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## Mindful Empowerment for Business Transformation: Adapting Inner and Social Technology

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Mindful Empowerment for Business Transformation: Adapting Inner and Social Technology

Betsy Parayil-Pezard

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**Abstract**

This paper develops a program for cultivating mindful leadership skills within an organizational context. Building on the history of digital transformation, it emphasizes the capacity of business professionals to apply learnings from the field of mindfulness to situations found in their environment and relationships. The program, Mindful Empowerment for Business Transformation, is divided into 4 units : Attention and Awareness, Empowerment, Connection and Change. Each unit visits mindfulness theory and practice, and encourages participants to create an action plan to integrate learnings into their lives.

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Mindful Empowerment for Business Transformation: Adapting Inner and Social Technology

### **Rationale Paper: Context and Intention for Creating the Program**

This program aims to boost leaders in growing the skills needed for a rapidly changing work environment and increasing demands. Leaders take responsibility for the world they create. Due to rapid technological development, requiring adaptations that have proved difficult to implement, today's work environment is increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA). Executives and managers may find themselves ill equipped to face challenges, creating high levels of stress and disengagement.

Mindful leadership practices have emerged within the last several decades through the meeting of philosophers and thought leaders and science. The work of Otto Scharmer, Peter Senge, Ken Wilber, and Frédéric Laloux, to name some examples, offer innovative frameworks for understanding the evolution of humanity. The Mindful Empowerment for Business Transformation (MEBT) program accompanies people in three different ways:

1. We help people better understand the history of business and possible directions for business transformation.
2. We help leaders embrace mindful leadership to grow their soft skills and gain confidence and insight.
3. We help companies use the current shifts in digital and business transformation to create a more human-centric organization through mindful leadership.

### **Who Created This Program?**

Betsy Parayil-Pezard's biography: Betsy Parayil-Pezard is the founder of Connection Leadership, a coaching and training company. Originally from the United States, she has degrees in literature from Wheaton College (Chicago) and the Sorbonne Nouvelle (Paris), and she is certified by the Centre International du Coach. She also taken the "Leader Coach" training with the leadership school Le Playground. She is currently researching the impact of

meditation and mindfulness in leadership in the master's program at Lesley University (Boston) in Mindfulness Studies. Betsy has lived in France since 2001, with a career in higher education. She accumulated 10 years of management experience before creating Connection Leadership.

She is the author of a book in French, *Méditer C'est Se Rebeller* [To Meditate is to Rebel] and has been a speaker at Unexpected Sources of Inspiration, a French business and technology conference gathering an audience of 1,800 people. She is also the English-speaking voice of Petit Bambou, a France-based digital application with over 3 million subscribers.

Her mindfulness practice and social engagement led her to co-found Mindfulness Solidaire, a non-profit organization with a mission to coordinate a national effort to bring mindfulness-based emotional intelligence programs to prisons and homeless shelters in France. Her clients count on her deep and intuitive coaching to accompany and challenge them as they cultivate increased performance and wellbeing and align with their own purpose and engagement.

### **How is the Program Organized?**

The program, MEBT, is intended as an in-person training course with one to two instructors and a group of 15 to 20 participants. This program is developed using a modular format, so that it will be possible to cover the five units even if the time allotted is limited.

### **Information on the Program for Trainers**

#### **Why Did I Create This Program?**

My professional experiences coaching and teaching mindfulness in companies, such as AXA, SODEXO, FRANCE Télévisions, L'Oréal, MERSEN, SNCF, and others, inspired the creation of the MEBT program. Many professionals learn mindfulness practices as a means for managing stress. While this is an important aspect of mindfulness, mindfulness is

also a path to greater levels of leadership in a rapidly evolving business environment.

Mindfulness is a way of empowering employees, to help them grow in agility and autonomy.

This program is the result of my research and reflection on how to help my clients succeed as they transform their economic models and modes of collaboration.

### **What Have We Experienced So Far?**

My first programs are underway at an insurance company with over 800 employees located in the south of France. From November 2018 to June 2019, I trained and coached the leadership team of the company with a planned period of eight months, with seven 1 or 2-day seminars on different topics within the spectrum of leadership. In May 2018, I gave two 1-hour workshops to this same team on the topics of mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and council circles. My experience is that this program is needed to extend shorter interventions into longer periods of accompaniment. These programs must focus on the transmission of practical tools and applications that leaders can use or teach to their teams, or that can be adopted by employees in training themselves.

### **When Do I Believe This Program Could Be Used?**

In general, I plan to continue using this program with companies who are undergoing business transformation. My approach is to create a relationship of trust with individuals in leadership positions who are interested in learning how to bring about transformation that will inspire cohesion and support among employees. The program can be used as a starting point for the transformation process, or as additional training and support for companies who have already begun the process.

### **For Whom Was This Program Intended?**

I recommend starting with a company's top leadership, the president or CEO and the directors, before training middle managers and team members. As leaders evolve, their way of leading will also mutate, affecting the entire ecosystem of the company. As people on

lower levels of the hierarchy of the company are empowered through the transformation process, they will become more autonomous and innovative. The management of the organization is also destined to grow flatter with the new modes of collaboration introduced through the digitalization and transformation process. If leaders themselves are not undertaking a leadership transformation path, they may be ill-equipped to understand the new needs emerging in the organization. The process will eventually come upon a wall that will block the success of the business transformation.

### **What Are the Prerequisites for Facilitating this Program?**

Facilitators of the program must have a background in mindfulness and experience in the business environment, preferably in leadership positions. Experience as a coach, and training in emotional intelligence and collective intelligence are recommended. In order to accompany people on different levels of the company, facilitators must have some level of business knowledge and business transformation. The willingness of facilitators to take on a new program and appropriate the tools that are presented here would be key to the success of the program.

### **What Will You Learn by Using This Training?**

Facilitators will learn how to accompany leaders in the application of mindfulness to practical business situations. My hope is that facilitators will grow on their path by using this program, and find a solid set of tools for inspiring mindful leadership in companies. The program includes basic practices of mindfulness. Through the emotional intelligence component, an increased awareness of one's inner thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations, as well as deepened understanding of what is happening within other people's worlds, will allow your participants to apply their practice in the work environment. Other tools, such as the Carpmen Triangle or summaries from studies in neuroscience, will allow facilitators to reinforce their knowledge and impact in a complex business environment.

### **What Are the Intended Outcomes?**

Often, when I take my first steps in a company, I hear stories of how impossible change is, based on the experiences of the past, or the high levels of tension or toxic relationships. My intention is to invite companies to go beyond their present difficulties to exploring the possibilities of a more human-centric organization. I believe that we can use the current need for business transformation as an opportunity to help people grow leadership skills and expand their understanding of our potential as humans.

### **Reference Summaries**

The reference summaries are short summaries of the main ideas that have inspired the creation of the program. The objective of this section is to help spread ideas and inspire trainers.

### **Histories**

**A short history of business and digital transformation.** In order to help leaders to understand how more agile forms of collaboration have entered into the business environment, it was essential for my personal understanding to reflect from a historical point of view. In this short overview, learn the basic transformation that is taking place in business today through many different forms, and ground your work in this global evolution.

For many years (in the 1980s and 1990s), with the drive to scale savings, businesses were concerned with the specialization and the departmentalization of the professions within the company, what we now call *silos*, separating out human resources, research and development, information systems, quality assessment, marketing and communication, operations, and other departments. Businesses developed a hierarchy that allowed for validation of a concept as it progressed from idea to prototyping, production, and distribution. They created processes and procedures to determine how value would be created as the process progressed through the series of silos.

In the 2000s, computer program developers, who had been integrated into businesses, and who were not satisfied with the traditional way of functioning, regrouped to create ways of working together that would allow them to be more efficient and productive. The silo model was counterproductive in their view. On the contrary, developers needed people from every silo to participate in the development process and give feedback in real time. The production of a value chain to create a computer program is as following: write ideas, developers code, create a series of tests, put the “package” into production, and put it on a server. Developers wanted to have these people in the room during the whole process; have access to quick validation; and to be able to test, fail, and improve without having to submit to company checkpoints that could slow the process.

With the introduction of this “fail fast” mentality, in order to create value more quickly, businesses leaders began to explore how we can use the same value chain in other areas. This movement was driven by the digitalization of many business services and products. Technology evolved quickly over the last two decades, and consumer habits and demands evolved as well. One important trend to note is the anytime, anywhere, any device (ATAWAD) model, signifying the demand for services to be accessible at all times and adapted to all possible formats. For example, a customer may want to file an insurance claim at 2:00 a.m. from her mobile phone. Because of this demand, the digital platform of the insurance company becomes central to the business model. Its accessibility and performance play an important role in the success of the company, and the role of the employees that were previously the only conduit through which to advance a process, is changing. Employees are becoming experts and facilitators. They are also subject a greater number of hours of connection to work messages and emails, multitasking, and higher complexity in demands made on them.

**A short history of mindfulness.** Although there have been many currents of influence in the growth of secular mindfulness in the Western world, we will mention two significant developments here. At the start of the 1980s, Jon Kabat-Zinn developed a mindfulness training program to help patients dealing with stress and chronic pain at the University of Massachusetts Medical School's Stress Reduction Clinic. This program, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), is the most well-known mindfulness program in France. Kabat-Zinn was inspired by the Buddhist contemplative practice of mindfulness meditation. He created a series of protocols that did not refer to the religious roots of the practice, and participants reported changes in their capacity to manage stress and pain. In the late 1990s, three researchers in psychotherapy, Zindel Segal, John Teasdale, and Mark Williams, used mindfulness practices to develop Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT). The intention of the program was to prevent relapse in patients suffering from depression, and also showed reported benefits.

With the development of medical technology, and the budding discipline of neuroscience, research looking into the benefits of MBSR and MBCT found noteworthy evidence that the practices change the brain. Mindfulness meditation seemed to use the brain's plasticity to reinforce certain parts of the brain associated with memory, self-management, and prosocial behavior. The neuroscientist Richard Davidson of the University of Wisconsin played a significant role in studying and publishing studies that explored the possible benefits of meditation for the brain. The scientific aspect led to higher levels of publicity for mindfulness, and interest from the greater public.

**A short history of employee engagement.** Between 2008 and 2017, the reported engagement of French employees dropped from 9 to 19%. Consultant and speaker Laetitia Vitaud explained her theory to me concerning this evolution in a historical context. Referring to Rick Wartzman's (2017) book "The End of Loyalty: The Rise and Fall of Good Jobs in

America,” she described how after World War II, the social contract between workers and companies was strong. Job security, healthcare, pay that allowed workers to take out loans and send children to college, and pensions, were the basis of the deal where workers benefitted equally to companies. With the erosion of these benefits, and shift in capitalism to a sole concentration on shareholder value, this privatized welfare arrangement is no longer central to the employee–employer relationship, and has resulted in a highly evolving work environment. Downsizing, outsourcing, and globalization reduced the level of security for workers, and eroded the basis for employee loyalty.

In France, the mindset of workers is changing. The number of freelance workers is on the rise, and Vitaud believes that it is by choice. Salaried workers are also in demand of conditions that will allow them to work on their own schedule, work from home, and increase autonomy in decision-making in general. Leaders in companies in France must not only increase their capacity to structure organizations that are adapted both to client demands, but also to employee demands. Some companies have tried to make the work environment more pleasant. When I visited the French headquarters of Google, I observed the high quality of cafeteria meals, access to massages, manicures, fitness rooms, and recreational spaces with foosball and videogames. These initiatives are accompanied by efforts to respond to employee demands for greater meaning in work, with, for example, opportunities to use company hours to work for non-profit organizations (Duport, n.d.).

### **End of Loyalty**

In 1994, Daniel Goleman published the ground-breaking book *Emotional Intelligence*. The book was significant because it attempted to show how emotional intelligence was a more significant factor than IQ in determining professional success. Goleman breaks emotional intelligence into the four quadrants of self-awareness, self-management, awareness

of others, and relationship to others. In his work, Goleman has identified the ability to use and grow one's own emotional intelligence as a central skill of leadership.

Studies that Daniel Goleman and neuroscientist Richard Davidson have been involved with show that mindfulness practices contribute to the growth of emotional intelligence. Becoming more present and focused, with increased awareness of one's inner world and one's environment, are developed through the practice of mindfulness. The practice allows the individual to increase levels of attentiveness and neuronal connectivity, and make decisions from an enriched base of information. Mindfulness is considered by many leadership experts as the central competency of emotional intelligence-based leadership.

Emotional intelligence is not only important for leaders, but also for employees on other levels of an organization. Because emotions are contagious, due to the activation of mirror neurons in our brains that systematically generate empathy by imitating other people's attitudes, leaders who bring greater emotional awareness to the work environment allow other team members to do so as well. High-stress environments put employees in a fight-flight-or-freeze mode, with lowered access to their own analytical and creative abilities. Because of this, lower levels of stress in the workplace, when combined with clarity in the meaning of the work, increase work performance. This type of leadership is neither coercive and authoritarian, nor absent and laxist. It is more rooted in agility (matching the tone and action with the need of the moment), inspiration (showing what is possible through vision and action), and providing firm support for collaborators (being present and of service, engaged in discussion, while holding convictions and creating impact).

Mindfulness-based emotional intelligence (MBEI) programs take this combination of factors into account and present mindfulness as a tool for increasing emotional intelligence. A common example of MBEI is the Search Inside Yourself program that was initiated by Chade Meng Tan for employees at Google. Shorter mindfulness-based interventions have

also become more common, with formats such as a 2-hour mindfulness meditation workshop or a keynote at a conference.

### **Philosophy and Theory**

**Reinventing organizations: Frédéric Laloux.** One of the fundamental ideas of “reinventing organizations” is that humans have historically advanced in sudden stages of transformation, rather in a smooth line of progression. The book illustrates this with examples from the history of human evolution (from foraging, horticulture, agriculture, to industrialization). Laloux begins by showing how our lack of imagination for what else is possible deters us from creating the organizations that we seek to create. We continue to base our analysis on logic that is obsolete, blinded by our tendency to perpetuate the same systems we have always known. Our organizations represent our level of consciousness. In this book, Laloux tries to summarize these different stages of consciousness and illustrate them with the reality of existing organizations. The idea is to help the reader expand her vision by seeing what other stages of organization look and feel like, and how they are structured. All of these stages simultaneously coexist in the same economic ecosystem. Laloux shows how human evolution is accelerating. The later stages are not presented as being better, but as being more sophisticated and complex.

Here is the succession of stages that Laloux describes:

1. Red
  - a. Organizations: mafia, gangs
  - b. Leadership: predatory
  - c. Characteristics: short-term focus, reactive, fear-based, authority of a powerful chief is necessary
  - d. Breakthroughs: division of labor, command authority
2. Amber

- a. Organizations: Catholic church, military
  - b. Leadership: paternalistic
  - c. Characteristics: hierarchical pyramid with formalized roles, top-down, little change
  - d. Breakthroughs: long-term perspective, formal roles
3. Orange
- a. Organizations: multinational companies
  - b. Leadership: decisive, goal and task-based
  - c. Characteristics: profit and growth, beat competition, stay ahead through innovation
  - d. Breakthroughs: Innovation, accountability, meritocracy
4. Green
- a. Organizations: culture-driven (Southwest, Ben & Jerry's)
  - b. Leadership: participative, service
  - c. Characteristics: Pyramid structure but with focus on culture and empowerment, employee motivation
  - d. Breakthroughs: empowerment, values-driven culture, stakeholder capitalism
5. Teal
- a. Organizations: evolutionary, organic (Patagonia, Buurtzorg)
  - b. Leadership: distributed, with emphasis on inner compass
  - c. Characteristics: self-management, organization seen as a living organism in evolution
  - d. Breakthroughs: self-management, wholeness, purpose

I use reinventing organizations to ask leaders to determine what stage they believe their organization is in, and whether they recognize their leadership style within the ones

described here. This can be a starting point for discussion and reflection on the transformational goals of the company. One of the difficulties of this model is the idea that the teal organization is an ideal that we should try to evolve towards quickly, whereas my approach is to create growth organically through coaching, mindfulness and collective work. When people are ready to go forward they start getting interested in what the next steps would be, and begin measuring their level of comfort and mastery of the next level. They ask themselves whether they would be able to help others learn what they are learning.

**Theory U: Otto Scharmer.** Otto Scharmer is a professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the founder of the Presencing Institute, which promotes the practices of the theory U. This book has been a great source of inspiration for my work over the last several years, and I have used the framework many times in coaching and trainings with leaders who are seeking change. The basis for the framework is that we can become instruments for change, and allow the future that is on the cusp of emerging to use us as a tool. To become an instrument for the emerging future calls for the development of new skills, based on mindfulness, which Scharmer calls *presencing*. The more present we become to weak signals, the more we open ourselves to “seeing with fresh eyes” and opening both our will and our heart, the better we can facilitate emergence both on an individual and a collective level.

From the time we set a new intention, instead of seeking to move forward in a straight line, using what we already know to immediately create the roadmap, the theory U invites us to travel in a U. In the first steps, we learn to ask open questions, slow down, and seek to perceive what has become obsolete in our thinking and seeing. What do we need to let go of? At the bottom of the U, we learn to let go and become more sensitive to “uploading” new ideas. Then a little further along, we will experience the emergence of new ideas that we previously had no room for, or no capacity to embrace. As we explore the incoming ideas,

we go into stages of ideation and prototyping, and we align with the new ways of being that these ideas call for. For leaders, the challenge is to embody the new postures and embrace the freshness of vision that accompanies this work. Then only do we move into creating the action steps that we know so well.

**“Team of Teams” by General Stanley McChrystal.** This book by General Stanley McChrystal uses the experience of the U.S. Army in fighting Al-Qaeda in Iraq, to illustrate the shortcomings of rigid organizational structures in facing smaller, more agile organizations. The U.S. Army fought many battles before understanding that the very characteristics that had made them strong in other wars (the high level of training, the size of the army, the technology and equipment) were no longer an advantage, and were even a disadvantage. Al Qaeda was smaller and had fewer resources, but they were able to reorganize quickly, and information seemed to circulate with more fluidity. The Army realized that instead of further working to unify one immense team under a broad command, that they needed to organize as a team of teams with more informal ties to other teams, and trust built on a more holistic approach. McChrystal describes how a large team of teams, connected to a unified mission, can act as an organic “collective consciousness.” The role of the leader is to exemplify the transparency, trust, and communication needed to develop the organization. Examples are given from well-known organizations such as NASA. Although the book does not mention mindfulness, it nonetheless describes a kind of collective intelligence that could be supported by the emotional intelligence and listening skills that are cultivated by mindfulness. The concept of a team of teams is one that that companies undergoing transformation can adopt in order to increase agility and adaptability.

Extra: One of the concepts I found to be helpful in this book is the distinction made between “complicated,” having many parts, and “complexity,” having a dramatic increase in the number of interactions (McChrystal, 2015, p. 57).

**“The Little Book of Restorative Justice” by Howard Zehr.** During my master’s, I took an independent study course in restorative justice with Meenakshi Chhabra. Over the course of the semester, I began integrating principles of restorative justice into my work with my non-profit Mindfulness Solidaire, bringing mindfulness programs to prisons and homeless shelters. From May 2018, I began also integrating council circles, an important restorative justice practice, into my work with companies. During council circles, a group sits in a circle with a facilitator, using a talking piece for speaking, and creating a space of deep listening and emergence. The expression that comes about during the practice is surprisingly fresh, authentic and laden with truth. From my first experience using peacemaking practices in the business world, I realized that these tools could be extremely powerful for professionals as well.

In Howard Zehr’s (2002) book, we do not find one short definition of restorative justice, but rather a set of questions and alternative ways of focusing that allow us to gradually create a picture of what the practice is and is not. What I have found useful in restorative justice is that rather than focusing on the crime that was done, and retribution for the criminal, restorative justice seeks to also identify other ways of addressing wrongdoing, without opposing retributive justice. This is the first link I see with the business world. Although much of it is highly accepted and goes unnoticed or unpunished, there is wrongdoing in the business world (harassment, manipulation, lying, domination, to name some examples), although it may not always be criminal. Restorative justice includes stakeholders that weren’t initially taken into account. The idea of the victim is redefined, to include all those who are harmed by the acts; this includes victims, the community, but also the person who is doing wrong herself. The practice of bringing parties together in new forms of communication, allows for a higher level of information to emerge, allows for the

narration of our stories, creates an increased sense of empowerment, while generating the possibility of recognition of others' needs and roles, and responsibility (Zehr, 2002).

In the fall of 2018, I took a 3-day council circle training with Jared Seide of the Council Circle Institute. Seide has been involved in bringing the practices to high-security prisons with staggering levels of gang violence, with noteworthy results. I believe that these practices will be useful in creating social peace and conditions for working side-by-side in France between warring politicians and activist groups. For businesses, the possibility of focusing not only on symptoms and results, but also addressing the causes of difficulties, is a major advantage. In a time of business transformation, restorative justice principles could help companies dig deeper and let go of culture traits that were discriminatory and counterproductive. When I took the second council circle training in 2019, tailored for experienced facilitators, I began to understand that circles are not only adapted to conflictual situations but to creating a strong base for collective growth.

**Insight dialogue: Gregory Kramer.** My study of *insight dialogue* in the mindful communication class greatly contributed to my understanding and practice of Council Circles. I also spent 3 days in retreat with Anne Michel, a student of Gregory Kramer, who teaches the practice in Europe. Insight dialogue uses six principles to guide a period of interpersonal meditation: (a) pause, (b) relax, (c) open, (d) trust emergence, (e) listen deeply and (f) speak the truth. *Pause* signifies an invitation to interrupt the mind and create the conditions for awareness. *Relax* is a way of bringing the sensations of the body into the experience. *Open* is a state of mind that increases receptivity and connection. *Trust emergence* is also a stage of preparation that helps us to let go of having to know what to say or share. *Listen deeply* gives us the opportunity to receive our partner's presence and expression from a much deeper place. When it is our turn to speak, *speak the truth* encourages us to refrain from censoring ourselves, and to become a conduit for authentic

sharing into the common space. One of the most difficult to understand aspects of insight dialogue is the sense of interruption one may experience as bells ring and call us into silence while we are practicing. We then become aware of the difference between speaking from being, and speaking is a way of driving ourselves forward, trying to accomplish something.

**Change theory: Robert Keegan.** We were exposed to the work of Robert Keegan in the mindful leadership classes, and this was the first time that I took a serious look at an important theory on the way change can take place. I retained the idea that we create our world by interpreting our experience and attributing meaning to it. In Keegan's work, the concept of transformation is that of transforming this very understanding of the world, and allowing for the mutation of our mind as a tool for understanding the world. Instead of simply coming into contact with the world, we perceive the very way in which we are coming into contact with the world, and the filters that are creating the interpretation and experience. Keegan names different stages of development, "orders of the mind," which signify increasing complexity in our understanding. Going from a very simple and solid approach of learning to distinguish objects into categories, to later stages where we can see the similarities between things that seem different and create common ground for diversity. This progression helps me to observe professionals in their transformation, as they learn to visit each other's perspectives and navigate between different points of views and narratives.

**Holonic, being-centered leadership: Fry and Kriger.** I was very influenced by Fry and Kriger's papers on being-centered leadership. The model shows five different stages that progress from Level V to I. As leaders grow their leadership, they become ever more agile, able to operate from different levels according to the situational need. "Mindful leadership" is for me another way of expressing being-centered leadership, as it invites us to take note of our positions and limitations as we detect possibilities for growth. Increased presence and awareness is necessary in order to go from an intellectual understanding of being-centered

leadership to a more navigational vision, an integrated and moment-to-moment approach that could change the actual outcome of a situation.

- Level V, the physical world: Leaders adopt traits and behavior associated with leadership.
- Level IV, the world of images and imagination: Leaders propose a charismatic vision.
- Level III, the level of the soul: Leaders develop authentic, ethical, and conscious leadership based on greater awareness.
- Level II, the level of the Spirit: Leaders abandon traditional postures and become servant leaders.
- Level I, non-duality: Leaders operate from a place of unconditional love and non-separation.

**Upward spirals of positive emotions: Barbara Frederickson.** I was first introduced to positive psychology when taking a course on emotional intelligence in 2014. I was influenced by the idea that positive emotions may have had an important role to play in the evolution of our species, allowing us to access prosocial behaviors, create, and learn. There is a vital connection between positive psychology and the field of mindfulness, and there are many similarities in the focus of both bodies of research. Frederickson's research suggests that psychopathologies such as depression may be due to a series of small, microevents and decisions that lead to a more permanent state. In the same way that there are downward spirals, upward spirals are also possible (Frederickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, Finkel, 2008). Creating optimal states for collaboration may be the work of leaders who also make many small decisions that lead them to share positive emotions with others, developing a positive base for the hard work of business transformation. An 8-week program of metta practices was shown to contribute to increased levels of positive emotions in professionals.

**Dunbar numbers.** The research of the anthropologist Robin Dunbar on the size of the neocortex in primates seems to suggest that social relationships become less stable and more conflictual when there are more than 150 members in a group. Some organizations have used the research to organize a bigger structure into smaller groups. In business transformation, in accordance with Stanley McChrystal's work on team of teams, companies can take this research into consideration when designing mode of operation and collaboration.

## **Neuroscience**

**Introduction to the human brain.** The brain is made up of water and fats, and uses 20% of the body's energy. We have 100 billion neurons in our brains. Each neuron is connected to other neurons using trillions of neural pathways. Chemical messages and electrical impulses are generated between these connections. The forebrain contains the cerebral cortex, which is divided up into four lobes. The frontal lobe is associated with our capacity to reason and organize, use language, solve problems, sustain attention, and regulate our behavior and emotions. The parietal lobe is related to bodily awareness, with vision, touch, and spatial awareness, integrating sensory information. The occipital lobe uses visual processing to capture body language. And the temporal lobe is associated with auditory capacities, speaking, and verbal and visual memory. The midbrain contains the limbic system, associated with our emotional regulation, along with the thalamus, hypothalamus, amygdala, and hippocampus. The hindbrain is associated with vital regulatory functions such as breathing, cardiac activity, and sleep cycles (Sentis, 2012).

**Neuroplasticity.** Mindfulness uses the brain's natural plasticity to modify its own structure and function. While we were aware that children's brains grew and reorganized, the discovery that adult brains also have properties of neuroplasticity is more recent. The number of connections between neurons can both augment and lessen in different regions of

the brains, depending on the experience. This discovery is often associated with a study of taxi drivers in London, whose brains were observed before and after taking a difficult test requiring the memorization of all of the streets in the city. Scientists observed a densification of the posterior hippocampus, associated with learning faculties and memory.

Mindfulness meditation is associated with significant changes in the brain, including greater emotional regulation, and increased attentional capacity, increased memory, greater well-being, reduced stress and anxiety. Mindfulness meditation generates the release of neurochemicals which reinforce the growth and connection between neurons in the cerebral cortex (Baer, 2010). Mirror neurons sometimes when we watch someone else doing an activity, we experience a sensation as if it were happening to us. Scientists say that this capacity to represent other people, and feel what they feel is in part due to a special subset of brain activity linked to what we call *mirror neurons*. Between 10 and 20% of our neurons are mirror neurons. Scientists discovered mirror neurons while observing monkeys that were watching other monkeys perform an activity. They are linked to our capacity for empathy, which is a trait that is also increased by the practice of mindfulness. Understanding how empathy may be generated in the brain, and understanding the role empathy plays in creating a cohesive social environment, allows some professionals to access internal permission to learn more about an aspect of themselves that sometimes seems out of place in the business world (Marsh, 2012).

**Attention at work.** The psychologist Daniel Goleman (1994) describes three kind of attention: external focus, internal focus, and focus on others. *External focus* is what we often call “attention,” when we are learning, working, with the current of our attention directed towards something outside of ourselves. *Internal focus* is composed of our awareness of the self and our inner world. This allows us to notice our internal states and make decisions as we navigate in the world. Our *focus on others* is an expression of empathy, and allows us to

take notice of the behavior and attitudes of others, and manage our relationships.

Understanding these different levels of focus can provide a framework for helping professionals to cultivate their emotional intelligence. As people develop mindfulness, they can become more aware of these different areas and make decisions from a greater level of awareness. Mindfulness practices help people to pay attention to attention, a precious resource in the intensity of the work environment.

**Flow and creativity.** The term *flow* was used by the psychologist Mikhail Csikszentmihalyi to describe a mind state where the individual is fully immersed in an activity, with a sensation of being absorbed, losing all sense of time. During flow, people “forget” themselves, and report a great sense of happiness. Being in flow is such a productive state of mind, and is associated with well-being and heightened creativity, the question arises of whether it is possible to induce such a state. The practice of mindfulness may support our access to flow by increasing our level of attention, and giving us the possibility of returning to the present moment and to the activity that we are engaged in. In general, mindfulness may support the creative process by decentering our minds from ideas we have had before, and inducing the default mode that is associated with higher levels of brain connectivity. Mindfulness may help us to incubate burgeoning ideas, allowing them to unfold, and become clearer and more precise.

## **MEBT Program**

### **Overview of Program**

The key objectives of this program are to help participants identify and develop the following elements:

1. Meditation and mindfulness
2. Emotional intelligence
3. Leadership

4. Collective intelligence through council circles

The main goals of the program are to:

1. Create an environment of growth and mutual support
2. Introduce the program and key concepts
3. Support transformation on an individual level
4. Invite participants to develop their leadership
5. Support transformation on a collective level

Mission: MEBT is an educational program for professionals in companies that are undertaking organizational and managerial transformation. The mission of the program is to support viable change by equipping participants with information and practices that allow for personal and collective development. The program description and resources will be described in the following sections.

**Unit 1: Attention and Awareness (2 Days)**

1. It's a VUCA World
2. Exercise: New Roles for Leaders
3. Exploring Connection Leadership
4. Leadership Tools: Values, Talents, Vision, and Mission
5. Exploring Mindfulness and Emotional Intelligence
6. Exploring Council Circle
7. Creating our Working Agreements
8. Practicing Mindfulness Meditation
9. Practicing Council Circle
10. Practicing Generous Listening
11. Sharing Experience
12. Action Plan

**Part 1: It's a VUCA world, people!** The term VUCA is an acronym, developed by U.S. Army generals to describe U.S. conflicts after the Cold War: It stands for volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous.

Today, the term VUCA is used to describe a quickly changing business environment. Many shifts are underway today:

- Technology
- Information
- Shift of power from nation-states to companies
- Volatile financial markets
- Climate deregulation
- Humanitarian crises
- Less stable job market
- Search for greater meaning in work
- Greater awareness of impact of organizations on society and the planet

**Part 2: Exercise: New roles for leaders.** Group discussion:

- In a VUCA World, how does the role of leaders change?
- How do you define leadership?
- Is that different from the way leadership was defined 10 years ago, 20 years ago?
- How do you see the leadership of the future?

**Part 3: Exploring connection leadership.** During this program we will explore the idea of “connection leadership.” This leadership model develops simultaneously at the level of being, knowing, and acting:

- *Being:* The leader withdraws from the world regularly to meet with himself, to allow his vision to emerge. The leader gives and serves generously by becoming the embodiment of his values and his vision, and paying focused attention to people's

needs. Those who work with the leader can notice a high level of presence in the leader, who amplifies his intention and his convictions in the pursuit of a collective mission.

- *Knowing*: The foundation of connection leadership is the increased awareness of oneself: values, talents, vision, mission. Through one's attention to this dimension, the leader refines her intuition, accepts her emotions and feelings and connects with herself, others and the whole of the system in which she participates.
- *Acting*: The leader is aware and intentional in creating an environment that develops the leadership of others. She uses her talents in collective intelligence to create new ways of working. The leader shows courage, learning to say no, giving herself the right to "be wrong," and dares to take risks to support her vision. She concentrates on combining meaning with effectiveness.

#### **Part 4: Leadership tools: Values, talents, vision, and mission.**

*What are values?* A personal value is a reflection of who we really are, an essential dimension, a central component of what constitutes us, carries us, gives birth to our dreams. We feel that we are realizing our potential as humans when we live in alignment with our values.

*What are talents?* A talent is a unique strength, something we do with ease or spontaneously. It is neutral and can be used to create something both positive and negative. Our talents must be at the service of our values and our mission, to support our growth.

*What is a vision?* Our vision develops when we bring ourselves to study the current state of the world in light of our values, and our unique way of perceiving this world. It is the project; the movement; the central momentum of all our decisions, choices, and actions. Deep satisfaction as a leader may emerge when we act to realize our vision.

*What is a mission?* The mission is based on the idea that we have a future that wants to emerge thanks to us (identified by developing our vision). Our mission would be the part we feel called to play in the realization of this future. When our life is organized around our mission, we feel that what we do is meaningful.

#### **Part 5: Exploring mindfulness and emotional intelligence.**

*What is mindfulness?* Mindfulness is a secular form of contemplative practice. In its simplest form it can be defined as the intentional directing of attention towards the present moment without judgment, and in its more complex forms, it is a unique way of being in the world, a form of leadership, and an invitation towards a societal transformation where people are more connected and present to what we are creating collectively. Numerous scientific studies are exploring the benefits, and a growing number of practitioners are beginning to practice throughout the world. Some businesses, schools, hospitals, and other organizations are offering mindfulness education to their personnel or to the students, patients, clients that they accompany.

*What is emotional intelligence, and an emotional intelligence leadership program based on mindfulness?* Emotional intelligence is a set of skills related to self-awareness and self-management, perception, understanding, and regulation of emotions. It also includes the ability to manage relationships with others.

The study and discussion of emotional intelligence first began developing when journalist Daniel Goleman published the book *Emotional Intelligence* in 1995. His research attempted to provide reasoning that could explain why some people with high IQ are surpassed in performance by people with an IQ lower than theirs. Goleman used the emotional quotient (EQ) to explain this difference. Two decades later, Dr. Travis Bradbury researched emotional intelligence and determined that it accounted for two thirds of

professional performance. These relational and emotional skills are missing from leadership education based on the development of traits.

MBEI includes interventions that stimulate emotional intelligence and prosocial behavior through the practice of mindfulness. Integrated with mindfulness, Goleman's model helps participants understand the relationship between thoughts, feelings, impulses, and behaviors, in particular by identifying the triggers that lead to automatic behaviors and their unintended impact on others.

*Why not stick to "pure" mindfulness programs?* The MEBT program is an MBEI program, inspired by my training and experience teaching mindfulness in business settings. I believe that the business environment requires a combination of approaches and skills in order to create high impact. We believe that a holistic approach, combining coaching, training and consulting will optimize the reach and impact of mindfulness. In this way, mindfulness supports and influences business strategy.

#### **Part 6: Exploring council circle (peacemaking circle).**

What is a council circle? The council circle has its roots in contemplative traditions and indigenous traditions. It is used today in schools, workplaces, social services, and justice to create authentic communication about difficult problems and painful experiences, in an atmosphere of respect and care for everyone. This process is based on sharing personal stories that unite people and create a space for personal and collective growth.

In a business setting, I have used the council circle to address unspoken issues, rumors, fear of confrontation, and the desire to be more deeply connected to the meaning of one's work. The results are often surprising and require commitment from the participants to take responsibility for the space that they create.

Our use of the council circle is inspired by the writing of Kay Pranis, the Restorative Justice program at Lesley, and my training with Jared Seide, President of the Council Circle Institute.

Kay Pranis gives the following guidelines for creating a circle. The council circle:

- Honors the presence and dignity of each participant
- Attaches importance to the contribution of each participant
- Emphasizes the interconnection of all things
- Supports the emotional expression of each participant
- Give an equal voice to all

The circle is a space strong enough to contain:

- Anger
- Frustration
- Joy
- Pain
- The truth
- The dispute
- Different points of view
- Strong emotions
- Silence
- Paradox

(Pranis, 2005, p. 9)

The council circle requires careful preparation through the creation of common guidelines to which the group commits. The whole group, not just the facilitator, is responsible for the respect of the working agreements and the environment that they create

together. It is possible to use a talking stick to slow down the pace and encourage thoughtful sharing.

**Part 7: Creating our working agreements.** What are our working agreements? The Circle is based on a set of values that have been identified by the group. It starts from the postulate that every human being aspires to be in connection with others in a positive way.

Invite the group to explore these issues to establish your list of working agreements:

- As a participant, what do we expect from others?
- How will we be present to each other?
- What do we need to support us in emotionally intense times?
- What could help us to overcome discomfort and fear?

Create a list of common guidelines using a flipchart or post-its. Here are some examples used in our programs. We invite you in this training to stick to four working agreements:

1. *Respect*: The opportunity to express ourselves will circulate freely and without judgment in respect of the diversity of experiences and points of view. The conversations and experiences that take place during the program are subject to confidentiality.
2. *Commitment*: The success of the program is dependent upon the educational content, the facilitators, and the contribution of the group. It is up to each participant to work from real situations with authenticity. As such we ask you to define the actions to which you can commit and we ask you to create the conditions that allow for achieving collective results.
3. *Co-responsibility*: Each participant is the first and foremost responsible for his or her own experience and results. It is up to him or her to identify ideas and actions and put them into practice, and up to the facilitator to be proactive and supportive.

4. *Effectiveness*: We give ourselves permission to call ourselves to order. The group commits to speaking up when our agreements are not respected.

### **Part 8: Practicing mindfulness meditation.**

*Recalling the basics of mindfulness.* As we mentioned, mindfulness is a state of consciousness that results from letting our attention rest in the present moment, on our experience. It is based on the awareness and observation of the present moment, and allows us to access information that may previously have gone unnoticed. Some of this information—how I am feeling emotionally, how my body feels, what mood I am in, what others seem to be feeling, how I feel as I listen to someone or work on something. This additional layer of information, taken in without judgment, and with an attitude of acceptance, enriches the database from which I make decisions. By becoming more aware of the layer beneath our mental process, we may increase our understanding of ourselves, our needs, and others and their needs.

This state of presence is developed through formal practices such as meditation.

*Why does mindfulness interest us?* Studies have shown that mindfulness meditation has many mental, emotional, and physical benefits, such as: lowering of hypertension, accelerating healing, strengthening the immune system, reducing emotional fatigue, reducing stress and anxiety, and depressive symptoms.

Some studies show that we are less happy when our mind turns to the future or the past, and increases when we are more present to what we are doing. In this program, we will learn just how mindfulness also helps us to get to know ourselves better and to better understand what is happening with others. This valuable knowledge helps us make better decisions and be more proactive in creating a healthy environment for ourselves and for others.

Introduce a first practice:

- Short practice on the fundamentals of mindfulness: posture, breathing, attention
- Posture: what should we think about when starting practice?
  - Sit comfortably, in a dignified and stable posture
  - Feet flat on the floor
  - Hands on the thighs, palms down
  - Straight back, without stiffness, open chest
  - Relaxed shoulders
  - The mouth closed or slightly ajar, the jaw relaxed
  - Eyes closed, or open gaze placed a few meters in front of you on the ground
- Practice: mindfulness meditation on breathing
- Duration: 10 minutes
  - Take a few seconds to feel the sensations in your body in the meditation posture.
  - Pay attention to the sensation of your breathing, feeling the passage of air through your nostrils, throat, raising and lowering chest, belly and shoulder movements.
  - Then extend your attention to the whole body, to the general feeling of breathing.
  - If thoughts arise, simply notice it, saying “I’m having a thought” or “thought.”  
Then, let go of that thought and bring your attention back to the breath.

***Practice of the council circle.*** Start with questions such as:

- Why am I here?
- Why am I participating in this group?
- What are my expectations?

- What do I bring to this group as a leader?
- What would I like to let go of as I explore my transformation?

**Part 9: Practicing council circle.** A possible question for council circle: VUCA WORLD: Who or what is absorbing or being affected by the shift in our working and planetary conditions?

**Part 10: Practicing generous listening.** Practice generous listening in pairs.

The generous listener: “You listen to me, I listen to you, we listen—together.”

Generous listening is a simple practice that has the potential to transform our relationship to yourself and to others.

Through a unique process involving words and silence, we will deepen listening through mindfulness, relaxation, openness, intuition, and sharing. In the practice, one person expresses herself, and the other listens in silence. The silent listener stays connected to the person speaking through body language, but does not interrupt in any way.

An allotted time is given for the person who speaks. If the person speaking has nothing to say, the two sit in silence and presence. The person may stop and speak when an idea comes to her. After the allotted time is over, the two participants switch roles. Give a time of guided meditation with silence and centering. We encourage the second speaker to begin speaking without bouncing off of the first speaker’s ideas.

**Part 11: Sharing experience.**

- Do you have specific situations to share?
- What was been the impact on you as a listener?
- As a speaker?
- What do you believe could be the point of such an exercise?
- When could you use the learning points from this experience?

**Unit 2: Empowerment (2 Days)**

1. Sharing Observations
2. Setting the Stage for Empowerment
3. Reminder: Emotional Intelligence
4. Exploring Journaling
5. Practicing a Body Scan
6. Practicing Council Circle
7. Learning to Give Mindful Feedback
8. Mindfulness Exercise on Connection Leadership
9. Action Plans

**Part 1: Sharing observations.** A time of sharing. Which practice from the first test and learning period were you able to bring into your daily life?

**Part 2: Setting the stage for empowerment.** What will allow us to do this work together?

*Fundamentals of transformation.* A team evolution can fail. This is a time to make known the prerequisites of successful collective coaching.

“Coaching is a process of accompaniment that promotes awareness by a team or a group of its modes of operation, with the aim of overcoming the situation in which it is located and to achieve its professional goals. has set in full autonomy (without the help of the coach).”

*The five main characteristics of successful coaching.*

1. A partnership where the coach and the team make an alliance.
2. An orientation towards the future starting from the present.
3. A search for pragmatic solutions.
4. An implementation of the solutions.
5. A methodology and a state of mind allowing a positive change

*The limits of the coach.* The benefits of coaching will be limited by the following situations:

- The team enjoys secondary benefits in the conflict and does not want to change.
- Only some members of the team wish to change but cannot express it because they are all under the domination of a member of the team that holds the “power.”
- The team wants to change operations, but the resistance to change and the fears that flow from the unknown hinder them.
- Despite the demand for a team coaching, the manager or manager is not ready to question himself and uses a form of management “dictatorial.”
- The request for support from hierarchy in the company accepts but will hinder the progress of coaching through inertia or behavior that will defeat the purpose of the coaching.
- With your knowledge of the group, what are the attitudes and behaviors that have a tendency to hinder and sabotage the achievement of your common goals?

*Research of antidotes.* Commitment for the development of the team’s declaration:  
Through practical coaching exercises, become familiar with their inner resources (beliefs, thoughts, emotions, attention, creation) and cultivate their leadership in a collective setting.  
Cultivating the basics of links, vulnerability, risk-taking of the servant leadership.  
Develop mindfulness practices.

**Part 3: Reminder: Emotional intelligence.** What is Emotional Intelligence?  
Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize one’s feelings and those of others, to manage one’s emotional reactions to oneself and others, and to motivate oneself to achieve one’s goals.

1995 - a study showed that people with average IQs outperform people with very high IQ - 70% of the time.

The traditional conception of emotions is that they distract us, they prevent us from making the right decisions (a rational decision that is based on a consideration of facts), and traditionally we must above all control situations and suppress emotions.

With better understanding of our emotions, we now know that emotions are essential to the decision-making process. In fact without them, we would not be able to make good decisions. Emotions do not distract us, but rather support our leadership.

Study by Schmidt (2012) on emotional intelligence; EQ stats (Bradbury, year):

- 90% of top performers have high emotional intelligence.
- 60% of your work performance depends on your level of emotional intelligence.
- People with a high level of intelligence earn more (25K € more).

Dr. Travis Bradbury, author of “Emotional Intelligence 2.0,” claims that in his research concerning emotional intelligence, he has not found a sector, a type of work, or a region of the world where emotional intelligence does not give an advantage.

**Part 4: Exploring journaling.** As part of the transformation process, when I suggest that professionals keep a daily journal in France, the image of a child with a diary often pops up for some. However, writing is not only for young dreamers; it’s also a great tool for business leaders!

In some ways similar to meditation, writing allows the mind to get out of its usual way of dealing with stress, emotions and daily life. In the field of health, American psychologists use this tool in therapy because of its effectiveness. Journaling is used to treat depression and other psychological disorders. Studies with AIDS patients by Dr. James Pennebaker, a researcher at the University of Texas, have shown that simply writing about one’s feelings regularly reinforces the immune system of participants. Another study shows that job seekers who kept a journal found employment twice as fast.

In the business world, this tool plays an important role in the leadership of a professional.

Here are 4 benefits to help motivate participants to start keeping a journal:

1. Writing to fight loneliness: The loneliness of leaders in business transformation is a common reality. While journaling will not replace balanced relationships and engaged and committed teams, reflective writing can regularly help a leader to better understand herself, and give a space for expressing oneself on recurrent topics that may require slow evolution.
2. Finding your own solutions: Writing regularly helps you organize your ideas. After expressing your ideas, you can analyze these reflections in detail. It also allows you to refine your vision and develop self-leadership, because by writing we may find solutions emerging as we write.
3. A space to release creativity: Writing also stimulates creativity, occupying part of the brain while freeing creative centers. We often find our best ideas by putting everything on a page freely.
4. Developing leadership in your organizational transformation. It's a long-term job to work towards your collective vision of an organizational transformation. Your journal will help you to refocus regularly on your objectives and navigate obstacles on the way.

How can participants develop their leadership by starting a journal?

1. Start with a notebook and a pen. Writing manually may stimulate your brain differently than typing on a keyboard, and lends itself to deeper understanding.
2. In your agenda, reserve a moment of your day for this exercise. It can become as much of a habit as a coffee break, or a time of exercise or meditation.

3. Your journal may have a theme that fits the development of your business or a larger project; nevertheless, feel free to write about what is going on in your mind when you start writing. This helps to “unload” your mind.
4. Do not censor yourself. Do not try to write beautiful sentences.
5. To begin, you can answer these questions:
  - a. How do I feel?
  - b. What are my current preoccupations? Is anything on my mind?
  - c. What am I proud of today?
  - d. What is happening in my relationships? Describe any tensions, then think about problems from others’ perspectives. Brainstorm possibilities for creating a solution.
  - e. What are my upcoming deadlines? What do I feel is needed of me?

**Part 5: Practicing a body scan.** Practicing mindfulness together: Introducing a body scan with the element of gratitude for the body.

An exercise to become present, relax, and disconnect from your daily tasks, from the complexity of relationships, everything outside of this room.

A time to connect with the body, which is the field of our experience.

Intro: Thank you for taking the time to meditate. Find a seated posture, position yourself and adopt a straightness that is both supple and firm, with the back upright (like a string gently pulling upwards, connected to the sky). You can meditate with your eyes open or closed, to become aware of your presence here and now.

1. Concentration phase on breathing: five deep inhalations/exhalations. Then, pay attention to any feelings and thoughts that are present; note the coolness of the air with each inhalation; and the warmth on the exhalation. Bring awareness to the movement of your breath (nostrils, throat, chest, belly, ribcage).

2. Beginning of the segmented meditation: While maintaining natural, soft and non-forced breathing, I focus on my feet and send a refreshing inhalation to this place, I become aware of their weight, the warmth of my socks and I say thank you, thank you for carrying me for all these years, for giving me support and stability and for directing my steps wherever necessary. Thanks to my feet for all these efforts.

Then I focus on my ankles, round and flexible that allow me to be agile as I walk. I give thanks to my ankles.

Then, I focus on the calves. I feel the support that my calves offer me in each of my movements. I thank my ankles for this support and agility.

I turn my attention to the knees and I become aware of the flexibility they offer me, and I thank the knees. I offer them a moment of tenderness. I am fully grateful.

Now, I place my attention on the thighs. I fill all the space that is occupied by my thighs. I am present, placing my awareness on the inside of these thighs and I become aware of the strength and power of my muscles at rest. And, I thank my thighs for this strength that allows me to walk, run, pedal, jump.

And, now, I focus my attention on the hips and I become aware of this axis of movements and balance that constantly work for me, and I become aware of my pelvis. And, I thank my hips, and my pelvis. I become aware of this comfort of balance.

Then, I bring awareness to the area of the belly, with the muscles of my abdomen, and I thank them for their support. Then, within the belly, I can explore the different organs, and thank them too. Each of my vital organs works for me, and no matter what I do, what I eat, these organs handle everything—take what is good for

me and transform it, and reject what is not useful. And, I thank these parts of my body for their service.

Now, I am becoming aware of the rib cage, and I can feel my heart. Maybe I can even feel the natural movement of the heart, sometimes accelerating in the light of my attention, but I can pay more attention to the heart and give it the opportunity to beat more gently. And, I thank my heart.

And, then, I focus on the lungs that swell with each breath. And, I feel the expansion of the body with each inspiration. And, I become aware of the movement, the grace of my breathing, the dance of my breath. And, I thank my lungs.

I direct my attention to the back, the muscles, the spine, and I become aware of my back, this posture that reflects my view of life, and I thank my back, for its support, its ability to carry me in all the circumstances.

I focus now on my arms—from the shoulders to the hands. I feel all the things I do, all the things I bear—they are here in my arms. Thank you, my arms, my hands, my shoulders, for their strength, for their art, the art of knowing how to support others, hold the hands of those who need me, the art of straining and creating the space, the art of signaling our victories by getting up in the air, the art of holding on with determination.

Then, I become aware of my neck, then my head—inside my brain—which makes billions of connections every day, always at my service. I thank my neck, my head. I focus on my eyes, my ears, my nose, my mouth—and I am now aware of all the information my senses receive, and the tremendous work my brain is doing at every moment.

3. 5 minutes of silence to gather all these many thanks into one wave of gratitude, to say thank you to the body in its entirety.

4. Return to breathing. Five deep inhalations and exhalations to refocus attention.
5. Make some small movements. Back to the present moment. I rub my face. End of meditation.

**Part 6: Practicing council circle.** Practicing circle process together using mindful feedback.

- Key skill: Learn the basics of collective intelligence through the council circle (1 hr.)
- What is a circle? Origins, functioning, commitments, objectives.
- Question for the circle:
  - What are the questions we ask ourselves today about this collective?
  - What emotions are presently present?
  - What are the doubts we have?
  - What is present for me right now?
- Reminder: What is a Council Circle?

The council circle has its roots in contemplative traditions and in indigenous traditions. It is used in a variety of contexts (schools, businesses, and social services) to create honest conversations about difficult problems and painful experiences, in an atmosphere of respect and kindness for everyone.

**Part 7: Learning to give mindful feedback.** Key skill: Acquire and master the steps of four-point feedback.

Practical scenario workshop: The mindful feedback will be based on the factual elements while emphasizing different moments of success, however insignificant they may seem.

“When we started coaching you a month ago, you made a commitment and stuck to it between each session. We notice an increase in your effectiveness as a leader.”

The trick is to ask your participant if he is aware of the progress made and to adjust your feedback to validate that the essence of what you are trying to share is well integrated.

“And now that you have received this feedback, what difference might it make for you?” Use tape on the floor to represent three steps:

1. State the factual element to which you wish to draw attention
2. Request a validation from the participant
3. Adapt the perspective according to the nature of the feedback.

**Part 8: Mindfulness exercise on connection leadership.**

Context: Self-leadership and leadership in the work environment.

Exercise: What are the characteristics of a conscious leader for you?

1. Choose a photo and find a corner of the room to do a meditation
2. Turn the attention to the breath. We will take several deep breaths by the belly.
3. Then turn your eyes to the face in the picture.
4. Stay a few moments to look at this person in the picture, in the eyes.
5. Ask yourself these questions:
  - a. How do you feel when you look at this face?
  - b. What are the characteristics that emerge from this image?
  - c. How do you imagine this person?
  - d. Imagine her in her workplace. What distinguishes her ?
  - e. What are the essential traits that make up her personality, her aura as a leader?

Gandhi  
Martin Luther King Jr  
Mandela  
Mother Theresa  
Richard Branson  
Elon Musk  
Umberto Eco  
Pierre Rabhi  
Nicolas Hulot  
Simone Veil

Rodin  
Basquiat  
Harvey Milk  
Steve Jobs  
Obama  
Kennedy  
Saint Exupery  
Gorbachev  
Churchill  
Abbé Pierre  
Dalai Llama  
Amma

**Part 9: Action plans.** Action plans for second test and learn period.

Invite participants to create an action plan together. Where can they imagine applying the knowledge from the unit?

Explore possibilities together. Then, choose three to five actions that the group is committed to accomplishing before the next session.

### **Unit 3: Connection (2 Days)**

1. Sharing Observations
2. Exploring Connection
3. Redefining Leadership
4. Presentation of Theory U
5. Exercise: Listening to Your Life
6. Council Circle
7. Group Discussion
8. Creating Connection
9. Learning to Express Needs Mindfully
10. Action Plans

**Part 1: Sharing observation.** A time of sharing. Which practices from the first test and learning period were you able to bring into your daily life? What was difficult to put into practice?

**Part 2: Exploring connection.** Create a laboratory for the exploration of connection.

Create a U shape with the chairs.

Share one experience from the instructor's management background, leadership and organizational coaching experience. How does mindfulness allow us to lead differently?

Create a discussion about the types of exercises that we are using. How is experiential learning different from more traditional classes? How can we apply what we observe to the work environment?

How do people connect to this experience?

- What is the intention? Why is it important to set an intention?
- Sometimes we tell participants to “trust the process” – what does that mean and what does that allow in the learning process?
- We sometimes ask participants to abandon any notion of success – why is it interesting to become aware of our relationship to success and try to free ourselves from it? Is it possible to work without aiming for success? What other meaning could work have?
- Invite participants to accept the experience, as well as the emotions or sensations that may come. Is it possible to accept the experience of others with their differences? What keeps us from doing that?

As instructors our intention is to create moments of sharing, solidarity, and joy. Do these values have their place in the work environment? Ask participants to talk about their values and alignment with those values.

- A laboratory is an opportunity to do research.

- What questions do we want to put in the test tube? Why do we want change?

**Part 3: Redefining leadership.** Learning points:

- Leadership does not depend on position/hierarchy.
- In management this is the case, we are given a position.
- Leadership is a way of life, a path, a state of mind. We believe that everyone is a leader.
- What does it mean to have self-leadership? How does self-leadership affect relationships?
- What is the difference between a leader and a manager?
- What is leadership? Management versus leadership.
- Through a set of reflections and exercises:
  - Leadership is an elusive concept, with many theories, frameworks, and so on.
  - Although there are principles to apply/best practices to learn, we believe that leadership is a personal choice and we encourage participants to develop their own “philosophy of leadership.” We want to develop and establish an effective and impactful leadership that participants can develop.
- Through a two-column exercise, help participants understand the difference between management (planning, allotting resources, monitoring operations) and leadership (sharing vision and inspiring others to move in a direction).

***Discussion: Mindful multilevel discussion.*** Objectives:

- Engage the whole group to generate questions, ideas, suggestions.
- Introduce the theme of the workshop.
- Know the level of reflection in this group.
- Valuing what is already acquired.

*The steps of the exercise.*

1. In reflection alone.
2. Two-way discussion.
3. Discussions between two pairs of pairs.
4. Discussion with the whole group - with notes on the board.

Between each of the steps of the exercise, invite participants to a centering practice.

Invite them to come back to the breath and to their awareness of their emotions and thoughts, their mood, before moving into the next stage.

*Questions to be addressed during this exercise.*

1. Where does the confidence of a leader come from?
2. What are the signs of that a leader has true confidence?
3. Knowing yourself, how will you know that your confidence has evolved?
4. When you seek to convey confidence and create trust with others, with your teams, what do you do?

*Learning points.*

- Confidence comes from within, and also from outward signs. It's a state of mind that creates results.
- Ask for feedback on the experience, and reflections on the difference with an exercise like this that includes an element of mindfulness.
- What did the participants observe?

**Part 4: Presentation of theory U.** The U is the coordination of mind and presence in the body to bring out information that the mind alone does not offer us.

This in-depth tour provides access to a part of us that is rich in experiences and has a very fine reading of our situation.

Theory U - It is a set of principles and methods very suitable for the experience we are going to have together.

Theory U starts from the idea that everyone, beyond their title or position, is the bearer of change—and also that, in the era in which we live today, all must equip themselves to become an actor of change.

Present the U – diagram U. In theory U, there are five types of “movements” that together create the U:

1. *Co-initiate*: Listen to your life experience, connect with people and contexts that will inspire a common purpose.
2. *Co-sensing/co-feeling*: Observe, observe, observe, with open heart and mind.
3. *Co-presencing* (mindfulness): Go to a common place of calm and silence, open to the future that wants to emerge through us, emergence of ideas/concepts, and so on.
4. *Co-create*: Explore the future from prototypes
5. *Co-evolve*: Act from a global vision, co-develop a larger ecosystem of innovation, create a space that connects people across natural boundaries.

**Part 5: Listening to your life.** What kind of leader are you?

1. Close your eyes: Imagine that a huge meteor hit the earth and only 1,000 survivors are now populating our planet. These people spontaneously regrouped and elected you as the chairman of the board who must look after the destiny of this small group. In your first speech to the group of survivors, you must each tell an important story of your life to inspire the group, a founding episode that really took place.
2. Tell this story to the group.
3. The group welcomes each story in mindful listening and notes the keywords.
4. The group identifies the leadership qualities they observe in the leader presenting their story: What do you find moving in this person’s story? What in this leader’s impact?

5. Journaling time: What can you learn about your own leadership? Write down your alignment level with each value.

**Part 6: Council circle.** What did you learn by doing the Listening to Your life exercise?

You are a source of wisdom and vision! We invite you to learn to give yourself time to listen to the stories of your own life to nurture your leadership.

Create opportunities in your teams for authentic sharing. What can we learn about each other when we listen to it?

This is another type of listening that detects the values of a leader, which creates space for what the person conveys and clears.

**Part 7: Group discussion.** What are you learning about yourself?

Stepback. Participants sit behind their chairs:

- What was my contribution as a mindful leader?
- What was the contribution of other people that I would like to highlight?
- What was the contribution of the group?
- What do I feel that I am bringing to the experience?
- What is making me curious? What do I want to learn?

**Part 8: Creating connection.** Our emotions, past experiences, stress, sleep deprivation, environment, memories, values, culture or drug or alcohol deficiency all play a vital role in our ability to feel confident.

Think about a situation where you were lacking in confidence.

- What were the determining factors? (on post-its)
- What can we do or put in place to foster our trust? (on post-its)
- How can we create connection to ourselves when we are not confident?
- How can we create connection to others?

The confidence of the collective:

- Background: Any complaint can be transformed into a request that others can hear.
- Trust of the collective.

**Part 9: Learning to express needs mindfully.** Learning points:

- Learn to formulate queries that are clear and specific.
- Practice the expression of needs.
- Learn to give clear answers to queries.
- Improve communication in functional groups.
- Improve communication between leaders.
- Eliminate preconceptions and rumors.

Process:

- Create function groups
- Groups of three or four people.
- Groups create a list of clear and specific queries.
- The answers will be as follows: *yes, no, I will try, and too vague.*
- Let's start by creating 20 queries.
- Decide on the two most important ones.

What I need from you is . . .

To find the circle: Each person expresses a request at least to another person of the co-  
dir. This person responds with: *yes, no, I will try, or too vague.*

No discussion, no elaboration.

**Part 10: Action plans.** Action plans for 2nd test and learn period

#### **Unit 4: Change (2 Days)**

1. Sharing Observations
2. Exercise Increasing Awareness

3. Discussion
4. Full Body Scan
5. Step Out Into Your Body
6. Change Treasure Hunt
7. Leadership Feedback
8. The Energy of Why
9. Action Plans

**Part 1: Sharing observation.** A time of sharing. Which practice from the first test and learning period were you able to bring into your daily life?

**Part 2: Increasing awareness.** Put your hand in front of you. Close your eyes. Leave your hand in front of you. Do not move; do not touch anything. Even if you can not see your hand, can you feel it?

After a while, at first it's subtle, then it's stronger—you can feel your hand from the inside. Keep feeling your hand. Then, do not move your hand, but open your eyes. And, look at your hand. Even if you have access to all of your senses, you continue to feel the inside of your hand. Now, put your hands in front of you, and feel both hands.

**Part 3: Discussion.**

**Part 4: Full body scan.**

**Part 5: Step out into your body.** This exercise is done outside. Spend 20 minutes in a circle, light body stretch.

As leaders we connect, we step into our bodies for the day (neck, shoulders, waist, knees, feet). We breathe.

Sit in a place outside where you feel comfortable and observe

**Part 6: Change treasure hunt.** Energy treasure hunt: Letting go, letting emerge. Begin with a meditation using the breath or a body scan.

In pairs they have to find an object in their immediate environment that represents change. Without too much reflection, move towards objects that represent change and trust that the object will reveal its message to you. It can be a picture you take on the phone that you will show afterwards when we are back in the room.

Back in the room: Gather all the objects found on the floor. Pairs present their objects. What do these objects teach us about change? What are we learning?

**Part 7: Leadership feedback.** One at a time in front of everyone. Two questions:

1. When does this person shine as a leader?
2. When does this person fail as a leader?

Lead a silent meditation where each person sits with the feedback they received.

Many things may come up: desire to please, to be perfect, to evolve more quickly. Invite leaders to take note of how the feedback feels. Invite them to transform difficult feelings by decoding the message within the feeling.

Take time to journal.

**Part 8: The energy of why.** Do two pairs of interviews on one of the requests. What do you do when you work on this topic?

1. Why is it important to you?
2. How is it really vital?
3. And how is it really important?
4. What do we see that it is essential?
5. What is behind all this for you?
6. And if you go a little deeper, what becomes obvious?
7. And why do you think it's so central?
8. How will you know that you have reached the basics?
9. If this dream becomes a reality, what would be different?

Debrief: How does it create confidence to know deeply why we are doing something?  
What effect could this have on collective trust?

This exercise helps leaders to connect to their fundamental human values. We invite leaders to become aware of these values and to be mindful of them even while undertaking small projects.

**Part 9: Action plans.** Action plans for the last test and learn period.

### **Objectives of the Program**

The main objective of this program is to stimulate and support business and digital transformation through deep cultural transformation. The program also aims to increase soft skills, awareness of the emotional and other human-focused elements in leaders, that greatly impact the capacity for change.

### **Methods Used in This Program**

The learning methods used in this program promote a pedagogy based on experimentation, practice, and discovery. All of the theory presented in the seminar will be preceded or followed by practical exercises and roleplay. All evaluations are based on roleplay exercises and are followed by insights and feedback that will allow the participant to further the learning journey.

### **Applying This Program and Sustaining Growth**

Participants will learn to create a more agile and inclusive work environment based on trust, togetherness, and connection. They will discover new dimensions of their own potential for growth, for risks and overcoming challenges. They will also learn to identify and lift up other leaders.

More info before/after the training: Bibliography, references to learn more:

### **Reading and Reference Lists for Participants**

1. Pre-reading

Theory U, Otto Scharmer

2. Reading between units
3. Post-reading

### **Conclusion**

After almost a year of implementing the MEBT program in a highly complex business environment, I have been confronted with the very specific difficulties that one may face. My experience has been that business transformation using mindfulness and emotional intelligence as both a base for reflection and source of collective energy requires agile navigation and instructors who will use their maturity, experience and willingness to brave the unknown in order to overcome the many obstacles that will arise on the path. My hope is that this program will be an opportunity for mutual growth.

### **Materials for Participants**

1. Online material and exercises: Include YouTube link to meditations that have been recorded.
2. Offline material and exercises: Include photos of the Ninja School box to show the kind of materials that can be used.
3. Transcripts for audio recordings of meditation are integrated into the content of the thesis.

### **Literature Review and Bibliography**

After living and working in France for over 15 years, I have grown sensitive to the cultural differences that permeate the business environment here. Mindfulness research and programs are often based on studies developed and tested in American countries. In April 2015, the Google mindfulness program spinoff, Search Inside Yourself, gave its first mindfulness-based emotional intelligence training in Paris; I was involved in the logistics of the organization and was able to measure some of the feedback. Although mindfulness is an

ancient and transcultural practice, it seemed evident to me that a standardized program full of cultural references from the United States would have shortcomings in communicating fully and deeply to professionals from other cultures. This first experience with a standardized mindful leadership program, aiming to respond to corporate needs, put me on a path of reflection concerning the business world and the place of mindfulness within it.

In developing a mindful leadership program, I believe it would be necessary to take into consideration the cultural specificities of a team or an organization. A standardized one-culture program runs the risk of not addressing key factors for growth or understanding. Several studies have shown that the quality and effectiveness of French managerial practices is low compared to other European countries. Findings reported by French sociologist Dominique Meda (2018) in the article “La Faible Qualité du Management Français est Confirmée” [The Poor Quality of French Management is Confirmed], point to the weakness of French management, selected solely based on degree, and often unable to understand the actual constraints of work, set objectives correctly, and recognize the efforts of workers.

What are the cultural mechanisms behind these specific weaknesses, and how can mindfulness and mindfulness-based emotional intelligence programs help the coaches and consultants who work daily with these problems to help companies to get to the root of the problem? From my observations in the business environment, currently consulting programs bring new concepts and practices to help evolve the culture, yet find themselves faced with passive resistance.

In addition to a need for culturally sensitive mindfulness programs, many companies are currently faced with the rapid evolution of managerial practices aimed to adapt company culture to an increasingly digital world. An article in *La Tribune* by Pr. Charles Cuveliez (2018) at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, cites a study by Forrester Consulting claiming that over 60% of digital transformation projects in companies fail by ignoring the specificities

of this particular field of change, and also by not taking into account the influence of the psychological or human factor in the success of the project. Possible problems cited are overuse of agile methods and insufficient coaching for employees.

I began to become more interested in *agile transformation* of managerial practices and started interviewing Alain Buzzacaro in personal communication, a partner at Octo Technology, a consulting company specialized in IT that was recently acquired by Accenture. Alain explained the history behind the introduction of agile methods. Over the last few decades, companies divided different professions and centers of activity into departments that each specialized in one area. The reasoning behind the compartmentalizing of these areas was to optimize costs by centralizing them. With the evolution of technology, client demands changed dramatically. Clients now have several devices, and expectations are that the client should be able to access a company's services at any time, anywhere, and from any of his or her devices. The acronym that is commonly used to describe these expectations is ATAWADAC (anytime, anywhere, any device, any content). This has created new challenges for companies who need to provide access, service, and a varied and constant flow of content, outside of office hours. The development of the technology and new services needed to respond to client's needs calls upon competencies that are spread throughout many specialized departments. To work together effectively, companies must use new modes of collaboration, such as project management. These new operational modes go against previous thinking and current structural organization. The agile methods were established in the domain of software development, where participants with different roles would come together in a process of rapid communication and continuous adjustment to produce successful results. Recent developments in management practices show that companies are seeking to respond to a highly competitive environment by working more and more in a project mode and using agile methods.

Alain Buzzacaro explained to me that new frameworks for businesses had emerged from the work of the British sociologist and anthropologist Robert Ian MacDonald Dunbar (1992), whose study of the size of the neocortex in primates caused him to conclude that the ideal size for groups of humans is approximately 150. According to Dunbar's article, "Neocortex Size as a Constraint on Group Size in Primates," in groups of under 150 people, individuals were able to retain the names and relationships between everyone in the group. Using surveys of village and tribal life, Dunbar argued that this group size was the limit for social stability, cohesiveness and collaboration. With a group this size, Dunbar estimated that 42% of time would be dedicated to the maintenance and development of relationships. Dunbar further studied this concept to predict the level of emotional connection that members of a group would experience in relationship to each other, and developed a concept of social layers. The first group of emotional connection ideally contains five people, the second layer contains 10 additional people, the third layer includes 35 more people, and the last layer can include 100 people to reach the 150-member limit. This research on social cohesion is being used to reorganize companies into smaller work groups connected to increasingly larger groups.

Mindfulness practices have been shown to develop emotional intelligence, a key element of leadership and organizational culture according to Daniel Goleman (1994), author of *Emotional Intelligence*—an influential book published in 1994 that explains how, in work performance, intellectual capacities are outweighed by emotional capacities. Since 1994, major advances in technology and research have allowed scientists to further explore the links between mindfulness and emotional intelligence. In the article "Mindfulness and Emotion Regulation: Insights from Neurobiological, Psychological, and Clinical Studies," Guendelman, Medeiros, and Rampes (2017) summarize the breadth of beneficial clinical effects of mindfulness-based interventions and the neuroimaging studies that have detected

functional and structural change in brain regions associated with emotional intelligence. The study dissects the emotional regulation systems in connection with models of mindfulness, and proposes a new framework (embodied emotion regulation) that integrates both the top-down and bottom-up strategies found within mindfulness models. Through my thesis, I will build upon the concepts that have been clarified in research such as this, to create a program in which the practices of mindfulness—mindful listening, mindful communication, peace-making circles, mindfulness meditation, meta, and other compassion development technique—to help companies bring light to the difficulties they face within their digital transformation, and support them in creating the humancentric change and prosocial environment desired.

My creative thesis will focus on understanding the worldviews and approaches that converge under the umbrella of the term mindful leadership and my creative thesis will seek to translate these findings into a pragmatic mindfulness and emotional intelligence program for companies seeking to empower employees in the change process. The working title for the program I aim to develop in my creative thesis is: “Mindful Empowerment for Digital Transformation.”

### **The Complexity of Defining Mindfulness**

In a recent discussion with Fabrice Midal (personal communication, date), a former disciple of the Tibetan Buddhist master Chogyam Trungpa and founder of the Ecole Occidentale de Méditation, one of the most prominent meditation centers in France with 900 active members—Midal explained to me his point of contention with the mindfulness movement in France and the translation of mindfulness as *pleine conscience* into French, or “full consciousness.” He wanted the word to be translated as “full presence.” His main complaint was that people taking MBSR classes or using mindfulness apps for initiation to the practices “would believe that that was all there is to mindfulness.” I was able to express

my point of view, that these are merely entry points, and that more mature seekers could find their way to deeper forms of practice if needed.

The most oft-cited definition of mindfulness comes from Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994) in his book *Wherever You Go, There You Are*: “Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally” (p. ). However, even in Kabat-Zinn’s work, a decade later, we come to understand that mindfulness is much more than a specific kind of awareness. In his book *Coming to Our Senses: Healing Ourselves and the World Through Mindfulness*, Kabat-Zinn (2005) presents mindfulness as a way of transforming our lives and creating balance within society. Professor Alberto Chiesa (2012), in his article “The Difficulty of Defining Mindfulness: Current Thought and Critical Issues,” tackles the surprising absence of consensus on an unequivocal definition of mindfulness within modern Western psychology, and the problems that arise in measuring mindfulness through questionnaires without having resolved this question. Going back to classical Buddhist literature on the subject, and showing the complexity inherent in the concept, Chiesa invites Western researchers into a more engaged dialogue with long-term mindfulness practitioners to create better frameworks for research. This is what Daniel Goleman and Richard J. Davidson (2017) attempt to do in the book *Altered Traits* where they divide mindfulness into paths that are not to be confused with each other. Level 1, where practice is integrated into a total monk or yogi lifestyle. Level 2, where these traditions have been extracted and adapted for the West, however still in a spiritual seeking context. In Level 3, the spiritual context is removed, allowing for wider distribution; MBSR programs are cited as an example. Level 4 mindfulness has simplified the practice further for accessibility through mindfulness apps. The authors predict the emergence of a Level 5, still being developed, where bits of mindfulness practice are adapted into other contexts and approaches. Goleman and Davidson hypothesize that these differences in experience of the state of mind described

as mindfulness may be attributed to the development of yet-unidentified brain regions as they absorb mindfulness less as a state, and more as an effortless trait. Goleman and Davidson suggest that models of mindfulness must include the observable shift in conception of self, an aspect they believe meditation researchers have shied away from until now. This is one of the many ways the authors suggest that meditation research can be upgraded.

The question that arose while reading *Altered Traits*, was where within this system I would locate the Mindful Empowerment for Digital Transformation program. Instinctively, I believe the program is on Level 4 or 5, with some elements of Level 2. I imagine inviting participants into a daily practice that is accessible and simple, while also creating spaces for reflection on deeper questions that could affect the philosophy and mission of a team or organization. One part of this could be to use different definitions of mindfulness from different levels to show the development of different states and the transformation of a state into a trait.

### **Mindfulness and Work**

Chiesa and Serretti's (2009) review of academic literature on the subject of mindfulness studies done with people without any identified pathology or psychopathology is interesting for the work environment. Their meta-analysis identified reduced stress and anxiety and increased empathy and self-compassion.

In the article "Benefits of Mindfulness at Work: The Role of Mindfulness in Emotion Regulation, Emotional Exhaustion and Job Satisfaction," Hülshager, Alberts, Feinholdt, and Lang (2013) used a 5-day diary study and an experimental field study to examine the effect of mindfulness factors associated with burnout, and found less emotional exhaustion and higher job satisfaction in participants than in the control groups.

Connections have been made between the domain of mindfulness and the field of positive psychology. Building on Dr. Barbara Frederickson's broaden-and-build theory, that

proposes that positive emotions held an important role in human evolution, and that the capacity to self-generate pleasurable emotions facilitates eudaemonic well-being, defined as the “striving towards one’s potential and purpose in life” (Garland et al., 2010, p. ). In the article “Upward spirals of positive emotions counter downward spirals of negativity,” Garland et al. (2010), reviewed the effects of mindfulness and loving-kindness meditation in midlife working adults through a 7-week workshop, and mention that nine positive emotions increased: amusement, awe, contentment, gratitude, hope, interest, joy, love, and pride. The review mentions the strengthening of neural circuitry related to positive emotions that has been discovered in the field of affective neuroscience. In the article, the researchers explore the evidence that positive emotions, generated through these practices, could counter the effects of mechanisms pinned to emotion-related disorders such as depression and anxiety by reversing the degenerating effects that take their toll over time.

### **Mindfulness and Varied Formats in Work Settings**

Many studies have been conducted using the MBSR program, and I was interested to find out what the results would be of mindfulness studies using interventions with other formation.

In the study described in the article “Mindfulness-On-The-Go: Effects of a Mindfulness Meditation App on Work Stress and Well-Being,” Bostock, Crosswell, Prather, and Steptoe (2018) discovered that using a digital application with recorded meditations could have a significantly positive effect on global well-being of participants, decreasing work-related stress and job strain and increasing pro-social behaviors. Participants reported improved psychological well-being and increased perceptions of support and connection to other. The study lasted for eight weeks and did not measure the results long term, and did not include a control group that using traditional methods of practicing mindfulness with an

instructor, but did show a correlation between the amount of practice and improved outcomes.

A study published in the *Journal of Happiness Studies* by Coo and Salanova (2018), “Mindfulness Can Make You Happy-and-Productive: A Mindfulness Controlled Trial and Its Effects on Happiness, Work Engagement and Performance,” found that with only three mindfulness-based interventions with an instructor of 150 minutes for a group of workers at a public hospital, that all measured variables improved. This study suggests that shorter variations may also be effective to some extent.

Hülshager et al. (2013) reported that a 4-week instructor-led and internet-based program designed to work-related rumination, fatigue, and sleep quality also showed significant improvements, using questionnaires that measure these elements. The course used 10 interactive sessions with instructional videos and audio recordings of guided meditations, and an invitation for participants to practice on their own outside of the learning modules. During this course, participants had no personal contact with the instructors outside of the recordings. Using a 3- and 6-month follow-up, researchers determined that gains made were sustained over these time periods.

### **Development of Mindfulness in Business and Other Settings**

Despite the lack of consensus on the definition of mindfulness and the need for further research on the subject, different aspects of mindfulness have continued to make headway into society, including the domain of business. In the article “Mindful Leadership: Focusing Leaders and Organizations,” Joshua Ehrlich (2017) puts forth information supporting the tendency that a number of well-known organizations have integrated mindfulness programs.

Many organizations are starting to teach employees mindfulness, including Aetna, Apple, BlackRock, Diageo, Deutsche Bank, GAP, General Mills, Goldman Sachs,

Google, Green Mountain Coffee, Intel, McKinsey, Monsanto, Navigant, NY Life, Procter & Gamble, Target, The European Central Bank, The U.S. Army, The U.S. Marines, public schools, MBA programs, hospitals, and police departments. (p. )

He also names the benefits of mindfulness that are being currently researched:

Fortune 500 companies are conducting research and documenting mindfulness benefits such as (1) focus, decision-making, memory, creativity, and learning; (2) communication, collaboration, and productivity; (3) emotional intelligence, well-being, and internal and client relationships; (4) job satisfaction and engagement; and (5) reduced stress, absenteeism, and turnover. (Ehrlich, 2017, p. )

With the growing interest in mindfulness as a practice for helping employees, it is of great interest to focus on the capacity of mindfulness to grow leadership and supporting the evolution of organizational culture in a fast-moving business environment. How is mindful leadership implemented and what forms does it take on? What potential lies within this concept?

### **Defining Mindful Leadership**

In “The Emerging Role of Mindfulness Research in the Workplace and its Challenges,” Marek Vich (2015) mentions that much of what is identified as mindful leadership theory lacks empirical support, and would require discussion to identify core variable and differentiation from other types of leadership theory.

To begin understanding different ways of approaching mindful leadership, it is interesting to observe the way Ehrlich (2015) defines the term in the article “Creating Mindful Leaders and Organizations.” According to Ehrlich, “Mindfulness is present, open, and engaged attention” (p. 22), leading to greater self-awareness, which he mentions is a key skill for all leadership. Ehrlich explains that the process of self-reflection and learning lead to a higher level of information and understanding of the world. But what exactly is happening

when the leader engages with the world from this new approach of curiosity and with reduced filters of judgment? In another article, “Mindful Self-Acceptance,” Ehrlich (2015) writes about the way mindfulness changes the central vantage point of one’s leadership, making a distinction between the self-esteem that is a standard leadership staple, and the very different concept of self-acceptance, which is cultivated through the practice of mindfulness. Ehrlich distinguishes these two concepts as one going from the outside in, and the other going from the inside out. Mindful leadership, when seen in this way, is above all a practice for approaching oneself, others, and the world.

But where will the practice of mindful leadership bring the leader? To understand what the practice of mindful leadership entails, it is essential to explore the roots of the contemplative traditions from which the concepts have evolved. Louis Fry and Mark Kriger’s (2009) work “Towards a Theory of Being-Centered Leadership” aims to develop a theory of being-centered leadership, proposing a five-level model that begins with the physical, sense-based world, to the imagination, to the levels of soul, spirit, and ultimately, oneness. Creating parallels between Islamic Sufism, Jewish Kabbalah, Christian Gnosticism, Buddhist Vijnanas, and Taoism, Fry and Kriger create a lens through which we can evaluate the universality of these levels. The holonic aspect challenges the idea that different models of leadership are mutually exclusive and puts forward the theory that we are referring to different levels of being. This article inspires us to ask what our definition of mindful leadership is. Is it a synonym for spiritual leadership? And if not, if it is on one of these five levels – which level is it on?

Another article by Fry and Kriger (2007), “Towards a Holonic Theory of Leadership,” places even more emphasis on the holonic aspect, with references to the work of Ken Wilber, who develops the idea that consciousness emerges in a series of stages in a fluid manner to more and more subtle levels of being. As an individual moves through each successive level,

the lower levels become subordinate and each level includes the whole of each of the lower levels. An individual leading from a Level 4 or 5 is fully capable of leading from a Level 2 or 3 as the situation calls for. As the leader evolves toward the Level 1 of non-duality and oneness, with transcendence comes increased agility to be and function on all levels. Is mindful leadership a way of describing the development of the awareness of a leader? Mindful leadership could be a way of referring to the leader's path of self-leadership and leadership of others based on the observation of phenomena occurring within the inner world of that individual. This level of observation would be developed through the various practices of mindfulness.

### **Mindfulness and Self-Leadership**

Furtner, Tutzer, and Sachse's (2018) study "The Mindful Self-Leader: Investigating Relationships Between Self-Leadership and Mindfulness" recognizes self-leadership and mindfulness as sharing a "self-regulatory core" (p. 353) with similar capacities to reduce stress and enhance performance. The researchers successfully predicted the observational skills that are found in mindfulness would be positively correlated with greater self-regulation and self-leadership. More surprising is the negative correlation between self-leadership and the aspect of accepting without judgment. The article explains that "while certain core features of mindfulness (self-regulation of attention, curiosity, and openness to experience) could enhance self-leadership, acceptance without judgment may have a negative effect on self-leadership" (Furtner et al., 2018, p. 357).

### **Conscious Leadership and Servant Leadership**

*Conscious leadership* is another term that is sometimes used in association with mindfulness. In the article "Conscious Leadership," Suzanne Ward and Beth Haase (2016) explore the concept in relationship to the health care environment, with the vision that nurses would be able to tap into a greater sense of self, presented as "expanded consciousness," in

order to enhance the quality of patient care (p. 433.e1). The elements of conscious leadership, according to the article are mindfulness, defined as living from the present moment; *context*, which takes into account the situation and background of people involved in situations; expanded consciousness, or approaching situations from a place of acceptance and learning while practicing equanimity; *the human experience*, seen as the capacity for embracing complexity, and *perceptual filters* that recognize the influence of filters and seek to reduce duality. Throughout the article, the authors use the term *mindful leader* to refer to the conscious leader. To develop conscious leadership, certain skills are seen as necessary. Specifically, the consistent practice of meditation, exploration of values, self-care, service-mindedness, empathy, and observation are recommended. The article briefly takes into consideration the idea of spirituality and connection to a higher power. Conscious leadership, as established here, seems to be closer to Fry and Kriger's holonic model of being-centered leadership, than to Ehrlich's idea of mindful leadership as a practice and a way of leading. Fry and Kriger (2007) place, conscious leadership, defined as "leadership based on being aware of the individual psyche or self in its relation to others and journey into Spirit" (p. 1670). This precedes the Level II of spiritual leadership, which is presented as a "leadership based on love, service and presence in the now" (Fry & Kriger, 2007, p. ).

Servant leadership, as introduced through the work of Robert Greenleaf (1991), is identified by Fry and Kriger as a Level II leadership theory. Servant Leadership is based on the humility and altruistic service-mindedness of the leader, who helps others to connect to their own spiritual leadership. It is symbolized by the character of Leo in Herman Hesse's *Journey to the East*.

Otto Scharmer's (2009) theory U makes a distinction on this subject of leadership between an open and closed heart, mind or will. This leadership model is based on the idea that the leader can lead from different places within the self. The theory U leader cultivates

stillness and mindfulness, practices deep listening, develops a deeper connection to his “creative and entrepreneurial journey,” while “co-initiating” the collective field (Scharmer, 2009, p.35). Once again, the practices of mindfulness come into play, but also the values that we saw identified in self-leadership. The theory U takes a pragmatic approach and proposes steps that go all the way to the prototyping of new concepts. Theory U is a model for doing, as well as being together and creating collectively, and therefore may be more pertinent to the business world.

### **Mindful Leadership and Social Engagement in the Business World**

One ideal that seems to be present in some approaches to mindfulness and mindful leadership, is the aspect of social engagement. This question is particularly important to me on my personal path, and I wonder how the MEBT program could address our need for meaning in work, without forgetting our need to develop a connection with society. One way of doing this may be through working in groups and learning together from the diversity of backgrounds and experiences that are present in many big companies. Emphasis could be placed on inclusion. The concept of interdependence may be helpful as well. I have personally noticed in my work as a manager, and then as consultant, that working as a group on a collective project may reveal the patterns of domination and subordination already present within a team or company. Beverly Daniel Tatum’s (2000) book *The Complexity of Identity* breaks down the structure of these relationships, describing how identity emerges and evokes the questions that are required for self-reflection and the emergence of self-consciousness. Tatum explains how members of dominant groups often know very little about members of subordinate groups, while the opposite is true for subordinates. Understanding how subordinates can be accepted as anomalies, or understanding how oppression can be ignored as a means for survival, may allow organizations to engage with systemic oppression in order to transform it. In their study, “The Hard-Knock Life? Whites

Claim Hardships in Response to Racial Inequity,” L. Taylor Philips and Brian Lowery (2015) described how dominant groups may experience the revelation of privilege as a hardship, and resist by accentuating the level of hardships experienced in order to manage. Tatum (2000) presents this as a means for the creation of better connections: “Our ongoing examination of who we are in our full humanity, embracing all of our identities, creates the possibility of building alliances that may ultimately free us all” (p. 14).

But the importance in creating awareness and generating a more inclusive work environment is not only for employee experience, but to avoid perpetuating biases in the process of digital transformation. Quoted in the *Digital Journal* article “Microsoft Talks About ‘Embarrassing’ Bias in AI-Powered Apps” (Walker, 2017), Microsoft’s Inclusive Design team are quoted in an official statement: “Bias in AI (Artificial Intelligence) will happen unless it’s built from the start with inclusion in mind. The most critical step in creating inclusive AI is to recognize where and how bias infects the system.” Despite these revelations, Silicon Valley has started heavily investing in start-ups developing technology using algorithms to help human resources professionals to eliminate prejudice in hiring. In the article “Silicon Valley is Stumped: Even AI Cannot Always Remove Bias From Hiring,” Rosenbaum (2018) quotes Cathy O’Neil, an academically trained mathematician who studied and worked at UC Berkeley, Harvard, and MIT, from her conference at MIT’s Initiative on the Digital Economy:

When we blithely train algorithms on historical data, to a large extent we are setting ourselves up to merely repeat the past. If we want to get beyond that, beyond automating the status quo, we’ll need to do more, which means examining the bias embedded in the data. The data is, after all, simply a reflection of our imperfect culture. (p.118)

If technology reproduces cultural bias, the digital transformation movement is an opportunity to work on ourselves both individually and socially, to create a world that we would want to see mirrored in our algorithms. Can technology learn to identify and resolve bias? Could be the future of machine learning? Allan G. Johnson (1997), a sociologist at Hartford College, details ways in which awareness of privilege and oppression can affect social change in the chapter of “The Gender Knot, ‘What Can We Do?’ Becoming Part of the Solution”: working with paradox, learning to pay attention, daring to create discomfort, modeling alternative paths, embracing complexity. Which of these can be integrated into technology and how?

Do companies engaged in relentless transformation have something to learn from the social ethics and the language and communication theories presented by mindfulness and leadership scholars and the engaged mindfulness movement? Can digital transformation be compassionate? Just as companies study customer experience to design products and services from an empathetic perspective, can the whole process engage with ethical standards that care for all involved? Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey (2001), in their book *How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work*, outline ways in which leaders can create a learning environment that overcomes immunity to change by being more respectful of resistance, and focuses less on symptoms, and more on creating deeper change through rare forms of communication.

### **Conclusion**

Just as change management has identified stages of adaptation, mindfulness practices and mindful leadership theories can also, in a multi-level and progressive manner, help organizations to develop the skills and create the nurturing environment desired. And even beyond offering a precious resource to employees, mindfulness practices may help organizations to overcome, through collective contemplation and practice, the bias that is

unknowingly transferred into technology and algorithms as businesses undergo digital transformation. Instead of steering away from complexity, mindfulness researchers may delve into the multidimensional and progressive nature of the practice to create definitions that connect to the spiritual and engaged aspect that may appear as mindful leadership evolves.

This literature review allowed me to understand the scope of the program that I would like to develop for my creative thesis. My project touches upon many aspects of mindfulness, from its health benefits to the possibility of generating self-compassion and prosocial behavior. The underlying mission of the project became clearer as I studied and wrote, which is that Mindful Empowerment for Digital Transformation can be socially engaged to prevent dystopian algorithms, by helping participants overcome their own bias and reflect on the technological world that we are creating for ourselves.

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