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# Introduction to Mindfulness-Based Leadership: Leading With Intention, Awareness and Values in a Complex World

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# Program Overview

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- The Leadership Landscape in 2019
- Mindfulness: Science, Benefits and Practice
- Mindfulness-Based Leadership
- Moving from Stress Reactivity to Response Flexibility
- Mindful Communication
- Integrating Mindfulness into Life and Leadership

# Leadership Landscape 2019

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- Increased competition, change, and complexity have put additional stress on leaders
- Under stress, leaders can be unresponsive, unfocused, lack empathy, be controlling, and de-prioritize self-care
- The leadership discussion is moving beyond the myth of a fixed list of leadership “qualities”, to core leadership capacities that can help leaders adapt to different contexts and personalities, manage stress, and lead with intention and awareness



# Leadership Landscape 2019

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- As leaders, what we can control are our **choices** – are we reinforcing unhealthy or unproductive habits, OR are we making choices that move us, our people, and our organizations in the direction of our highest aspirations (results + values)
- Mindfulness is a core capacity that can support making these kinds of choices amidst the stress and pressure of leadership
- This isn't about adapting to a broken system: this is about capacity building for embodying and leading change
- What outside forces are putting pressure on your leadership? (i.e. bureaucracy, funding uncertainty, political polarization, etc.)



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# Mindfulness: The Power of Enhanced Awareness



# Mindfulness Can Literally Change Your Brain

January 8, 2015

*“Mindfulness should no longer be considered a “nice-to-have” for executives. It’s a “must-have”: a way to keep our brains healthy, to support self-regulation and effective decision-making capabilities, and to protect ourselves from toxic stress.”*

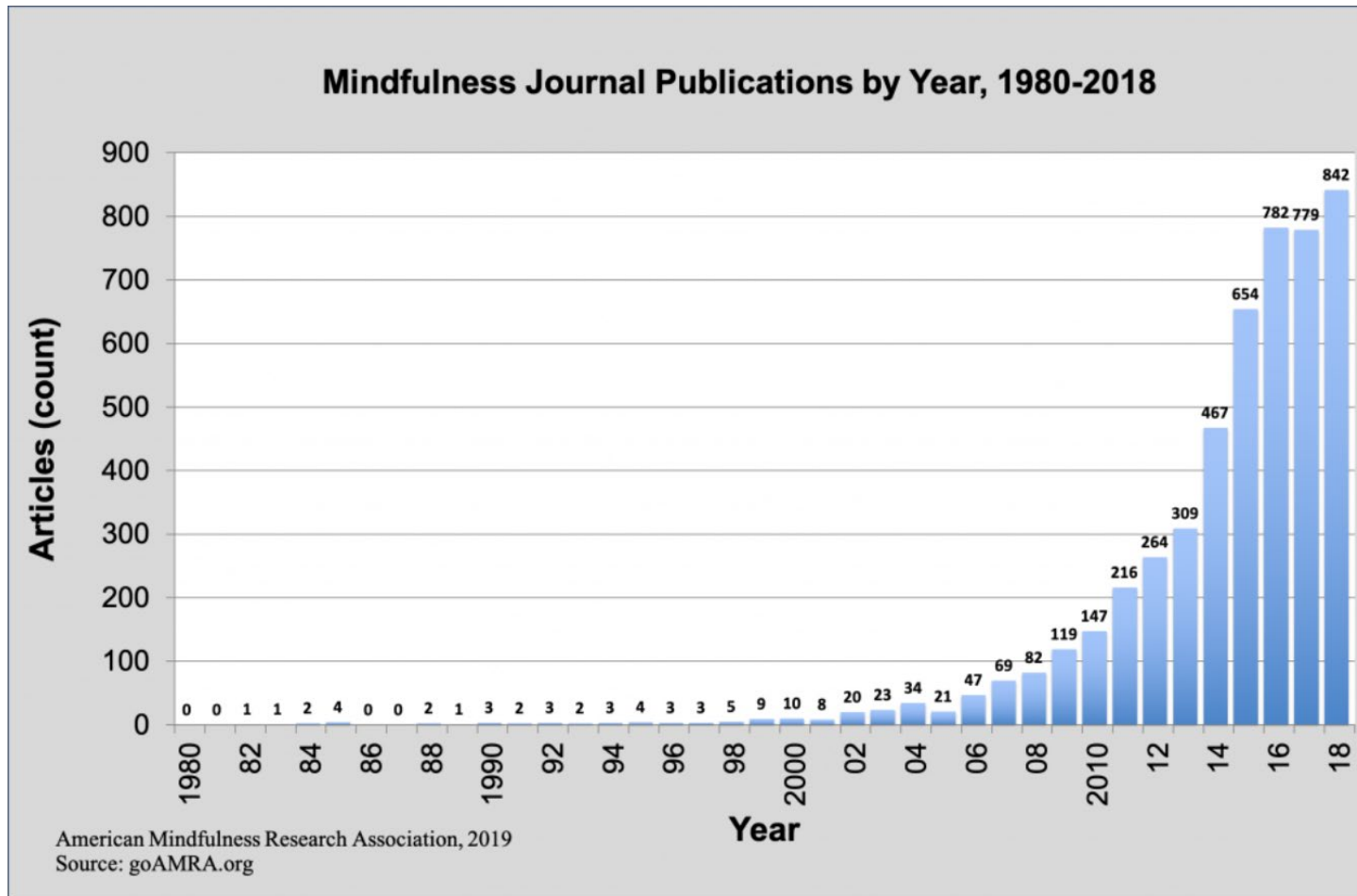
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*Mindfulness can enhance a host of competencies related to effectiveness, including increased focus and concentration, working memory, critical cognitive skills, reduced burnout, and ethical and rational decision-making.*

*2018 Report of the National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being*

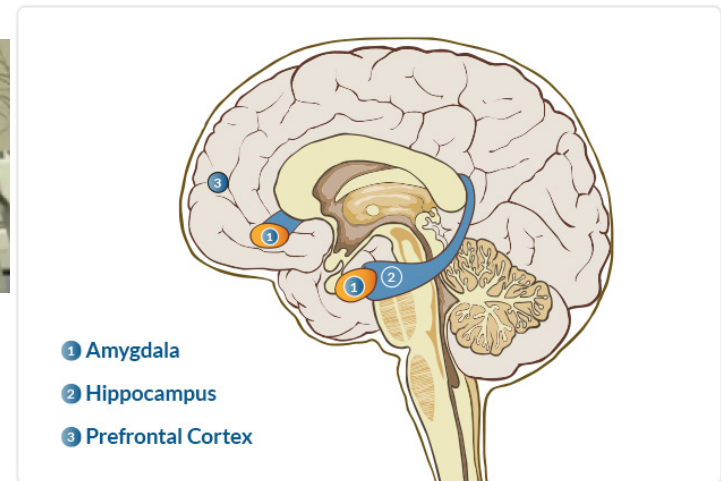
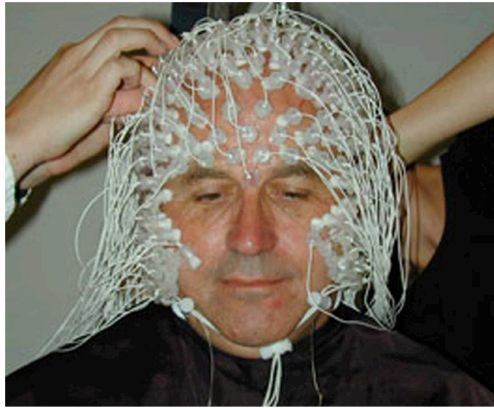


# Growth in Mindfulness Research Publications – Over 4,900





# The Neuroscience of Mindfulness



Mindfulness creates functional and structural changes to network areas of the brain involved with:

- Attention regulation
- Emotional regulation
- Sense of self
- Interoception (body awareness)



# Applying Mindfulness in the Workplace

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- Stress reduction, well-being and resilience
- Improving focus, cognitive skills and innovation
- Preventing errors and unintentional ethical violations
- Reducing unconscious bias and protecting individuals from its harmful impact
- Mindful listening and speaking
- Mindful meeting practices
- Leadership presence and effectiveness



# Mindfulness Is

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- Being aware of what's happening as it's happening
- An innate capacity for coping and thriving
- A purposeful, clear and available quality of attention
- A radically different way of relating to whatever arises



# Mindfulness Is Not

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- Trying to relax
- Going slow, being passive or being any particular way
- Stopping thoughts



# Mindfulness Is Cultivated by

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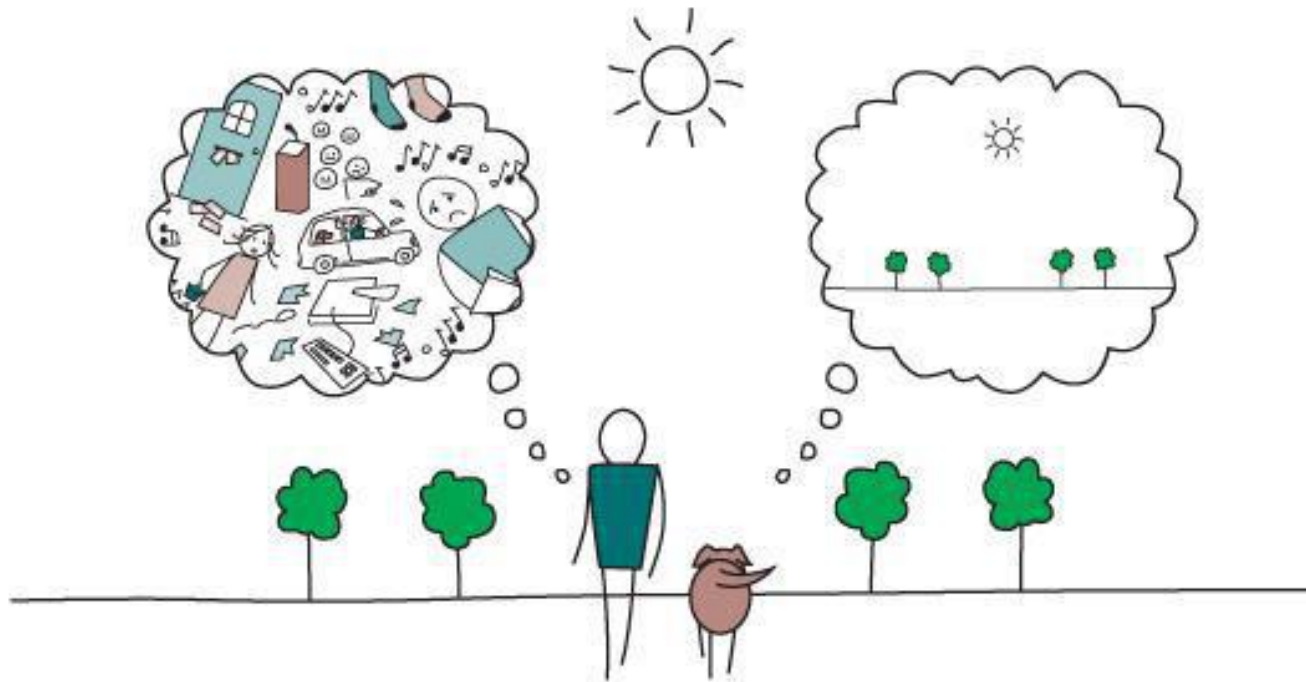
**Paying attention in a particular way:**

**On purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally**



# 47% of waking hours are spent thinking about something other than what is going on

Killingsworth and Gilbert, Harvard University



Mind Full, or Mindful?

# We Live in an Age of Continuous Partial Attention

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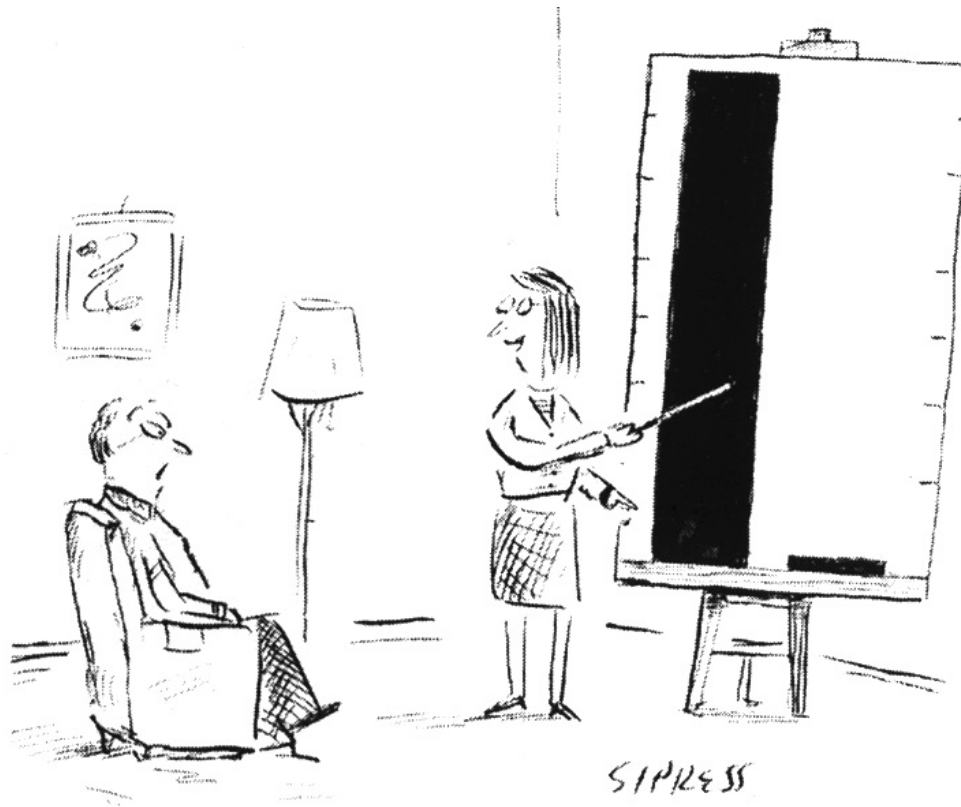
The average worker:

- Checks Facebook 21 times a day
- Checks email 74 times a day
- Shifts computer screens an average of 566 times a day (i.e., switch from document to email to website)
- Distracts and interrupts themselves almost as much as they are getting externally interrupted.

*Study of employees of high-tech companies from Dept. of Informatics at U.Cal*

**There is a high cost to multi-tasking and interrupted work: forgetfulness, redundancy, increased mistakes, longer completion time, increased frustration and stress, harmful changes in the brain relating to multi-tasking, lost opportunities for creative and innovative ideas.**





*This is everything you've ever worried about.  
That's everything you've ever worried about that actually happened.*







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# MINDFULNESS PRACTICE



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# Mindfulness-Based Leadership

## Leading with Intention, Values, and Awareness

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- We must get clear about our highest aspirations as leaders, and who we want to be in the midst of the messiness and busyness of work
- Mindfulness builds the emotional intelligence muscles to be aware of when we are out of alignment, and to re-orient to intentions
- The non-judgmental quality of mindful awareness allows us to meet ourselves and others with compassion and curiosity
- Mindfulness-based skills help create the space for leaders to discern “what’s called for now” in a given moment, and respond as skillfully as possible, and in alignment with intentions and values
- Leaders must be able to stand in the tension of not knowing and Stop, See, Understand, and Choose



# With Mindfulness, we can optimize our capacity to:

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- **Stop** habitual, autopilot-driven, reactive modes of activity
- **See** ourselves, others and information more clearly
- **Understand** situations more fully
- **Choose** effective, contextually relevant solutions.



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# Reacting vs. Responding To Stress and Challenge



# Automaticity v. Making REAL Choices

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Mindfulness allows leaders to engage with the nuances of the present moment rather than operating on autopilot, driven by how it's always been or you want it to be, lost in thoughts or worry or repeating old and often unhelpful habits of thought or behavior





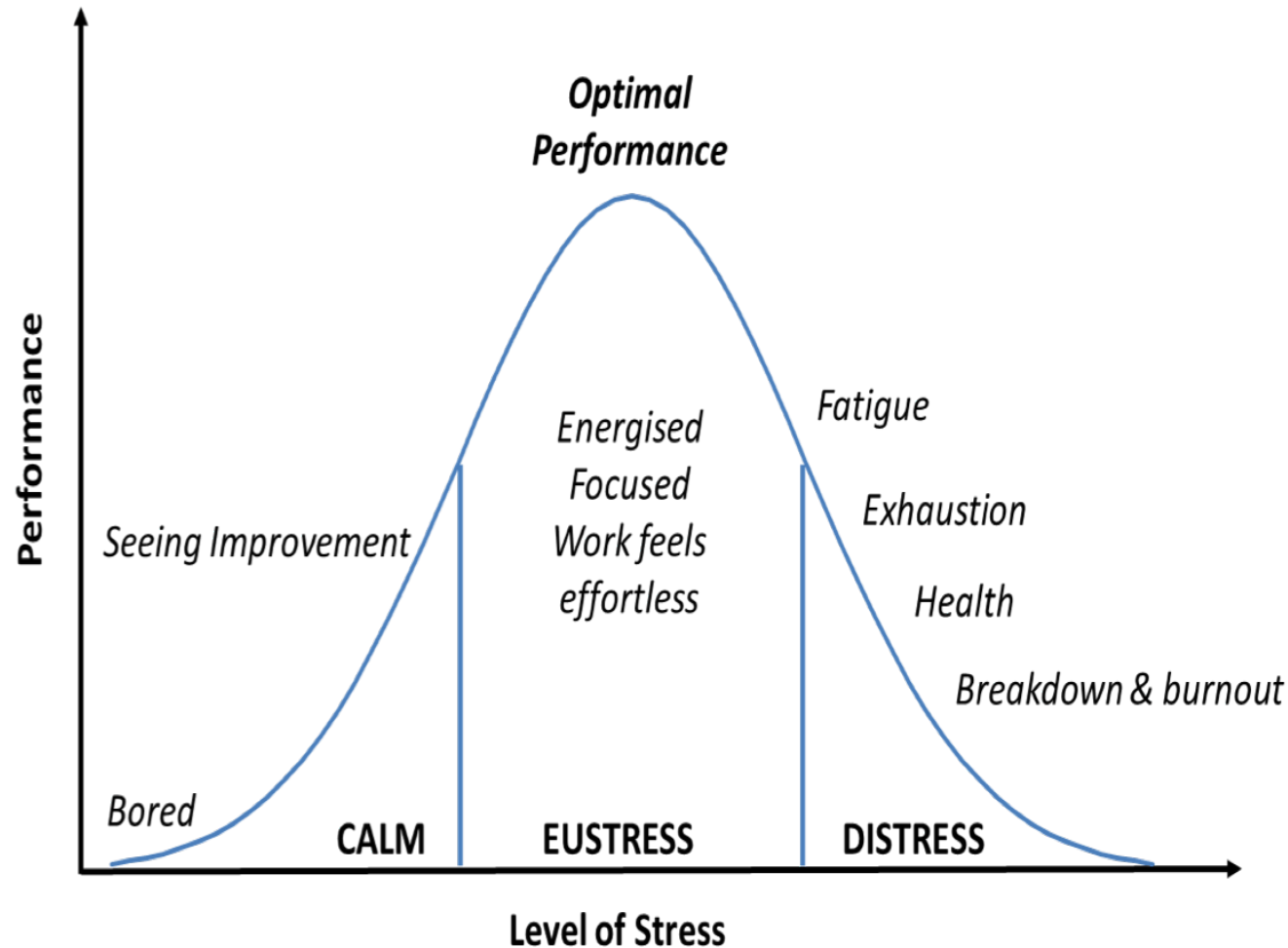
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“Anything that threatens our sense of well being – challenges to social status, ego, strongly held beliefs, desire to control things or to have them be a certain way – can trigger (the flight/fight/freeze) reaction to some degree.

--Jon Kabat-Zinn, Full Catastrophe Living



# Eustress, Acute Stress, Chronic Stress, Burn Out





# Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

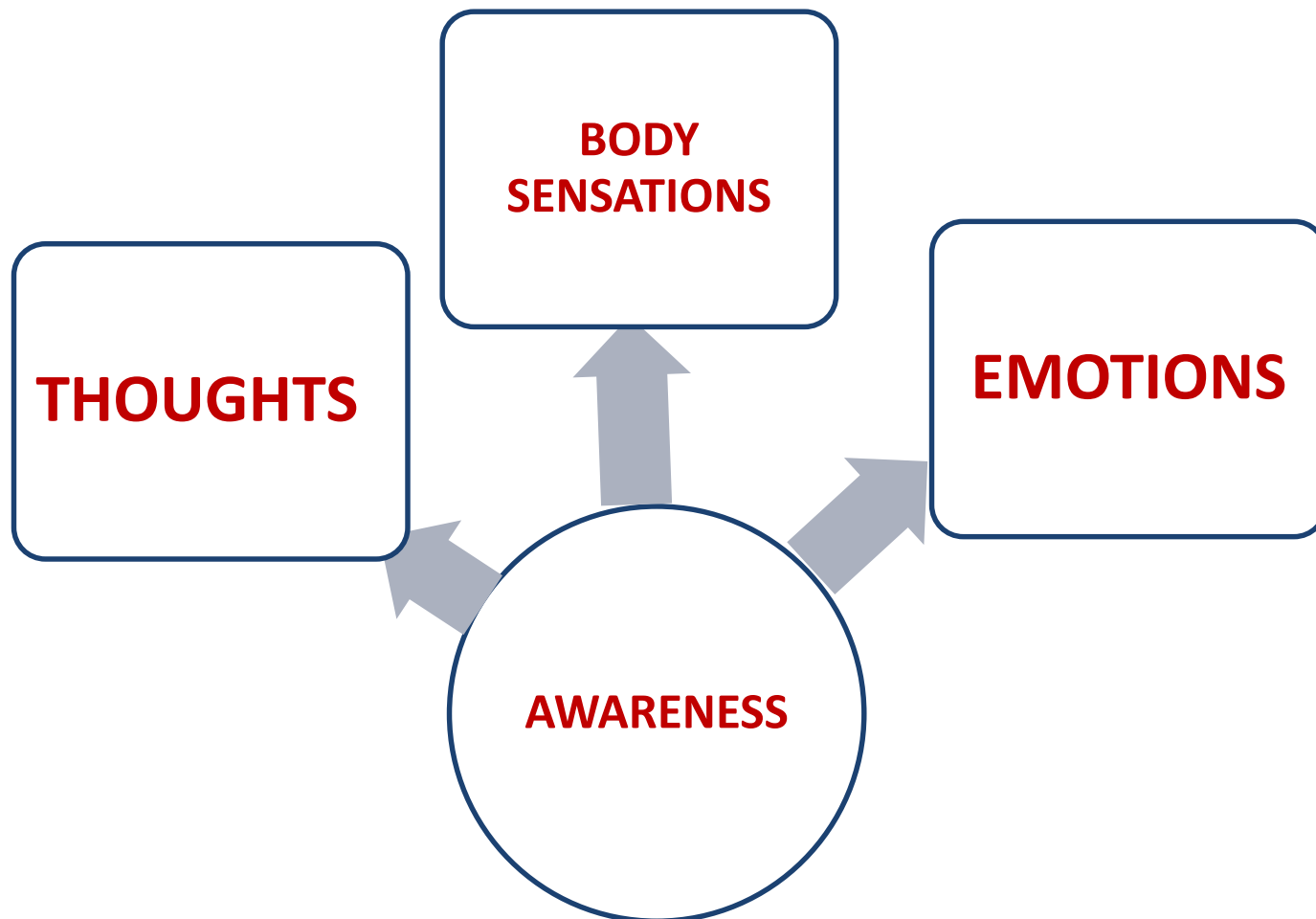
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“The very first and most important step in breaking free from a lifetime of stress reactivity is to be mindful of what is actually happening while it is happening.”

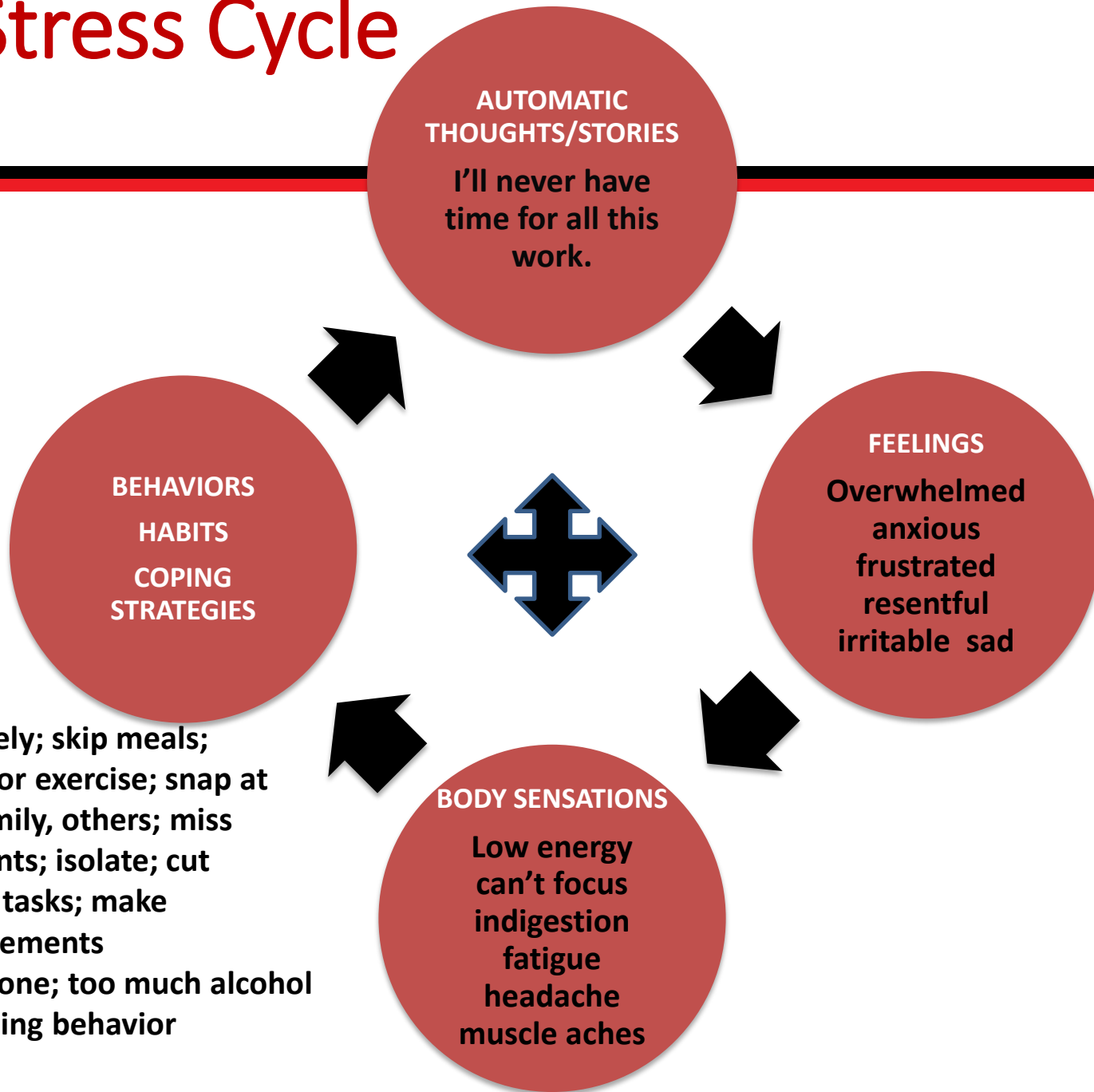
*Jon Kabat-Zinn, Full Catastrophe Living*

# The Mindful Check In: Paying Attention to the Direct Experience of the Moment

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# The Stress Cycle



Work excessively; skip meals;  
cut sleep and/or exercise; snap at  
colleagues, family, others; miss  
important events; isolate; cut  
corners; avoid tasks; make  
impulsive judgements  
to get things done; too much alcohol  
or other numbing behavior



# As soon as you notice you've been triggered:

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**Stop**

**Breathe**

**Observe with curiosity – What's happening here?**

Check in with body, mind states, emotions, urges, environment.

**Proceed**

By intentionally stepping out of autopilot, reflexive habits, judgements about how it's always been or how you want it to be, or being lost in stories or emotions, you can more fully engage with the nuances of the actual present moment to choose a skillful response to the question: *"What's called for now?"*

*\* Know your personal stress warning signals \**



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# Mindful Communication



# Leadership Communication Choice Points – What is called for now?

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- Connection Points – Making the decision to coach, collaborate, or get to know someone
- Clarity Points – Providing vision, direction, or commands
- Courage Points – Having a direct conversation, giving and receiving feedback, managing conflict, taking ownership, challenging the status quo, committing to an important decision or direction, speaking from the heart



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“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

~George Bernard Shaw



# MINDFUL LISTENING

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How much of the time are we really here when we are having a conversation?

We may look here, but how often are we actually:

- Planning what we're going to say
- Judging what is being said
- Wondering about our own image
- Coming up with a defense
- Trying to control the situation
- Thinking of something else entirely

*"It is often through the quality of our listening and not the wisdom of our words that we are able to effect the most profound change in the people around us."*

*-- Rachel Naomi Remen*







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# MINDFULNESS PRACTICE: MINDFUL LISTENING



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*“To listen is to lean in softly with a willingness to be changed by what we hear.”*

*-- Mark Nepo*

*“Listening is considered an essential leadership skill.”*

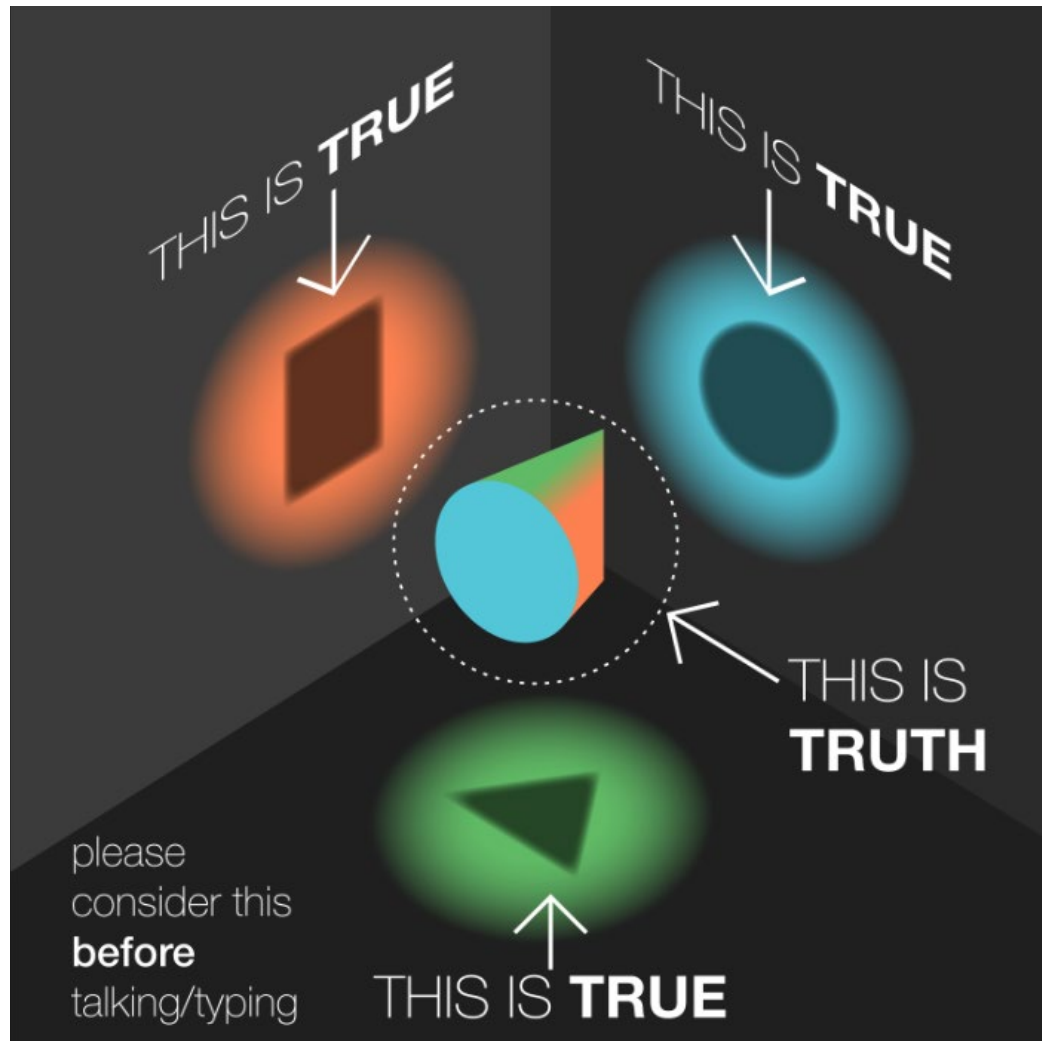
*-- Daniel Goleman*

*“Pure listening is letting go of control. It’s not easy and takes training. The bottom line is when we are listened to, we feel connected. When we’re not listened to, we feel separate.”*

*-- Tara Brach*







# MINDFUL SPEECH

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## **Is it TRUE?**

Do I know this for sure?

## **Is it BENEFICIAL?**

Will it serve the needs of the moment, project, discussion, etc.

## **Is it the RIGHT TIME?**

Is now the best time to share it or would another time be better?

## **Is it KIND?**

Is it respectful of the other person, with best intentions for all?



# Speaking While Under Stress

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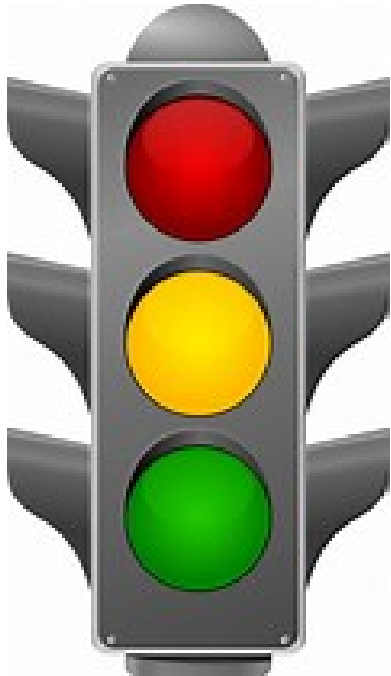
When we get charged up or lost in any emotion, particularly anger, fear and stress, we are essentially absorbed by the emotion and all other interactions we have at this time will be tainted by this emotion.

Paul Eckman



# Internal Traffic Signals

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## Red Light: Defensive Reactions

We stop using our innate communication wisdom

## Yellow light: In-Between

## Green Light: Openness

From Red, Green, Yellow, Susan Gillis Chapman, Mindful Magazine (May 3, 2013)



# Navigating Conflict

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## **THE MINDFUL PAUSE**

- Drop into the body
- Name it to tame it
- Recognize you have choice
- Reorient to intention





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# Ways to Integrate Mindfulness into Life and Leadership



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# **Regular and Consistent Practice**



# Formal Practice

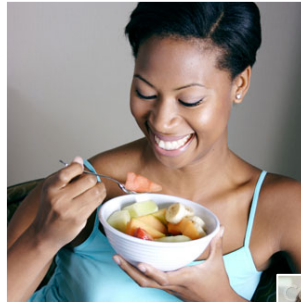
*“Money in the Bank”*

The more you build the muscle of mindfulness through a dedicated daily practice, the more naturally and consistently it will arise in the course of your day.

- Sitting Meditation
- Body Scan
- Walking Meditation
- Mindful Movement – Yoga, Stretching, Tai Chi



# Informal Practice: Short Moments/Many Times



# Mindfulness in the Workday Practices

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- One minute mindful pause
- Regular Mindful Check Ins
- “Staple It” to something you already do (ex. Bring mindfulness to stairs or first sips of a beverage)
- “Center before you enter”
- Stay connected to your breath/body and check in with yourself from time to time (for information and self regulation). The body is a stress barometer.

# Mindful Leadership Practices

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- Mindful leadership starts with setting intentions (see worksheet in the resource packet)
- Build a community of mindful leaders

