

every  
woman

# WORKBOOK

## Mindful leadership



# CONTENTS

About this workbook	1
Why leaders need mindfulness	2
Mindful leadership: what does it look like?	5
Advanced mindfulness techniques	10
Savvy organisations are embracing mindfulness	14
Enabling mindful teams	15
<b>Your personal action plan</b>	<b>18</b>
everywoman experts	20
Further reading	21
Endnotes	21

## ABOUT THIS WORKBOOK

Established in 1999, Everywoman advances women in business. Our aim is to ensure women from all over the world fulfil their potential. We produce workbooks on topics that matter most to our members, and we're constantly listening to your views to give you the tools you need to kick-start your career, at a time and place that suits you.

Before you embark on 'Mindful leadership', it's recommended that you work through the companion workbook 'An introduction of mindfulness', which gives you a good grounding in the neuroscience and benefits of the practice, and some basic techniques which can help you incorporate mindfulness into your working life.

It's important that you develop your own personal mindfulness practice before you set about leading others in a mindful way. "To be an effective leader of others, you must first start with self-leadership," writes leadership coach Maria Gonzalez in her book *Mindful Leadership*. "One of the keys to self-leadership is mindfulness."

This workbook is designed to build on those early learnings. And it isn't just for CEOs of multinational companies. Each and every one of us is a leader of sorts. Whether you're running an entire department or enterprise, Whether you have a team of direct reports, are involved in mentoring others or have influence over clients, customers or more junior members of staff, you have the responsibility of a leader. This workbook will demonstrate how mindfulness is core to the central traits of effective leadership.

You'll learn what mindful leaders do in everyday scenarios, and how the organisations they work for are embracing the practice as a means to enhancing both employee and business performance and wellbeing.

We'd love to know how you get on.

Share your experience with [karenmax@everywoman.com](mailto:karenmax@everywoman.com). Good luck!

The everywoman team

"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."

From *Mindfulness Can Literally Change Your Brain*,  
Harvard Business Review

# WHY LEADERS NEED MINDFULNESS

What are the essential qualities of a great leader? And what role does mindfulness play in each? Explore the table below to uncover what global leaders say are the traits most crucial in today’s business world, and the role mindfulness plays in each.



Essential qualities of leaders <sup>1</sup> [numbers in brackets = % of business leaders who consider themselves ‘highly effective’]	What mindful leaders can do differently <sup>2</sup>
Communicating and interacting with others (74%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have difficult conversations</li> <li>• Stay present during conversations</li> <li>• Listen to others and themselves</li> <li>• Respond with clarity under pressure</li> <li>• Hold effective meetings</li> <li>• Eliminate unneeded tasks and conversations</li> <li>• Engage in conversations in the moment</li> </ul>
Coaching and developing others (63%)	
Developing strong networks/ partnerships (61%)	
Identifying and developing future talent (61%)	
Building consensus and commitment (67%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritise work</li> <li>• Hold ambiguity until a better time to make a decision</li> <li>• Engage and re-engage employees</li> <li>• Stay focussed from beginning to end</li> <li>• Reduce errors</li> </ul>

Managing and successfully introducing change (62%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay attentive to what is needed in the present moment</li> <li>• Improve strategic thinking</li> <li>• Minimise 'auto-pilot' to enable change</li> </ul>
Inspiring others towards a challenging future vision (58%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create the space for innovation</li> <li>• Find 'out of the box' solutions</li> <li>• Remain flexible throughout turbulent times</li> </ul>
Fostering employee creativity and innovation (56%)	

**EXERCISE:**

In the space below, summarise the leadership qualities that are most relevant in your role or business right now, and how mindfulness can help you develop strengths in these areas. You may wish to draw inspiration from the mindfulness definitions and business scenarios outlined in our companion workbook An introduction to mindfulness.

Leadership qualities I need to possess in my role or business	How mindfulness could enable more effective delivery of this trait
<i>e.g. Keeping my direct reports motivated throughout a long project beset with challenges.</i>	<i>e.g. Would be able to better manage my own day-to-day stresses to be in a better position to guide them through managing theirs.</i>

Leadership qualities I need to possess in my role or business	How mindfulness could enable more effective delivery of this trait

# MINDFUL LEADERSHIP: WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Thought leaders have likened today's business world to a battle, drawing on a military term to describe what leaders at all levels face in their day-to-day working lives: it's a VUCA world they say: volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous<sup>3</sup>. Can you think of examples from your career where you've felt the impact of such forces?

Mindfulness has been embraced by many leaders as an antidote to the effects of the chaos and disruption that surrounds them. Below are three examples of leaders sharing how they use mindfulness and how it makes them more effective in the workplace.

## CASE STUDY 1:

Henna Inam, Executive Coach and author of *Wired For Authenticity*<sup>4</sup>

Burned out, I decided to go to India to spend ten days at an ashram to learn how to meditate. The actual course was 21 days but as a self-proclaimed over-achiever I figured I could nail it in ten.



Fast-forward five years, I have still not learned how to empty my mind; I am a student and practitioner of the topic, rather than an expert. I meditate 20 minutes in the morning each day. The deep breaths and getting away from the hustle and bustle of life to just sit helps me be calm and intentional about my day. The act of slowing down and observing my breath, thoughts, and feelings is a huge factor in increasing self-awareness. It has allowed me to be an objective observer to what is

### AT A GLANCE

Mindful practice:

20 minutes deep breathing practice on waking.

Results:

Increased self-awareness, greater compassion and empathy, better listener, more engaging and engaged.

happening inside rather than an unwitting participant in the drama that can sweep me. Just the other day, as I observed myself giving my 13-year old instructions to be productive and stop watching TV, I had an epiphany. I am a bit of a control freak!

My mindfulness practice has allowed me to have greater compassion and empathy for myself most days. We allow ourselves to see some of the things we would normally dislike about ourselves more readily. Greater self-awareness of our own thoughts, emotions, and feelings allows us to manage our energy as leaders. As leaders, we have our own Energy Footprint and our energy is highly contagious.

Observing my breath and my thoughts has made me a better listener. I am more aware of how I am listening to others. I find myself listening to “How I am Listening” to a person I don’t particularly like. It is quite comical observing the thought balloons and judgments that arise. When we recognise our judgments and stories about others and develop the capacity to make a choice in those judgments, we are able to connect more meaningfully and authentically with others. We are able to be more engaging leaders, to truly understand what motivates others. We are able to influence others more powerfully because we listen and connect better.



Adapted from Breathe. Meditate. Lead. Ten Ways Mindfulness Practice Can Make Us Better Leaders<sup>v</sup>.

## CASE STUDY 2:

Shona Mitchell, Managing Director, Headspace

Just over three years ago I was signed off work with classic burnout symptoms, the result of feeling driven by a constant feeling of guilt into working relentless hours and becoming impossibly productive in work and out.

Wanting to try an alternative to the doctor’s offer of medication to treat my newfound friend, anxiety, I started meditating. It worked, quickly and with no nasty side effects.



If you haven't ever tried it, give it a go. I'd recommend doing it before you sit down to write your to-do list, rather than putting it at number one (I doubt you have brushing your teeth in Evernote and I'd encourage you to see 10 minutes of meditation in much the same way).

It's very easy. You need yourself, a place when you feel comfortable enough to close your eyes (at home, on the bus, at your desk), and 10 minutes. The simplest way to practise for a beginner is with a guided programme.

Three years on and I've gone from total collapse to running an exciting and rapidly growing digital start up. I work hard but I feel happy, healthy and, more importantly, my inner guilt creature has become the exception rather than the rule.

Adapted from *How meditation brought me back from burnout*<sup>6</sup>

### CASE STUDY 3:

Padmasree Warrior, Board member at Microsoft and former Chief Technology Office, Cisco.

When I was younger I trained in Indian classical dance and one of the things you're taught is to focus and concentrate. That was my first introduction to being present in the moment.

When I lost my mother I realised I needed to pay better attention to myself and be kinder to the world around me. That was the beginning of daily mindfulness practice. I meditate every night and take Saturday to paint and write poetry, turning off my phone or leaving it in the other room. It's almost like a reboot for your brain and your soul. It makes me so much calmer when I'm responding to emails later.

#### AT A GLANCE

Mindful practice:  
10 minutes of meditation at desk before starting on to-do list.

Results:  
Overcame burnout, reduced anxiety and feelings of guilt.

There is no particular method or way to meditate; it's wherever you find your own calm. For me it's painting, for someone else it might be going for a walk. It's whatever allows you to reduce the signal and quiet the noise. Whatever you need to get to that stage, that's what mindfulness is.

I'm an engineer and have large led groups of engineers and one of the things mindfulness helped me become is a better leader. It helps me pay attention not just to what I want to get done, but how I make that a win for others. When I deliver a presentation it's less about what I want to say, more about what others want to hear. When I'm recruiting I'm mindful of what's going to excite and motivate the candidate. When I'm thinking about new technology, I think more about what the customer needs.

Adapted from *The Business Application Of Mindfulness*<sup>7</sup> and *Silicon Valley Says Step Away From the Device*<sup>8</sup>

#### AT A GLANCE

Mindful practice:  
Painting; regular digital detoxing.

Results:  
Calmer, more in tune with feelings, more focussed on employees, clients and others.

#### EXERCISE:

*Note down any thoughts, feelings or ideas you had while you were reading the above case studies.*

**EXERCISE:**

*Were you inspired by any of the stories? In what ways can you relate them to your own life and career situation?*

**EXERCISE:**

*Jot down any thoughts you've had about how you could incorporate mindfulness into your own life and leadership style, and in what form? Think about when you're at your most calm and focussed.*

# ADVANCED MINDFULNESS TECHNIQUES

In our companion workbook *An introduction to mindfulness* we provide some simple mindfulness techniques to get you started in your practice. Once you've mastered these, you may wish to move on to some of the following more enhanced techniques.

## **Samantha meditation**

Named after one of the Buddhist messengers of Nirvana, this meditation instils calm through focussed attention on the breath. Enables greater concentration and awareness of surroundings.

## **Satipatthana Meditation**

Meaning 'steadfast mindfulness', this meditation encourages awareness of nothing but the current moment. In it you sit quietly with an 'object' - an area of your body or mind - and observe it at every angle. Allows worrying thoughts to be released.

## **Chakra meditation**

The seven life forces in the body are explored in turn through this meditation, in which you'll visualise the colours associated with each chakra. Enables greater clarity around whatever might be going on for you in the present moment.



## **Inner smile meditation**

Taking a quiet moment to inwardly smile at your body and mind. It allows greater connection between your external and internal worlds and enables you to focus purely on yourself and your own needs temporarily.

## **White skeleton meditation**

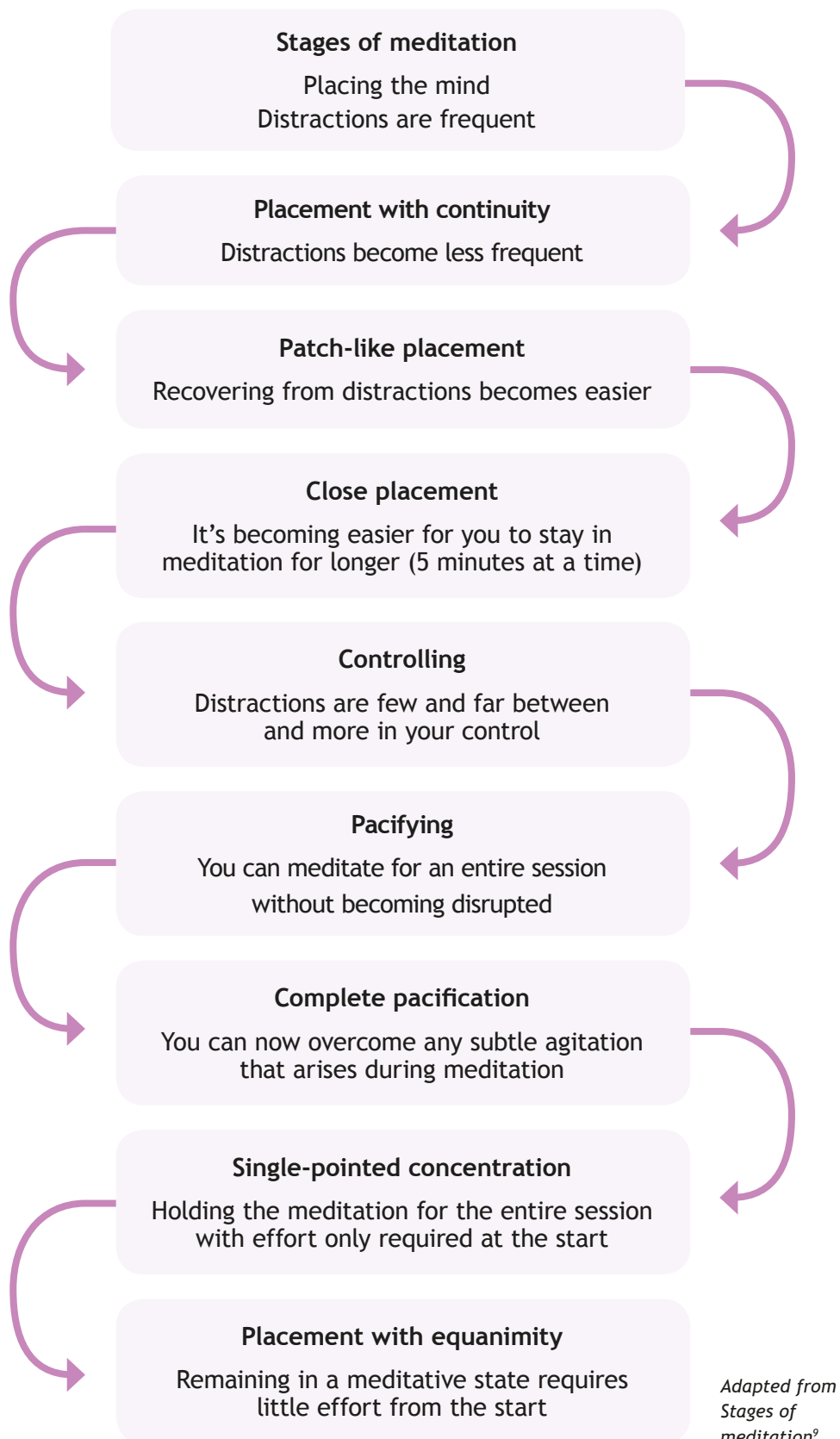
A visualisation technique whereby you visualise your entire skeleton as one, in a bright white light. A very advanced technique, it requires deep concentration and is said to be an antidote to harmful behaviours.



**EXERCISE:**

*Choose from above the technique that most appeals to you, and spend a few moments doing some research around that technique to enable you to try it out in your own time. Make your notes below.*

# TRACKING YOUR PROGRESS



**When you start practising mindful meditation, you will inevitably find your mind frequently wandering. This is very normal and should not discourage you from persevering.**

As you progress, you will find yourself moving along the stages of meditation. Some stages may take more time to master than others, and do not be alarmed if you slip backwards a stage or more during a particularly stressful period or even for no apparent reason. Simply use the mindfulness techniques you've learned to notice what is occurring.

**EXERCISE:**

*Make a note of where you feel you currently sit in the process, reflecting on how far you might have come along.*

# SAVVY ORGANISATIONS ARE EMBRACING MINDFULNESS

Over the past thirty years, we've experienced an 18-23% increase of self-reported stress<sup>10</sup>. As individual leaders discover mindfulness as an antidote to the impacts of burnout, countless corporations have embraced the practice within their organisations, bringing its principles to all levels of the workforce. In 2015, an increasing number of renowned business conferences, including the World Economic Forum, incorporated mindfulness into their discussion agenda. Meanwhile, Wisdom 2.0, the high profile annual conference, brings together major players in the technology industry - Huffington Post, Google, Facebook, LinkedIn and PayPal to name a few - to discuss the more holistic aspects of working life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Organisations increasingly report that investing in mindfulness is rewarded by greater productivity and less sick leave.

Google's 52,000 employees are given free lessons in mindfulness. Some meetings begin with a few moments of meditation, a practice said to encourage positivity and presentness in participants.

Intel's mindfulness programme has been completed by 1,500 employees. By the end of the course, stress levels were down two points; happiness levels up three points. Mental clarity, creativity and the quality of relationships were also enhanced.

Keurig Green Mountain offers mindful stretching exercises for warehouse and factory workers before each shift, a move which saw a reduction in job-related pain and reported injuries, along with increased focus and concentration.

The 25% of employees who've been through healthcare provider Aetna's mindfulness workshop report a 20% improvement in sleep quality, and an additional 62 minutes of productivity per week, which Aetna estimates is worth \$3,000 per employee, per year.



# ENABLING MINDFUL TEAMS

As mindfulness becomes a part of your daily life, you may inevitably find yourself looking for ways to incorporate its practices and benefits into your team and wider networks.

Mindful teams...	Mindless teams...
Have a bias for action	Find themselves in endless, unproductive meetings
Interact frequently, but efficiently	Resort to micromanagement
Understand the value of autonomy and accountability	Tread the well worn path of habit (“We’re doing it like this because that’s how we already do it”)
Find new ways to solve problems	Waste energy

Use the spaces above to highlight any examples of mindful or mindless behaviour in your team.

# SIX WAYS TO BUILD A MINDFUL TEAM<sup>11</sup>

## 1. Develop and enforce standard operating procedures

Make a list of the most routine tasks and operations your team performs. Codify these so that the team's cognitive energy can be directed towards more complex challenges. Ensure you regularly evaluate procedures to ensure they remain optimal.

## 2. Develop checklists

Mindless activity is often error-prone. Prevent errors during the performance of mindless activity by reminding individuals of critical actions and processes they must follow. Building in a second pair of eyes also helps others focus on quality control of day-to-day activities.

## 3. Plan according to a standard, collaborative process

When teams share a common and effective model for planning and decision-making (e.g. a specific brainstorming or scoping out structure), they can get straight to the mindful effort needed rather than wasting time mindlessly chatting and struggling to reach consensus.

## 4. Brief plans to your team

Planning, when performed properly, is a mindful activity. Give the team a break afterwards, but brief the completed plan to them in a formal way after the break. Good briefing techniques communicate details and accountabilities to refocus a team toward mindful execution.

## 5. Regularly - and succinctly - check in

As a plan unfolds, hold short, frequent meetings, in which the team comes together to understand progress from all sides and address any emerging challenges.

## 6. Debrief successes and failures frequently.

Turn learning from an occasional pursuit into a habit. The quarterly debrief, retrospective, after-action review, post-mortem or whatever you wish to call it, is too infrequent to develop a habitual commitment to learning. Instead make it a part and parcel of on-going life within your team.

### **How should you start a mindfulness program at your company?**

Will this work best with a bottom up approach like launching an employee affinity group on the topic? Or in the case of Google, as reported by Laszlo Bock in his book *Work Rules*, by conducting an experiment with your own staff for a couple of months?

Google's Chade Meng-Tan first tried to introduce meditation classes at Google, but only after the class *Search Inside Yourself* was positioned as a "workout program for developing your emotional intelligence" did the program really take off. Now *In Search of Yourself* has a wait list of six months.

Being able to understand how to communicate and position mindfulness inside the company is a key criterion for getting corporate traction.

From *Future Of Work: Mindfulness As A Leadership Practice*<sup>12</sup>

## YOUR PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

Spend a few moments reflecting on your own mindfulness practice, where you feel you are at and how it is impacting your life and work.

In what ways do you see enhanced mindfulness practice as benefiting your working life as a leader?

Which of the new techniques learned in this workbook can you commit to researching more about and incorporating into your daily life? Outline how you'll find the time and space to dedicate to your practice.

How will you 'pass it on' to those around you in order to enable them to benefit from the practice of mindfulness? Think about co-workers, direct reports, mentees and your organisation at large.

## EVERYWOMAN EXPERTS

Everywoman creates workbooks on topics that matter most to our Network members. We draw on member surveys and the latest thinking from the academic and business worlds, as well our own experiences as we navigate our careers. Each workbook offers practical advice, enabling tangible actions for your daily work lives ahead of those important performance reviews.



### Maxine Benson MBE & Karen Gill MBE

Co-founders of everywoman, Karen and Max have spoken to thousands of women about the challenges they face at work. Through their own experiences of starting a business, they uncovered a real need for a network where female entrepreneurs and business-women could interact and share experiences. The everywomanNetwork, launched in 2009, serves as a truly global tool to enable members the world over to propel their careers through online membership.

### everywoman workbook team

Rebecca Lewis, Associate Editor

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Any topics you'd like to see covered on the everywomanNetwork?

We'd love to hear from you: [contact@everywoman.com](mailto:contact@everywoman.com)

## FURTHER READING

### On the everywomanNetwork

#### Workbooks:

*Workbook: Developing your emotional intelligence*

*Workbook: Avoiding burnout*

#### Bite-size reading:

*Chaos, combat & disruption: how business leaders make it work*

*Improve your wellbeing with the ‘5 ways’*

#### External resources

*Mindful Leadership: The 9 Ways to Self-Awareness, Transforming Yourself, and Inspiring Others*, by Maria Gonzalez (Jossey-Bass: 2012)

[instituteformindfulleadership.org](http://instituteformindfulleadership.org) particularly the ‘media’ section, featuring blogs, videos and podcasts.

## ENDNOTES

1. Ready now leaders: 25 findings to meet tomorrow’s business challenges (DDI Global Leadership Forecast 2014-15)  
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12. [forbes.com/sites/jeannemeister/2015/04/27/future-of-work-mindfulness-as-a-leadership-practice/](http://forbes.com/sites/jeannemeister/2015/04/27/future-of-work-mindfulness-as-a-leadership-practice/)

advancing **WOMEN IN BUSINESS**