difference.

Starting with baby steps is always a good idea, and this is especially true when it comes to mindfulness. Even just a minute of mindfulness can make a difference in your overall well-being. There are many ways to be mindful, such as focusing on your breath, paying attention to your surroundings, or simply being present in the moment. If you're new to mindfulness, start with just a minute or two each day and see how it goes. You may be surprised at how much better you feel.

2. Make it a habit – set aside some time each day for mindfulness and stick to it.

Mindfulness is a habit that can be cultivated through setting aside some time each day for reflection and focusing on the present moment. It can be helpful to establish a regular mindfulness practice by setting aside a specific time each day, such as first thing in the morning or last thing at night, and sticking to it. There are many different ways to be mindful, so experiment and find what works best for you.





3. Be patient – it takes time to learn how to be mindful, so don't get discouraged.

Mindfulness is a skill that you can develop with practice. Learning to be mindful takes time and patience. Don't get discouraged if you don't see results immediately. Keep practicing and you will eventually develop the skills necessary to live in the present moment. This practice, when turned into habit, can serve you if you pay attention to changes in your life and energy.



4. Focus on your breath – simply focus your attention on your breath and nothing else.

Try to set aside some time each day to focus on your breath and being in the present moment. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to your breath. Over time, you'll find that you're able to be more present and less reactive to what's going on around you.

5. Don't judge – let thoughts and feelings come and go without judgment.

When practicing mindfulness, it is important not to judge your thoughts and feelings. Let them come and go without judgment. This will help you to be more present and aware of the present moment.



6. Acceptance – accept whatever thoughts and feelings you have without trying to change them.

Thoughts and feelings are a natural part of life, and it's important to accept them without trying to change them. This can be difficult at times, but it's a healthy way to live. Acceptance doesn't mean that you have to like everything about your thoughts and feelings, but it does mean that you're okay with having them. When you are able to do this in a state of mindfulness, you will find yourself in a better state of being.





7. Let go – once you've accepted your thoughts and feelings, let them go.

When you find yourself struggling with intrusive thoughts or negative emotions, it can be helpful to remind yourself that these are just thoughts and feelings - they are not reality. Once you have accepted them, let them go. Don't get caught up in ruminating on them or trying to push them away. Instead, focus on the present moment and on what you can do to take care of yourself.

8. Be in the moment – focus your attention on the present moment and not on the past or future.

When we focus our attention on the present moment, we are better able to appreciate what is happening around us. We can savor the taste of our food, the beauty of a sunset, or the joy of spending time with loved ones. Our minds are free to wander when we focus on the past or future, but when we are in the moment, we are fully present and can truly enjoy life.

## What are the Benefits of Mindfulness?

Mindfulness has been shown to offer a number of benefits. These include reducing stress and anxiety, improving sleep quality, increasing focus and concentration, and enhancing overall well-being. Additionally, mindfulness can help to reduce negative emotions and rumination, and promote more positive outlooks on life.

There are many benefits of mindfulness in organizations. Mindfulness can help employees become more aware of their surroundings and themselves, which can lead to increased productivity and decreased stress levels. Additionally, mindfulness can help to create a more positive work environment by promoting communication and collaboration among employees.

## How can Mindfulness Meditation help with Anxiety & Stress?

Mindfulness meditation is a form of mindfulness that can help with anxiety and stress. When you are mindful, you are aware of your thoughts and feelings and you observe them without judgment. This can help you to see your thoughts and feelings more objectively and can help you to let go of them more easily.

There are many different ways to meditate, but mindfulness meditation generally involves focusing on your breath and being aware of your thoughts and sensations without judgment. The goal is to be present in the moment and to let go of thoughts that cause anxiety or stress.

## There are four main steps to mindfulness meditation:

- ✓ Find a comfortable position. You can sit in a chair with your feet flat on the ground, or you can sit on the floor with your legs crossed.
- ✓ Close your eyes and focus on your breath. Breathe in and out slowly and evenly.
- ✓ Pay attention to your thoughts and sensations without judgment. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to your breath.
- ✓ When you're finished, open your eyes and take a few deep breaths.

There is a growing body of scientific evidence that suggests that meditation can have a positive effect on the brain. Studies have shown that regular meditation can increase levels of activity in the areas of the brain associated with concentration and attention, and can also lead to changes in the way the brain processes information.

Some research has also suggested that meditation may help to reduce stress and anxiety, and can even improve memory and cognitive function. Studies have shown that regular meditation can increase gray matter density in the hippocampus, which is associated with memory and learning, and decrease gray matter density in the amygdala, which is associated with stress and anxiety. Other research has found that meditation can improve focus, attention, and self-control, and reduce age-related cognitive decline.

# Mindful Leadership

What is mindful leadership and why is mindfulness important in leadership?

In the business world, the term “Mindful Leadership” is used to describe a leadership style that is focused on the present moment. This type of leader is aware of their surroundings and their own thoughts and feelings, and they use this awareness to guide their decisions and actions.

Mindful leaders are often able to create a more positive work environment and foster better communication and collaboration among team members.

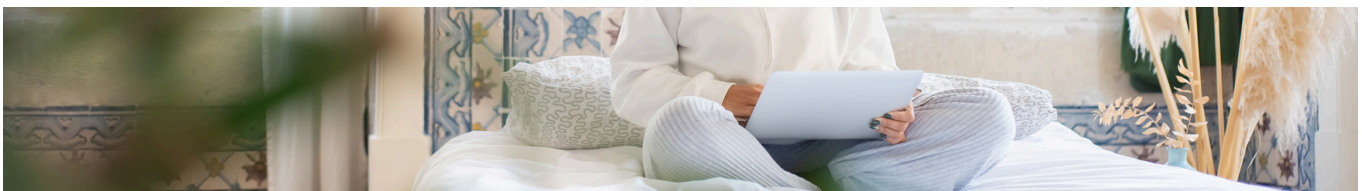


There is a lot of evidence that mindfulness can help leaders be more effective. For one thing, it can help them be more aware of their own thoughts and emotions, as well as the thoughts and emotions of others. This can make them better at communication and problem-solving.

Additionally, mindfulness can help leaders reduce stress and anxiety, which can improve their decision-making ability. Finally, mindfulness can simply make leaders more pleasant to be around, which can make employees more engaged and productive. Leaders who are mindful are able to make better decisions, because they are not influenced by their own biases or emotions. They are also able to be more effective communicators, because they can really listen to what others are saying.

## **Mindfulness in leadership is proven to develop Focus, Clarity, and Creativity**

A recent study (Burmansah, Rugaiyah, Mukhtar, 2019) has shown that applying mindfulness in leadership is proven to develop Focus, Clarity, and Creativity. Mindfulness allows a leader to respond to situations as they arise to respond to the reality of constant change with calm and focus. It also helps the leaders to have the presence of mind to deal with the reality of any situation and a leader whose mindfulness is apparent in his communication. Those they lead to know that decisions are made from places with awareness, integrity, and courage (Gonzalez, 2012).



## What happens when leaders are unable to manage stress?

Managing stress, uncertainty and change is a must for a leader to succeed. However, when a leader can't handle stress, the consequences can be devastating. To manage stress, uncertainty and change well, a leader must know how to work with his or her emotions as well as the perceptions and actions of others. This is not always easy to do, as personalities can vary. However, mindfulness is a proven practice that can help a leader manage stress, uncertainty and change well.

These days, it seems that leaders are finding it harder and harder to cope with stress. This is largely because the way of dealing with stress in the past centered around self-help. However, we are in a different era now. Not only is vulnerability valued, it is also a pathway to establishing cohesion among colleagues during tough moments.



# What type of training methods should organizations use to train leaders in mindfulness skills?

There are many mindfulness exercises that can be done in order to increase awareness and focus.

One popular exercise is to sit in a comfortable position and focus on the breath. The breath is then followed as it goes in and out of the body.

Other exercises can include focusing on the sensations in the body or on a particular object.

- 1.Box breathing
- 2.Visualization
- 3.Breath of Fire
- 4.Whole brain breathing
- 5.Sensing and releasing
- 6.Visual rehearsal
- 7.Body Scanning

# Why you should have a mindfulness program in your organization?

Organizations are under more pressure than ever to do more with less. But it is resourcefulness, not resources, that enables an individual to achieve this.

## 1. Improving productivity and efficiency

One way to increase productivity and efficiency is to implement a mindfulness program. Mindfulness has been shown to help people reduce stress, improve focus and concentration, and be more present in the moment. All of these benefits can lead to increased productivity in the workplace. In addition, mindfulness can help create a more positive work environment by promoting greater communication and collaboration.

## 2. Reducing Triggers

This has a downstream effect of reducing triggers. If you have ever felt like you were being triggered by something that happened, you may have felt like you couldn't do anything about it. If you are someone who has been triggered in this way, it is crucial that you practice mindfulness, which helps you to reduce the frequency of triggers that happened to you in the past. It also helps you to be aware of what triggers you and how to avoid them in the future.

For example, if you find yourself getting triggered by people who are late for meetings, you can practice mindfulness to be more aware of how you are feeling when you are waiting for them. You can also practice meditation to calm yourself and reduce the intensity of the trigger.

### 3. Reducing unwanted Turnover

Turnover can cost up to 200% of an employee's annual salary. In industries like retail, customer service, and hospitality, entry-level turnover alone costs billions of dollars each year, based on voluntary turnover rates and annual replacement costs. Meanwhile, employee disengagement results in higher absenteeism, more accidents, lower business profitability, worse customer service, and a lower share price.

In one recent study, researchers examined the relationship between company mindfulness programs and retention. They found a significant relationship between mindfulness and higher levels of commitment among employees to their current employer.

# Case Studies

Many organisations have rolled out our mindfulness program internally and measure the impact of such programs in happiness, well-being, relationships, ability to focus and many more.

Here's some case studies from 2 organisations :

## 1. Intel

Awake@Intel is a mindfulness program that Intel plans to make available to over 100,000 employees in 63 countries. To date, 1,500 employees have taken part, having completed 19 sessions. The results so far: “On average, participants responding to pre- and post- self-evaluation questionnaires report a 2-point decrease (on a 10-point scale) in experiencing stress and feeling overwhelmed, a 3-point increase in overall happiness and wellbeing, and a 2-point increase in having new ideas and insights, mental clarity, creativity, the ability to focus, the quality of relationships at work and the level of engagement in meetings, projects and collaboration efforts.”

## 2. Aetna

At the American health insurer, Aetna, nearly 15,000 employees have participated in at least one yoga or meditation class “and those who have reported, on average, a 28 percent reduction in their stress levels, a 20 percent improvement in sleep quality and a 19 percent reduction in pain. They also become more effective on the job, gaining an average of 62 minutes per week of productivity each, which Aetna estimates is worth \$3,000 per employee per year.” Further to these benefits, in 2012 medical claims dropped by 7.3 percent, which amounted to a \$9 million saving for the company.

# Emotional State Management

Emotional management is a skill that everyone needs to learn. However, it is obvious that it is an elusive skill, as not everyone who needs it has mastered it.

What is emotional management in the first place? Emotional management is the ability to change your emotional state through effective methods and in order to succeed at specific behaviors. For example, you might need a state of calm awareness in order to shoot a target well. This same calmness might be useful in situations that might call for it, such as negotiating with a difficult customer, or even navigating a complex change process.

Essentially, emotional management is linked to the way you carry out tasks. Whenever you reach a goal successfully, it is due to the fact that you acted in a manner that supported your ability to reach that goal. However, if you were in the wrong state, the actions you take are likely to cause you to miss that goal.



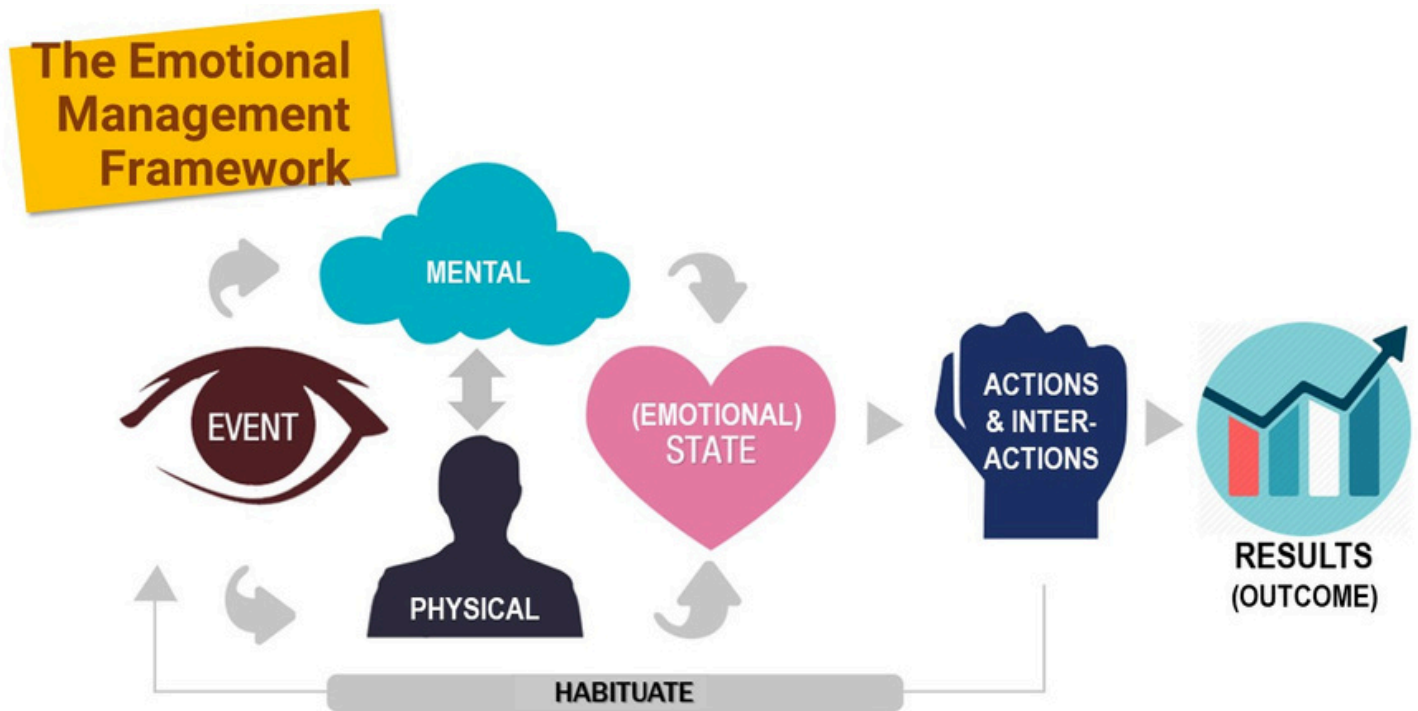
So, how do we actually manage our states well?

There are two components to emotional state management. The first is the thoughts, including mental images and self-talk we carry in our mind. The second is the condition of our body, or your physiology. When negative images and dark dialog enter your mind, you are likely to feel bad. This interrelation can also be seen when you start imagining moments of joy and compassion. Your body, if you connect with yourself well, is also likely to experience a certain lightness.

Why would this work?

To illustrate, imagine right now that you are eating a lemon. Really bite into it and simulate that reality. You might notice a physiological reaction. This is a classic experiment done in the 1980s by Denis Waitley, a well-known psychologist for the US Olympic Team at the time. By getting basketball teams to (i) visualize making the perfect shot versus (ii) physically making the perfect shot, he discovered that both teams were able to have significant gains. In other words, we can use the power of the mind to have an effect on the body.





This is the Emotional Management Framework.

It is a way of recognizing that all results are the basis of action, which are dictated by emotions.

Hence, if we want to get the results that are desired, we need to deliberately and effectively put ourselves into an effective emotional state.

Here are some emotional management techniques that all leaders should have:-

- Shifting physiology
- Changing breathing
- Recalling resourceful and motivating states
- Enclothed cognition

# 1 Shifting Physiology

In various experiments, it was found that not only do thoughts influence physiology, the reverse also happens. Take for example just standing up, stretching and smiling. Or, adopting a powerful pose that demonstrates confidence. You begin to feel that way too! Unfortunately, when we are caught up in work, we often forget, and lapse into bad postures, and sometimes we wonder why we feel confused, anxious or unmotivated.

Rule of Thumb: observe your body and change it to something more empowering on a moment-to-moment basis!



## 2

# Changing Breathing

It is easy to underestimate breathing as a way to change our states.

In multiple neurological studies, breathing directly influences our brainwaves that are representative of specific emotional states.



In our workshops, we invite participants to practice different kinds of breathing methods in order to arrive at a better emotional state. As a result, it enables them to feel more calm, grounded and energized, sometimes as if they had a power nap!



## 3

# Recalling Resourceful States

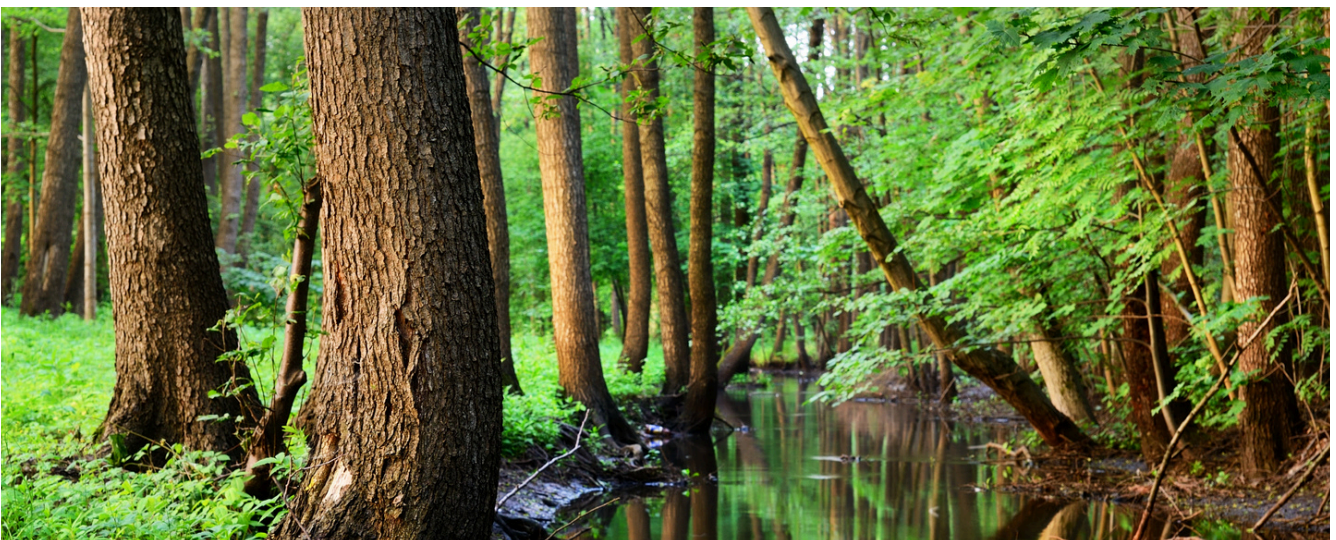
In a sense, your mind is a simulation machine. If you take the time to really recall moments, you can feel nostalgic. At the same time, directing these thoughts to moments where you felt liberated, free, positive and at peace, you are more likely to resonate with similar feelings.

Now, the idea is to then take the time to be mindful of these states in the present moment.

Feel what you might feel... as if you are truly there.

Notice the sensations in your body. What indicators are there of your peace and positivity?

Such a practice is known as embodiment. When you learn to take feelings inside your body rather than dissociate from them, they become real. Unfortunately, the mind tends to gravitate toward practicing what is familiar. As a result, many people experiencing negative states simply lapses into bad memories without realizing that practice makes permanent. Thus, a proper guided practice series is required, which we use to guide our coachees toward better state management.



## 4 Enclothed Cognition

Various studies have shown that when you have a favorite item or article of clothing that you wear, it makes you feel better.

Ironically, we don't utilize this for places we sit, things we eat, or actions we participate in. Wouldn't it be interesting to imbue, say, your pen with powerful emotions? This is the concept of enclothed cognition, a form of psychological priming.



In our workshops, we utilize techniques that enable our participants to involve themselves in creating their own enclothed cognitions so that they can regularly practice on their own.

# How Emotional Intelligence Links to Mindfulness?

## 1. Develop awareness of one's own emotions

One way is by helping a leader to be more aware of their own emotions. By being aware, they can determine alternative behaviors that are enacted as a result of their emotions, help others to understand their intentions more clearly, and work on themselves.

## 2. Awareness of others' emotions

Another is by helping a leader to be more aware of the emotions of those around them. This will help them be better able to create a team that functions well. When you can tell that someone is more motivated or driven in one task, it is not within the realm of impossibility for you to reallocate another person who dislikes that task so that you can balance up the motivations of individuals. Likewise, when someone is not emotionally right, a good leader can conduct a supportive conversation with them. They will be able to read people's emotions and respond appropriately.

## 3. Develop empathy

A third way mindfulness helps with emotional intelligence is by helping a leader to be more empathetic towards those they lead. After all, being able to understand how others feel can help you to empathize with their situation and support them better.

All three of these skills are needed to be a good leader.

# Is Your Organisation Ready?

We hope you enjoyed the insights from this guide.

As you might know, organisational well-being is increasingly important, and this skillset needs to be turned into a competency that every employee needs to survive and thrive in times of challenge and change. Are your team members ready?



## Transform Your Organisation Today

[Schedule a Call](#)

*Find out more about how your business can support the development of your employees' well-being, resilience and productivity through culture, communication and leadership growth.*

