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The *Bodhichitta* Way: Igniting Mindful Leadership from Within
An 8-Week Online Program

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September 2022

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Acknowledgments

I sit in appreciation...

...To the summer 2018 Lesley University residency cohort, thank you for all the memories, we learned a lot and had so much fun.

...To Diane Friel, I am grateful to have shared this school experience with you (since the first class!); we finally made it through! Onward!

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...To my Dad, Roy Ledbetter, who sparked my imagination by creating new worlds alongside me, and who will forever be missed.

...To Jeff Jabaay, my love, I am ever grateful you are on this life journey with me and for filling my soul with love and laughter. Thank you for all your support, now on to our next adventure!

Abstract

This paper investigates ways in which the practice of mindfulness can positively influence workplace leadership. Mindfulness-based approaches, when woven together with compassion, self-awareness, and meditation, cultivate qualities of effective mindful leadership that are essential in today's workforce. Within this creative thesis, I developed an eight-week online training program for leaders to build foundational mindfulness practices necessary for optimizing meaningful connections in their daily work-life. The online training is based in experiential learning, self-reflection, and meditation practice. Research shows that there is significant benefit to incorporating mindfulness in the workplace. The purpose of this paper and online training is to provide tools of awareness for mindful leadership practices that can be regularly used to make a lasting, positive impact for work/life balance.

Keywords: mindfulness, leadership, mindful leader, compassion, meditation, workplace mindfulness

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The *Bodhichitta* Way: Igniting Mindful Leadership from Within

Merriam-Webster (2022) defines a *leader* as “something that ranks first, a person who has commanding authority or influence” and to *lead* is to “direct on a course or in a direction, to have charge of, to be first in or among.” These definitions imply being the best at something and being an agent of change. However, in the mindfulness community and in Buddhism, there is something more profound than the typical concept of a leader. It is the *bodhichitta* way. Pema Chödrön (2019) writes that, “In Sanskrit, *bodhi* means ‘awake’ and *chitta* means ‘heart’ or ‘mind’. Our aim is to fully awaken our heart and mind, not just for our own greater well-being but also to bring benefit, solace, and wisdom to other living beings” (p. 2). The *bodhichitta* path is not meant to be an individual pursuit, but a journey that has collective benefit. As Buddhist teacher and author Ken McLeod writes in Tricycle Magazine:

Bodhicitta, as awakening mind, is the intention to awaken to life in order to help others awaken to life. It is not simply a feeling or an emotion or a sentiment. It has a vertical dimension that runs at right angles to our social conditioning and embraces a knowing, a seeing, into the nature of experience itself. (Summer 2018, para. 7)

In my experience as a vice president of corporate marketing, I have personally not seen an abundance of leadership stories from the workplace that uphold the path of the *bodhichitta*. However, research is showing that when mindful leadership is in practice, it has a lasting positive effect not only to the person practicing but also their surrounding workplace.

This paper investigates ways in which workplace leadership can make a positive impact when principles of mindfulness are regularly applied. Mindfulness practice interwoven with acts of compassion and intentional self-awareness through consistent meditation practice provide

foundational traits for mindful leaders that are needed in today's workforce. Mindfulness and compassionate action create a roadmap for those in the corporate world to live and practice ways that "bring benefit, solace, and wisdom to other living beings" as Chödrön (2019, p. 2) describes. Furthermore, mindfulness brings about "a new philosophy of work based on greater human understanding, respect for oneself and others, and an awareness of the qualities and skills that create peace in the world: communication, cooperation, and responsibility" (Tulku, 1994, p. 30). For corporate business to adapt to a *bodhichitta* way of leadership and work, employees need to have access to the right training that incorporates the value of regular mindfulness practice to maximize emotional intelligence, self-compassion, compassion, and self-awareness. Though *bodhichitta* encompasses all sentient beings, for purposes of the point of mindfulness in business leadership, I am implying that the definition of *bodhichitta* and its compassion and wisdom for all beings is for those people who surround the leader in the workplace. And with that, mindfulness is the conduit for becoming a better leader through mindful communication, equanimity, authenticity, empathetic listening, and a pathway that builds stronger relationships and an authentic sense of self.

What is Mindful Leadership?

Countless global experts define leadership in their own terms, offering a plethora of potential definitions that serve a variety of corporate agendas. Leadership by its very nature is a topic riddled with opinions, best practices, and pitfalls. As cultural anthropologist and Zen practitioner Maia Duerr (2017) writes, "We can get attached to a professional identity that gives us a degree of security, financially and psychologically – but it can also confine and limit us" (p. 31). Duerr points out how this kind of identity distances us from others that we work with, that it puts up a wall around us. "This kind of identification can cut us off from what might be a deeper

calling, a more whole and authentic version of ourselves” (Duerr, 2017, p. 31). Yet, this deeper calling and authentic self can be found through the practice of mindfulness, which invites us to gain greater awareness of our motivations, actions, and interactions.

As I work on this thesis in 2022, my opinion based on nearly 30 years working in corporate America and ten of those years practicing mindful leadership, the definition of a good leader is someone who understands their values, lives authentically and with integrity, is compassionate and empathetic, practices humility, communicates mindfully and actively listens, and has high emotional intelligence (which is the ability to perceive, understand, and evaluate one's emotions). Emotional intelligence is an area that leadership experts have been more focused on in recent years, noting that it may be more important than intellectual intelligence (George, 2007). Someone who is a mindful leader is also “more concerned about serving others than they are about their own success or recognition. And they are constantly looking for ways to grow personally, [while developing] genuine connections with others” (George, 2007, p. 206). If authentic leaders engage in consistent mindfulness practice, this allows them to stay connected to their innate nature, which breaks down walls and build relationships with others through a process of embodied practice that increases self-awareness.

The State of Leadership in the Workplace

The “Global Leadership Forecast 2021” report from the Development Dimensions International, Inc. (2021) shared statistics on workplace leadership and professionals’ views of organizational impact when it comes to leadership. It examined responses from more than 18,000 professionals (including human resources and “leaders” as an undefined category of employees), spanning more than 50 countries and 24 industry sectors (p. 2). With the onset of the pandemic and workplaces shifting how they do business, the report states that:

The leaders who are succeeding in this time are those who have been able to rapidly learn new skills and change... Most of all they've learned to act with empathy and compassion, recognizing that we don't leave our humanity at the door when we clock in to work. This ability to embrace uncertainty and develop new skills rapidly will be the hallmark of great leadership in the years ahead. (p. 3)

Embracing uncertainty and developing new skills to cope is an inherent aspect of mindfulness practice. In the here and now, 55% of CEOs surveyed said their top challenge is developing the next generation of leaders (Global Leadership Forecast, 2021, p. 4). In addition, the report's leadership forecast results show:

- Only 28% of those surveyed believe they have high-quality leadership.
- 86% use formal leadership development programs, but only 57% leverage those programs and individuals.
- There is a gender gap when it comes to leadership programs, according to the survey, males are 13% more likely to receive leadership training and 22% more likely to be assigned a mentor than females.
- Only 11% of human resources professionals said they have a strong bench to fill leadership roles that may transition
- The majority of leaders feel underprepared to lead virtual teams, coach and delegate, and be empathetic.
 - Empathy was shown as the number one leadership skill to combat employee burnout, but only 18% of leaders understood how to help employees get through or avoid burnout.

- 48% of leaders want to learn through an external coaching opportunity versus 29% who wanted internal coaching
 - They also reported wanting to spend around 7.5 hours a week learning new leadership protocols.

There are promising details found within these statistics. Leaders show an interest in wanting to learn to be better not only for themselves, but for the employees they serve. There is also a realization that empathy is a necessary skill. However, workplaces are not fully prioritizing the gaps and needs found within this survey.

In 2014, a survey conducted by the American Management Association and the Business Research Consortium showed the impact of mindfulness training in the workplace. Nearly half of the organizations surveyed said that when they leverage mindfulness as part of their training, “85% reported that mindfulness training and/or resources are at least somewhat beneficial to their organization” (paragraph 6). These results coupled with the Global Leadership Forecast 2021, show that not only is there need for mindfulness training in the workplace, but leaders desire to learn new skills and be more empathetic, with the goals of building bench strength and boosting employee retention.

Researchers Taylor and Bishop (2019) considered teaching skills of compassion, leadership, and mindfulness before new leaders entered the workforce. They hypothesized that “mindfulness may prove relevant to undergraduate and graduate leadership and business education, especially when addressing topics such as emotional intelligence, organizational culture, employee wellness, stress management, ethics, diversity, and employee work attitudes” (p. 103). The researchers introduced students to mindfulness practice via an app and their “reflections include[d] feeling a greater sense of focus, peace and calm, and emotional

control...a deeper connection with others” (Taylor & Bishop, 2019, p. 109). The more mindfulness was introduced, taught, and practiced together, whether before entering the workforce or after, the more positive impact to the organization’s culture, leaders, and employees.

A Review of the Literature

The purpose of reviewing existing research is to bring awareness to how mindfulness practice has an impact on the workplace, the participants, and those around them. Research on mindful leadership may be in its infancy, however research that has been conducted is showing positive results to take into consideration. Arvind Birdie (2015) writes, “[it was found] among respondents from the organizations that leverage mindfulness practices, about 85% reported that mindfulness training and/or resources are at least somewhat beneficial to their organizations” (p. 434). They go on to say that “mindful leaders were also associated with employees having a better work-life balance, and overall job satisfaction. The more mindful a leader is, the lower an employee’s emotional exhaustion is” (2015, p. 434). These are crucial points that underscore the importance of mindful leadership training for organizations.

In investigating the impact of mindfulness practice on leadership, I am also reminded of *Samu Gatha* from Upaya Institute and Zen Center (n.d.),

May this work be done in a spirit of generosity,

Not driven by ego, greed, or delusion.

May kindness sustain us and prevail in conflict.

And compassion guide us and lead us to understanding.

May we rejoice in the successes of others.

And remain unmoved by praise or blame.

It is within the intentions of these words that the work of mindful leadership uncovers specific impact that mindfulness may have on the workplace and the concept of leadership. Through mindfulness training and its continued practice, the following review evaluates the lasting impact not only on the individual, but those they serve and work with as well as the organizations in which they work.

Leadership and Mindfulness in the Workplace

Authenticity is a highly important shared trait between leadership and mindfulness. Authenticity is a thread of learning which I taught in Illinois' year-long Leadership Academy for the last five years (before I taught at the Academy, I was a student in the program). In fact, the concept of authentic leadership is what drove me to explore a graduate degree in mindfulness studies. It was there that I first learned about self-awareness and how to be transparent, leading with honesty and an emphasis on core values to build relationships based on empathy and compassion. Through this program, I began to see the connection between leadership and mindfulness, which I wanted to explore at a deeper level.

Researchers Nübold et al. (2019) sought out this connection by exploring how mindfulness could be integrated into the workplace to enhance and teach authentic leadership traits to employees. They wrote that,

A key prerequisite for authentic leadership is that leaders are aware of and embrace their true self: their fundamental values, needs, strengths, and weaknesses. It is this awareness that enables meaningful and authentic relationships with followers, and mindfulness may be an important means in promoting it. (p. 473)

Nübold et al. (2019) conducted two different studies comparing leader-follower dyads (supervisor versus direct report). The first study encompassed 209 leader-follower dyads,

comprised of 30% female in the leader category with an average age of 43, and 51% females in the follower category with an average age of 37 years old. All females were from a mix of different industries, including wholesale and retail, services, IT/electronic, and government. The leader-follower dyads were asked questions measured with the Mindfulness Attention and Awareness Scale (for leaders) and the Authentic Leadership Inventory Scale (for followers). Leaders were asked to rate their level of mindfulness whereas followers were asked to rate their leader's behavior from the perspective of authentic leadership (Nübold et al., 2019). Their results showed that "Leaders with high levels of trait mindfulness were more likely to show authentic leadership" to their followers (Nübold et al., 2019, p. 482).

In research reviewed by Lyddy et al. (2015), they confirm similar results, "Although mindfulness is an individual quality, initial evidence suggests that it affects interpersonal behaviors and quality of dyadic and work-group relationships" (p. 13). In the second study conducted by Nübold et al. (2019), comparable results came through, however it was much more comprehensive than their first study as they used a "pre-/post-test, waitlist control group design to study the effect of a 30-day, app-based mindfulness intervention on leader and follower-rated authentic leadership" (Nübold et al., 2019, p. 475). One-hundred and four leaders participated in the groups, and 87 followers, with ages and female demographics similar to the groups of their first study (Nübold et al., 2019). This second study shows that "mindfulness interventions delivered via an app are an effective and relatively cost-efficient tool for cultivating authentic leadership...[and] aspects of authentic leadership that are empirically linked to mindfulness are indeed malleable and possible to train" (Nübold et al., 2019, p. 482). The researchers go on to say that "Mindfulness could be integrated as a substantial building block of leadership

development programs or might even be included in trainee programs in order to build leader mindfulness and authentic leadership in a sustainable way” (Nübold et al., 2019, p. 483).

The impact these mindful training programs could have on leadership are revealed by Sanyal and Rigg (2015), who state managers “have shared their experience of mindfulness with staff and colleagues and have started to put this into practice within their teams. This offers potential for wider improvement of employee self-care with potential impact on the overall organizational health and well-being” (p. 257). This suggests the far-reaching impact that mindfulness training can have on the overall structure of an organization. Not only will the person receiving the training have the ability to harness that knowledge and use the skills for themselves, but when they share what they learn and change their own behavior for others to experience and imitate, the reach trickles out to more and more employees (similar to *bodhichitta*). As Bill George (2017) writes, “only when leaders stop focusing on their personal ego needs are they able to develop other leaders” (p. 45).

Like Nübold et al.’s (2019) research on authentic leadership, Furtner et al. (2018) examined what a “self-leader” is and the relationship between it and mindfulness. Much like an authentic leader, a self-leader is intentional, non-judgmental, curious, self-aware, and acts consciously. The self-leadership study examined 174 students from the University of Innsbruck, who were primarily women, but with a lower average of 21 years old. Furtner et al.’s (2018) participants took an online survey on the topics of mindfulness and self-leadership. Results showed that “certain core features of mindfulness, such as self-regulation of attention, curiosity, and openness to experience, could enhance self-leadership, acceptance without judgment may have a negative effect on self-leadership” (2018, p. 357). This study, like others mentioned

earlier, included surveys which were self-reporting, which is listed as a potential limitation due to self-biases inherently present in individuals.

Another study comparing the effects that a leader has on their “members” (or followers as described earlier) was conducted in 2021 by Amina et al. with 230 clinical care providers working in health care institutions in Pakistan. They examined how employee job performance was impacted by leaders exhibiting mindfulness traits. Results proved statistically significant that the more mindfulness traits a leader had, the stronger the relationships with their employees, and those “high-quality relationships then further [impacted] employee overall performance” in a positive manner (Amina et al., 2021, p. 152).

Right now, in the United States we are seeing what is being called the “Great Resignation” as many employees leave behind jobs due to workplace dissatisfaction, burnout, and lack of flexibility. With turnover at record highs, some are speculating that employee loyalty is a thing of the past. Amid all of this, the benefits seen with mindfulness practice and its impact on the workplace provides a key to employee retention and improved workplace satisfaction. Now is a critical time for mindfulness practice to be incorporated by employers into workplace culture and employee trainings for the wellbeing of individuals as well as the overall environment.

Meditation as a Skill for Better Leadership

Lyddy et al. (2015), in their *Contemplating Mindfulness at Work* research, state that “Pathways through which mindfulness might improve relationship functioning are diverse, including greater attention to others, better communication, reduced conflict, reduced emotional reactivity, and greater expression of other-directed emotions, such as compassion and empathy” (p. 13). Many of these traits can be strengthened through the practice of meditation, as written by

Barua et al., (2019), “meditation is mind training where mindfulness is practiced consciously by focusing on attention” (p. 233). Mindfulness practice with consistent meditation practice creates powerful tools in the leadership toolbox to pull from as a “simple and powerful way to cultivate mindfulness and self-awareness” (Duerr, 2017, p. 39). In addition, Barua et al. (2019) note “research indicates that meditation impacts practitioners positively and promotes team building and strengthens organizational identification” (p. 232-233). The impact of meditation practice goes beyond the person practicing. It has a ripple effect which translates into how individuals interact with others, thus having external positive ramifications for those who engage with the meditation practitioner.

Researchers Sanyal and Rigg (2021) were asked the rhetorical question, “how can they [managers] manage people well if they can’t manage themselves?” (p. 247). That is a good jumping off point to launch into compassion and self-regulation. Mindfulness practice not only influences the ability to engage in self-care, it builds resilience in the face of life’s inherent challenges. Setting an example of looking inward builds the capacity to positively influence those around us, encouraging aspects of mindfulness practices that have great benefit to our collective wellbeing.

The Positive Influence on Self Through Compassion

Lama Zopa Rinpoche (2019) writes, “Without compassion there is no peace or happiness in the family, in society, in the country, or in the world. Generating compassion is also the source of a healthy mind and a healthy body. The most powerful way to heal ourselves and other living beings” (p. 144). He goes on to stress the importance for compassion to be taught in schools and at home, which would certainly seep into the fabric of workplace culture. When I engage compassion and mindfulness practice within the workplace, I become a more effective leader and

teammate because I have increased self-awareness and empathy, greater control of my emotions that release assumptions, and the ability to open to new perspectives.

As Feldman and Kuyken (2011) report, “At times, compassion is translated as the heart that can tremble in the face of suffering. It is aspired to as the noblest quality of the human heart, the motivation underlying all meditative paths of healing and liberation” (p. 144). If mindfulness is the paying attention in the present moment without judgment (as goes the famous definition from Jon Kabat-Zinn), then compassion is the glue that connects the mindfulness teachings from self to external-facing traits of kindness, openness, and empathy. “The more compassion we have, the more we will dedicate our life to helping others” (Rinpoche, 2019, p. 150). Further research considering the impact of compassion practice in the workplace is needed, and additional acceptance and attention from organizations is necessary to provide avenues to foster such traits in employees and leaders.

In two studies discussed in an article written by Di Fabio and Saklofske (2021), the connection that compassion and self-compassion have with emotional intelligence and personality was examined in detail. The results from the first study showed that “Emotionality, together with the trait EI factors of self-control and well-being, appear to be key factors underlying compassion,” (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2021, p. 4) which also leads the person to being open to another’s suffering. Following the results of the first study, the second study didn’t focus on “the relationship between personality, EI and compassion, and self-compassion but focused on whether trait EI mediates these relationships” (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2021, p. 4). Their second study revealed traits such as agreeableness are positively impacted by and associated with compassion, and that self-control, emotional stability, and well-being are associated positively with self-compassion (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2021). Some limitations of both of their

studies are lack of diversity from a demographic, geographic, and background standpoint, and all participants were workers from the Tuscany region (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2021). However, both studies support that

emotional intelligence is an important and even primary factor in developing and promoting both compassion and self-compassion... and compassion would seem to be a most powerful human emotion and expression that has far reaching implications for the self, others, and the world we live in. (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2021, p. 7)

These results show the effectiveness that compassion has on personality traits which can be valuable to exhibit in the workplace.

Furthering this point, a study from Weng et al. (2013) hypothesized that compassion training would increase altruistic behavior. Weng et al. (2013) investigated “whether short-term compassion training would enhance altruistic behavior toward a victim encountered outside of the training context” (p.1172). They measured brain function through a functional MRI (fMRI) before and after two weeks of compassion training with participants who all had no previous meditation experience. Participants were split randomly into a compassion training or their reappraisal training (Weng et al., 2013). During the testing, the participants were provided a video game scenario which they were told they were playing with real people. It was a situation where they were to spend money to ultimately redistribute funds to a victim. In addition, participants were tested during an fMRI, and the compassion training participants “were instructed to evoke feelings of compassion while silently repeating compassion-generating phrases” while the reappraisal participants were to “decrease negative emotions by silently interpreting the emotional meaning of the images (Weng et al., 2013, p. 1173). Ultimately, the compassion training participants “spent more money to redistribute funds to the victim compared

with reappraisal trainees” (Weng et al., 2013, p. 1176) and results from the fMRI showed that “increased altruistic behavior is achieved by enhancing neural mechanisms that support the understanding of others’ states” (Weng et al., 2013, p. 1177), showing that mental training in compassion can result in observable altruism.

Compassion and altruism are not something a person has to be born with, as training programs can be administered to inculcate these positive enhancements. This cannot only be seen in life situations, but through an fMRI. If training and awareness can be done for individuals to understand what it means to be emotionally intelligent and how to practice compassion, an intentional daily practice would greatly impact the workplace and thus increase positive leadership traits. Additionally, Lyddy et al. (2015) writes,

The literature provides evidence that mindfulness leads individuals to process events and occurrences in a less self-referential or ego-involved way, which fosters greater attentiveness to and care for others and a stronger focus on interpersonal concerns rather than self-concerns. This could lead to more compassionate behavior. (p. 15)

The connection between mindfulness and compassion reveals how training in mindfulness can lead to beneficial outcomes in the workplace.

Mindfulness Training Leads to Compassion & Self-Compassion

Considering that compassion is a positive trait influencing emotional intelligence and kindness toward others as seen in the Weng et al. (2013) and Di Fabio and Saklofske (2021) studies, what part does mindfulness play in supporting compassion and bringing out more awareness to heighten these traits? To answer, Duerr (2017) writes, “Mindfulness is an invitation to change [patterns] and to become aware of where we are and how we got here. Mindfulness gives us a chance to listen to the wisdom of our hearts, to notice with more clarity when we get

in our own way, and to shift from reacting out of habit to responding from our intentions” (p. 37).

In 2016, researchers Rodríguez-Carvajal et al. developed the Mindfulness Integrative Model (MIM). The MIM states that regular meditation practice “leads to sequential acquisition of (1) mindfulness, (2) self-compassion, and (3) positive states of mind (*brahmaviharas*)” and it “implies that increments in mindfulness will lead to increments in self-compassion, which in turn will lead to increases in positive states of mind towards oneself and others” (p. 750). Their study required participants to take a series of pre- and post- questionnaires, attend weekly classes, and do a daily mindfulness practice at home. Their main aim was to test the MIM through a mindfulness-based intervention and to test for any differences that presented in non-meditators versus meditators (Rodríguez-Carvajal et al., 2016). Over 19 days, participants learned in-session practice techniques such as body scan, awareness of breath, awareness of breath with open monitoring, creativity and art, the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold path, interdependence and impermanence, and more.

While at home, participant’s practice included walking meditation, awareness of eating, awareness of taking a shower, awareness of breath, and during the last week some of the practice time was self-selected (Rodríguez-Carvajal et al., 2016). Overall, the study’s results support that “mindfulness practice, mindfulness, self-compassion and positive states of mind towards oneself and others... should be taken into account while designing mindfulness interventions, as it might be wise to explicitly include kindness and compassion practices” within a training program to bring about these traits with participants (Rodríguez-Carvajal et al., 2016, p. 758). It is important to note that, in the words of Feldman and Kuyken (2011), “The teacher needs first and foremost to have through their own mindfulness practice cultivated compassion in relation to [their] life

and experience. This experiential learning is a pre-requisite to teaching others and is experienced by participants as an embodied teacher who ‘walks the walk’” (p. 153). Thus, as mindfulness interventions are designed, emphasis should be equally made on who is teaching the program and not just what the curriculum is going to be for the participants.

A couple of years after the introduction of the MIM and the Rodríguez-Carvajal et al. (2016) study, Cheryl Fulton conducted a study focused on bringing about self-compassion through mindfulness training, which was hypothesized to bring about compassion and enhanced relationships (2018, p. 49). The study used a self-reported questionnaire about mindfulness in daily life and used the measures from the Self-Other Four Immeasurables (loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity) to assess “compassion for self and others within the context of mindfulness” (Fulton, 2018, p. 50). Participants were comprised of master’s counseling interns, mostly female (129) with 23 males averaging 28 years old and primarily Caucasian (Fulton, 2018).

Results showed that self-compassion does have a “relationship between mindfulness and compassion for others” (Fulton, 2018, p. 51). However, because the study used self-reporting measures, the degree for bias and participant knowledge could influence the results, and the mostly Caucasian and female participants were not a diverse enough sample to determine efficacy for other groups of people (Fulton, 2018). Nonetheless, it did “provide insight into the relative relationships between mindfulness and self-other compassion” (Fulton, 2018, p. 54).

Compassion is a necessary aspect of effective leaders as well as an important component of the *bodhichitta* way, and “we need great humility in nourishing this aspiration [of the *bodhichitta*]. We can simply plant the seeds... that our lives and our practice be for the benefit of all, and water and nurture those seeds until they gradually become a force for great good in the

world” (Goldstein, 2016, p. 367). The importance of compassion extends beyond the workplace as a foundation of our interconnectedness through all aspects of life.

Limitations on Current Research

The above sections acknowledge existing research focused on the impact on leadership when mindfulness is practiced, when compassion is experienced, and how workplace settings can be changed through positive characteristics obtained through an individual’s practice of mindfulness and meditation. The research studies are not in abundance as the topic of mindful leadership began to be explored approximately 15 years ago. Arvind Birdie (2015) writes that the impact of mindfulness on the workplace is available anecdotally, but “little research is available regarding the effects of mindfulness in a work setting. Most studies that do exist continue to demonstrate the positive effect of mindfulness on mental health...” (p. 433). He goes on to write, “mindfulness in the workplace is a relatively new area of mindfulness application and research. Nevertheless, initial studies have documented beneficial effects of mindfulness training on conditions related to work stress” (2015, p. 434). It has been seven years since Birdie wrote those words, and there is still not a bounty of research to review when it comes to mindful leadership or mindfulness in the workplace.

Overall, in mindful leadership research, the long-term impact of the practice needs a closer look. There have been no longitudinal studies on the topic and its impact on the workplace. Programs of up to eight weeks in length have been studied, but long-term research or regrouping with participants several months after a shorter program should be conducted to determine if the practice or results are sustained or waning after initial trainings are complete.

In addition, diversity of workplace settings has not been overly saturated, with the predominant focus on health care workers. There has also been a lack of diversity in the

participants themselves. Di Fabio and Saklofske (2021) write, “Future studies should also consider demographics and background variables, for example gender, age, and seniority at work as potential intervening factors” (p. 7). Lastly, many of the research studies reviewed for this paper included some self-report measurement as part of the results which could skew results due to personal unconscious bias.

A Discussion on Looking Forward

With more attention on the topic of mindfulness in the workplace and leadership, and with consideration of past limitations on research efficacy, I have hope that the tools provided will become more commonplace so that businesses will provide more resources to encourage mindfulness practice. In future mindful leadership research, employer involvement should be assessed and included. How organizations reinforce and implement mindfulness practice for leadership is an important aspect to consider. It is essential to foster a supportive environment in which mindful leadership can thrive. None of the research studies that I found discussed interactions between organizations, participants, and the study itself. It will be critical to review with future studies how organization’s obtain resources and train staff as well as how to replicate the practices and research. Servaas van Beekum (2016) writes,

When an organization as a whole wants to introduce more time to think deeper and be mindful, an invitation to a mindful consultant to help start the process, is a first step. The consultant’s role is indispensable to support and contain the emotional process of deeper thinking and deep practice. (p. 49)

Future researchers could examine which aspects of mindfulness training provide more positive results and in what ways. They might also review trainings conducted among fellow employees versus trainings done outside of the workplace with non-coworkers. In my own anecdotal

experience teaching leadership topics, comments from participants has been that they felt more open and able to be vulnerable when they are not in their workplace and when they are not among co-workers.

The practice of mindfulness can be a pathway for positively influencing employee retention, empathy and engagement, and increased emotional intelligence. Reitz et al. (2020) surmise that “Mindfulness is an increasingly important capacity because it enables leaders to develop greater self-awareness, resilience and emotional regulation, which could then have an impact on others in social interactions of a complex organizational system” (“Limitations and future research” section). The non-self and non-judgmental traits that are learned through the practice “also encourages one to realize the thoughts, feelings, and sensations that one observes are simply experiences in the mind or body, and not something that one should ‘over-identify’ with” (Birdie, 2015, p. 432). Furthermore, the person practicing mindfulness and embodying its essential components has an impact on those around them. As Dunoon & Langer (2011) write,

When we practice leadership mindfully we are able, in particular moments, to put the quality of our interactions ahead of task accomplishment... to give the others involved our full attention. If we are to learn from them, we need to be present, attuned to what they are communicating to us - rather than letting our thinking run ahead or focusing on particular strategies or actions we might want to put in place. (para. 12)

This ability ignites a positive ripple effect for workplace settings and for colleagues who engage with the person practicing mindful leadership.

One must acknowledge the value in providing access to foundational mindfulness practice for leaders in the workplace. Trainings to teach the practice of mindfulness would provide necessary tools for exercising mindfulness, compassion, empathy, and more, in all

aspects of daily work-life. As Barua et al. (2019) write, “research indicates that meditation impacts practitioners positively and promotes team building and strengthens organizational identification” (p. 232-233). The impact mindfulness training has in the workplace is further supported by Nübold et al. (2019), “Mindfulness could be integrated as a substantial building block of leadership development programs, or might even be included in trainee programs in order to build leader mindfulness and authentic leadership in a sustainable way” (p. 483).

People have a desire to learn, but workplace settings need to be supportive and exhibit a culture of learning, acceptance, and understanding. Author and researcher Brené Brown (2018) writes, “it’s incredibly liberating to have employees own their own performance and feedback, and it’s incredibly powerful when you set your leaders up to be strong coaches who are equipped to have hard conversations” (p. 207). Setting up the foundational principles of leadership within the organization and providing ongoing training is key to exhibiting mindful leadership. As reported by the Global Leadership Forecast (2021), leaders want to learn (preferring to spend nearly one day a week if they had the ability). In addition, younger generations “need more help growing their communication and interaction skills, recognizing a greater need for developing empathy” (Global Leadership Forecast, 2021, p. 5). Putting these research and report findings into practice through trainings supported by organizations would positively impact work settings. Increasing essential traits such as self-awareness, empathy, compassion, authenticity, and integrity in the workplace will lead to increased engagement, retention, and better communication throughout the organizations. In this way, every employee will feel empowered to become a mindful leader.

Conclusion

Mindfulness-based practice paves the way to enhancing leadership and improving the workforce according to the *bodhichitta* way. Although research is in its infancy, evaluating different surveys and training programs related to mindfulness in the workplace has been very promising. Leadership development steeped in mindfulness is a necessity in corporate America now, when stress from the pandemic is so prevalent, turnover is an epidemic, and the desire to learn, feel safe, and be cared for is at its peak.

Considering the *bodhichitta* way and its concept as an important guidepost for mindful leadership, Joseph Goldstein (2016) writes that “Right Livelihood, in its broadest application can be seen as the expression of *bodhichitta*...Whatever work we do can be performed with the noble aspiration of benefitting other beings” (p. 387). The existing research shows that there is abundant opportunity to benefit from a combination of mindfulness practice, compassion training, and meditation. These practices bring benefits to leaders, colleagues, and the workplace environment. Rinpoche (2019) writes,

With *bodhichitta* there will be fewer problems at work because we no longer create any negative karma in our relationship with others. Instead of being in competition with others, we will see ourselves as their servant, happy to do whatever will help them. If we are an employee, we think we are working to help our boss and [their] customers; if we are an employer, we think we have developed our company in order to help our employees and our customers. (p. 89)

The research, coupled with anecdotal evidence, points to the fact that there is much to gain, and great benefits experienced, when mindfulness is practiced in the workplace.

Karol Wollenburg wrote these words in 2004: “For many people, the meaning of work goes beyond financial compensation. Working provides a sense of service, a way to help

ourselves and others grow, and allow us to perfect our skills. Many individuals feed their souls by continuing to work. Work is an important part of fulfilled living” (p. 1787). Though stated nearly 20 years ago, these words still ring true today. A great start to living the *bodhichitta* way at work is offering access and providing training to leaders and aspiring leaders who inherently understand the value of mindfulness practice. May we all initiate a regular mindfulness practice that makes an impact on leadership and brings compassion – even joy – into the workplace.

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Igniting Mindful Leadership from Within: An 8-Week Online Program

Instructor's Guide

Audience

This experience is designed for leaders and aspiring leaders in for-profit and not-for-profit industries. It is also for anyone with a desire to bring self-awareness, compassion, and mindfulness to themselves and their workplace.

Learning Objectives

- Journey inward and examine who we are authentically to gain self-awareness
- Uncover ways to better communicate with others
- Discover ways to build up team members
- Better take care of oneself through self-compassion
- Learn ways to bring mindfulness practice to the workplace

Overview to Provide Participants

This eight-week virtual training program is designed to be a blueprint for personal and professional growth with the goal of providing leadership skills through the roadmap of mindfulness, compassion, and self-care. The purpose of this training is to develop leaders who are self-aware, empowered, authentic, and committed to mindful practices so they can successfully use the practice on a regular basis in the workplace. The virtual training is a high-engagement environment requiring everyone's willingness to lean into vulnerability, to discover their authentic selves, to reflect and share life and work stories and the lessons learned from those experiences. We will experience a mix of lecture, group discussion, co-learning, reflection journaling, experiential teachings, and meditations. Participants will receive specific instructions prior to each session, detailing the Zoom access, homework, and more.

Details

- Eight-week online training (two-hours/week via Zoom as a group)
 - Sessions will not be recorded
- Weekly homework assignments (30-60 minutes/week)
 - Homework readings and exercises will be provided via email at the end of each session
- Recommended daily meditation practice (10-30+ minutes/day)

- 1:1 Zoom or phone time with instructor available upon request

For Participants: Preparing for Sessions

- Log in to Zoom 15 minutes prior to start time
- Mute your phone and other devices, close out of email, and be in a space that is free of unnecessary distractions
- Practice self-care and explore the learnings as you are comfortable and see where they lead you

Values

- Integrity
- Respect
- Inclusiveness
- Introspective
- Collaboration

Participant Promises

- Show up consistently: on time and for the entire time
- Avoid using cell phones unless there is an emergency
- Video cameras remain on in Zoom unless otherwise instructed
- Be present fully for yourself and for others
- Practice deep listening
- Be in sanctuary with the group: know what is shared personally here stays here
- Embrace the being with silence and the being with others
- Lean into unbecoming & becoming
- Be curious to trying new things and thinking in new ways

Recommended Texts* for Instructor

1. Brown, J. (2007). *A leader's guide to reflective practice*. Trafford Publishing.
2. George, B. (2007). *True north*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
3. Glassman, B. (1998). *Bearing witness: A Zen master's lessons in making peace*. Zen Community of New York.
4. Goldstein, J. (2013). *Mindfulness: A practical guide to awakening*. Sounds True.
5. Hahn, T.N. (2013). *The art of communicating*. HarperCollins.
6. Jinpa, T. (2015). *A fearless heart*. Penguin Random House.
7. Liebenson, N.H. (2018). *The magnanimous heart*. Wisdom Publications.
8. Nestor, J. (2020). *Breath*. Riverhead Books.
9. Pollak, S.M., Pedulla, T. & Siegel, R.D. (2014). *Sitting Together*. The Guilford Press.
10. Rothberg, D. (2006). *The engaged spiritual life*. Beacon Press.
11. Salzberg, S. (2002). *Loving-kindness*. Shambhala Publications, Inc.

*These texts are referenced within the lesson plans to use for instructor teachings during the sessions.

LESSON PLANS FOR INSTRUCTOR

Welcome - Session 1

Introduction

(<10 minutes)

- Welcome everyone, share housekeeping overview of the workshop - including objectives of the training and ground rules of time together (Participant Promises). Emphasize that everything is kept confidential, so when partner work or small group work is done, nothing is mentioned without permission from the person who said it. If ever participants are feeling overwhelmed or sense they need to step aside, let them know they are able to take a break when it is needed. Pause to acknowledge in gratitude the shared time together, what it took for them to reserve this time to be here with everyone.
- Overview of session teachings.
- Define mindfulness – paying attention, on purpose, with nonjudgment, with curiosity and acceptance.
- Ask attendees to practice the native land acknowledgment: www.native-land.ca (Identify what location participants are by noting the name of the indigenous land as identified at the above URL and to be placed within the Zoom chat.)

Introduction of attendees

(<10 minutes journal, <40 minutes discussion)

Journal prompt exercise: Inform participants of the value of self-reflection and that it will be something practiced throughout the weeks together. *Note: though noted as journaling, they may choose to not keep a journal, perhaps they prefer bullet-style lists on post-it notes, or video messages to themselves, or audio recordings as a more effective means for themselves. They can explore the right self-reflection style for them throughout the weeks.*

- Prompt: Describe who you are as a leader or as an individual. Dig deep, provide examples of who you are authentically.

Instructions: Let participants know that everyone's answer will be shared to the group so that everyone is introduced, and we have a better understanding of who they are. They choose what

they want to say, whether it's exactly what they wrote down or some variation of it. We'll have 10 minutes to journal, and then we'll popcorn-style share. Participants are invited to turn off camera if they wish and to turn them back on when they are finished and ready to share. At end of 10 minutes, begin popcorn-style sharing, inviting someone to volunteer to go first. Ask participants to remain silent during this time, use deep listening. Ask participants to be mindful of time and limit their answers to 3 minutes or less.

Participant Contact Information + Short Break

(<7 minutes, short break)

During break, route a Google doc link in the chat to voluntarily gather contact information from participants to share with each other to use to contact each other as they may wish. Note that the contact information will only be shared with fellow participants and is not a requirement.

Values Exercise

(<10 minutes introduction to exercise journal, 30 minutes break out groups & discussion)

Instructor reference book:

George, B. (2007). *True north*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Chapter 5, p. 85-102

Journal prompt & exercise:

- Our values are a glimpse inside ourselves and what we deem important. This is an exploration of who are authentic self is by identifying the top values in our lives right now. Release any judgments you may have about doing it right, or feelings of guilt that may come if you don't put something down, nothing has to be written or said because you feel you need to, only say or write what is you.
 - Prompt: What values do you hold most important? (List out. No particular order necessary.)

Instructor to demonstrate an example of their own values list and story.

Break out group instructions:

Once journaling is complete, break out into small groups of 3-4. During the breakout time, each take turns sharing their listed values and any story that accompanies why those are their values. Each person should get 5-7 minutes to share, someone to be the timekeeper who isn't speaking. The person presenting their values should be the only one talking, while the others in the group practice deep empathetic listening, taking light notes as they may wish. When one person is done sharing, the next person voluntarily goes until all are done. If time allows, discuss with each other any commentary that bubbles up from having shared their values.

- Remember to hold the group conversation confidential. When coming back to the larger group, do not share what others may have said, only what you may have shared in order to hold the group talk as a sacred space.
- What is deep listening? Being in the moment with the person speaking with no other agenda – no reactions or offering of help or commentary. Push aside your own needs to be actively present for the person speaking.

Returning as a group, debrief with all. Inquire: How was the experience of the breakout groups, of the exercise? Anything that came out that they wish to share? (Not all need to participate but see what arises coming back as a larger group.)

In closing: Keep these values and we will revisit later on during our time together. You may also wish to revisit this list every year to see how they change over time, to see which remain constant and change, considering why and how things are different or the same.

Recap the Session, Mention of Session 2 & Practice Over the Week

(<5 minutes, specifics are placed in a document sent via the chat on Zoom & emailed to participants that day):

- Consider an accountability partner: someone from the group or in your personal/professional life. Share with them what you are focused on, any goals you've set for yourself, and check in with them.
- Practice one 30-minute Body Scan Meditation during the week, suggested meditation to listen to from Jon Kabat-Zinn: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_DTmGtznab4
- 10+ minutes a day practice meditation (sitting or walking)
 - *Provide resources on how to do and what sites to visit if they need references*
- Homework Journal Prompts:
 - How did it feel to do the body scan? What sensations or thoughts arose during that time?
 - How do your values align with your role at work? Are they present, how so or how not?
 - During session 1, did you notice anything or have an idea that you wish to explore further? Write what that may have been and consider steps to its exploration.

Check Out

(<10 minutes)

For a few minutes in their journal, consider answering this question:

- What is one way you will honor your values this week?

Invite anyone who may wish to share their insights to do so, popcorn style. Let everyone know not everyone needs to share but may as they wish.

Wise Speech - Session 2

Check in

(<20 minutes)

Each time we gather we will do a check in, a question posed to the group followed by a few moments of journal writing, then popcorn style for all to share. Though not required for all to speak out loud, we hope to hear from everyone what they feel comfortable sharing.

Check in question (journal prompt):

What does it feel like when you are really being listened to?

Invite someone to voluntarily start out the group, open to all who may wish to share their insights to do so, popcorn style. Active listening is used, no commentary during the check in.

Instructor Welcome & Wise Speech Overview Teachings

(<30 minutes)

Questions, insights from participants from last week's session, or from homework/time away?

Introduce wise speech and include commentary from:

- *The Art of Communicating*, Thich Nhat Hahn, chapter 6: pages 115-126
- *The Magnanimous Heart*, Narayan Helen Liebensen, chapter 13: pages 171-184
- *The Engaged Spiritual Life*, Donald Rothberg, pages 22-31
- *Sitting Together*, Susan M. Pollack et. al., page 58:
 - W.A.I.T.: Why Am I Talking

Set Intention for Wise Speech

(<15 minutes)

An exercise found in *The Engaged Spiritual Life* tells us to set a practice by creating stronger intentions, and one way is to bestow an intention into an inanimate object to serve as a reminder.

Journal prompt:

What is your intention for practicing wise speech and what inanimate object may serve as a consistent reminder for you?

Prompt participants when they are done reflecting they can go into a break.

BREAK (<7 minutes)

Participants are invited to stretch, walk around as they are able, take a bio break, and turn off cameras if they wish, returning by the time requested.

Ask Wise Questions Exercise

(<15 minutes introduction & journaling, <30 minutes break out in pairs)

- By asking the right kind of questions we can have deeper conversations, questions can open up new ways of thinking.
- A well composed question:
 - Non-leading
 - Open-ended
 - Not a one-word answer

- Come from a place of good
- Not controversial

“Wise and meditative questions are ways to look into and drop our assumptions, preconceptions, and unexamined beliefs. Our intention when we question in this way is to learn, not simply to accumulate knowledge but to encourage relaxation so that we can receive a deeper wisdom.”

(Narayan Helen Liebenson, *The Magnanimous Heart*, page 174).

“We don’t ask a question while simultaneously trying to tell ourselves how we should feel or what we should be experiencing. We explore and open to different perspectives to see for ourselves what emerges.” (Narayan Helen Liebenson, *The Magnanimous Heart*, page 183).

Exercise:

Practice developing wise questions as a group, providing first several examples.

Then, divide the participants into pairs into breakout rooms in Zoom. Each shares questions they’ve written. Explore asking a wise question to the other person to be answered/each taking turns. See how it feels to be asked a question with this intentional thinking. Discuss together how the conversation feels and what the overall experience is like.

Returning as a group, debrief. Inquire: What was the experience like? How did it feel to ask someone a wise question? How did it feel to answer one? (Not all need to participate but see what arises coming back as a larger group.)

Recap the Session, Mention of Session 3 & Practice Over the Week

(<5 minutes, specifics are placed in a document sent via the chat):

- Practice one 30-minute Body Scan Meditation during the week, suggested meditation to listen to from Jon Kabat-Zinn: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTmGtznab4>
- 10+ minutes a day practice meditation (sitting or walking)
- Take the personality test: <https://www.16personalities.com/free-personality-test>
- Journal Prompts for the Week:
 - What gets in your way when listening to someone at work or in a meeting?
 - What does it feel like practicing this week with asking wise questions during the work day?

Check Out

(<15 minutes)

Harkening back to our earlier exercise on creating intention around wise speech, please share as you are comfortable what you wrote in your journal.

Popcorn style ask for anyone who may wish to share.

Emotional Intelligence - Session 3

Check in

(<20 minutes)

Journal prompt:

Check in with yourself as you are right now. What emotions are you feeling? What do you feel in your body and where in your body are you feeling them?

Invite someone to voluntarily start out the group, open to all who may wish to share their insights to do so, popcorn style. Active listening is used, no commentary during the check in.

Instructor Welcome & Session Overview Teachings

(<30 minutes)

Questions, insights from participants from last week's session, or from homework/time away?

Introduce emotional intelligence/self-awareness and include commentary from:

- *Sitting Together*, Sydney Pollack, et. al., pages 92-99
- <https://www.forbes.com/health/mind/what-is-emotional-intelligence/>
- <https://hbr.org/2015/04/how-emotional-intelligence-became-a-key-leadership-skill>
- <https://hbr.org/2017/02/emotional-intelligence-has-12-elements-which-do-you-need-to-work-on>

Personality Test Results (from week's homework)

(<15 minutes)

- Check in with participants on results they experienced in taking the personality test. Did they learn something new about themselves? What was it like taking the test and reading the results?
- Would anyone care to share anything specific to themselves from the test that provided them with specific insights?

Note to instructor: The better you understand yourself, the more skilled you become on how to handle situations at work and build team members.

BREAK (<7 minutes)

Participants are invited to stretch, walk around as they are able, take a bio break, and turn off cameras if they wish, returning by the time requested.

Letting Go Exercise

(<10 minutes)

Ask each participant to spend a moment thinking of something they are mentally holding on to, something they want to let go of. What do they want or need to let go – what can they give themselves permission to let go? It might be letting go of checking work emails before they get out of bed in the morning or letting go of some old habit that's been hard to break or letting go of some emotional trauma. What it is, is entirely up to them.

As they identify that thing, write it down on a slip of paper. Tear it out of their journal.

Sit in silence studying the words they wrote down and pause to notice what arises as they think of letting go and giving themselves permission to do so. How does it feel to let it go? Rip up the paper and toss it out, ring bell at end of moment to signify the letting go permission.

Guided Meditation – Alternate Nostril Breathing Exercise

(<20 minutes)

Breathing Exercise instructions (adapted from James Nestor, *Breath*, page 219)

- Benefits: improves lung function; lowers heart rate, blood pressure, and sympathetic stress.
- How to:
 - Place your right thumb over your right nostril, and the right ring finger on the left nostril. The forefinger and middle finger should rest on your eyebrows.
 - Close your right nostril with your thumb, inhale through the left nostril slowly.
 - At the top of the breath, pause, hold both nostrils closed, then lift only your thumb to exhale through your right nostril.
 - At the end of your exhale, hold both nostrils closed for a moment, then inhale through the right nostril.
 - Continue, alternating breaths through the nostrils for five to ten cycles.

Excerpts from “The Journey of Un-Becoming” <https://theripplesguy.com/r882/>

Maybe the journey isn’t so much about becoming anything. Maybe it’s about un-becoming everything that isn’t really you, so you can be who you were meant to be in the first place.

Stop trying to fast-forward the movie of your life, chasing futures that never seem to arrive. Instead, bow deeply to yourself as you actually are. Your pain, your sorrow, your doubts, your deepest longings, your fearful thoughts, are not mistakes, and they aren’t asking to be healed. They are asking to be held. Here, now, lightly, in the loving arms of present awareness.

Recap the Session, Mention of Session 4 & Practice Over the Week

(<5 minutes, specifics are placed in a document sent via the chat):

- Read article: “Building the Emotional Intelligence of Groups” (*Harvard Business Review*, March 2001). <https://hbr.org/2001/03/building-the-emotional-intelligence-of-groups>
- 10+ minutes a day practice meditation (sitting or walking)
- Experiment with Alternate Nostril Breathing before a meeting, at the start or end of the work day, use as an exercise to take a break during the day.
- Journal Prompts for the Week:
 - What experiences occurred during time spent meditating?
 - If you tried Alternate Nostril Breathing, when did you try it and what did you experience?

- Do you remember a coworker or supervisor who handled a difficult situation well? What did you observe that they did to work through things positively? What might you learn from that?

Check Out

(<15 minutes)

What is one step you can take in implementing something in the next week that supports anything that resonated with you today?

Popcorn style ask for anyone who may wish to share.

Teamwork - Session 4

Check in

(<15 minutes)

Journal prompt:

How can being more self-aware lead to better work interactions?

Invite someone to voluntarily start out the group, open to all who may wish to share their insights to do so, popcorn style. Active listening is used, no commentary during the check in.

Instructor Welcome & Session Overview Teachings

(<30 minutes)

Questions, insights from participants from last week's session, or from homework/time away?

Introduce the topic of teamwork and include commentary from:

- (Participant homework article) "Building the Emotional Intelligence of Groups" (*Harvard Business Review*, March 2001). <https://hbr.org/2001/03/building-the-emotional-intelligence-of-groups>

Quotes for instructor to use as needed:

*"The core of empathy and understanding is seeing each other as humans. Revealing even small things about your personal life can help make someone comfortable opening up about other things." (Patrick Lencioni, *Five Dysfunctions of a Team*)*

*"When I meet someone, I always try to relate to the person on the basic human level. On that level, I know that, just like me, he or she wishes to find happiness, to have fewer problems, and less difficulty in their life. ...If, on the other hand, I relate to others from the perspective of myself as someone different...I will then create walls to keep me apart from others. ...I will create the basis for my own separation and loneliness." (Dalai Lama, *The Book of Joy*, 2016)*

"Realizing that the other person is also just like me is the basis on which you can develop compassion, not only towards those around you but also towards your enemy. Normally, when we think about our enemy, we think about harming [them]. Instead, try to remember that the enemy is also a human being, just like me." (Dalai Lama)

Rule of Six Exercise

(<15 minutes introduction and example, <10 minutes break out, <5 minutes debrief)

Commentary extract from Judy Brown's, *A Leader's Guide to Reflective Practice*, pages 107-114.

- Provide an example of what it would look like to practice the Rule of Six and work through the scenario in front of participants.
- Then, provide participants with a shared scenario that they can work through in breakout groups together. They're tasked to come up with six possibilities for the scenario.
 - o As they work together, observe how it feels working through and taking the time to see different angles and perspectives of the scenario and not leaping to the first thought about it.
- Returning as a group, debrief. Inquire: What was the experience like? How might it feel during the work day when a confusing or problematic experience occurs to work through the Rule of Six?

BREAK

(<7 minutes)

Participants are invited to stretch, walk around as they are able, take a bio break, and turn off cameras if they wish, returning by the time requested.

Just Like Me Exercise

(<15 minutes)

(adapted from Ram Dass and Mirabai Bush, *Walking Each Other Home*)

As participants are comfortable, sit (with eyes closed or softly lowered and gazing at the ground) and prompt them to think of someone they know, a colleague, friend, neutral person, or a difficult person. Participants may wish to turn off their Zoom camera for the exercise to be in their own space. Instructor says these phrases out loud as participants are asked to silently repeat these phrases as they are thinking about that person (say each one out loud to the group):

- Just like me, this person has feelings, emotions, and thoughts.
- Just like me, this person has experienced physical and emotional pain and suffering.
- Just like me, this person is trying to do a good job.
- Just like me, this person worries and is frightened sometimes.
- Just like me, this person wants to be content with what life has given them.
- Just like me, this person wishes to be free from pain and suffering.
- Just like me, this person wishes to be loved.
- Just like me, this person wishes to be safe and healthy.

Popcorn style debrief: How does it feel to practice this?

Recap the Session, Mention of Session 5 & Practice Over the Week

(<5 minutes, specifics are placed in a document sent via the chat):

- 10+ minute walking meditation exploring the 5 senses:
 - o As you walk, what do you notice that you can see, smell, touch, hear, feel/think?
- Beyond the 5 senses meditation, practice 10+ minutes of meditation on the other days.
- Journal Prompts for the Week:

- How can I best support others in their endeavors?
- What did I experience during the 5 senses meditation?
- How might I put into practice any of the concepts or ideas I've experienced so far in the training?

Check Out

(<15 minutes)

In what ways could you practice “Just Like Me” during your workday?

Popcorn style ask for anyone who may wish to share.

Equanimity - Session 5

Check in

(<15 minutes)

What practice(s) have you tried at work so far and what was the experience like?

Invite someone to voluntarily start out the group, open to all who may wish to share their insights to do so, popcorn style. Active listening is used, no commentary during the check in.

Instructor Welcome & Session Overview Teachings

(<30 minutes)

Questions, insights from participants from last week's session, or from homework/time away?

Introduce what Equanimity is and how to practice it, include commentary from:

- *Loving-Kindness*, Sharon Salzberg, chapter 9, pages 136-151
- *Mindfulness*, Joseph Goldstein, pages 277-284
- Tell holding hands story from John Lewis' *Walking in the Wind* (1998), xvi-xvii

BREAK (<7 minutes)

Participants are invited to stretch, walk around as they are able, take a bio break, and turn off cameras if they wish, returning by the time requested.

Visual Cards – OUISI – Exercise

(<7 minutes journaling, <15 minutes choosing a photo and journaling, <40 minutes in breakout group)

Journal Prompt Part One:

Considering the concept of equanimity, take a few minutes to journal about:

- A time when I have been in the storm of the hurricane at work
- A time when I have been in the eye of the storm, in the center of it all, but calm and equanimous.

Now, taking into consideration what participants have written:

Use OUISI photo cards (www.ouisi.co)

From the photographs provided in a PDF in the chat, participants review which image they most identify with when considering the two stories they wrote about in the earlier prompts,

considering:

Journal Prompt Part Two:

- This photo reminds me of a time when I have been in the storm of the hurricane at work because...
- This photo reminds me of a time when I have been in the eye of the storm, in the center of it all, but calm and equanimous because...

Once two images are chosen by the participant, they are to journal about each image and example that they chose. Why does the image match that time in their life? What do they notice comparing the image to their story? Was it easy to identify an image that felt connected to them

and this example? Do this for both images and prompts. They are welcome to turn their cameras off until they are ready but return with cameras on no later than 15 minutes.

Instructions:

When all participants are back on camera or 15 minutes is up, begin breakout rooms. Break out into small groups of 3-4. During the breakout time, each take turns sharing the image they chose and how it relates to their story. Each person should get 5-7 minutes to share, someone be timekeeper who isn't speaking. The person presenting their image and stories should be the only one talking, while the others in the group deep listen and take notes as they may wish. When one person is done sharing, the next person voluntarily goes until all are done. If time allows, discuss with each other any commentary that bubbles up from having shared their photos and stories.

Returning as a group, debrief with all. How was the experience of the breakout groups? What was it like choosing an image that resonated with their story? What did the image teach them about their story?

BREAK (<7 minutes)

Participants are invited to stretch, walk around as they are able, take a bio break, and turn off cameras if they wish, returning by the time requested.

Recap the Session, Mention of Session 6 & Practice Over the Week

(<5 minutes, specifics are placed in a document sent via the chat):

- Practice one Body Scan or do again the 5 senses meditation
- 10+ minutes a day practice meditation (sitting or walking) when not doing the Body Scan or 5 senses meditation
- Journal Prompts for the Week:
 - o What ways have I been practicing wise speech since session 3?
 - o How can I practice equanimity at work while being in the middle of a storm?
 - o In what I have been learning, what might I want to share with my coworkers or team at work? How could I share the information?

Check Out

(<5 minutes)

As you leave here today, what is one thing that you are taking with you?

Popcorn style ask for anyone who may wish to share.

Loving Kindness - Session 6

Check in

(<15 minutes)

A gratitude practice moment:

- What is something that you are grateful for? (*Participants are welcome to make a list or focus and expand on one thing.*)

Invite someone to voluntarily start out the group, open to all who may wish to share their insights to do so, popcorn style. Active listening is used, no commentary during the check in.

Instructor Welcome & Session Overview Teachings

(<30 minutes)

Questions, insights from participants from last week's session, or from homework/time away?

Include commentary from:

- *Loving-Kindness*, Sharon Salzberg, chapter 9, pages 136-151
- *Bearing Witness*, Bernie Glassman, chapter 11, pages 55-59 and chapters 14-16, pages 74-93
- *A Fearless Heart*, Thupten Jinpa, chapter 6, pages 113-132

Exercise: Letter to Your Future Self

(<30 minutes)

Consider yourself one year from today. What are some things you want that future self to know, and/or be reminded of? With loving-kindness in your mind, see what comes about as you think of what you would tell yourself in a year. Honor any feelings that may arise. Freely write in your journal this letter and see where the prompt takes you.

We will pair up in break out rooms to share what you wrote and bring intention to the words you put on paper. Each person will share for 5 minutes, then the other person will share. Be mindful of time so both have equal sharing time. Listen deeply without interruption of the other person. After both have shared, comment and discuss together freely with the time remaining thoughts on the exercise and loving kindness practice.

Returning as a group, debrief with all. Inquire: How was the experience within the breakout groups? What came up in which needs to be shared?

BREAK

(<7 minutes)

Participants are invited to stretch, walk around as they are able, take a bio break, and turn off cameras if they wish, returning by the time requested.

Guided Meditation – Loving Kindness Practice

(<20 minutes)

See Appendix A for a sample script that can be used.

Recap the Session, Mention of Session 7 & Practice Over the Week

(<5 minutes, specifics are placed in a document sent via the chat):

- Practice one 30-minute Body Scan Meditation during the week, suggested meditation to listen to from Jon Kabat-Zinn: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTmGtznab4>
- 10 minutes a day practice meditation (sitting or walking)
- Take the Self-Compassion Quiz (free and takes 5 minutes):
https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/quizzes/take_quiz/self_compassion
- Journal Prompts for the Week:
 - o What feelings or thoughts arose after taking the Self-Compassion quiz?
 - o Review your values from session 1, are you practicing your values? Is there anything new to add or what arises as you look back?

Check Out

(<15 minutes)

Journal prompt:

What was it like to practice loving-kindness? What came up for you personally? Did anything surprise you?

Popcorn style ask for anyone who may wish to share.

Self-Care - Session 7

Check in

(<15 minutes)

Journal Prompt:

- What do I do to take care of my well-being (mentally, physically, spiritually)

Invite someone to voluntarily start out the group, open to all who may wish to share their insights to do so, popcorn style. Active listening is used, no commentary during the check in.

Instructor Welcome & Session Overview Teachings

(<30 minutes)

Questions, insights from participants from last week's session, or from homework/time away?

Introduce the topic of self-care and include commentary from:

- o *A Fearless Heart*, Thupten Jinpa, pages 27-46, 143-152
- o *Mindfulness*, Joseph Goldstein, pages 362-365
- o Self-Compassion Quiz which participant's took as part of the homework

Examining Your Self-Care Practice

(<25 minutes)

Bring introspection to participants to take a deeper look into how they take care of themselves.

As Donald Rothberg (*The Engaged Spiritual Life*, page 209) writes, "At times, we may need to listen carefully for what brings us alive, for what these gifts are. We may need to unearth buried gifts, develop gifts that are not yet manifest, or remember one's purpose...Eventually, we discover ourselves afresh, as a new kind of being, as is said in thie African American church song: *I looked at my hands, and my hands looked anew. I looked at my feet, and they did, too. I started to talk, and I had a new talk. I started to walk, and I had a new walk.*"

Participants to consider these questions to answer in their journals:

- What does self-care look like to you right now as you are?
- What actionable steps or activities can you outline to do?
- Be aware of obstacles or hindrances that may arise in considering these into practice. List any that come to mind.
- How could you overcome these obstacles?
- What actions can you take to practice self-care in the next 24 hours?
- What can you do to practice self-care over the next week?

When done answering, invite participants to put into the Zoom chat one action they wish to take to practice self-care in either the next 24 hours or the next week. In an act of compassion and

accountability, the chat will hold sacred their intentions. View the prompts come through and then do a check for a need to break and stretch.

BREAK

(<7 minutes)

Participants are invited to stretch, walk around as they are able, take a bio break, and turn off cameras if they wish, returning by the time requested.

Guided Meditation

(<20 minutes)

Create a meditation about interconnectedness to each other, to nature and Earth.

Talking points to include:

Let us notice what arises from the following words from scientist and author Robin Wall Kimmerer (*Braiding Sweetgrass*, 2013): “Let us hold a giveaway for Mother Earth, spread our blankets out for her and pile them high with gifts of our own making. Imagine the books, the paintings, the poems, the clever machines, the compassionate acts, the transcendent ideas, the perfect tools. The fierce defense of all that has been given. Gifts of mind, hands, heart, voice, and vision all offered up on behalf of the earth. Whatever our gift, we are called to give and to dance for the renewal of the world. ... In return for the privilege of breath.”

Thich Nhat Hahn’s *Love Letter to the Earth* (2013), letter titled “Walking Tenderly on Mother Earth” – see Appendix B.

Recap the Session, Mention of Session 8 & Practice Over the Week

(<5 minutes, specifics are placed in a document sent via the chat):

- 10+ minutes a day practice meditation (sitting or walking)
- Practice Box Breathing (from James Nestor, *Breath*, page 229)
 - o Inhale to a count of 4, hold 4, exhale 4, hold 4. Repeat.
 - o Try at least six rounds.
- Journal Prompts for the Week:
 - o What have I done to practice self-care? (List out moments or experiences throughout the week to bring awareness to them.)
 - o How do my leadership qualities enhance or diminish when I practice self-care?
 - o How has practicing meditation made me feel over these last two months? What do I experience when I meditate more regularly?

Check Out

(<15 minutes)

How does it feel to have spent so much time focused on taking care of yourself? What emotions arose during the time together?

Popcorn style ask for anyone who may wish to share.

Mindful Leadership Final Session - Session 8

Check in

(<20 minutes)

As I begin this last session I am feeling...

- Note for participants: Repeat the question several times in your mind. Take time to pause and then write. Then repeat the question again and consider if another answer or direction arises, pause and write again.

Invite someone to voluntarily start out the group, open to all who may wish to share their insights to do so, popcorn style. Active listening is used, no commentary during the check in.

Instructor Welcome & Session Overview Teachings

(<30 minutes)

Questions, insights from participants from last week's session, or from homework/time away?

Regroup and recap with participants key learnings from time together, revisiting learning objectives and what was covered:

- Journey inward and examine who we are authentically to gain self-awareness
- Uncover ways to better communicate with others
- Discover ways to build up team members
- Better take care of oneself through self-compassion
- Learn ways to bring mindfulness practice to the workplace

Poem Exercise

"In Process" (p. 26), *Process Not Perfection*, by Jamie Marich, PhD

Read and show poem, discuss as a group

(<15 minutes)

Works of art in gestation

Art often called

Works in progress

The slogans and inspirational

Cliches call for

Progress not perfection

We judge students and employees

With the metric of a progress report

What if we were to change

Every use of the work *progress*

With the word *process*?

What if works of art in

Gestation are called

Works in process?

What if we encouraged

People to focus on

Process not perfection?

What if our metrics of

Evaluation took on the tone of
 Process report?
 What if we were to live our lives in process?

All life could transform
 Into a journey of art making,
 Fueled by the expressive spirit
 We could refrain from
 Judging ourselves so harshly
 And instead savor the unknown
 From the unknown and yes,
 Even from our mistakes
 We can discover a new way of being
 From what we once labeled failures
 We may unearth a new solution,
 A new way to solve a problem
 By creating in the moment and
 Not forcing the big picture
 May we encounter the essence of meaning.

After reading poem, allow participants to have a few minutes to digest from the poem their own thoughts, journaling as they wish. As a group, discuss their thoughts.

BREAK

(<7 minutes)

Participants are invited to stretch, walk around as they are able, take a bio break, and turn off cameras if they wish, returning by the time requested.

Guided Meditation

(<20 minutes)

Include poem from Judy Brown, from *Stepping Stones* (2014):

“Living Things”

Living things
 are shaped
 by seeking light –
 Sometimes
 given the space,
 they can grow
 straight and full –
 yet context isn't
 always easy.
 That tree we passed –
 the trunk twisted –
 had fought for light,
 I think,
 until some

winter ice storm
years ago
had broken down
whatever it blocked its
early path,
and it began to
grow straight up.
Like us,
its work is simple –
living through the storms,
continuing to grow
toward the light.

Check Out

(<30 minutes)

For a few minutes in their journal, consider the following:

- What I'm leaving behind me is...
- What I'm taking with me is...

Invite anyone who may wish to share their insights to do so, popcorn style. Encouraging everyone a bit more than prior weeks to participate in this last check out as a group. Practice active listening as always.

Instructor shares final thoughts at check out with the group as the last voice to speak after participants say their check out. Thanking all for being on the journey and sharing their time and insights with everyone. Send out workshop evaluation and mention its relevance to participants (see Appendix C).

APPENDIX A
Loving Kindness Meditation Script

Bring awareness of your energy into your body in this moment
And notice your inhale
And your exhale
Bring attention to your face

Relax any tension in your jaw

Noticing the muscles in your cheeks

And is it possible to have the space between your eyebrows relax
Continue to do a body scan and notice what arises

If you're feeling any awkwardness, or other emotions that are distracting you right now, it is important to be patient and kind toward yourself.
Allowing whatever arises to be received with kind affection.

When you're ready, bring to your mind the face of a dear loved one.
Someone living or passed,
a person or a beloved pet.
Focus on the face of this being.

Gaze in boundless friendliness and invite them in with gratitude.

Wish for their well-being, happiness, and safety.
Gently and silently to yourself,
repeat these words in your mind as you think of this being:
May you be safe
May you be touched with kindness
May you be at peace

Some of you might want to put your hand over your heart if that feels natural to you as you continue to think about this person or pet and continue to allow your thoughts on this being with the words

May you be safe
May you be touched with kindness
May you be at peace

May you be safe
May you be touched with kindness
May you be at peace

We now open the heart space to everyone.
Family, friends, neighbors, animals.

Allow yourself to be surrounded by your circle.
 Near or far. Alive or passed.
 Offering caring and boundless wishes for well-being for all in that circle.
 See who pops up as you consider this.
 Dwell in what connects you.
 Allow yourself to gaze into their faces.

Bring loving kindness with these statements silently:

May all beings be at peace
 May all beings be at ease
 May all beings be safe and well

May all beings be at peace
 May all beings be at ease
 May all beings be safe and well

We'll rest a few moments here in silence as we repeat these metta phrases

Now we will turn our attention to ourselves and send metta to ourselves.
 Without loving yourself it is almost impossible to send loving-kindness to others and yet it is so often the hardest thing for us to practice.

Many of us may have inner critics,
 Can we turn to a deservingness of kindness and care of ourselves?
 Knowing that I am loved.
 I am loving.
 I am enough.

Gently to yourself,
 repeat silently the following words for yourself:

May I rest in not knowing
 May I be kind to myself
 May I find peace in this moment

May I rest in not knowing
 May I be kind to myself
 May I find peace in this moment

May I rest in not knowing
 May I be kind to myself
 May I find peace in this moment

Sharon Salzberg describes metta as:
 "Metta is the ability to embrace all parts of ourselves,

as well as all parts of the world.

Practicing metta illuminates our inner integrity because it relieves us of the need to deny different aspects of ourselves. We can open to everything with the healing force of love. Metta sees truly that our integrity is inviolate, no matter what our life situation may be.”

I invite you now to return your attention to the energy in your body. And begin by noticing the sensations – the sense of touch – in the soles of your feet on the floor. If you’re lying down, you may wish to turn attention to where your legs are meeting the floor or the furniture you are on.

Feel the sensation in your feet or legs, and if it is possible, and as you are comfortable, gently rock them left to right or side to side..... perhaps changing to making make soft circles with your feet. Noticing the changing sensations in the movements.

Return your attention to your breath.

Let’s take a moment and if you are comfortable rub your hands together, up and down, and hear the noise.

Feel the connectedness of this group.
Feel the heat of your palms.

Now if you wish, cover your eyes so your fingers are resting on your forehead and notice the warmth on your face and know that in this moment we are connected.

May we be safe and well
May we embrace stillness and calm
May we live with ease and with kindness

Gently bring awareness back to your body, and in your own time return to our Zoom room.

APPENDIX B
Love Letter to the Earth (2013), Thich Nhat Hahn

“Walking Tenderly on Mother Earth” (p. 108-110)

Dear Mother Earth,

Every time I step upon the Earth, I will train myself to see that I am walking on you, my Mother. Every time I place my feet on the Earth I have a chance to be in touch with you and with all your wonders.

With every step I can touch the fact that you aren't just beneath me, dear Mother, but you are also within me. Each mindful and gentle step can nourish me, heal me, and bring me into contact with myself and with you in the present moment.

Walking in meditation I can express my love, respect, and care for you, our precious Earth. I will touch the truth that mind and body are not two separate entities. I will train myself to look deeply to see your true nature: you are a living being, a great being – an immense, beautiful, and precious wonder. You are not only matter, you are also mind, you are also consciousness. Just as the beautiful pine or tender grain of corn possess an innate sense of knowing, so, too, do you. Within you, dear Mother Earth, there are the elements of Earth, water, air, and fire; and there is also time, space, and consciousness. Our nature is your nature, which is also the nature of the cosmos.

I want to walk gently, with steps of love and with great respect... At every step I can take refuge in you. At every step I can enjoy your beauties, your delicate veil of atmosphere and the miracle of gravity. I can stop by thinking. I can walk relaxingly and effortlessly. Walking in the spirit I can experience awakening. I can awaken to the fact that I am alive, and that life is a precious miracle. I can awaken to the fact that I am never alone and can never die. You are always there within me and around me at every step, nourishing me, embracing me, and carrying me far into the future.

APPENDIX C
Sample Workshop Evaluation

Emailed to participants after the last class, same day. Evaluation is mentioned as part of last session to bring awareness to the why and for participants to be on the lookout and to know their thoughts are held valuable.

Rate your overall experience (choose one):

Excellent Above Average Average Poor

What did you find most valuable to you?

What areas of improvement would you identify for the instructor?

What areas of improvement would you identify for the workshop?

Would you recommend this workshop to a friend or colleague (choose one):

- Yes
- No

What topics from the experience would you like to explore more deeply (choose as many as apply):

- mindful communication
- deep listening
- wise questions
- loving-kindness
- equanimity
- guided meditation
- self-care
- self-compassion
- compassion
- emotional intelligence
- other:

Other comments to share: