



# THE MINDFUL LEADERSHIP GUIDE

What is *Your* Action Plan?

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Command Your **Mindset**

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# Action Plan

"Information without action will not lead to change..."

— JANNELL MACAULAY, PHD

## Personal Focus Areas:

- 1. Mindfulness.** Start your own mindful journey to lean into the moment and quiet your mind. Practice mindfulness for yourself. It takes tremendous discipline and you have to do the work to get the reward.  
**GOAL: Practice mindfulness 10-12 minutes per day.**
- 2. The Art of Self-Reflection.** Spend some time in thoughtful self-reflection. Do not fear solitude, allow it to help you create mental space to explore who you are and what principles guide you.  
**GOAL: Reflect on your guiding principles. Live them every day.**
- 3. Be a Mindful Leader.** When you find the power of organizing your inner life by training your mind to be more present, share it. Demonstrate calming techniques, then use connection and trust to develop an open culture that is bold, brave, and safe.  
**GOAL: Lead by example. Set time on your calendar for self-reflection or start meetings with a Mindful Minute.**

### 4. BONUS: Put on your oxygen mask.

Are you eating right? Sleeping enough? Exercising your body regularly?  
Can you optimize your stress levels? Are you connecting socially with others?

**GOAL: Commit to take care of yourself in at least one way EVERY DAY.**

## How to Lead a Mindful Minute:

- "Good morning! Let's start with our Mindful Minute to focus our attention before we begin our meeting.  
**Ready? And.... go..."**
- Time yourself for 1 minute of breathing. It takes me 6 deep breaths to get to 1-minute.
- As soon as I exhale the 6th breath I say, "Alright... now that I have everyone's attention! Let's begin."
- NOTE:** *You can offer this with eyes open or closed, whatever is most comfortable for each individual. As the leader, resist the urge to look around, and create subsequent stories in your mind about what everyone else is thinking. This is not productive. Focus on your intent for doing this practice – increased focus, decreased distraction, and shortened meeting times!*

## Organizational Focus Areas:

- 1. Commit to being a Mindful Leader for your Organization.** *(see steps 1 - 4 on previous page)* You need to lead from an authentic place and start a personal journey with mindfulness. While working with various organizations, I've found the most effective leaders transform their cultures by exemplifying and modeling mindful behaviors. This includes compassion, active listening, gratitude, facilitating a culture of "failing forward" and building trust. Start a mindfulness practice. Find space in your day for constructive self-reflection and taking deep breaths. I suggest adding this time to your calendar rather than putting it on your to-do list. Schedule it into your day and create a habit around it. If your calendar event is overcome by other events, practice self-forgiveness, let it go, move on, and try again tomorrow.

**SUGGESTIONS:** *No-email Friday, writing personal notes, being an active listener, etc.*

- 2. Create Mindful Opportunities for your Team.** You need to create space to cultivate the skill of mindfulness within your team. Start your morning meeting with a Mindful Minute. Allow space for your team members to reflect or be mindful within their workday. Resist the urge to create a storm when a high-priority task comes down from headquarters. Maybe bring the team together for a deep breath before solving the next big issue. Facilitate a culture of connection and calm.

**SUGGESTIONS:** *Mindful Minutes, book clubs, and human performance initiatives that include sleeping well, eating well, physical activity, and optimizing stress levels.*

### How to Introduce Mindfulness to your Organization:

- 1. Build Awareness.** *Educate individuals on their physiological stress response, building awareness around the body sensations we feel in stressful environments.*
- 2. Introduce the concept called, "Go to the Cloud."** *When we feel the physiological sensations, teach individuals to step back, take 2 deep breaths, and respond rationally rather than emotionally to the stimulus.*

- 3. Digital Detox.** I realize the importance of staying connected, but try to build in opportunities for a digital detox. Set healthy limits with your digital devices for yourself and for those you lead. Creativity requires a bit of boredom - to stimulate free flow and association of ideas - to help us recontextualize reality. This is most effective by carving out space for our minds to do nothing. Instead of being anxious or antsy with stillness, you can train your mind to be comfortable in the space and then bear witness to the creative possibilities that will flow. A recent study revealed that we lose 20% of our attention, just by having our cell phones on or near us when in a meeting or while in a discussion with someone. **SUGGESTIONS:** *No cell phones in meetings, set healthy boundaries on connectivity, and empower team members with decision-making.*

### 4. BONUS: End of Day Reflection.

At the end of the day ask yourself and your team two questions:

1. What did we do well?
2. Where can we improve?

# Immediate Steps in a High-Pressure Situation:

## 1. STOP.

Remind yourself that you've done the work ahead of time: Mental push-ups/Mindfulness/Self-Reflection

## 2. BREATHE.

Take 2-5 deep breaths. Ensure you are thinking rationally and clearly with a quiet mind in that particular moment.

**TIP:** *If your team can observe you taking deep breaths, research shows that teams will mimic these behaviors.*

## 3. RE-FOCUS.

From a relaxed mental state we move toward:

**A. Mental Imagery** - do you have a vision for what you want to accomplish?

**B. Alignment with self** - do you know how you will show up and be you in this moment?

\* *The more you exercise this on a regular basis, the quicker you find your way to your high-performance space.  
The quicker your team can do this under pressure the greater the competitive advantage.*

## Recommendations

### Podcasts:

- 10% Happier with Dan Harris
- Finding Mastery with Michael Gervais
- Behind the Shield with James Geering
- Food Heals with Allison Melody
- Unlocking Us with Brené Brown

### Websites:

- Center for Mindfulness: <http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/>
- Free Mindfulness course: <http://palousemindfulness.com>
- The Jha Lab (Research): <http://www.amishi.com/lab/publications>
- Mindfulness: [www.mindful.org](http://www.mindful.org)

### Books:

- *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl
- *The Art of Learning*, Josh Waitzkin
- *The Tao of Pooh*, Benjamin Hoff
- *Where Ever You Go There You are*, Jon Kabat Zinn
- *10% Happier*, Dan Harris

### Applications:

- Headspace
- Calm
- 10% Happier
- Nature (*not an app, just go outside!*)

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