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# Leadership in uncertainty: The mindfulness solution



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## EINSTEIN'S APPEAL

“A new type of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive and move toward higher levels.”

Atomic Education Urged by Einstein (1946)

In the face of pressing and severe global problems, survival requires that we move to a new type of thinking, one that is at a higher level. So proclaimed Albert Einstein and the Federation of American Scientists in a public statement in 1946. This statement represented a recognition that a new form and level of thinking is needed to address complex important challenges — challenges like the world's currently disruptive state of affairs and the pervasive uncertainty it creates.

Enthusiasts for the current ‘mindfulness revolution’ regularly present increasingly mindful thought, leadership and governance as the solution to such challenges. In this paper we wish to support this view, and show how mindfulness can be used to help equip leaders to cope with the pressures and demands of a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world. However, we also wish to emphasise, that this requires a deeper understanding of mindfulness than that commonly associated with surface ‘mindfulness hype’ or restricted corporate ‘McMindfulness’.

There is a depth in the appeal for more mindful thought and action that contributes profound insights into how we are to understand and respond to our current predicament. This involves appreciating the character of collective as well as individual mindfulness, committing to ethical and political reflection and action, and using pragmatic tools for survival in the ‘attention economy’. One of the characteristics of what could be described as ‘mindfulness lite’ is a dissociation of mindfulness from Buddhist philosophy and religion. It is important, however, not to throw out deeper

insights into the nature of experience with a stereotyped Buddhist ‘bathwater’. Einstein is regularly quoted as stating that Buddhism is the religion best suited to the modern age and the needs of science. He never made such a statement, but it is significant that he is widely cited and praised for doing so as it represents our quest for new ways to think about our inner and outer experience and the goals that we set ourselves. In this paper, we will attempt to show how deep mindfulness provides an approach and set of guidelines for leadership development that answers Einstein’s appeal for a ‘new type of thinking’, drawing on the wisdom of both the East and West.

Existing confusion about what mindfulness means and the exploding interest in the topic *can*, however, make mindfulness seem too complex to apply to contemporary business. This diminishes the opportunities that can accrue. To help address this issue, the following pages set out a practical, commercially-relevant framework to help translate mindfulness-based leadership principles and practices into the business development setting — from design to implementation and evaluation. In an environment fraught with systemic uncertainty, this framework enables us to expect, understand, avoid the dangers, and realize the opportunities these uncertainties create.

Using the five-stage process outlined in Fig. 1, we explain what this framework involves. The process starts by reviewing the problem of uncertainty. This reminds us of the scope of change needed and highlights the challenge of understanding the potential role of mindfulness which can be somewhat confused by an exploding literature. With a clear view of the problem, we then look at what the mindfulness solution involves, its implications for both leadership and organizational development, and the interventions and tools required to create change.

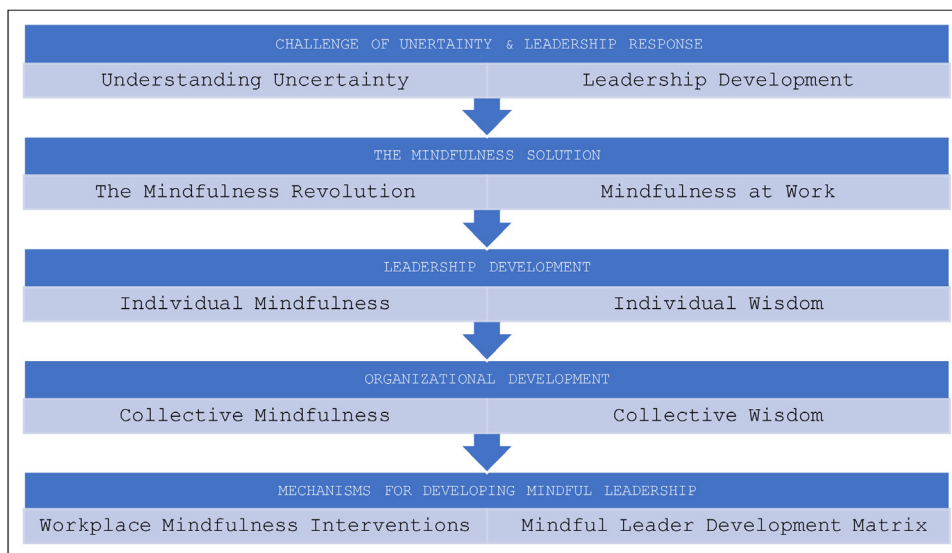


Figure 1 Understanding the Mindfulness Solution

## CHALLENGE OF UNCERTAINTY AND LEADERSHIP RESPONSE

### VUCA (Volatile Uncertain Complex Ambiguous) Environments and Their Costs

Impermanence demands attention. The global rate of change and disruption is the highest it has ever been, and it is expected to increase. Internet penetration has risen three-fold in the last decade to over 50% globally — in developed countries it is over 80%. The use of smart phones has risen 12% and the average individual spends over 5 h a day on a mobile device — that is 35 h a week, close to a full-time job! There is exponential growth in computing with greater accessibility due to lower costs with a consequent growth in data, technology and knowledge along with social pressure, expectations and influence. The rate of change is creating structural change in our society requiring companies to embrace both change and new technologies.

The structural changes resulting from disruptive technologies create winners and losers alongside massive change for both organizations and individuals. Examples include the increase in connected devices due to the ‘cloud’ and the ‘internet of things’ where devices talk to each other making some ‘things’ redundant while others become essential. In the near future, electric and autonomous vehicles will remove costs from some businesses and remove other businesses altogether. When the block chain mechanism for controlling data expands allowing records to be centralized and bank transfers to be instant, the financial industries and systems will be pervasively impacted. These massive changes in organisations will create mirror changes in individual lives.

Already changes in organizational structure and role responsibility are described as the main sources of pressure for leaders who are working longer and more intensely, with less social support than past generations, whilst facing unprecedented levels of change in the age of uncertainty. Fluid organizational structures and new working practices,

such as flexible work and project-based structures drive the complexity, change and uncertainty. These experiences impact work-life balance and can create what Stanford Professor Jeffrey Pfeffer describes as ‘toxic workplaces’. The effects may be disproportionate. Studies of Australian women’s dissatisfaction with work-life balance, for example, tells a troubling story that echoes around the globe. Nearly 70% of working women in Australia are experiencing chronic time pressure described as a *work-life bomb*. This Australian situation discussed by authors such as Barbra Pocock, showcases the impact of uncertainty and stress experienced by leaders, contributed to by pressures arising from gender inequality as well as economic policy and circumstances.

### Costs of Uncertainty

The financial impact of these changes is high due to the real costs of stress and poor performance.

The cost of stress to society is difficult to determine. Due to definitional variances, global estimates range from \$US221 million to \$US1.87 billion.

When the costs to business of stress, absenteeism, ‘presenteeism’ (being at work but not fully functioning), and lack of engagement are estimated, the numbers become so big that it’s challenging to grasp their meaning. They are:

- US absenteeism — \$US225.8 billion annually (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention).
- US presenteeism — 57.5 days a year per employee of nonproductive work (Virgin Pulse).
- Australian presenteeism — \$AUD34 billion a year (Centre for International Economics).

Within Australia, workplace stress has been estimated to cost \$14.81 billion per annum. This figure is made up of \$9.69 billion in stress-related ‘presenteeism’, and \$5.12 billion in ‘absenteeism’. The remaining \$19.19 billion of costs are due to the argued

further influence of presenteeism in the 40% of Australian workplaces that underperform and fail to meet their profitability or ROI targets. A corresponding financial analysis for the US would estimate the costs of presenteeism over \$1.5 trillion.

These figures do not account for the hidden costs associated with attention deficit (resulting from emotional strain) in organizations. Attention deficit is deemed to be so significant that managing the attention economy is now being touted as the single most important determinant of business success. While the precise figures are always contestable, the total amount is substantial.

At a personal level these changes are also extremely significant. Whilst some leaders do thrive in complexity, others feel overwhelmed. Complexity and uncertainty can create an intolerable emotional and negative burden. Leaders can be affected physically and mentally, resulting in even further stress, bad moods, tiredness, sadness, fear and insecurity. So while performance at work suffers, the cost of poor wellbeing on an individual's personal life and health is also devastating.

This forms a reinforcing loop — poor work performance comes from the negative emotion that results from stress while negative emotions are associated with low performance for both individuals and their organizations. The economic and social costs of failing to deal with the impact of uncertainty on our societies, organizations and leaders are consequently high, creating a compelling motivation to find solutions.

Across the globe, broader political, economic and ecological concerns are also becoming more apparent and pressing. Organizational irresponsibility, as organizations neither hold themselves nor are they held, accountable for the broader outcomes of their actions, fosters ever greater occupational, regional and racial inequalities. Unnecessary systematic cruelty is widespread as disenfranchised or marginal groups and populations face economic and environmental devastation. New and more complex forms of interdependence — personal, institutional, economic, political, social and environmental — intertwine with inequality and intolerance in new and more explosive ways. In such a challenging context, the business (and busyness) of business is no longer just business.

### Leadership to Address Uncertainty

In the face of these threatening uncertainties, there is a danger that leaders and their followers will turn to simple solutions. In such contexts, history has shown that leaders often gain popularity and retain power through charismatic appeal and simple reassuring messages rather than their ability to handle the uncertainties and complexities involved. Yet, as Marshall Goldsmith advises CEOs, “*What Got You Here, Won't Get You There*”. The leadership attributes that enable performance in VUCA environments — such as systems thinking, tolerance of ambiguity, ability to handle paradox, distress tolerance and learning mindsets — are rarer and less easily understood than simple charismatic appeal. But if we are to recognize and avoid the insidious attractiveness of ‘dark’ leadership, what is the alternative? If we need to look beyond confidence, strength and clear solutions in our leaders, what exactly is required for them to operate effectively in uncertain and complex environments? And how do we recognize it?

### What is Leadership Performance in Uncertainty?

#### *Not Sure!*

It is hard to define and measure leadership performance, let alone performance under uncertainty, because performance means different things to different individuals, organizations and stakeholders. Common assessment practices use subjective measures which link the concept of success to expectations, which are in themselves subjective. Popular measures of organizational performance include achievement of sales targets, turnover, profit, customer satisfaction, employee engagement and so on. Yet these different measures intertwine, conflict and shift over time. When environments are complex and in constant flux, the task of measuring performance is complicated by the changing nature of the externally-related benchmarks against which actions are correlated.

### Measuring Leadership Performance in Uncertainty

#### *Not Robust!*

Because of this complexity, we find that current practices of defining and measuring performance within uncertain contexts tend to fall short. There is also a lack of models to guide the way.

Psychology assists us to determine performance at the individual level using self-reported experience and outcomes. However, a broader and more pragmatic approach is required if we are to go beyond subjective impressions and capture the range and fluidity of actions and effects. New assessment tools are being developed by scholars such as Prof Mark Griffin, but there is much work still to be done.

### Leadership Development in Uncertainty

#### *Not Effective!*

In the face of this endemic uncertainty, there is an imperative to help leaders develop the capabilities they need to navigate it. Such development is crucial in generating the forms of intelligence and resilience needed to sustain performance. The level of resources committed to development programs shows that companies are trying. Yet there is a perception that results are disappointing. A recent McKinsey survey reaffirms this perception. It estimates that only 7% of CEOs believe they are preparing leaders well and only 10% believe that leadership development interventions impact their business results. Only 11% of executives feel that development interventions fulfil their intent. For further reading on these types of fascinating facts see the McKinsey Quarterly, particularly August 2017.

Precise evaluations of such leadership program are notoriously difficult. The complex relationship between challenges, learning, development and outcomes are not fully captured by traditional evaluation methods. More qualitative, considered, reflective and dynamic forms of evaluation could help overcome some of these problems. These are, however, rarely conducted, possibly due to a reluctance to acknowledge the unsatisfactory nature of the situation.

In addition, functional and financial benefits for leadership development providers flow from the flawed practices

in evaluation. These encourage ‘collusion with denial’ between the suppliers and purchasers of leadership development programs. Effective evaluation of such interventions requires the courage to be honest, the integrity to be outcomes-focused, the capacity to persist in ambiguity, and a mindful awareness of the tentative, provisional and yet crucially significant nature of the enterprise.

In what follows, we argue for the importance of mindfulness and mindful leadership ideas, methods and programs as a significant contribution to leadership development in a VUCA world. We do this, however, in full awareness of the uncertainties and challenges that surround its proper development and evaluation. Positive reflexive action that is aware of, attends to and accepts uncertainty and ambiguity is a central component of mindfulness. This needs to be practiced as well as preached, which means its consistent application in creating and evaluating interventions for its development.

## THE MINDFULNESS SOLUTION

### A Mindfulness Revolution?

The popularity and enthusiasm for what has been termed the *mindfulness revolution* is broadly based on recognition of the *mindlessness* that results from increasing mental demands. In an era of rapid and unpredictable change, multiple distractions and increasing diversity and demands, individuals and organizations routinely bemoan the busyness of business, and their consequent difficulties in maintaining focus and attention, challenges in creating space for genuine exploration and creativity, and inability to handle the stresses and anxieties of increasing fluidity and overload. In this context, the promotion of mindfulness as an important capability and set of practices appears to many as a reasonable approach to addressing, or at least reducing, such problems.

Promoters of the mindfulness revolution see it as a solution to the problems and anxieties that surround rapid and disruptive change, digital distraction, stress and burnout. They offer understandable, controllable and practical solutions in the form of packaged meditation and non-meditation-based mindfulness programs to enhance individual and organizational performance and well-being. Such programs and methods are legitimized by the hard science of neuroplasticity and evidence of the clinical effects of meditation and mindfulness programs. Promoters of mindful work and ‘mindful organizing’ describe its success in helping people and organizations to meet the demands of an attention economy, to achieve high reliability outcomes in deploying risky technologies and responding to fluctuating market conditions and, in general, to adapt effectively to life in challenging, changing environments. Supporters of mindful leadership celebrate it as both a perspective and a systematic method that helps leaders better understand and transform their own minds.

However, despite this proliferation, an enthusiastic response from business and an increasing number of academic discussions and popular debates addressing its character and value, there remains confusion, disagreement and prejudice about the nature, costs and benefits of

mindfulness and associated programs. While for some, our understanding is increasing and clarity improving, in truth we do not yet know how to authoritatively define mindfulness, measure it, isolate it or really understand what it does. The infancy of our knowledge base is reflected in the fact that its supporters remain firmly convinced that mindfulness is powerfully effective in improving well-being, while critics remain equally convinced that it is a superficial and detrimental form of ‘McMindfulness’.

### Evolution of the Mindfulness Revolution

Much of the confusion around mindfulness is reduced by putting this current popular evolution in context. The evolution of the mindfulness revolution explains the emerging nature of our knowledge as well as providing insight into the narrow individual, instrumental perspective that dominates current organizational interventions.

The beginning of the modern mindfulness movement emerged strongly in the mid-1970s through exposure of Americans to Buddhism because of Asian immigration and the Vietnam war. During that period, political decisions led to Asian immigration while visitors brought their religious beliefs into the culture.

Among the visitors were monks from modern Buddhist movements who aimed to bring meditation and mindfulness to the west. These included the influential Thich Nhat Hahn who published significant books including ‘The Miracle of Mindfulness’. Importantly these monks described the techniques involved in the ancient Buddhist practices, but made Dharma (Buddhist teachings) optional. At the same time, a small but key group of American peace corps volunteers in Vietnam also contributed to the phenomenon. These volunteers became the scholars who seeded the most influential mindfulness interventions, emphasizing the techniques or most basic aspect of mindfulness, as articulated in the modern Theravada tradition. One volunteer, Jon Kabat-Zinn, a doctor and scientist, became the pivotal force for medicalization of mindfulness through the MBSR (Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction) program run at the Massachusetts University Medical School.

Mindfulness, as a revolution, has been dominated by the work of these mindfulness researchers who have dedicated their lives to adapting traditional Buddhist meditation techniques to western culture. They have done so by medicalizing, secularizing, psychologizing and marketing mindfulness.

From the scientific focus of the early American scholars in the field, other key players began investigating the value of mindfulness techniques to address the discontent of the mind, seeking to shed light on the psychological and/or neurological effects of mindfulness such as mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT). Today, a psychological perspective on mindfulness is being extensively researched and clarity about mindfulness at work is increasing following exemplary studies by people such as Ute Hulsheger and Jochen Reb, detailed in such overviews as that provided in the 2017 review by Tim Lomas and his colleagues. This is, however, just one perspective on mindfulness, a perspective which if seen as all there is, limits its breadth of application within business.

## Mindfulness at Work

Influenced by these recent translations and renditions of mindfulness, the current practice of mindfulness in organizations is dominated by an individualistic and therapeutic perspective. This represents the easiest path to designing workplace mindfulness interventions because of the availability of psychological measurement models and tools and the evidence of the instrumental benefits of medical and therapeutic programs that deploy them.

The growing interest in mindfulness at work is accompanied by its representation as a solution to the leadership challenge of managing oneself and others in the face of the difficulties and uncertainties of a VUCA world. This interest is most apparent in the explosion of literature on the topic which is mostly occurring outside the accepted business journals. Within this literature a wide variety of benefits are claimed for mindfulness capabilities and the programs that develop them. Along with greater wellbeing and task performance, claimed effects include the outcomes of managing oneself and others more effectively, particularly in circumstances of personal or interpersonal conflict, change or uncertainty, as well as when complex ethical decisions are needed or innovative responses required.

In the eyes of those promoting mindfulness, its compelling promise is grounded in the realization that we urgently need a different approach to navigating the workplace issues of our time and their inherent paradoxical challenges. Individual leaders need ways to pilot their way through the impact of escalating complexity on their health, personal lives and performance. Organizations, on the other hand, need to manage rapid change and increasing disruption, while the broader society needs to address important and urgent issues of governance and environment, all of which involve complex conflicting agendas. The benefits of mindfulness are understood and claimed to be the contributions it can and does make to addressing such issues.

This promise, despite the enthusiasm of its promoters, has not yet been realized. In its support, the medical and therapeutic benefits of mindfulness capabilities and programs are relatively well-established. In addition, several exemplary and suggestive workplace studies have been conducted which have provided evidence of both the value of mindful traits and states in enhancing performance and wellbeing at work, and of the benefits that can be achieved by mindfulness programs. Yet, as outlined by critics of 'mindfulness hype', these studies remain limited and provisional in form. The commercial focus on mindfulness techniques and applications has not yet been matched by a similar level of scholarly investigation and evidence. The commercial focus on mindfulness techniques and applications has not yet been matched by a similar level of scholarly investigation and evidence. Academic studies still struggle to understand the construct and how to measure it.

As a result, there has been a substantial backlash against this 'mindfulness hype' as the rapid acceleration and diffusion of programs and claimed impact has not been matched by attendant research. The backlash is not restricted to critics of superficial 'McMindfulness' programs or those concerned about the 'dark' side of mindful meditation. Even supporters of mindfulness admit to an 'immaturity' in research on its

nature and benefits, citing the existence of multiple definitions of mindfulness, conflicting approaches to operationalizing its character, lack of clarity around the content of programs, methodological weaknesses in field trials and inadequate measures of outcomes. This is particularly so in the field of leadership and leadership development, as these fields are also hampered by the traditional problems surrounding the definition of higher-level capabilities, and by both measures and evidence of performance outcomes in turbulent and complex leadership environments.

These problems are not insurmountable. The very existence of considered reflection on the evidence so far, the appeal for more mindful methods for investigating the complexity of leadership capabilities and outcomes, the suggestiveness of some studies, and the growth and proliferation of new programs and their evaluation — all provide stimulus for further development. However, at present, in any critical evaluation of studies of individual mindfulness and its implications for leadership, researchers have been forced to admit that the field is an immature one and, in scholarly terms, in its infancy.

Despite all this, the problems that mindfulness is claimed to address are highly relevant and widely recognized. Several solutions it provides resonate widely. They include its methods for enhancing relaxation, resilience and focus as well as the attention it pays to health and well-being, compassion and sustainability.

So, where to from here?

## Mindfulness Revisited

The initial challenge we posed was one of 'how to best develop leaders so they can cope with, and creatively respond to, the challenges of a VUCA world'. In this regard, we believe mindfulness has a lot to offer. What this requires, however, is a deep rather than shallow understanding of mindfulness, a 'deep mindfulness', as it were, rather than a 'surface mindfulness' caught up in the limitations and vocabulary of simplistic mindfulness hype. Our attempt to inform such a deeper understanding follows.

From the outset, while this assumes a degree of sympathy towards and commitment to the individual psychology-based ideas and programs mentioned above, it requires us to situate such programs in a wider and broader understanding and agenda. The inspiration behind many of the more restricted mindfulness programs, as well as the concerns of many critics, can only be fully addressed through a deeper and more considered approach to leadership and mindfulness.

The following pages outline such an approach.

## What is Mindfulness? The Raisin to the Reason

There is no generally agreed definition of mindfulness. But for a truly mindful exploration, this should be expected and not trouble us too much. There is no one mindfulness, just as there is no one type of bread or music, transport or flowers. Therefore, rather than viewing mindfulness as having an essential nature with singular meaning and unilateral significance, we can view it as an ambiguous and contested phenomenon. An understanding of mindfulness requires a

mindful appreciation of its fluid, impermanent and contextual nature, together with some guidelines on how to navigate this terrain.

Two of the main dimensions of contention within mindfulness debate are deeply rooted in Western reception to Buddhist ideas. These concern what mindfulness is ‘of’ and what mindfulness is ‘for’. The issues around ‘of’ and ‘for’ concern whether mindfulness is viewed as an individual or collective phenomenon and whether it is for instrumental or substantive purposes, with substantive purposes being both meaningful and considerable.

Mindfulness perspectives are more **individual** in character when they are directed towards immediate personal experience, emphasizing awareness and attention to the present moment, stress reduction, emotion regulation, overcoming habitual thought and behaviour etc. They have a more **collective** focus when addressing the minor importance of the individual self and the corresponding reality of interdependence, group mind, relational mindfulness and organizational support for cooperative and careful thought and action.

Mindfulness perspectives are characterized in **instrumental** terms to the degree they are focused on how individual performance and well-being might be improved through mindful thought and behaviour, and how organizational sustainability and success might be enhanced. Mindfulness has a more strongly **substantive** focus when the viewpoint is mindful consideration of and reflection on purpose, the value of transcending self-centred concerns of individuals and organizations and attending to the meaning of individual action and collective endeavours.

As outlined in the Fig. 2 these two dimensions give us four forms of mindfulness, which are not distinct, but have different core centres of gravity.

Once we adopt such a framework, it is clear there is more to mindfulness than has been emphasized in discussions

around the nature and impact of individualistic therapeutic, meditation-based organization programs. The latter are stereotyped, for example, by the classic Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) activity of ‘sucking a raisin’ and similar activities. In what follows, we will be directing attention towards broader characteristics **of**, and **reasons for**, mindfulness. This involves addressing the significance of the **collective** as well as **individual** meanings and purposes embedded within mindfulness and the **substantive** as well as **instrumental** purposes for which it is (and can be) used. If we were to offer an equally stereotyped counter-image, we require a move from the ‘raisin to the reason’.

## Mindfulness Defined

Clarity about what mindfulness is requires a broad perspective and a deep understanding of the ideas beneath the differing discussions about mindfulness. It requires a way to represent the core components while allowing nuanced application. To inform such an enterprise, established definitions of mindfulness at work that reflect recent influences, often offer definitions that are too individualistic in character or meditation-based in their focus. What we adopt here is a broader approach, one that draws not only on Eastern Buddhist understandings but also long-established as well as more recent Western views of mindfulness that underlie many recent explorations of leadership meta-skills and relational practices. With this intent in mind, we define mindfulness as:

“a quality or state of mind that attends to experience, avoiding or overcoming mindlessness by giving full and proper attention to presence, context and purpose.”

The core features of this general approach to mindfulness are described below.

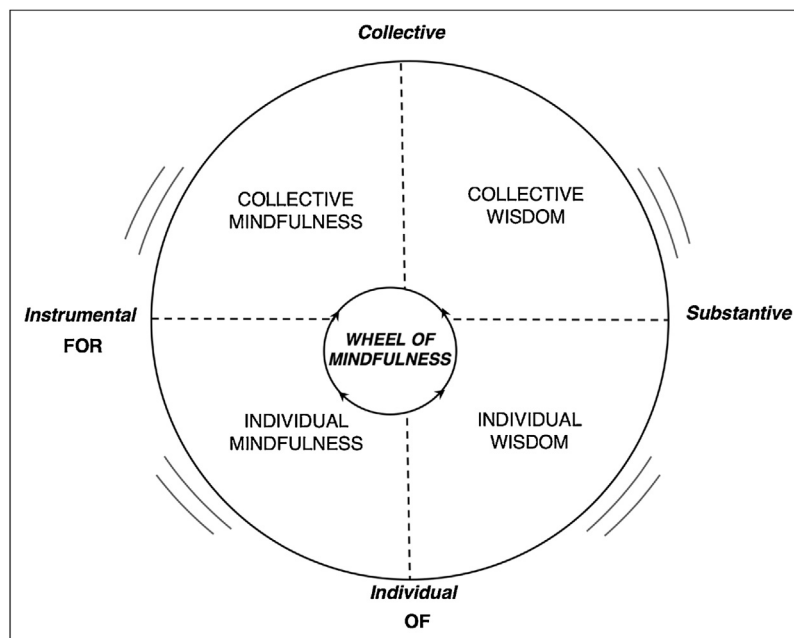


Figure 2 Mapping Mindfulness

## Inner Mindfulness Experience — The 3 A's

The *inner experience* of mindfulness is made up of the common assumptions about what it is to pay full and proper attention to experience.

The description of the core internal components of mindfulness as the three A's (awareness, attention, and acceptance) strives to be an inclusive, pragmatic approach to understanding the internal experience of mindfulness. It relates to clarity and breadth of *awareness*; metacognition and regulation of *attention*; and an attitude of *acceptance* that ranges from open and curious to compassionate and grateful. This captures the orientation towards experience of recent psychological definitions of mindfulness, established mainstream Buddhist views and mindful approaches towards experience emphasised by recent processual, practice-based, relational and embodied approaches to leadership.

## Outer Mindfulness Experience — The 3 I's

The *outer experience of mindfulness* concerns the nature of the experience to which we are paying full and proper attention and can be characterized as 3-I's of *incongruity*, *impermanence* and *identification*.

These assumptions refer to the inherently disjointed and unsatisfactory nature of our experiential existence (*incongruity*); the *impermanence* of ourselves and everything around us (all things shall pass); and a tendency to see the world in terms of our personal development and gratification, together with the importance of understanding the dynamics and limitations of this process (*identification* — clinging to and craving for self).

As we have argued elsewhere, these assumptions are crucial in capturing not only traditional Buddhist notions of the essential nature of experience, but traditional common sense and contemporary Western ideas of what it is to be 'mindful'; ideas that inform and guide the relevance of mindfulness for leadership studies. Many contemporary definitions of mindfulness restrict what is to be attended to as being that of the 'present moment'. What is crucial for a broad and inclusive definition of mindfulness, however, are the common underlying assumptions about the essential nature of experience that underpin the concern with the present moment but go beyond it. These reflect common sense rulings for individuals in general and leaders in particular to, for example, appreciate inherent ambiguity and paradox ('the best is the enemy of the good'), ongoing emergence, improvisation and change ('all things shall pass'), relationality and dialogue ('it's not all about you') and equanimity and poise ('take time out', 'smell the roses', and achieve or regain 'balance'). Additional reading on these ideas can be found in a paper describing the framework further by King and Badham, published in the journal *Mindfulness*.

## Forms of Workplace Mindfulness

Mindfulness at work as discussed above, has been defined, explored and promoted in multiple ways. While these are sometimes vague and often overlap, we can identify four distinctive tendencies.

The first two, individual and collective mindfulness, are centrally concerned with self-development and organizational development whereby mindfulness is regarded as of instrumental value in enhancing the performance and health of individuals and organizations. The second two, individual and collective wisdom, adopt a more substantive view of mindfulness, including within its definition the meaning of life and work for individuals and the purpose of collective enterprises.

As outlined earlier, most current mindful leadership programs fall within the individual mindfulness tendency of supporting individual leaders to become more mindful. They tend to emphasize mindfulness as an individual phenomenon, despite the current understandings of leadership as a relational process.

These programs tend to focus on instrumental issues of performance and well-being. While substantive ethical, political and social issues are sometimes incorporated, the focus of the mindfulness programs has tended to be more instrumental in character and are now sometimes referred to as 'first generation' programs. However, given the four forms that mindfulness may take in an organization as outlined above, it follows that there are four types of development programs which, collectively, can transform an organization's leadership by delivering the benefits listed in Fig. 3 in a form that can ultimately generate profit and purpose. These are programs to develop:

1. Individual Mindfulness: to enhance leaders' capacity for being aware of, attentive to and accepting of experience.
2. Individual Wisdom: to enhance leaders' reflexivity, relationality and compassion in adopting and pursuing individual and collective purposes.
3. Collective Mindfulness: to enhance the adaptability, reliability and resilience of organizational cultures and systems.
4. Collective Wisdom: to enhance consciously responsible, collaborative and sustainable forms of governance.

Details of these programs are discussed in the next two sections. Section "Leadership development" will describe a focus on individual development with either individual mindfulness or individual wisdom programs. Section "Organizational development" will describe organizational development with collective mindfulness or collective wisdom. The

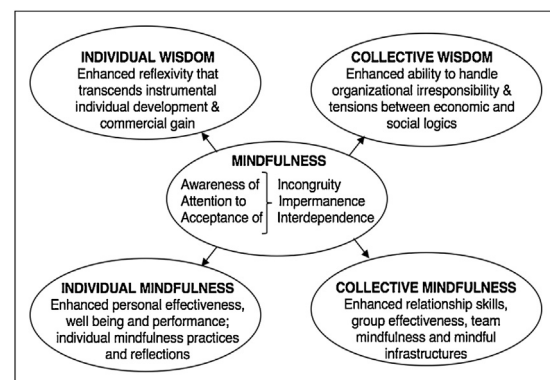


Figure 3 Mindfulness forms in the workplace

knowledge, capabilities, observable behaviours and potential outcomes of each of these overlapping forms of mindfulness are described later in Section “Mechanisms for developing mindful leadership”.

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

### Individual Mindfulness

It seems as if everyone is dealing with the stress of change, and while some of us are also experiencing the joy of uncertainty and engagement at work there are many who do not.

In a context of change and chaos in the corporate world, the benefits of mindfulness for the individual include a myriad of health and relationship outcomes associated with lowering the negative impact of stress and gaining control over the way we think and engage at work.

*Individual mindfulness* in the workplace is a means for improving individual performance, well-being and the relationships required for bringing these about.

Individual mindfulness involves directing ‘minds’ towards the nature and importance of awareness, attention and acceptance in how we experience ourselves, others and the world around us. The separate dimensions are significant, overlapping and interdependent, with awareness affected by attention, attention influenced by attitudes, and attention and attitudes influenced by what we are aware of. Understanding the distinctions is very helpful in demystifying mindfulness and using it as a pragmatic tool for modern work.

Individual mindfulness also involves going ‘outside’ or ‘beyond’ the mind, in attending to the body, feelings, emotions and overall understanding and acceptance of what experience involves. In Buddhist teaching the numerous points of focus for mindfulness practice are described variously as the four pastures, four fields, or four foundations, although they resonate with broader understandings of what experience involves. In these traditions the body is seen as the starting point for learning mindfulness as we generally find it easier to be aware of our body, than our mind, emotion or beliefs.

People practicing this form of mindfulness are expected to be rewarded with lower levels of stress than the circumstances might otherwise dictate. This alone will lead to greater performance at work, less absenteeism and presenteeism and greater engagement. In addition, the capacity to observe, reflect upon and manage their attention is expected to lead to individuals with greater task mastery, better decision making, reduced distraction, enhanced focus and greater creativity in situations of ambiguity, conflict and tension. An ability to be accepting of experience in an open, relaxed and creative manner is not only a key to attaining the above benefits but also to enhancing cooperative relationships by listening more intently, understanding others better and being caring and compassionate. Excellent further reading on this form of mindfulness at work includes recent books by Wibo Koole on *Mindful Leadership* and *Mind Time* by Megan Reitz and Michael Chaskalson.

### Individual Wisdom

Most of us have experienced leadership that was damaging and would have concerns about the behaviour of some of the

most influential people in our world today. Some scholars believe that most senior leadership positions in organizations are occupied with dark triad personalities (narcissists, Machiavellians, and psychopaths) because of these individuals’ commitment to gaining power and social dominance and their personal charisma which makes it possible.

However, in principle, opposite characteristics of openness, tolerance, collaboration and compassion are regularly claimed and documented as important ingredients for survival in VUCA environments. While there may be limits to how far one can go with relational and participative leadership, it is clear that moral integrity, displays of kindness, establishing dialogue and fostering collaboration can have positive effects on engagement, creativity and resilience. How can we understand and address this frustrating situation? Arguably, being under pressure with everything moving and with ambiguity and uncertainty increasing, knee-jerk reversion to negative, reactive, zero-sum or win/lose power tactics become the norm.

An embodied and contextual ability to reflect upon such reactions; question the purposes that we adopt, impose on others or have imposed on us; and collaboratively and compassionately search for solutions can help. The ability to be aware of, attentive to and accepting of such challenges is what we term *individual wisdom*.

Individual wisdom highlights our attention to mindful consideration of the purposes we set ourselves — it involves being caring and compassionate; working with oneself and others to craft out a meaningful sense of what our purposes are and should be; taking seriously and pursuing ethical commitments; supporting a constructive response to decision-making in a VUCA environment; engendering trust and collaboration; and enhancing sustainability at all levels.

While the pursuit of individual mindfulness does not exclude attending to purpose, the champions of individual wisdom highlight this further dimension through metacognitive reflection on aims and goals. This orientation includes the concerns of many Buddhist and process scholars about the limitations of individualistic self-centredness. However, it also captures the concerns of many of the critics of simplistic *McMindfulness* in their condemnation of mindless lack of attention to the social sources of toxicity in the modern workplace, and provides an alternative to the unsustainable, individualistic cravings generated by capitalism’s religion of consumerism.

In contrast to instrumental approaches to individual mindfulness, all proponents of individual wisdom highlight the significance of ‘remembrance’ — of spiritual, moral or humanitarian ideals and social and political purposes. The embeddedness of such concerns in mindfulness programs extend from simple forms of kindness meditation to broader social and political ‘Mindfulness Plus’ programs which link mindfulness with other practices to develop an understanding of disadvantaged groups or to advance the agenda of social movements.

In this way, the individual wisdom approach to mindfulness promotes the development of a form of wisdom based on a deeper awareness of, attention to, and acceptance of, moral issues and the essential nature of existence, grounded in an understanding of the importance of reducing our own sense of self-importance. In doing so, this form of mindfulness supports a world view that recognizes multiple per-



spectives, interdependence, systemic complexity and emergence. It therefore prepares leaders and their organizations to face disruption and the elements of a VUCA environment.

Excellent further reading on this form of mindfulness at work includes overview books and papers by such authors as William van Gordon and his colleagues in 2015 and Ron Purser, David Forbes and Adam Burke in their 2016 *Handbook of Mindfulness*.

## ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Collective Mindfulness

Organizational accidents can be catastrophic. Events that occur within complex corporations from industries such as aviation, nuclear power plants, banks, oil companies and others can create devastating levels of damage on uninvolved populations, assets and the environment. They are difficult to understand, control, predict or foresee and their impact on a business or corporation can be permanent. Recent examples of such events are listed below.

- The Beaconsfield mine collapse in Tasmania in 2006.
- The 2010 Deepwater Horizon rig explosion in the Gulf of Mexico, killing 11 and causing millions of barrels of crude oil to spill into the ocean.
- The 2011 naval explosion in Cyprus when containers of gunpowder exploded, killing 13, injuring 62 and putting the power station out of action for days.
- The horrific Sava building collapse in Bangladesh in 2013 which killed 1129 people.
- The disappearance of Malaysian Airlines Flight 370 in March 2014, killing 227 people.

Equally disastrous for organizational survival is the inability to operate effectively in increasingly turbulent and high-velocity market environments. Being able to anticipate and respond to disruptive technologies and trends has become an almost routine source of anxiety and concern in modern organisations.

Collective mindfulness is relevant in such contexts as it is about the ability of groups and organizations to notice 'weak signals' of such pending crises and have the motivation and capacity to respond to what they notice. Noticing events early on is a path to reducing the likelihood of the disastrous incidents and dramatic collapses outlined above by minimizing human error or predicting potential problems so they can be moderated or limited.

In contrast to individual mindfulness, collective mindfulness implies a state of collective (rather than individual) mind, and relational (rather than individual) leadership. When such collective mindfulness is absent, people may still have individual mindful capabilities. However, such capabilities are not fostered, promoted by, or focused on day to day relations with others and the patterns of interaction that influence such relationships. Generating a careful collective mind is a two-way street as people can not be careful unless they take account of others and unless others do the same. Being careful is, in this sense, a social rather than an individual act, and occurs at the organizational, interpersonal and group levels.

*Organizational mindfulness* is a form of collective mindfulness that is characterized by a productive, safety-enhancing vigilant wariness. It incorporates principles of *anticipation* ('preoccupation with failure', 'reluctance to simplify', and 'sensitivity to operations') and principles of *containment* ('commitment to resilience', 'deference to expertise').

*Relational mindfulness* is another form of collective mindfulness. It expresses leadership as a relationship that is embedded in daily events and facilitates mindful group dynamics. Relational mindfulness includes being sensible of, and sensitively responding to, others and relations with them; recognizing established and changing mindsets and handling the emotions and interpersonal dynamics that surround their transformation; appreciating and enhancing social dialogue through crucial and fierce conversations.

As an extension of mindfulness into the collective arena, collective mindfulness remains primarily instrumental, directed to enhancing performance, well-being, organizational health, effectiveness and sustainability. Through it, little attention is paid to the nature of the substantive goals being pursued or the wisdom involved in their selection.

Like individual mindfulness, collective mindfulness involves awareness, attention to and acceptance of the fact that things go awry, that impermanence is the norm and that fixed ideas and rigid commitments to our 'selves' can be counter-productive. It does so, however, by emphasizing the significance of such phenomena at the collective level. It highlights the degree to which we are all involved in relationships with others. In the abstract, these ideas may seem obvious to many managers. However, behaving in a way that is consistent with this understanding will elude most of us without a pro-active approach to sustaining this form of attention.

The benefits of collective mindfulness include greater reliability in addressing issues of technical safety and market survival, as well as the resilience of leaders, groups and organizations in achieving these outcomes. Excellent further reading on this form of mindfulness is found in the series of books by Weick and Sutcliffe and the review by Sutcliffe et al.

### Collective Wisdom

Communities, societies and shareholders are losing faith in, and respect for, organizations and their leadership. Evidence of growing inequality, unethical behaviour and organizational irresponsibility threatens to undermine both the legitimacy of modern organizations and our long-term survival.

One response to this situation has been appeals for a more 'long term' and 'conscious capitalism', and the development of what has been termed 'benefit organizations' or 'B Corps', which pursue social and environmental goals as well as shareholder wealth. These corporations are aligned to calls for new models of corporate governance that address the purported damage of time poverty and short-term focus. One strong example is the position taken by BlackRock, the world's largest asset management company. BlackRock's CEO, Larry Fink, in his 2018 letter to shareholders, espoused 'a sense of purpose' driven by the understanding that 'to prosper over time, every company must not only deliver financial performance but also show how it makes a positive

contribution to society'. The sentiments of BlackRock are echoed by consultants, directors and board experts seeking to create enduring organizations that are effective in addressing the future challenges of our modern world.

*Collective wisdom* extends the giving of full and proper attention to purpose to such considerations, alongside the development of the economic, social and political conditions necessary to make them a reality. In this way, mindfulness is directed in a systematic, disciplined and ongoing manner onto considerations of *collective purpose*.

Some proponents of mindful leadership have focused attention on ideas of conscious capitalism, system leadership and the attainment of a new level of consciousness within deliberately developmental organizations. Laloux, for example, elaborates on principles in organizations such as Patagonia and Sun Hydraulics which have been based on self-management, wholeness and evolutionary purpose.

Four common and key elements of the recommended new forms of organizations are:

- a sense of *higher purpose* (meaningful contribution, supportive mission and vision);
- *stakeholder integration* (customers, employees, investors, suppliers and dealers, communities, environment);
- *conscious leadership* (social intelligence, values-driven 'servant leadership', integrity, compassion); and
- a *conscious culture* (meaningful purpose, care for multiple stakeholders).

What all such ideas have in common is the suggestion that a new type of organization is required, embedded in a global socio-economic and ecological system that unites the pursuit of economic interests and social values in a responsible and purposeful manner. For many adherents, such a system can be created within the confines of consumer capitalism, by shifting mindsets, leadership orientations and governance structures within it. For others, however, a deep-seated transformation is required, involving a more radical departure from the ideologies, practices and structures of neo-liberal capitalism.

While proponents of collective wisdom differ strongly in their political philosophies and strategic recommendations, they are drawn together in common recognition of the central significance of mindfully addressing our collective purposes in complex global systems. While the values underlying this enterprise derive from several sources, they are informed by and ally with both classic liberal-democratic principles as well as principles of 'Buddhist economics'. A societal extension of this framework has, for example, been made through the Gross National Happiness Index (GNH) used to govern Bhutan. This framework includes nine domains to focus the political administration: good governance, living standards, community vitality, education, time use, psychological wellbeing, cultural resilience, health, and environment.

Leaders, organizations, social movements and networks of organizations adopting the focus and embodying the capabilities and orientations of collective wisdom dedicate a significant level of resources to ensuring corporate social responsibility (CSR), embedding principles and procedures for their attainment, and creating the types of governance

and forms of legal and governmental regulation and political mobilization necessary to support CSR in a sustainable fashion. Further reading on this form of mindfulness at work includes books by authors such as Otto Scharmer and Fredrick Laloux, and the handbook of mindfulness by Ron Purser and his colleagues.

## MECHANISMS FOR DEVELOPING MINDFUL LEADERSHIP

### Workplace Mindfulness Interventions

Mindfulness education programs are constantly evolving in response to specific demands and situations.

In recent years, the most widespread programs, outside and inside the workplace, have been individual and instrumental in nature, deriving from the promotion and use of mindfulness in medical and therapeutic contexts. This initially involved an eight-week program, using group-based therapies to teach mindfulness skills through a range of formal and informal mindfulness-based practices, traditionally focused on the use of meditation-based techniques for improving wellbeing. Further adaptation has led to increased cognitive and regulatory skills to support greater focus, attention, emotional intelligence, creativity and performance inside and outside the workplace. Exemplary workplace programs have been the Google 'Search Inside Yourself', the Institute for Mindful Leadership Program (US) and the 'Mindfulness in 8 Weeks' program (UK). These programs have been based on adaptation of a core curriculum, a 'weaving' process elaborated in greater depth in the 2017 review paper by Rebecca Crane and her colleagues on 'the warp and the weft' of MBSR based programs.

In workplace programs, such MBSR based 'first generation' individual mindfulness initiatives have been supplemented by a wide range of 'second generation' programs that focus more on substantive ethical issues and complex leadership qualities. These include programs that more strongly integrate compassion-based Buddhist ethics, as well as leadership meta-skills for operating effectively in uncertain and complex environments. Beyond the workplace, individual, wisdom-based programs that challenge inequalities of power and sources of repression have been developed and delivered in higher education, schools, prisons and community youth and justice work environments, as well as social movements with such initiatives as Occupy Wall Street.

Research and initiatives focused on organizational development have opened areas for intervention. They have established collectively mindful structures and cultures; relational leadership and mindful group dynamics; and mindful and purposeful governance structures that incorporate principles of system leadership, ethical and social responsibility and socio-ecological sustainability.

Promoters of collective mindfulness and collective wisdom have espoused examples of organisations they consider fulfil such requirements. Yet the promotion of such achievements exceeds detailed documentation of associated development programs or interventions which are logically designed to create such outcomes.

**Table 1** Mindful Leadership Development Matrix

	Knowledge Knowing that	Capabilities Knowing how	Observable behaviour	Performance outcomes
Individual mindfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Incongruity</i> There is an inevitable gap between our aspirations and achievements, and between our experiences and how we interpret them. A lack of recognition and consequent reflex reactions are an unnecessary and counter-productive source of suffering, pain and stress</li> <li>• <i>Impermanence</i> A constant state of flux and change exists in ourselves (thoughts, feelings, sensations, existence), as well as in others, the world around us and our relationships with them.</li> <li>• <i>Identification</i> We are often trapped within and seek to satisfy and sustain an illusory 'self', however we can be reflective and make choices about the limitations of these ideas and our self-narratives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Awareness</i> . . . of the incongruous and impermanent nature of our experience and identifications, . . . of the difference between experience and phenomena and our thoughts about the same.</li> <li>• <i>Attention</i> . . . to notice the changing mental, physical and emotional states in ourselves and others, and having the capacity to choose what and how to attend to them. . . . to direct attention in a disciplined manner towards the challenges of incongruity, impermanence and identification.</li> <li>• <i>Acceptance</i> . . . by adopting an open, curious &amp; compassionate attitude towards our experiences, our thoughts, and our perspectives on and judgements about others.</li> </ul>	<p>Demonstrated awareness of self, others, and complex environments</p> <p>Demonstrated regulation of attention and double loop reflective metacognition</p> <p>Demonstrated calm and compassionate responses to stress and in attending to relationships.</p>	<p>e.g. low levels of reactivity and negativity</p> <p>e.g. sustainable capacity to select, maintain and switch attention</p> <p>e.g. cooperative social relationships</p>
Individual wisdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Incongruity</i> We subordinate ourselves and others to self-imposed purpose, and maintain illusions of control about achieving such an end.</li> <li>• <i>Impermanence</i> We are influenced by differing, changing, historical and temporal constructions of who we are and should be, the degree of control we have, the projects we should undertake and the ideals we should pursue.</li> <li>• <i>Identification</i> We have illusory and exaggerated senses of an idealised self to which we subordinate ourselves. We are influenced by our self-narrative and the self-centred ideals fostered by commercial and individualistic ideologies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Awareness</i> . . . of subordination to transient, self-imposed, and commercialized forms of self-centredness and control.</li> <li>• <i>Attention</i> . . . regulation and disciplined meta-cognition of such forms of subordination, as they are manifested in ourselves, others and the relationships we establish.</li> <li>• <i>Acceptance</i> . . . through open, curious and caring attendance to such self imposes traps and their transcendence through reflection, relational dialogue and compassion.</li> </ul>	<p>Demonstrated meta-skills of self and other awareness in defining and negotiating individual and relational purpose.</p> <p>Demonstrated meta-abilities in self-regulating behavior based on such awareness</p> <p>Demonstrated meta-qualities in open, curious, and compassionate responses to challenges</p>	<p>e.g. high level of commitment and goal alignment</p> <p>e.g. rapid and positive response to strategic redirection</p> <p>e.g. high levels of engagement with teams and followers during challenge</p>

Table 1 (Continued)

	Knowledge Knowing that	Capabilities Knowing how	Observable behaviour	Performance outcomes
Collective mindfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Incongruity</i> There are risks of disaster and threats to survival due to misunderstandings and traps resulting from rigid and divergent views of: environmental/institutional realities and requirements; shifting group tasks; and varying individual contributions and responsibilities.</li> <li>• <i>Impermanence</i> There is an irreducible degree of change and uncertainty created by complex situational contingencies and unpredictable developments in all collective (group, relational and institutional) endeavours.</li> <li>• <i>Identification</i> We are routinely blinkered and trapped by habituated and institutionalized judgements, embedded in rigid and unreflective forms of group think and collective mindlessness about the goals we pursue and the means for their attainment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Awareness</i> . . . of the emergent and situated nature of collective action and risks of partial and habituated viewpoints in adapting effectively to changing circumstances.</li> <li>• <i>Attention</i> . . . regulation and metacognition in interaction, by groups and broader collectivities towards such experiences</li> <li>• <i>Acceptance</i> . . . through open, curious, and compassionate attendance to the experimental and risky nature of all interactive, relational, group and institutional endeavours.</li> </ul>	<p>Established mindful infrastructures</p> <p>Demonstrated mindful organizing values, behaviors and practices</p> <p>Demonstrated openness to and understanding of the challenges of group endeavours</p>	<p>e.g. low levels of accidents</p> <p>e.g. high levels of goal attainment in collective projects</p> <p>e.g. effective group dynamics and a low fear environment.</p>
Collective wisdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Incongruity</i> There are inherent uncertainties, ambiguities and contradictions between goals and means for their attainment, and contradictions between, narrow institutional interests, economic imperatives and, broader social/ecological concerns and objectives.</li> <li>• <i>Impermanence</i> Complex institutional, inter-institutional and global environments are characterized by inherent instabilities, uncertainties and threats to sustainability.</li> <li>• <i>Identification</i> There are ongoing, inherent and shifting conflicts and contradictions between narrow organizational identities and strategies and, broader global concerns, survival and progress.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Awareness</i> . . . of mechanisms that prevent institutions being responsible for harm and inherent contradictions between economic and social/sustainability concerns</li> <li>• <i>Attention</i> . . . regulation and disciplined metacognition by the collectivity towards the above contradictions</li> <li>• <i>Acceptance</i> . . . through openness, curiosity, and caring towards the transcendence of such tensions, within collective forms of relational reflection and compassionate dialogue in complex purposive and global systems</li> </ul>	<p>Established routines, practices, and structures attending to such concerns</p> <p>Institutionalized cultural values and power structures that acknowledge and experiment with such tensions</p> <p>Demonstrated institutional reflection on mechanism that prevent organizations being held responsible and socioeconomic contradictions</p>	<p>e.g. level of resourcing and scope of corporate social responsibility</p> <p>e.g. responsible operational outcomes achieved by following principles and procedures</p> <p>e.g., application of ongoing enquiry into principles and responsible values when reacting to critical tests</p>

What such programs or intervention engender is a wide spectrum of mindfulness knowledge and capabilities for leaders, groups and organizations if they are to be effective and thrive in uncertain and complex environments.

### Mindful Leadership Development Matrix

In order to advance the range and depth of such interventions, it is helpful to have a framework to guide the design of tailored programs that translate the generic core competencies of mindful leaders, groups and organizations into practical programs for their achievement. The Mindful Leadership Development Matrix (see below) has been designed to guide such interventions.

As indicated in the Matrix, one feature of mindfulness programs is about “**knowing that**” which encompasses knowledge about the nature of individual and organizational experience. Another feature is about “**knowing how**”, or what it is to mindfully appreciate experience which involves capabilities of awareness, attention and acceptance.

To design tailored programs that meet the goals of different forms of mindfulness and can be integrated into unique organizational contexts and, even more importantly, can be measured, it is necessary to describe observable behaviours and outcomes that relate to the various forms of workplace mindfulness (as outlined in the Matrix) (Table 1).

Individual mindfulness programs are primarily about developing leaders who have a careful and reflective appreciation of the present moment experiences they confront. They need to establish an understanding of the fact that ‘we are not our thoughts’, facilitating disciplined attention and creating a state of mental and physical relaxation that, in turn, enables attention to experiences. The purpose is to enhance the depth and breadth of what people notice from a resilient position of poise and balance. This will make them more capable of noticing, attending to and enjoying their personal experiences and interactions with others.

Individual wisdom programs extend the skills of individual mindfulness into deeper and more reflective consideration of the incongruities, impermanence and identifications that characterize our experience. Greater attention is given to reflective consideration of the purposes we set ourselves as individuals and leaders and in our relationships with others. The form this takes varies.

In collective mindfulness programs, the focus is on developing leadership knowledge and capabilities to overcome collective *mindlessness*. Such programs would aim to enable groups to work effectively with and lead others to notice and respond to weak signals that ‘things may be other than they seem’. To do so means attending to and overcoming habituated and entrenched differences in viewpoints and prejudices, systematically reflecting upon and attending to the need to change goals, strategies and directions within the pressures of group dynamics, institutional practices and relational issues.

Collective wisdom programs extend group development from collective mindfulness towards an orientation with how leaders address the strategic goals and purposes pursued in working with others. The focus is on further developing knowledge and capabilities around the nature, sources

and consequences of organizational irresponsibility, and on fostering values, establishing practices and institutionalizing forms of governance that support greater dialogue, diversity, tolerance, compassion and responsibility in integrating narrow economic and broader socio-ecological concerns.

### CONCLUSION

No one program can provide the range of knowledge and generate all the capabilities outlined above. In addition, there are practical, pragmatic and even political reasons why instrumental individual mindfulness programs have proliferated, conducted under the restricted (yet still important) rubric of increasing wellbeing and, more recently, enhancing focus and disciplining attention in a time-poor and rapidly evolving attention economy. Leaders and organisations are increasingly time-poor while direct performance outcomes of programs aiming to develop higher level leadership capabilities are challenging to create and difficult to measure. In this context, it is far easier to justify and address understandable and immediate health issues and provide pragmatic cognitive tools and mental capabilities.

Such a restricted approach is, however, part of the problem rather than the solution. If we are to effectively develop leaders capable of operating effectively, sustainably and responsibly in increasingly complex and uncertain environments, then a broad and comprehensive approach to mindfulness is essential. Under the banner of purportedly narrower programs, many advocates and practitioners of individual mindfulness programs recognize this to be the case and incorporate broader elements. Broader metacognitive and embodied reflection, noticing and attending to relationships, questioning of identity, self and career, and attending to broader and more strategic questions of corporate ethics, compassion, sustainability and responsibility are often, at least, touched on. More is required, however, if mindfulness is to contribute to developing effective leaders and avoid being relegated into the category of meditation-based wellbeing and simple cognitive skills programs. The purpose of this paper has been to help address and legitimate such an extension by pointing to research and programs that support it.

Mindfulness, in all the forms that we have identified and explored, is not a contemporary preoccupation. It draws strongly on ancient Western as well as Eastern injunctions to ‘know thyself’, to be aware that ‘all things shall pass’, to be skeptical about the ‘false idols’ that our culture and institutions often pursue, and to attend to others and go beyond self-preoccupation in crafting a meaningful and sustainable life. A deep mindfulness provides a pragmatic, research-based and increasingly popular set of methods and programs for addressing such issues in conditions of uncertainty and complexity.

Some practical implications for organizations seeking to introduce mindfulness interventions that develop leaders in this way include:

- Resourcing broad mindfulness initiatives that expand the focus from individual and instrumental to include collective and substantive forms of mindfulness.

- Rigorously evaluating mindfulness initiatives to ensure that we are capturing the depth of development.
- Engaging in academic/practitioner collaboration and field research on the subject.

If scholars can work with leaders whilst themselves using mindfulness to enhance their mutual understanding, we can build innovative solutions to current problems which can transform our society and organizations for the better. A

deep understanding and approach to mindful leadership research and practice provides a popular, practical and unprecedented opportunity to realise such aspirations.

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