



HOW TO BE AN **ANXIETY FREE, MINDFUL LEADER**

“3 exercises you can start using right now, to increase calm, perform at your best and raise the energy of your entire organization”

A portrait of Dawa Tarchin Phillips, a man with a beard and short dark hair, wearing a dark blue suit, white shirt, and blue tie. He is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

DAWA TARCHIN PHILLIPS

Dawa is a leadership coach and consultant, co-founder and director of education for the Center for Mindfulness and Human Potential at UCSB, and co-founder of the Mindful Leadership Online Training Conference. A Buddhist monk for 12 years, he now teaches leaders from around the globe how to leverage their mindset, optimize their teams and organizations and achieve better results through mindfulness.



In today's fast-paced work environment sometimes it can feel like distraction comes from every direction.

Whether



Bombarded
by email



Dealing with
competing
priorities



Deciphering
unclear
directions



Wrestling with
distracting
thoughts



Or many
other forms
that
distraction
can take

- These distractions have serious consequences on your productivity, the productivity of your team, and it weakens your organization as a whole.
- According to a new survey from Think Money, employees tend to waste more than **750 hours** each year on distractions.
- These distractions are lowering overall performance while simultaneously increasing anxiety as you become lost in thoughts about the future or ruminations on the past.
- As a leader, you have the opportunity to set the tone for your workplace, and it begins by decreasing your own anxiety and becoming more present.
- Remaining calm allows you to focus your entire mind on the most important tasks at hand and see things through to their completion.

When distractions and stress abound, there are several steps you can take to center yourself and be a beacon of clarity and anxiety free leadership that your organization desperately needs

- New studies continue to emerge regarding the role that mindfulness can play in productivity within the workplace..



A significant correlation was demonstrated between those who practice mindfulness and their overall level of output according to one study by Erik Dane and Bradley J. Brummel: those who are mindful of their surroundings and the way they feel in a given moment are more productive than their non-mindful counterparts.



A second case study by Case Western Reserve University showed that mindfulness is ultimately responsible for affecting and improving three major areas related to attention: stability, control, and efficiency.



Leaders are discovering that mindfulness can lower stress and give a greater degree of control over the important functions of the organization.



Not only that, but leaders who practice these tools are setting a great example for the people they work with.



One study shows that employees who work underneath leaders who actively practice mindfulness also benefit from improved performance.



Mindfulness has the potential to unlock previously unseen levels of productivity within your organization while simultaneously decreasing your stress.



New studies continue to emerge regarding the role that mindfulness can play in productivity within the workplace.

STEP 1

DEEP BREATHING



We breathe all day long without putting much thought into it



A few minutes spent focusing on your breath can produce greater clarity, boost your performance on tasks, and increase your ability to respond mindfully in high-pressure situations.



Mindful breathing requires only a few short minutes and no outside assistance to help lower your stress so you can focus all of your attention on the needs of the present moment.



When we start to struggle with the what-ifs and the stresses of day to day work, anxiety increases and your breathing becomes faster and shallower, depriving your body of the oxygen it needs to function well.



When this happens you're more likely to react with a fight or flight response and you won't have access to your full range of conscious choice.



Your work and leadership ability will suffer.



Begin practicing deep breathing by setting a timer for three to five minutes.



STEP 1

DEEP BREATHING

Deep breathing is a great way to reset your mind and reset your leadership presence.

- Practice good posture by sitting upright in your chair allowing palms to face up on your lap.
 - Feel free to close your eyes, allow yourself to focus completely on how your body feels in the present moment, or you can select a gazing point and allow your eyes to rest gently in this area.
 - For these few minutes allow yourself to let go of any thoughts about the past and preoccupation with the future.
 - Take a few deep breaths in through the nose and notice how the body feels as the oxygen is carried throughout your bloodstream.
 - Consciously let go of any tension that resides in your shoulders, a clenched jaw, or anywhere else you may be storing up your anxiety.
 - After taking a few moments to clear your mind, you will then begin to focus on taking deep, full body breaths.
- Slowly count to three as you inhale through your nose, pausing at the top of your inhale to hold the breath for two to three seconds.
 - Exhale gently through the nose, trying to extend your exhale past the length of your inhale.
 - As you consistently practice this deep breathing exercise, your exhale should be able to measure twice as long as your inhale.
 - When the timer comes an end, allow your eyes to blink open softly and adjust to the light surrounding you.
 - Take a few deeper breaths, making note of any areas in your body that feel different or more relaxed following your brief pause from the workday.

Deep breathing is a great way to reset your mind and reset your leadership presence.

STEP 2 MEDITATION

- Along the same lines as the deep breathing exercise, mindfulness meditation is another great way to lower your stress and increase your ability to remain calm and effective.
- Meditation offers a very flexible option to bring greater awareness to current anxieties and stressors, as well as providing a way to release them and reground yourself for the rest of the day.
- This exercise can be practiced at the start of the day, prior to making a list of priorities and goals, it can also be used when you start to feel overwhelmed and triggered by the events of the day.
- Begin your meditation by setting a timer for five to fifteen minutes.
- As you grow more proficient in your practice you can increase your time, but for now, start gently.



The trick is to simply acknowledge each thought and distraction as you become aware of them then let them go over and over again.



A few deep breaths in the beginning can help to lower your stress quickly but then simply observe the way your body naturally inhales and exhales.

As the timer finishes, you will find yourself feeling more in tune with your body and less stressed about the day that awaits you.

After becoming comfortable with this practice you can start to bring the quality of mindful awareness into your day as you communicate with others and accomplish tasks.



STEP 2 **MEDITATION**

Eyes can be either closed or open throughout the meditation process, depending on what feels most comfortable for you.

Inevitably, your mind will wander back to pressing situations in your life.

Find a comfortable sitting position with your back straight and shoulders rolled back to open up your chest.

Take note of your thoughts then let them go, bringing your attention fully back to your breath.

Bring awareness to your breathing but allow it remain natural.

Is each breath short or long? How does the chest or belly feel as the breath enters and exits the body?

STEP 3 “VISUALIZATION”



Fretting over the upcoming schedule and the potential performance of you or your team takes the focus away from what needs to be accomplished in the present moment.



For example: what would be the desired result of a successful presentation, the signing of an important contract, or the completion of a major advertisement campaign.



Instead of allowing your anxiety to reign supreme, take back control and steer your organization by visualizing the end result.



What are your greatest hopes for the work in front of you or any situation that is causing you serious stress in this moment?



For many leaders and professionals, a major project or presentation can cause stress, anxiety, and overwhelm.



Visualization begins by identifying the result you hope to achieve.



STEP 3 “VISUALIZATION”

Name the situation and your desired outcome, speaking it softly out loud if your environment allows you to do so.

Imagine the sights, sounds, smells, and feelings that you will encounter in that situation. Replay this scenario a couple of times until it seems real and within your reach.

Now allow your eyes to close as you sit comfortably and visualize what the perfect outcome would look like.

You can transmit a feeling of confidence and positive outcome to your direct reports, raising the energy of the whole organization as you do so.

By imagining the positive potential of the future, you can bring your awareness back to your responsibilities as a leader.



OVERALL BENEFIT OF MINDFULNESS FOR LEADERS



These simple exercises give you an entry point to create a more productive workplace with less anxiety for you and your team.



In a day and age where distraction runs rampant among multi-tasking workers who have to rush to finish each day's tasks with mediocrity, mindfulness allows for a new and better method.



Leaders who set the example of working intentionally on each project with fewer distractions not only see an increase in their own mental health but in that of the people they work with.



Lowering your own stress as a leader can lead to significant gains in performance across your entire organization.



Is taking a few minutes off from your work to practice a handful of simple mindfulness exercises worth it?



Mindfulness spares your mental health and boosts your performance and the effectiveness of your organization.



Those few minutes would be wisely invested in cultivating a sense of mindfulness, starting in this present moment.