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WHEN LINES ARE BLURRED AT WORK

By DARSHANA SIVANANTHAM
editor@leaderonomics.com

F邹R. Extreme discomfort. That nauseating feeling in your gut. These are just a few different emotions I remember feeling when I was asked a long time ago by a client to come over to his left for a late supper. Fresh out of university, excited and pumped about my first job at a pharmaceutical company, I tried very hard to understand what an entry-level executive was expected to do. Such an experience left me feeling threatened and frightened.

When I approached my manager to ask for advice on how to deal with the issue, his only response to me was (with some laughter), “This is all normal. You’ll just need to learn how to deal with it and let it slide.” Picture a 21-year-old, with absolutely no professional working experience, needing to digest that statement. Thankfully, I had the presence of mind to see the senior manager. My values and beliefs didn’t allow for me to “let it slide.” Regrettably, I had to resign and I left with a very negative impression of the industry entirely.

Today I see a lot of young graduates, who just like me at that time, struggle with such experiences. What worries me the most is that they are unable to understand the inappropriateness that is blatantly staring at them.

Whether we like it or not, harassment happens at all levels within an organisational structure. Many times, as drivers of the organisations we serve, we are unaware of such things simply because our employees don’t speak up. As leaders, how can we start to create a safe environment for our people?

EDUCATE YOUR PEOPLE THROUGH AWARENESS

While actions speak louder than words, awareness creates the avenue for allowing for actions to manifest. Educate your employees and management on how to handle workplace harassment (across the board).

There are many types of actions that are classified as harassment. How do we detect these behaviours? What can we do if we notice someone displaying acts of harassment? How can we support the victims in these situations?

Make it a point to include workplace harassment awareness as part of your induction or monthly learning programmes. It will go a long way, as the knowledge gained can also be used outside of the workplace.

EMPATHISE AND LISTEN

In any sort of situation, a victim is subject to trauma—physical, emotional and/or mental. Put yourself in their shoes first, especially if they’re young and new to the working world. Sometimes, they may seem aloof and are completely unconcerned about what’s happening. Is that because they’re deliberately numbing the situation and downplaying it so they don’t appear as weak? Or is it truly because they are unaware of what’s happening?

Listen without judgment, empathise and provide unbiased counsel. They need to know that it isn’t their fault. And they need to know that whatever had happened is not okay.

EMPOWER PEOPLE TO SUPPORT

Within the context of an organisational structure, this support system is usually human resources. However, everyone can be a source of support.

When an employee can walk up to their chief executive officer and ask for a minute without feeling intimidated, you know their doors are truly always open. When the tea lady can support an executive struggling to deal with harassment from a supervisor, you know that everyone has the potential to lead responsibly. Leaders, who are willing to provide support, form a bond of trust and loyalty with their people. Of course, there are many other ways to understand, learn and address workplace harassment (keep reading this issue to educate yourselves!). Some people may find this a sensitive subject, unimportant and perhaps irrelevant to leadership.

However, let me put it this way: If my first manager was willing to stand up for me, empathise with the situation and educate me on clear ways to handle such clients in that first job, there was a very high chance that I wouldn’t have made the drastic decision to resign.

YOUR TURN

Do you know of someone experiencing workplace harassment? If a name pops up in your mind as you read this, then you know what to do—educate, empathise, empower.

Darshana is a HR media specialist at Leaderonomics. A former PR consultant, photographer, and associate trainer, her career path has been anything but monotonous. Article first published on www.leaderonomics.com.
WHENEVER I am faced with negative people, I feel drained. They are like energy vampires who suck every ounce of positivity from you and replace it with their pessimism and dreary outlook. After spending considerable amount of time with these “vampires,” you become like them—pessimistic and frustrated.

While Peter Economy encourages us not to avoid them, as many of their negativity may stem from personal issues that they may be going through either at home or at work, spending too much time with them can be detrimental to you. Personally, at one stage in life, having spent significant amount of time with a group of negatively minded folks, I started believing in their vibe. I find myself giving up when the going was tough—even believing that the best I could do was indifferent and background could possibly not thrive.

And background could possibly not thrive. So, whilst the group will say that it is impossible to do a specific task, I will go the other extreme and prove to them that not only is it possible, but we should strive to do two impossible tasks instead of just one. When I go high on positivity, and really switch it on, it soon becomes infectious and it starts to destroy the negativity.

The key to ensuring you influence them (and not vice versa) is to ensure that you switch the positivity on and really believe what you postulate to the group. I have seen countless occasions where the group either embraces this new stance or they kick you out of the group so that they can go back to their “sad” lives. Either way works as you don’t get mired in their disillusions and self-pity.

At Leaderonomics, we work closely with organisations to help transform negative culture (which translates to negative behaviour and pessimism) to a fresh, engaging and energising culture. Joseph Tan, who leads our culture transformation unit, clearly embraces this new stance or they switch the positivity on and really believe what you postulate to the group. I have seen countless occasions where the group either embraces this new stance or they kick you out of the group so that they can go back to their “sad” lives. Either way works as you don’t get mired in their disillusions and self-pity.

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**LEADERSHIP CAMPS FOR YOUTH**

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Does sexual harassment exist in our workplace? Yes, it does.

Strangely, it is not an area that most employees like to talk about. This is also not something most HR practitioners and employers are fully trained in.

The culture of the organisation can also impact the type of conversation one would like to have on this topic.

Why do employees pursue issues of sexual harassment?

In recent times, we also have seen many lawsuits being filed against employers for turning a blind eye on such cases.

Recent examples globally are the cases of Ellen Pao, former interim chief executive officer of Reddit and Hanna Bouweng, former assistant to a Wall Street financier.

In today’s environment where risk has become boardroom conversation, many HR issues have also been raised at that level.

Policies are being reviewed and sexual harassment is one of those areas of HR risk management that warrants attention.

If you have a board that is people-focused and reviews the company policies annually, then chances are good that sexual harassment policies are updated.

Industrial relations (IR) are the HR practice, which governs sexual harassment, and IR is about prevention. You would need to assess issues and risks, which could cause duress and injustice at the workplace.

Imagine spending millions in developing and building a strong employee value proposition, and have nothing written on sexual harassment.

Why should organisations be concerned about sexual harassment?

They can contribute to a high turnover rate and this might not show in your exit forms.

Employees would pursue organisational justice and there are areas in which they can seek duress.

Employers are obliged to provide a workplace environment free of harassment.

They may eventually lose their best talent.

More women are joining the workforce, and there are more reported sexual harassment cases involving women compared to men.

A quick glance on the issue of harassment on the SHRM and International Labour Organisation sites indicate that annually, an increasing number of employees are filing suits against employers for failure to provide a safe place to work.

What can managers handle this? Do they know what to ask? Do they know who to go to or how to assist the employee in seeking redress and fair treatment?

Some organisations fail to educate their managers on how to conduct domestic inquiries.

With the existing Act, HR practitioners are encouraged to run a half-day or one-day internal programme and share relevant case studies.

If you have unions within your organisation, it would be wise to conduct this and invite the right audience.

Within the Malaysian context, many of such cases have been brought to the Industrial Court. These cases include Eddie Yeo Soon Chye and Lilian Therera De Costa.

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WHAT CONSTITUTES HARASSMENT?

BY KAMINI SINGGAM
www.leaderonomics.com

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10 TIPS ON HOW TO CONTROL TENSION IN THE FAMILY

Nobody wants to open the door when stress is knocking on the other side. We feel defeated when it creatively finds its way into our family and tries to become an additional member.

By CHRISTINE MARYANNA GABRIEL
editor@leaderonomics.com

Research in 2009 by educational consultants, Deborah J. Thomasen and Pamela A. Havice, highlighted that past discussions on stress have focused on a single person. When considering family stress, the focus needs to be on how stress impacts the family as a whole. They defined family stress as an imbalance between the demands of the family and the ability to cope with those demands.

These demands are also known as stressors—a life event or transition that happens in the family. Stress is the feeling. How a family copes with stressors impacts the level of stress in the family. Ineffective ways of coping can bring about a myriad of feelings and worst of all—disconnection.

Here are 10 small yet effective ways your family can use to cope with stressors and bid farewell to stress:

1. **ESTABLISH SELF-CARE FIRST**

If the word “self-care” is not in your family dictionary, please add it now. Self-care is the simple act of attending to your own needs. Taking care of one’s self first can impact the family system tremendously as it gives permission to the other to take care of his or her own self. This applies especially for working parents.

2. **SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES**

There are many subsystems within the family system. It is the responsibility of the adults in the family to set boundaries between the couple, parent and sibling subsystems. Dragging your children into adult issues is not only harmful to your children’s emotional well-being but to the family system as a whole. Physically separating yourself from your children to resolve adult issues or seeking professional help is highly recommended to set healthy boundaries and reduce family stress.

3. **HAVE AN OPEN FAMILY SYSTEM**

There is a flow of ideas in open family systems and feedback is exchanged so that members can learn and grow. In closed family systems, no new ideas are allowed and differences of opinions are shut down. If there is a member in your family that needs to be right all the time, it is a sign that you are in a closed system. Stress levels are high in closed family systems. Be open to differences and recognise that multiple ways of thinking can exist at the same time in a given space.

4. **DEVELOP A FAMILY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

Families come in all shapes and sizes. Thinking about how you would like your family to function is called family management. Use a calendar. Share tasks. Have clear expectations of roles and responsibilities. Plan your budget. Intentionally developing a management system can give family members a sense of consistency and security that can help family members feel more in control of the stress levels.

5. **KNOW WHEN TO SAY ‘YES’ AND ‘NO’**

Parenting can be very stressful especially if you’re a single parent. It is important to recognise when you need help and when you don’t in terms of raising your children. It’s alright to say “yes” to help offered, especially when you are overwhelmed. It’s a way of allowing others to love you by helping you. Learn to say “no” when you have friends or relatives who interfere too much in your parenting methods. It’s a way of being in control as a parent.

6. **VALIDATE EFFORTS**

When was the last time you validated an effort, not just an accomplishment, but an effort made by a family member?

7. **HAVE NON-JUDGEMENTAL FAMILY MEETINGS**

Calling for family meetings is an intentional way of saying, “We are here for each other.” However, family meetings can turn ugly when a lot of judgements are thrown at each other. Create a space for each voice in the room to feel heard. Be clear of the meeting agenda. Recognise that differences are not threats, but rather, opportunities for the family to grow.

8. **ACKNOWLEDGE ‘IT’**

“It” is often unspoken in many families. “It” could be the loss of a family member ten years ago and the grief that continues to linger. “It” could be an affair that is rather kept as a secret. “It” could be a past trauma. Unspoken “its” may feel safe and comfortable now but the silence could insidiously affect each member in various harmful forms—substance abuse, depression, and suicidal thoughts. Acknowledge the “it” for the long-term health of your family. Seek professional help if needed.

9. **ACCEPT THAT NOTHING IS PERMANENT**

Pain is temporary. Stress is temporary. Loneliness is temporary. Conflicts are temporary. Reminding each other in the family that nothing is permanent reduces the rigidity in the system. It gives the family hope to change.

10. **BE TOGETHER**

When a family is under stress, it is common to withdraw from each other. This may be okay if a member just needs some space for him or herself but can be problematic when members are starting to feel disconnected. Find ways to do things together. Because remember, stress is temporary.

By Christine Maryanna Gabriel is a Marriage and Family Therapist at Rekindle Centre for Systemic Therapy. She is currently pursuing to become a United States Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. She is very passionate about increasing mental health awareness in Malaysia. To learn more on how to handle stress within the family, e-mail jean.selvam@leaderonomics.com for more information.
FEELING JITTERY?

SIX WAYS TO FLEX YOUR COURAGE MUSCLES

1. **KEEP CALM AND BE CONFIDENT**
   - Find ways to relax and distract yourself. This can help draw you away from negativity and refocus your attention on the positive aspects of a situation. Put your mind into a realistic and objective state towards figuring out the best option.

2. **WORRYING WOULD ONLY GET YOU SO FAR**
   - Worry can be like a bug which will not go away. One of the ways to manage self-worry is to reason with yourself about the facts and possible consequences. A personal bad habit that I have is worrying about what others would think. We are innately social beings who want to be liked, and we are wired to conform to certain actions or behaviour to decrease the risk of criticism, disapproval, or professional rejection.

3. **SEEK OUT OPINION AND SUPPORT**
   - Ask for advice and coaching from a trusted peer or a mentor. They can help to pace your thoughts in a more objective manner.

4. **SELF-CONFIRMATION: QUESTION YOUR DOUBT**
   - Ask yourself this: Are they realistic, or are you overreacting? Your inner voice exists as a self-protection mechanism and can possibly become your worst critic. “You would never be good enough.” “Do not embarrass yourself.” “Really?”

5. **KNOW YOUR WHY**
   - Your actions are generally motivated by the intentions or purpose behind them. It is easier to be brave when you are clear about why you need to take a particular risk or a challenging route. Take for example my personal experience of an upcoming presentation with a big client, and being paralysed with a fear of public speaking. Despite being an extrovert, I do have the worst case of anxiety and jitters when it comes to presentations. But, the reason for overcoming this fear (of public speaking) is clear: to close that deal or to lose it. Knowing that very fact pushes me to pace myself and to face my fear.

6. **REFRAME FAILURE**
   - Yes, previous failures and “falls” may have left some pain and scratches. Take baby steps when getting out of your comfort zone, and give yourself a chance (or more!) to try new things and to squash your fears. Take a leap of faith. And at the same time, challenge yourself by mentally preparing for the worst that could happen.

It will heal. Be optimistic and get your positive mindset up and running. Be persistent, and be better the next time around.

“Do not be embarrassed by your failures, learn from them and start again.” — Sir Richard Branson

PARTING THOUGHTS

Living bravely is about forging your own path. Wouldn’t you agree that life is best lived without regrets and less worries?

By STEPHANIE HO
editor@leaderonomics.com

**OUTDOOR** activities excite me, and I am a frequent trekker at Gasing Hill, Petaling Jaya. I trek the hills alone, although I am sometimes accompanied by my dog.

Recently, there were separate crime cases (which happened on the same day) involving a snatch thief whereby a blogger got hurt, and an abduction/car theft incident took place. Scary.

Because of these incidents, and the heightened feeling of wariness, I began to make excuses not to pursue my regular weekend activities. After weeks of not sweating it out, I eventually pushed myself to go to Gasing Hill. It was yet another satisfying fitness experience—the only bummer being that I fell and sprained my weak ankle (yet again).

I noticed that there was an increased level of security in the area. Police officers were out in large numbers, and most of the trekkers appeared to be women going solo.

The realisation dawned on me then, that I had let fear take over my favourite routine. In addition, I could have mitigated my skittishness by levelling-up precautions, for example, by running with a buddy or in a group.

And that got me thinking, am I creating fear and inferiority in myself, even in my professional capacity?

**DON’T LOOK BEHIND YOU**

In my opinion, if you allow fear to foster in your life, it would eventually take the reins and control you. Conquering your fears on the other hand, can elevate innovation and future successes.

Self-doubt and fears create many disadvantages, both personally and professionally, making one feel inadequate, overwhelmed and insecure.

The bottom line is that, it is your own personal battle. When I experience dreadful self-doubt, you simply don’t do the things you need to do, are afraid to try new activities, and lose the motivation to perform. Your defensive actions to avoid failure can limit growth and change.

**FLEXING THOSE MUSCLES OF COURAGE**

You need to learn to understand your doubts and get beyond it.

Here are six ways to grow your “courage muscles” because bravery in overcoming your fears guarantee success, and you can never succeed without it.

**KEEP CALM AND BE CONFIDENT**

Find ways to relax and distract yourself. This can help draw you away from negativity and refocus your attention on the positive aspects of a situation. Put your mind into a realistic and objective state towards figuring out the best option.

**WORRYING WOULD ONLY GET YOU SO FAR**

Worry can be like a bug which will not go away. One of the ways to manage self-worry is to reason with yourself about the facts and possible consequences. A personal bad habit that I have is worrying about what others would think.

We are innately social beings who want to be liked, and we are wired to conform to certain actions or behaviour to decrease the risk of criticism, disapproval, or professional rejection.

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Ask for advice and coaching from a trusted peer or a mentor. They can help to pace your thoughts in a more objective manner.

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Ask yourself this: Are they realistic, or are you overreacting? Your inner voice exists as a self-protection mechanism and can possibly become your worst critic. “You would never be good enough.” “Do not embarrass yourself.” “Really?”

**KNOW YOUR WHY**

Your actions are generally motivated by the intentions or purpose behind them. It is easier to be brave when you are clear about why you need to take a particular risk or a challenging route.

Take for example my personal experience of an upcoming presentation with a big client, and being paralysed with a fear of public speaking.

Despite being an extrovert, I do have the worst case of anxiety and jitters when it comes to presentations. But, the reason for overcoming this fear (of public speaking) is clear: to close that deal or to lose it. Knowing that very fact pushes me to pace myself and to face my fear.

Self-doubt can be your biggest enemy in the workplace. So, learning how to manage it is crucial for your career success.

It will heal. Be optimistic and get your positive mindset up and running. Be persistent, and be better the next time around.

“Do not be embarrassed by your failures, learn from them and start again.” — Sir Richard Branson

**REFRAME FAILURE**

Yes, previous failures and “falls” may have left some pain and scratches.

Take baby steps when getting out of your comfort zone, and give yourself a chance (or more!) to try new things and to squash your fears. Take a leap of faith. And at the same time, challenge yourself by mentally preparing for the worst that could happen.

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**PARTING THOUGHTS**

Living bravely is about forging your own path. Wouldn’t you agree that life is best lived without regrets and less worries?

**HOW TO TRULY CONQUER YOUR ANXIETY**

We (unfortunately) live in a culture of fear that constantly bombards us with reasons to play it safe and to be on guard. This is why we must be vigilant about discerning between the fears that are serving us and those which are holding us back and keeping us from taking the very actions that would move us forward and open doors to the opportunities that we want.

Here are some steps you can take to overcome fear in your professional life.

1. **Ask for help or feedback on the areas you can improve on** (so as not to appear weak or incompetent)
2. **Have a say during brainstorming activities** (so as not to appear ineffective)
3. **Share your suggestions/ideas to a superior** (without undermining his/her capabilities or authority)
4. **Ask for advice and coaching from a trusted peer or a mentor** (so as not to appear weak or incompetent)
5. **Have a say during brainstorming activities** (so as not to appear ineffective)
6. **Share your suggestions/ideas to a superior** (without undermining his/her capabilities or authority)

Each of these actions require you to conquer your fear in some way, large or small. This is what being brave is all about: taking action despite the presence of fear, the perceived personal risk, the uncertainty of the outcome and the vulnerability that you will feel in the process.

Good luck!
**STAND UP FOR YOUR RIGHTS.**

**HOW TO DEAL WITH THE CONNIVING AND THE UNSCRUPULOUS**

**By TAMARA JAYNE**

**editor@leaderonomics.com**

Ever find yourself doing something you didn’t initially agree to? Although they may not blatantly tell you to do things, emotional manipulators are good at observing people’s weaknesses and using it to their advantage. As psychologist Joyce E. A. Russell states in The Washington Post, “They don’t want to be seen as the ones publicly criticizing progress or new initiatives, so instead, they make sure others carry the torch for them. Are they manipulators? Bullies? Possibly both.”

Manipulators usually exude these characteristics:

- They recognise people’s weaknesses and emotions.
- They are great at disguising motives and intentions.
- They are able to charm with positive reinforcement or superficial sympathy to control others.
- They may use anger or intimidation to make others afraid to confront them.
- They may use their emotions to stir up guilt or set the emotional climate around them. (If you are upset, everyone around them should be upset too.)

If not stopped, manipulators can cause talented employees to quit, create conflict in a team by causing people to turn against each other, and may even set employees up to fail. The root causes of manipulation are complex, though it usually stems from a need for power, control, and superiority, or due to simple boredom, or some other hidden agenda. However, if not stopped, their behaviour will be reinforced and will continue to affect more and more people.

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**HOW TO SPOT AND STOP EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION**

1. **RECOGNISE AND BE AWARE OF THEIR TACTICS**
   
   Since they are great at disguising their motives at times, it is good to be aware of how they talk you into doing the dirty work for them. Some people may use charm to get things done, while others may use anger. Whichever method they use, be aware of it.

2. **SAY NO TO GUILT-TRIPS**
   
   By accepting that it is alright to be guilt-tripped by someone, you encourage them to continue in their behaviour. Sentences such as, “Why can’t you be more like your friend who scored all As in his exam?” or “If only you acted more like her husband, he’s more caring and loving towards his wife.” These sentences are used to make the other party feel bad and is a form of emotional manipulation. Giving the silent treatment is also another form of emotional manipulation used to make you feel bad.

3. **KNOW YOUR RIGHTS**
   
   Remember that the problem is not you. Preston Ni, a professor of communication studies, states that,
   
   - You have the right to be treated with respect.
   - You have the right to express your feelings, opinions and wants.
   - You have the right to set your own priorities.
   - You have the right to say “no” without feeling guilty.
   - You have the right to get what you pay for.
   - You have the right to have opinions different from others.
   - You have the right to take care of and protect yourself from being threatened physically, mentally or emotionally.
   - You have the right to create your own happy and healthy life.

   You have the power to stand up for yourself and your life. Don’t let anyone physically, mentally or emotionally manipulate your thinking.

4. **ALWAYS VERIFY INFORMATION**
   
   They may often tell you what others have said, but always check with the original sources. This can prevent them from using information against you or twisting words to suit their own personal needs. Be wary when other people’s names and vague generalisations are used as a backup to get what they want. For example, “So and so says this about you,” or “Everyone thinks this of you, not just me.”

5. **ASK YOURSELF SOME QUESTIONS**
   
   Manipulators are good at wearing different masks with different people depending on the situation. They may use anger or self-pity to get what they want.

   - Are you being treated with genuine respect?
   - Are you constantly feeling afraid to state your own views?
   - Is this relationship only one-sided?
   - Are the expectations and demands of me reasonable?

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**PARTING THOUGHTS**

Manipulative behaviours can create a ripple effect when not put to a stop. It is thus essential that we recognise and end them. Ultimately, the goal is not to change a manipulative person. It is to understand your own personal rights and stand up for them. “When people don’t like themselves very much, they have to make up for it. The classic bully was actually a victim first.” – Tom Hiddleston

Tamara loves thought-provoking conversations over cups of tea. If she is not writing, you might find her hiking up a mountain in search of a new waterfall to explore. To engage with her, write to tamara.jayne@leaderonomics.com. For more How To articles, log on to www.leaderonomics.com.

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Great organisations are learning organisations. Is your organisation a learning organisation? If it is not, here is your opportunity to transform your organisation into a learning organisation.
Mindfulness is an increasingly popular notion in the workplace, with companies such as Apple, Yahoo, Starbucks, and Google using it to their benefit. Google, for example, offers its employees a 19-hour course on the subject, which is so popular that thousands of Googlers take it each year.

**SO WHAT EXACTLY IS MINDFULNESS?**

Mindfulness is a simple yet effective form of meditation that enables you to gain control of unruly thoughts and behaviours. People who practise mindfulness are more focused, even when they are not meditating. Mindfulness is an excellent technique to reduce stress because it stops you from feeling out of control, stops you from jumping from one thought to the next, and stops you from ruminating on negative thoughts. Overall, it’s a great way to make it through your busy day in a calm and productive manner.

Ellen Langer, a Harvard University psychologist who studies mindfulness, described it this way: “Mindfulness is the process of actively noticing new things. When you do that, it puts you in the present. It makes you more sensitive to context and perspective. It’s the essence of engagement. And it’s energy-begetting, not energy-consuming. ‘The mistake most people make is to assume it’s stressful and exhausting—all this thinking. But what’s stressful is all the mindless negative evaluations we make and the worry that we’ll find problems and not be able to solve them.’”

AND WHY IS MINDFULNESS BECOMING SO POPULAR IN THE WORKPLACE?

While the benefits of mindfulness are many, perhaps the most important reason that companies such as Google are sold on it is its ability to directly improve performance. Langer has conducted a host of studies that show that practising mindfulness improves your performance on all types of tasks.

Still, the mindfulness movement isn’t all about performance; there are a number of other important reasons why companies are making mindfulness a priority. Five of these reasons follow all great illustrations of why we should all be using mindfulness to our benefit.

**1. MINDFULNESS IS THE ULTIMATE STRESS RELIEVER**

Stress is more than a performance killer; it’s a people killer. According to the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, roughly two-thirds of all hospital visits are for stress-related problems, and 75% of healthcare expenses are stress-related. Stress can cause high blood pressure, autoimmune diseases, cancer, heart disease, insomnia, depression, anxiety, and more. Mindfulness is a great stress reliever because it takes you out of fight-or-flight mode and brings you into a relaxed state of mental clarity and calm.

**2. MINDFULNESS IMPROVES YOUR ABILITY TO FOCUS**

Mindfulness improves your ability to focus on one thing at a time. This focus carries over into everything you do. Mindfulness teaches you to avoid distractions and brings a heightened level of concentration to your work. While you may have fallen prey to multitasking in the past, mindfulness will help you to kick this nasty, productivity-killing habit. A focused mind is a productive mind.

**3. MINDFULNESS BOOSTS YOUR CREATIVITY**

Creativity hinges on your mental state. Mindfulness helps you to get into a creative frame of mind by defeating the negative thoughts that stifle creative thinking and self-expression. The fact that mindfulness focuses on “the now” helps you to think freely and creatively.

**4. MINDFULNESS IMPROVES YOUR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is the “something” in each of us that is a bit intangible. It affects how we manage behaviour, navigate social complexities, and make personal decisions that achieve positive results. EQ is your ability to recognize and understand emotions in yourself and others and to use this awareness to manage your behaviour and relationships.

Decades of research now point to EQ as the critical factor that sets star performers apart from the rest of the pack. It’s a powerful way to focus your energy in one direction with tremendous results. TalentSmart tested EQ alongside thirty other important workplace skills and found that EQ is the strongest predictor of performance, explaining a full 58% of success in all types of jobs. Of all the people we’ve studied at work, we’ve found that 90% of top performers have a high EQ.

The heightened awareness that exists in a mindful state allows you to more clearly feel, label, and understand your emotions. This turbocharges your emotional intelligence because it greatly increases your self-awareness, which is the foundation of a high EQ.

**5. MINDFULNESS MAKES YOU A BETTER PERSON**

A Harvard study found strong connections between mindfulness and prosocial behaviour. Subjects who meditated showed compassion and kindness to others 50% more often than those who didn’t. There’s something about feeling present and calm that brings out the best in people.

**BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER**

Mindfulness can improve your performance now as well as your capacity to perform in the future. Give it a try, and you’ll be surprised where it takes you.
THREE CHALLENGES THAT DERAIL LEADERS

By DAN ROCKWELL
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SELF-DEVELOPMENT DURING SEASONS OF SUCCESS
Talent’s halo makes you overestimate your abilities and underestimate your need for growth.
I often ask audiences to raise their hands if they’re smarter than the person sitting beside them. We all laugh, but there’s a hint of truth behind the smiles.
Leaders who do everything well are confused.

Jim Parker, retired chief executive officer (CEO) of Southwest Airlines, gave me a surprising answer to winning at leadership’s challenges. He was CEO during the events of September 11.
It’s been five years since we talked, but I still remember him saying, “Be yourself!” I keep relearning the wisdom behind those underwhelming words.
Frequently reflect on yourself and your journey. Define your values.
Connect with mentors and coaches who help you find and express your best self. Avoid mentors who pressure you to be like them.
Define yourself by who you are, not who others expect you to be. This is the leader’s journey.
Being yourself is never an excuse for laziness, indulgence, or flaunting weaknesses.
Be yourself or someone else will define you.

LIVING BY PRIORITIES RATHER THAN URGENCIES
Urgencies make you feel important, but sticking to priorities makes you a leader. Three things that obscure priorities:
- Pressure
- Problems
- Opportunity

The most dangerous urgency is opportunity. Priorities enable “no.”

POURING INTO YOURSELF AS YOU POUR OUT FOR OTHERS
You ran out of steam because you poured out but didn’t pour in.
Warning phrases include: “I’ll take time off after…” “Just this time.” “I just need to finish this, before…”
Don’t justify poor decisions by suggesting you’ll do it right the next time.
An excuse is permission for failure to continue.

SUCCEEDING WITH THE THREE CHALLENGES:

#1 #2 #3

CHALLENGE

TRENDING ARTICLE: “CAREER ADVICE FROM A ROCK STAR:” THINK YOU’VE MISSED IT, LOG ON TO WWW.LEADERONOMICS.COM TO READ IT!

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