The Executive Mind at The Peter F. Drucker School of Management: Mindfulness and the Inside Work of Management

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What is the relation of this [contemplation] to actions? Simply this. He who attempts to act and do things for others or for the world without deepening his own self-understanding, freedom, integrity and capacity to love, will not have anything to give others. He will communicate to them nothing but the contagion of his own obsessions, his aggressiveness, his ego-centered ambitions, his delusions about ends and means, his doctrinaire prejudices and ideas. There is nothing more tragic in the modern world than the misuse of power and action to which men are driven by their own Faustian misunderstandings and misapprehensions. We have more power at our disposal today than we have ever had, and yet we are more alienated and estranged from the inner ground of meaning and love than we have ever been.

Thomas Merton

I have only three enemies. My favorite enemy, the one most easily influenced for the better, is the British Empire. My second enemy, the Indian people, is far more difficult. But my most formidable opponent is a man named Mohandas K. Gandhi. With him I seem to have very little influence.

Mahatma Gandhi

Introduction

Contemporary management education has largely overlooked creating an educational process as systematic as accounting and financial analysis for managing oneself. Students are left to fend for themselves to know how to skillfully handle and transform

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the inner forces of emotions, physical sensations, thoughts and beliefs to produce elegant and effective results. The cost of this can been seen in leaders given enormous responsibilities to perform with few tools for managing the inevitable pressures that will come their way. This can lead to scattered, unfocused efforts, destructive actions misaligned to one's stated values or habitual ways of perceiving that fail to adapt to changing circumstances (Hunter & Chaskalson, 2013). Just as leaders need tools to manage external realities, they also need tools to manage the internal ones. Effectiveness starts inside.

This perspective builds on management philosopher Peter Drucker's observation that "you cannot manage other people unless you manage yourself first" (Drucker & Wartzman, 2010). This work is aimed a particular kind of person. The manager it addresses seeks to make a positive contribution through their work while also making a living. At the Drucker School where I teach, this is called "Doing good while doing well." Embedded in this notion is both a value for productive performance and a sense of personal responsibility to embody and express dearly held values through positive action in the world. However, these managers sense "something is off." Stress, tension, and distraction play too much of a role in their lives and they seek answers to remedy the pain they feel but can't explain. They understand the fluid boundaries between the personal and the professional; and how tension in one area can detrimentally spill over into the other. They seek to be more effective in both arenas. They want greater balance, but don't know how to get it.

The goal of the chapter is to share my experience as a teacher, not a researcher or clinician, of mindfulness and allied awareness practices in a management school setting. The chapter describes the origins and methods of the Executive Mind/Practice of Self-Management courses I developed at the Peter F. Drucker School of Management in the early 2000s. It explores the motivation behind the creation of the courses and examines why a systematic method for self-management hasn't happened already. What factors are different now compared to a century ago and why are they gaining traction now? The bulk of the discussion examines what instructional and learning methods are relevant and appropriate for executives. It will illustrate how these methods are used, drawing from the lives of working executives as well as lessons learned from my experience teaching executives. Finally, it will briefly explore what might be the future of mindfulness and management.

Why Managers Should Manage Themselves

For most of its modern history, management education has focused on systematic training in the external: accounting, finance, strategy, marketing and all the important elements needed to manage an organization. Furthermore, educating managers in the United States has primarily been in the so-called "hard skills" of rational analysis and manipulating abstract symbolic systems cultivating certain capacities of human ability but leaving others fallow.

Left out of the equation is systematic development of the perceptual, emotional and somatic/embodied sensing qualities of managers. These are capacities that are simply taken for granted, ignored as irrelevant or quietly derided as "soft." Because dominant managerial approaches assume that humans are conscious and rational, they underplay or ignore the reality that the vast majority of human functioning happens automatically and outside of conscious awareness (Wilson, 2002). This absence creates a vulnerability to the darker side of human nature.

There are costs to ignoring the non-conscious, emphasizing the external and not positively cultivating the internal. The most extreme example is toxic leadership where a leader's destructive qualities inflict "serious and enduring harm on their followers, organizations and non-followers" (Lipman-Blumen, 2006). The US Army describes them as having *"a combination of self-centered attitudes, motivations, and behaviors that have adverse effects on subordinates, the organization, and mission performance. This leader lacks concern for others and the climate of the organization, which leads to short- and long-term negative effects"* (Wilson, 2014). Witness leaders with enormous power and responsibility who do not see how egocentric prejudices and projections distort their perceptions or how reptilian survival reactions distort their relationship to the world. They are blind to how reactive emotions like anger or fear distort their actions.

Why does this matter? Consider the state of the world today. The reality of ecological, financial and technological interconnectedness is now much more obvious, complex and vulnerable. Actions seem able to travel further and faster. A rogue trader can send a market spiraling. Prolonged drought in California affects the food supply of the nation. A nuclear accident shifts the environmental, political and economic dynamics of an entire region. Can a leader act with skill and wisdom without first learning to deftly handle one's built-in but often inappropriate survival reflexes, cognitive biases, or emotional reactions? With institutions and communities reeling from economic, ecological and social disruption, can they afford not to better manage themselves?

How can decision-makers muster wisdom, ingenuity and insight to make effective decisions and take effective action? Certainly, naturally talented individuals can arise to the occasion. However it is more effective for leaders to systematically learn how to manage their own toxicity and cultivate their generative qualities to the benefit of themselves and their teams. Indeed research is beginning to demonstrate that a leader's quality of mindfulness influences employee experience and performance. Reb and colleagues (2012) found positive associations between a leader's trait-level mindfulness with greater employee job satisfaction, job performance, organizational citizenship behavior and well-being. The employees of mindful leaders were less exhausted and enjoyed better work-life balance. Mindfulness training provides a developmental pathway for a capable leader.

Why Hasn't A Systematic Method for Managing Oneself Emerged Before and Why Now?

While mindfulness and meditation are often associated with Asia, the idea of developing attention for effective self-management is not a uniquely Asian idea. In addition to Drucker, the idea appears many times in Western thought. Adam Smith advocated cultivating an Impartial Spectator who could act as a witness to one's action to assess and guide moral behavior (Smith, 1759/1976). A century later, William James asserted a connection between disciplined perception and self-mastery and the essential need for developing attention: "[T]he faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character and will. No one is *compos sui* [master of oneself] if he has it not. An education which should improve this faculty would be *the* education *par excellence*" (James, 1890). Unfortunately, he did not have a practical method for realizing this ideal. In a sense, the West was "all talk and no action."

Years later, James, after hearing a Harvard lecture by Buddhist teacher Anagarika Dharmapala, stood up and declared that "This is the psychology everybody will be studying twenty-five years from now" (Fields, 1981, p 135). Unfortunately, while 20th century Western psychology created models of development that spoke to cognitive and emotional development (Piaget, 1967), linguistic development (Vygotsky, 1962), identity development (Erikson, 1950), and moral development (Piaget, 1932; Kohlberg, Levine and Hewer, 1983; Gilligan, 1982) it never produced a model of attention development. It took nearly a century for James' vision to become a reality.

Efforts over the past four decades have slowly built a foundation of empirical evidence demonstrating transformative capacity of contemplative practices. Many individuals and institutions have contributed to this effort. The Mind and Life Institute held its first public symposium at MIT in 2003. This event occurred after years of dialogue between top Western scientists and "professional" contemplatives including the Dalai Lama. Under the theme of "Investigating the Mind," this event is considered a watershed moment in bringing scientific credibility to the study of inner transformation. It made meditation discussable in polite company. Other significant figures made this possible too. Jon Kabat-Zinn of the University of Massachusetts created the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program. MBSR was the first systematic mindfulness tool to be delivered in secularized contexts and subject to rigorous research protocols (Kabat-Zinn, 1990) Findings have shown that MBSR changes brain activity and structure, enhances emotional regulation, memory and perspective taking (Davidson, Kabat-Zinn, *et al.*, 2003, Hölzel, *et al* 2011). Others have found that mindfulness enhances cognitive functioning, including focused attention, working memory and unfocused sustained attention (Chiesa & Serretti, 2010). Mindfulness has been associated with greater well-being, self-awareness, and self-regulatory measures as well as decreased negative affect (Brown & Ryan, 2003); for a discussion of numerous other effects of mindfulness, see

the other chapters in this volume or Brown, Creswell and Ryan's forthcoming *Handbook of Mindfulness: Theory, Research and Practice*.

Mindfulness at a Management School?
What is the intellectual foundation for why mindfulness and contemplative practices are relevant, if not essential, in a management education? How does this "woo-woo" stuff relate to the serious business of management? Why should a manager invest energy in learning a set of seemingly mystical practices associated more with ascetics than executives? How to discuss practices for inner development using everyday language so that they don't seem off-putting? What is needed is a rhetorical strategy so convincing that a hard-headed finance or engineering executive can embrace these practices as common sense necessities. The answers I found to these questions came from different directions to cohere into a clear picture.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, mindfulness, meditation and allied practices were not on the cultural radar in the way they are today. The now exploding body of science was still gestating. In large part, mindfulness and such things occupied a place in the public imagination somewhere on the incense-scented shelf between tarot cards and crystal healing. The essential relevance of these practices to effective management was not at all clear.

However, pioneers in the professions, like Jon Kabat-Zinn in medicine (1990), Ronald Epstein (1999) writing on mindfulness in the workplace, Len Riskin (Riskin, 2002) in law and even pro basketball coach Phil Jackson (Lazenby, 2001) with the championship Chicago Bulls and LA Lakers, build a plausible case that managers might benefit from mindfulness. They demonstrated a clear relationship between quality of attention and quality of experience and performance. People who are present and aware function more effectively and they generally feel better in the process.

Another powerful block of evidence came from a project I was involved with that explored the relationship between contemplative practices and "good work" (Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi & Damon, 2002). The study consisted of a series of detailed interviews with successful professionals who were also long-term mindfulness practitioners. Study participants came from a variety of backgrounds and included healthcare executives, scientists, journalists, film producers and a Fortune 500 CEOs (Hunter & McCormick, 2008). From these conversations, a consistent picture emerged describing how mindfulness practice had deeply transformed these individuals' relationship to their work.

A few participants gave up unsatisfying, extrinsically-driven careers for more intrinsically meaningful livelihoods. One architect walked away from a glamorous global career for a more human-scaled, contemplative approach to work. Others discussed how the practice had saved them from a life driven by self-centered ruthlessness and lead them down the path of compassionate action. Many described

how mindfulness practice gave them solid ground to stand on in the face of complex and contradictory demands. Without fail, they all offered concrete examples of moving out of a narrow, selfish way of living to a larger reference point informed by a greater sense of service, even in traditional corporate contexts. They also described how they felt more effective at living, handled conflict better, skillfully managed difficult emotions, and made wiser, healthier decisions. "Productive" meant not just "getting things done," but doing the right things while living from a place of greater intrinsic meaning, personal responsibility and social contribution.

This study taught me how mindfulness creates choices for practitioners about how they take action in the world. Mindfulness helped me create choices too. For nearly a decade at that point, I had lived with a chronic, degenerative, and supposedly terminal autoimmune disease, and I relied on meditation and mindfulness to manage difficult emotions, focus my energy and, frankly, help me live day-to-day. It gave me tools to take responsibility for my own pain and suffering. Instead of projecting my suffering out into the world on innocent others or suppressing it out of my awareness, mindfulness gave me the ability to metabolize the energies of anger, fear and anxiety. In so doing, I could make better choices and take wiser actions to live in a positive way.

An additional stream of support came from the research of my graduate advisor Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi at the University of Chicago. His writings on human development (Csikzentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, Csikszentmihalyi 1993) emphasized that human beings who better controlled their attention, their limited resources of psychic energy, were better equipped to control their own future. After all, our lives are what we attend to. Failing conscious control of attention people are vulnerable to seduction from biological or cultural programs not of their own making or in their own interests. From Csikszentmihalyi's point of view, willfully controlling attention was the basis of the good life—it created the option to create options. To me, mindfulness is the clutch that moves us from habit to conscious choice.

A final thread comes from the writings of Peter Drucker. Critical that education focused too heavily on analysis, he claimed that in a dynamic environment it was also crucial to develop *perception*. In a world defined by knowledge, being able to perceive invisible configurations of meaning was essential to function and adapt in a changing world (Drucker, 1989). Furthermore, he emphasized the necessity of "trained perception and disciplined emotion" to create mature human beings who are capable of functioning in the world (1983/1992, p.319). Mindfulness trains perception to make more conscious invisible structures of meaning that drive action. It is an uncanny parallel.

The combined effect of experiences with mindfulness from other professions, the experiences of the study participants, my experience of mindfulness in relationship to illness, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's connection between quality of attention and quality of life and Peter Drucker writing about the importance of cultivating perception and emotion created a compelling possibility. Mindfulness is deeply relevant to audiences

outside Buddhist practice centers and monasteries. Mindfulness could form the foundation of a practice of self-management. The ability to "manage oneself" might be the basis of a "new" liberal art forming a vital part of any truly educated person's set of skills.

Developing The Executive Mind Course: Principles and Practices

This section addresses how to implement a mindfulness course in a conservative management setting. The core strategy used in The Executive Mind course is to splice the DNA of mindfulness practice into a management environment without arousing an immune response. Because the needs of managers are (at least on the surface) different from those of medical patients or spiritual aspirants, the framing of mindfulness must shift to meet that circumstance. Special considerations need to be made about what is relevant and appropriate when introducing mindfulness into a management context. These include emphasizing action and results, familiar language, and practical and immediate value of the tools and frameworks.

Stress Reduction is the Starting Point, Not the Aim of the Work
The thrust of the course is not reducing stress but cultivating internal conditions that lead to effective action. Of course, having a calm, less-stressed mind is intrinsically important because it is healthier for the body. However, the course helps the participant cultivate the ability to make wiser, more effective and compassionate choices for themselves and those they manage and live with. Enhancing their capacity to make choices emerges from them seeing how their mind is reacting to a situation. As the student observes this reaction that is normally hidden from view it becomes amenable to change. A person's mindful observation of the contents of their consciousness creates the possibility for transforming their results. A Buddhist might say the course transforms a person's *karma*, the genesis of their actions, to evince a positive shift in their *vipaka*, the fruits of their results. A later section will discuss the frameworks students use to implement this goal.

Natural Language Over Spiritual Jargon
Language is a key factor for creating willingness to try these practices. For managers who are comfortable in a world of rational analysis, asking them to dive into the pool of perception and emotion is a big, scary step. The rationalist may also bring a fair share of skepticism for this work. Language that can be alienating or off-putting detracts from learning the practice. To make the course as accessible as possible, I chose not to use Sanskrit or Pali terms or any other "spiritual" terminology. Words or phrases that sound out of place in a contemporary workplace or in competition with one's existing religious or spiritual commitments are not used. Depending on the circumstances, I even avoid the word "mindfulness" in favor of "enhancing attention and awareness." Even after a decade of teaching, some environments still see "mindfulness" as New Age frippery or faddish nonsense (A prime examples is Luke Johnson's "Stoic response to

the fad of meditation" in the May 13, 2014 *Financial Times*). The intention is not to "sell" an ideology of mindfulness but create a condition where a person experiences living in attention.

Incidentally, I have found that my most religious students find a complementary relationship between their faith commitments and cultivating greater attention and awareness. They consistently report that the tools help them to better enact their faith commitments in the world, and they often become the course's most enthusiastic supporters. Further examples of how language is used will be explored later in the chapter.

Moments as Units of Analysis
Every discipline needs a unit of analysis, a lens through which it sees the world. Mindfulness offers a powerful way of seeing the world: the unit of the moment. This is rather distinct because typical conversations about "managing oneself" happen at the level of a person, emphasizing personal traits, qualities or habits. What are Rajiv's strengths and weaknesses or Sally's Myers-Briggs type? However, by focusing on the scale of the moment, mindfulness brings into view previously invisible factors affecting productive action.

Moments are the scale at which people experience the world. By directing attention to what is happening inside right now, a window opens to what is often unseen but not unfelt. New elements come into focus. Just as a movie is made up of the combination of light and sound, image and motion, our experience of life is made up of the combination of body sensations, emotions and narratives and images (McLeod, 2001).

The most concrete element of experience are sensations in the body. These can register as tensions, pressures, places of warmth or coldness, internal movements or qualities of space. Someone might notice tension in the jaw, an open feeling in the abdomen, a subtle vibration in the chest or a multitude of other possible sensations. A second character is emotion. Happy, fearful, strong, contentment, doubtful, curious, joyful, angry, irritable, enjoyment are only a few potential emotions. Often these intertwine with specific body sensations. The third category consists of inner narratives and images. These are the stories and pictures in one's head that form the running commentary to the flow of experience. These can be the thoughts, judgments, assumptions, expectations, explanations, preconceived notions that overlay what is happening right now. Managing oneself involves becoming aware of the contents of this flow and how they influence action in the moment.

Moments are also an unseen and unmeasured, but not unfelt, dimension of organizational life. Just as a TV screen is made up of thousands of pixels, organizational life is comprised of a web of momentary events. A manager sitting in a meeting has an impulsive thought to check her phone and reflexively steals a quick glance. This momentary distraction is interpreted by a colleague as a lack of interest. An off-hand

comment is misinterpreted by an associate as a snub who then withdraws vital resources from the team. A manager looking over a faltering project feels a sense of panicked pressure in his forehead that leads into a sudden outburst scaring people from bringing him bad news. These momentary actions ripple out into the workspace affecting the quality of interaction, commitment and productive work. Mindfulness can shed light on these moments, raising awareness of previously unseen dynamics. Just as the invention of a microscope opened up a new previously unseen view on reality, mindfulness can help us see ourselves and our actions in a new way.

Focus on Process and Content of Immediate Subjective Experience,
One danger of implementing a mindfulness course in an organizational setting is that it becomes a group therapy session. This can feel inappropriate in a professional context where one is surrounded by colleagues and potential career competitors. Therefore, the course is structured so that participants focus on the immediate internal processes of their experience. Discussing the process of how their mind worked in a situation rather than the larger narrative circumstances puts a tight focus on what gets aired. For example, Fred gets impatient in a meeting and loses his temper but discusses it like, "I heard a colleague say something which my mind registered as negative. I noticed there was a story in my head about how this wasn't going to work out well and I felt concerned. It reminded me of a past experience where something similar was being discussed and the outcome was a disaster. A bolt shot off inside me and before I knew it I was yelling at my colleague." We know exactly what was happening in Fred's head but the identities of the people being discussed, their personal histories, and the content of the meeting all remain out of the frame. By focusing on the process of experience, privacy and discretion can be maintained. It also holds a frame for Fred to be responsible for how he manages himself, rather than displacing blame to others, getting caught in a narrative about others and so on.

Emphasis on Taking Effective Action
Because executives are defined by action and decisions, the class emphasizes action in life, not contemplation divorced from the mess of the world. Mindfulness practiced in a blissful retreat setting is not so helpful for the leader who needs to be mindful when the metaphorical bullets start flying. Instead, the mess of the world is embraced as an arena for training.

The course is oriented towards the student's life through exercises called "live-fire practices" nodding to military exercises where real, not rubber, bullets are used. Live-fire practices address an issue common to meditators: the "off-the-cushion dilemma." This occurs when the peace and calm of the meditation practice do not necessarily translate to peaceful, calm action in the world. By making the student's life the meditation hall participants practice in a much more demanding and intense way.
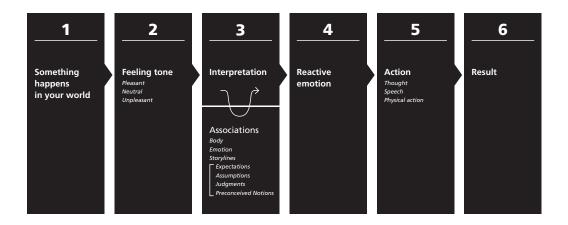
First-Person Case Studies

No third person case studies are employed. By making their lives the case studied, a powerful set of personal insights arise from students' weekly investigations. By relying on the students themselves to observe and study their experience, they arrive at insights more immediately than if the course lecture had simply "told" them what the "right" answer is.

Consider the situation of Fatima, a manager at a large aerospace company. A direct report of hers sought her out for advice in dealing with a difficult client. Wanting to be helpful, Fatima fires off a checklist of what the younger associate needs to do. She notices the associate shut down and stop listening. Her initial reaction is to think the associate is ungrateful and wasting her time. However, she steps back and considers her own actions. She realizes that her voice was raised and her tone stern. Her "helpfulness" comes off as scolding and prickly. She reverses course and apologizes. She asks the associate more about the experience with the client and then brainstorms together different possible actions. The exchange becomes upbeat and positive. The associate leaves smiling with a list of action items. For Fatima, the exchange is a revelation. Her actions come across counter to her intentions to "help." She begins to be aware of how this pattern plays out elsewhere in her life. "No wonder my kids think I'm a Tiger mom!" She begins the patient process of creating a different pathway.

A Map for Managing the Mind

1	2	3	4	5	6
Something happens in your world	Feeling tone *Pleasant* *Neutral* *Unpleasant*	Interpretation Associations *Body* *Emotion* *Storylines* ⌐ *Expectations* ⎸ *Assumptions* ⎸ *Judgments* ⌐ *Preconceived Notions*	Reactive emotion	Action *Thought* *Speech* *Physical action*	Result

Based on *Wake Up to Your Life* by Ken McLeod, Harper San Francisco 2001.

Let's turn toward a more practical and personal direction. The following sections will discuss how to practice mindfulness in action, including case studies followed by italicized prompts for inquiry. These practice prompts are ways to incorporate mindfulness in the moment.

Though the course includes regular meditation practices, what makes it unique is its systematic approach to action. The primary tool I use is a map, which forms the pillar around which the Executive Mind class is built. The map describes the mind's reactive process, drawn from the teachings of Ken McLeod, known for his modern interpretations of traditional Tibetan teachings (McLeod, 2001). Developed in collaboration with McLeod and my colleague Scott Scherer (Hunter & Scherer, 2008), the "Reactivity Map", or the "Moment Map", is used to help students understand their momentary and past automatic, reactive patterns, the results they bring about and how to transform them. The map provides a tool to "override the old connections between stimulus and response" (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi 2006, p.9).

One pharmaceuticals executive confessed that at first, the process terrified him because he was used to a world of metrics, benchmarks and processes. However, as he began to work with the map, he realized the "logic" of how the reactive process worked. Once he understood there were clear topographies in the map, he relaxed into the process. His "light bulb moment" came when he noticed he could manage his temper at work "because people can be less forgiving," but not so at home. There he expected his wife

to understand and be forgiving. Seeing the imbalanced expectations in the two conditions through the map helped him embrace the tools.

One virtue of the map is that it makes space for a wider view of mindfulness than what is often presented in contemporary therapeutic literature as "present-moment, non-judgmental awareness," to include cognitive, evaluative dimensions as well as aspects of memory and body sensations (see Dreyfus' commentary in Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2013). Practitioners become familiar with how their minds work.

The map emphasizes mindfulness' core essence: the ability of the mind to stay with an object and not get swept up in a reaction (McLeod, 2001). Staying with an object, holding it in working memory, and not getting caught up in it yields an essential benefit: seeing or perceiving clearly. Clear perception allows the practitioner to see more deeply into the workings of the mind, recognize subtleties of the reactive process and make discernments about the causes and effects of these processes. The above example of the executive who expects forgiveness for his temper at home but not at work illustrates this. Otherwise, lacking mindfulness, one might be carried away by surface impressions, driven by short-sighted knee-jerk reactions leading to potentially undesirable results. Practiced over time, one begins to see connections between past causes and future effects.

The map starts with taking in a sense impression…something happens: a new email chimes, a balance sheet is full of red ink, the boss sighs during an important meeting. The sense impression is followed by one of three visceral feeling tones, pleasant, neutral or unpleasant—"I like it," I don't like it" or "I don't feel strongly either way."

Pleasant sensations generally give rise to favorable, attractive interpretations, wanting more. "Who can resist just one potato chip?" While unpleasant sensations lead to avoidant or aversive stories, an email from a difficult colleague is a tiresome nuisance. The valence of this reaction connects to a story or interpretation. The stories trigger associations of past experiences bringing with them bodily and emotional reactions as well as narratives that could include judgments, expectations, or assumptions.

Memories arise of the last time the difficult colleague caused trouble, bringing on a sense of dread felt heavily in the stomach, bring up the thought, "What does he want *now?*" This powers an emotional reaction, frustration, which leads to an action, <delete!> which brings about a result. Six weeks later he asks why his email about buying Girl Scout Cookies from his daughter never got a response. No Thin Mints this year.

Working with Reactive Emotions

Let's start by working with reactive emotions and move backward through the map. This is helpful because reactive emotions like anger, fear or disgust are often the most apparent for people to apprehend at an early stage of practice. The subtler aspects emerge as a person's capacity in attention increases.

Because they are unpleasant and sometimes dramatic, reactive emotions are often the first element in the reactivity map people become aware of. The reactivity can be so intense that the capacity to make mindful choices is impaired. Learning to pause and create distance between the reactive emotion and the action makes space for wiser choices.

Tracy is a senior administrator at a large hospital. She gets word that one of the hospital's nurses has tested positive on a random drug test. Instantly she feels a surge of energy course through her body. Her head pounds. Should she take quick action and make the call? Or should she wait to get a better sense of the situation? "What were my choices? What was best to do? I had simultaneous conflicting feelings."

Part of her wants to sound the alarm that would involve several dozen agencies to inform them of the circumstances. However, this would subject the nurse to a public inquiry and the hospital to potential litigation. Another part of her thinks it's best to get a sense of the whole situation before taking action.

She takes a deep breath and counts to ten. The emotional wave peaks and passes away. A small space of calm opens up inside. She asks herself, "What actually happened? What are the facts? Are we jumping to conclusions without more information? As the lead, what am I responsible for?"

She decides to consult the ten supervisors involved in the situation to get their input. As it turns out the test result was false. However Tracy found that by taking a moment to step out of the reactive emotion, she maintained a calm and collected demeanor.

"I acted like an air traffic controller, and it actually became fun. I took myself out of the stress of the conflict and became completely impartial. This allowed me to gather the facts, assess the damage, address the situation in a more focused approach rather than an emotionally-driven shotgun approach. The calm way of doing things turned out to be particularly effective. My approach was solution-focused, I made thoughtful choices, which resulted in a win-win result."

Practice Inquiry: *Just because I feel X does not mean it has to drive my actions. What can I do to create space between emotion and action?*

Working with Interpretations and Associations

Interpretations are the stories we create to make sense of a situation. People rely on past experience—associations—to make sense of things, a sort of mental shorthand (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999). Associations are triggered because a situation resembles a previous experience and are imported onto, appropriately or inappropriately, the current circumstance (Ekman, 2003).

When a person acts from a past experience rather than the actual one trouble can arise from the mismatch. The phone rings and the caller ID reports the caller is your most difficult client. Your stomach ties itself into a knot and you brace for battle. However, no battle is happening other than the one you're remembering from the last time he called. If you pick up the phone with a terse and irritated tone, you may unintentionally create a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Associations may over-focus attention on one area and exclude other aspects of a situation or person or problem. For example, the founders of Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression note that depressives habitually fall into a biased perception that emphasizes the negative aspects of a situation (Segal, Williams & Teasdale, 2001). Biased perception yields an incomplete picture and our actions may likely be inappropriate and the results undesired.

Sara works for a large entertainment firm as a contractor on a temporary project. Her boss is an intimidating, demanding figure. Whenever Sara spends time with her she feels nervous, pressured and somewhat overwhelmed by the boss' actions.

She notices the emotions she feels are influenced by the stories in her head. Sara examines the stories closely and realizes that she has thoroughly villainized the boss creating a picture of a person with no redeeming qualities. Past memories feed into immediate circumstances, prejudging that the current situation will not go well, sending Sara into a tense reaction. The boss walks into Sara's office and senses the tension, which in turn raises her own discomfort with Sara. Their exchange is clipped and cool.

Sara realizes these associations are freezing her assessment of the boss into a no-win narrative. She makes an effort to become aware of and drop her habitual stories about the boss. She observes the boss as if it's the first time they've met and notices that the boss carries around her own set of anxieties and concerns. A crack appears in her narrative. The boss gradually becomes more human in Sara's eyes as she realizes the boss is not happy in her job. Sara's tension eases as she sees the boss simply as another human being. Gradually, after weeks of effort, the boss reacts to Sara's newly cultivated calm and begins to open to her as a peer, sharing her worries and fears. After a few months, the boss announces she is leaving the firm and to Sara's astonishment, "she asked me to write a referral for her. It was amazing for me to see the change in our relationship that is no longer strained."

Practice Inquiry: *Just because this story appears in my head does not mean it's true. Just because my body reacts this way does not mean it is warranted. Are my judgments completely true? Are my expectations realistic or understood by the other? Am I harboring an unwarranted assumption? Are my preconceived notions freezing the possibilities of this situation?*

Phil is a senior planner who must analyze a great deal of data in his work. Working through a routine but complicated spreadsheet analysis, he lets go of his old associations and imagines this task is new to him. He immediately notices a way to remove three steps from this cumbersome procedure. "This new process was much more efficient and now I spend more time analyzing the data instead of building the data."

During a session mentoring a younger colleague in a procedure new to her but old hat to him, Phil decided to step out of his "known world" and imagine the situation was new to him, side-stepping his associations, memories and impatience. "I was able to see things from my colleague's point of view, as she had not run across this situation before. I really think this approach did two things for her. First it made approaching the problem less apprehensive for her. Seeing my humility made her feel at ease. Second, we were able to work all the way through the process. Before this exercise in this situation I would just tell her the answer, instead I showed her my thought process, which made her knowledgeable and more confident."

Through the process of shifting the experience from his point of view to the junior associate's he was able to more skillfully help her learn, build skills and trust in her abilities. He enabled the colleague to engage the process as an active learner rather than a passive recipient.

Practice Inquiry: *What if this was the first time I've seen this, been here or met this person? What is the other person experiencing?*

Working with Feeling Tone

Moving through to the start of the map, feeling tones are the visceral reactions of liking-neutral-disliking that arise when encountering something. Feeling tones are the "spark" that light the flame of a reactive process. Pleasant feeling tones engender approach actions and unpleasant ones lead to aversive reactions. A useful frame to see this happen is watching reactions to the names of senders as new email is downloaded into one's inbox.

Miguel is a logistics supply chain manager for the West Coast division of a large materials company. He notices a strong sense of dislike when a certain name, let's call him "Eddie Lopez," shows up in his inbox. Eddie sent Miguel an email asking about a product line Miguel is an expert in. What follows is the interaction between Miguel and me in response to Eddie's email:

Miguel: "When I see his name, my stomach turns into a knot!"

Me: "Why is that?"

M: "He's such a pain in the neck! He's one of our salespeople and is always pushy about what he needs. He frantically asks our team to get him information yesterday, but he takes his good old time to retrieve it from us. We're tired of being jerked around."

Me: "Sounds like he's frustrating you!"

M: "Yeah…we really can't stand him."

Me: "So, in addition to the knot in your stomach, do you notice any other body sensations?"

M: "I feel this rapid heartbeat and an edgy part of me wants him to go away."

Me: "Can you sit with that edgy sensation of wanting him to go away?"

He closes his eyes and shifts his attention to the sensations in his body for a few moments. After a long pause, he takes a deep inhale and then exhales, opening his eyes.

M: "I feel calmer."

Me: "I'd like to ask about Eddie…is he a bad guy?"

Miguel thinks for a moment.

M: "No, he's not a *bad* guy, he's just a pushy guy."

Me: "Tell us about him, is he married? Does he have a family?"

M: "Yeah, he's married. I think his wife is expecting."

Me: "So what's your assessment about why he's so pushy? Why would somebody be insistent about getting information?"

M: "Well…I know he's trying to land a big, new client….but the thing is Eddie is on the East Coast and he should be interfacing with the East Coast team, not us!"

Me: "Ah. So, his coming to you seems like an intrusion, because he should be talking to someone else. But it also sounds like we've identified a management issue. Why isn't the East Coast team supporting him? Do you know?"

M: "That's right, it's an intrusion. I don't know why the other team isn't helping him, I just know he gets answers from us. I'm tired of solving his problems for him."

Me: "So, let's step back. We agreed that Eddie isn't really a bad guy. He's married and has a baby on the way. While at the same time is trying to land a new client, but isn't getting the support he needs from the people that *should* be helping him and so he turns to you."

Miguel suddenly turns silent, looking down at his lap. He exhales deeply. When he finally speaks, it's in a whisper.

"Oh my God … I created this problem. I created the negative relationship with Eddie because I only saw that his requests would mean more things for me to do. When in reality, I should be helping this guy not judging him. I don't know everything that is going on with him and I might just be the only person he can turn to. I want to pick up the phone and reach out to him right now to get a sense of how things are going."

When the debrief started, Miguel's attention was hijacked by his own reactive emotions and judgmental storylines about his colleague Eddie resulting in frustration and upset. Once he shifted attention to become mindful of what he was experiencing, starting with the negative feeling tone, the upset reaction began to subside. His mind cleared, allowing the possibility to shift his attention to Eddie's point of view.

By challenging his own assumptions about Eddie he became aware of a larger picture and saw a different world emerge, Eddie's world. Miguel noticed that his own concerns about being impinged upon by Eddie's needs clouded his understanding of the larger set of causes and effects that Eddie was experiencing. Suddenly, Miguel's awareness shifted with empathy towards a nervous expectant father eager to be a success with a large new client. A compassionate desire to help Eddie arose in the place of judgment and frustration.

For Miguel, this analysis of his reactive pattern proved to be a turning point in his managerial career. As time went on he began to notice more moments when an assignment would cross his desk and trigger the unpleasant feeling tone reaction of aversion. Like a scientist collecting data points, these accumulated moments revealed a consistent pattern. He noticed how his mind's knee-jerk resistance undermined his effectiveness and responsibility as a manager and set the wrong leadership tone for his team.

He began to see these new assignments were opportunities for his professional growth. Instead of resisting them, he began to embrace them; even to the point of thinking proactively about how he could be helping the company expand its presence. He

realized that a neighboring firm needed one of his core products. He invited his counterpart there to lunch which ended with a new deal for Miguel.

There are other ways of working with feeling tone. Here mindfulness is a process of pausing. For example, when a sense of dislike arises the effort to make is to drop or step aside from the disliking and observe what's there. The phone rings again and you see it's a call from the same difficult but vital client, a sense of avoidance arises. Noting that, allowing it to be there without pushing it away, you take a deep breath and pick up the phone.

Practice Inquiry: *Just because it's unpleasant doesn't mean I have to move away. Just because it's unpleasant doesn't mean it's negative. (Think a visit to the dentist where the sensations are unpleasant but the result is healthier teeth.)*

Pleasant feeling tones are much more challenging to work with, because they feel good. They are harder to let go of or harder to perceive because we take them for granted. Lisa is always up for adventure and her job takes her to many places. When an invitation comes to go somewhere new, a sense of pleasantness and excitement arises. She feels attracted by the possibility of a novel experience and without thinking she agrees to take the assignment. However, her schedule is already packed, her body is tired from the wear and tear of travel, no matter how interesting the new prospect might be. She rechecks her calendar and begins to feel the anxiety of overload.

Practice Inquiry: *Just because it's pleasant doesn't mean I have to move toward it. Just because it's pleasant doesn't mean it's positive. (Think of the pleasant sensations offered by eating a large bag of potato chips, but also the resulting weight gain.)*

Hopefully, by now it is clear how the map works. Practice develops the ability to see the elements of the map and how they correspond to their experience. Practitioners begin to query themselves, What is my objective? Where am I putting my energy? What do I see as my choices? What am I actually doing? What happens as a result? Is this is a result that creates benefit or harm? Can I live with this? We can describe what mindfulness reveals with the model below:

Intention→Attention→Awareness→Choice→Action→Result

Intention creates conditions that influence what is sought and selected from experience. Intention shapes the placement of attention, our limited supply of mental energy. Attention brings information into awareness, interpreting experience through narratives as well as the body's somatic and emotional reactions. These reactions impact the menu of perceived choices, the array of potential actions and their corresponding results.

With time, practitioners begin to see the underlying stories and themes that drive their actions. Observing moments over time, patterns of thought, feeling and action emerge. Practitioners begin to see the genesis of their problems, the underlying experiential components and, with a bit of trepidation, begin to address them. What seemed out of their control and hopeless becomes workable. They see life through a new lens and find an ability to create options where their mind said none existed before. They "unstick" themselves. Cynicism gives way to fresh possibility. Of course there are setbacks, frustrations and aborted good intentions, but they become more willing to make the effort.

Lessons Learned and Some Practical Advice for Teaching Executives

After more than a decade of helping executives develop their capacity in mindfulness, here are a few lessons learned:

1. **Begin each semester/engagement with a dialogue about expectations.** The structure of the class is not a traditional "broadcast model" where the instructor "talks at" a group of passive students. It is more the creation of a community of learners. This dynamic must be consciously created. I have found that devoting part of the first session of a semester to discussing expectations the students have of the course, the professor and each other sets a positive frame for future learning. We come to agreement about sharing experience but not giving advice, holding course conversations in privacy, not having crosstalk and not using electronic devices during class. I tell them my expectations that they will work hard, turn in material on time and they share expectations that I will push them into challenging territory and be a resource and support. This dialogue is essential to creating a community over the course of the semester. I also follow up with a mid-term review to ask them if their expectations are being met and what needs to be changed if not.

2. **Value is not the professor talking, value is the experience the students are having.** One of my own assumptions that got imprinted early on in my teaching career is what the students experience is more valuable than the amount that I spoke in class. I try to keep my discussion limited to an hour in a 2 hour 50 minute class. Students also value in-class meditation exercises, mindfulness-in-action exercises and especially dialogue with one another. Learning from each other's experience is a powerful reassurance that they face common human problems and "aren't the only crazy one in the room." A typical 2 hour 50 minute class session breaks down like this:

   15 minutes: meditation practice
   5 minutes: discussing the practice as a group

> **10 minutes:** discuss with partner their lesson learned from the week's live fire exercises
> **60 minutes:** collect and discuss insights and challenges from students and document on the board
> **10 minutes:** break
> **25 minutes:** lecture on the week's topic, covering scientific findings or mindfulness principles and weaving them into students' insights
> **25 minutes:** in-class activity to concretize the abstract
> **10 minutes:** discuss results of the activity
> **10 minutes:** check-in, wrap-up, and set up for next week

The bulk of the class is not solely lecture, but a variety of experiences intended to emphasize the points for that week.

3. **Make everyday life the focus of the course with meditation as a support.** By equating mindfulness with mindfulness meditation one runs the risk of separating practice from living. As referenced earlier, a calm and peaceful meditator is not necessarily calm and peaceful on the streets. Bringing mindfulness into one's life is the purpose of the map.

   It creates a framework for observing the mind in action and is the foundation for a variety of mindfulness exercises. One week practitioners may observe the feeling tone of liking and disliking as it arises in their working life. While another week may be spent examining storylines or judgmental patterns of thought and their affect on results. Students can practice letting go or not-clinging to views or perspective and see how their actions and results change. At the same time, formal meditation practice builds strength and stability in attention to effectively use these skills. By emphasizing both formal meditation and live-fire meditation, the student receives a "full-body mindfulness workout."

4. **Aesthetic experiences are useful for bringing mindfulness to action.** Each semester, I hold one session at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The museum collection provides a number of opportunities to use art as a stage for mindfulness practice. For example, slowly walking the perimeter of Richard Serra's room-sized torqued steel sculpture Band (http://collections.lacma.org/node/214935) is an excellent tool for practicing mindfulness. Its undulations evoke a variety of reactions that help practitioners observe how physiological reactions frame their experience. Because the sculpture is divorced from their everyday experience it provides a "blank slate" to witness the mind in action.

5. **The instructor <u>must</u> have a robust mindfulness practice.** There is a direct correlation between the quality of my practice and the quality of my

teaching. My ability to be present, empathic and accepting of experience translates directly into the classroom experience, which student's detect. I also discuss my challenges and difficulties in practice to show that I also struggle with the same things they do. A support system is essential. I meditate daily and do at least one extended retreat per year. I also have several seasoned teachers whom I consult.

6. **The class is an opportunity to for the instructor to be mindful and practice equanimity and not-clinging.** The relationship between student and professor must be held in a field of non-judgment. A student's struggles are not for the professor to "fix" or weigh in on with "the answer." Allowing students to face their lives with unconditional support let's them know you are on their side. I ask questions to elicit thinking, but refrain from telling them what to do.

7. **Anticipate, screen for, and be ready to support students with unresolved life trauma.** I have discovered that students with unresolved trauma can have adverse experiences to meditation practices. It is also the case that such students seek out courses on how to manage themselves better. Before the class starts, students are asked to answer several questions about who they are, their work, their goals and interests for the class, and if they have a history of trauma. I let them know that the course might be challenging for them and to report to me if they have difficulty. I also let them know that I might suggest they seek out more professional help. I also received training in Somatic Experiencing, a body-based modality for healing trauma in case a student falls into a trauma-induced hyper-aroused state. I also keep a backbench of trauma therapists to refer students to for deeper work. The good news is they almost always seek out therapy. See: http://www.traumahealing.com/somatic-experiencing/practitioner-directory.html
for a practitioner near you. There are a number of different kinds of body-based trauma therapies, Somatic Experiencing happens to be the one I'm most familiar with.

Conclusion: The Future of Mindfulness in Organizations

I believe mindfulness in organizations will evolve through three distinct themes as practitioners mature. The first phase revolves around the most immediately obvious application: Mindfulness as Stress Reducer. This theme has years of research behind it and it is likely that the vast majority of people who seek out mindfulness and similar methods do so because they need tools to address pain in their work lives.

The second theme, Mindfulness as Performance and Productivity Enhancer, emerges from the first. As people practice they see that mindfulness has other results that extend

beyond reducing stress. Mindfulness gives tools to better manage attention in a distracted, multitasking environment. Skillfully handling emotional reactions affects the quality of their relationships and the possibilities that emerge out of them. Conversations become less contentious and more supportive. People work more harmoniously together and perform better.

The third stream, Mindfulness as a Tool for Change and Transition is emergent and represents a fuller flowering of the fruits of practice. Fundamentally, mindfulness transforms one's relationship to change. It enables the capacity to let go of what no longer works and generate more effective options. My most recent course uses mindfulness to help executives navigate transitions. Why might this be important? Many executive students come to class having changes thrust upon them in the form of organizational merger, job loss or retirement. They often lack tools for negotiating the inner shifts that happen because of outer changes. Mindfulness helps to mourn the losses faced when an old world, like a job, role, or organization comes to end. It helps them move forward to explore new possibilities and shed old beliefs, identities and assumptions making space to create something new.

As I write this, multiple sources portend potentially troubling signs ahead. These crises in the making hold implications for the role mindfulness might play in organizational life. The January 18, 2014 issue of *The Economist* featured a cover story about the effects advanced artificial intelligence may have on the white-collar workforce. Service workers, like doctors, lawyers and accountants, have previously been immune to technological shifts but increasingly sophisticated technologies are making these jobs vulnerable to disruption. What can be automated will likely be automated. The article cites an Oxford study that finds as much as 47% of today's jobs could be affected in the next twenty years.

At the same time, those left employed will perform functions that humans are uniquely suited to do: ideate, create, and innovate, manage complex interpersonal communication, and detect large patterns (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2013). Here too mindfulness will play a valuable role because it enhances these capacities that cannot be reduced to algorithms.

In this emerging tumultuous condition, what could be more essential than a set of skills that help people be calm and present, deal more effectively with their reactive emotions and make clearer, smarter decisions? Could it be possible that mindfulness might help workers constructively face widespread social disruption and suffering? Perhaps mindfulness can give people tools to more positively face and adapt to wrenching change? In a time where knowledge quickly becomes obsolete, mindfulness and managing oneself is a body of skills that will become a necessary foundation for facing the future.

Acknowledgements

About the Author

Jeremy Hunter, PhD

Jeremy is the great-grandson of a sumo wrestler and serves as Assistant Professor of Practice at the Peter F. Drucker Graduate School of Management at Claremont Graduate University. He has more than a decade's experience helping leaders to relentlessly develop themselves while retaining their humanity in the face of monumental change and challenge.

He created and teaches The Executive Mind, a series of demanding and transformative executive education courses dedicated to Drucker's assertion that "You cannot manage other people unless you manage yourself first." Hunter's courses seek to redefine and enhance productivity by cultivating quality of mind. He has been featured in the *Wall Street Journal, The Economist,* the *Los Angeles Times* and National Public Radio's *Morning Edition.*

His work is informed by the experience of living day-to-day for 17 years with a potentially terminal illness, and when faced with the need for life-saving surgery having more than a dozen former students come forward as organ donors.

Dr. Hunter received his Ph.D. from University of Chicago, under the direction of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, author of *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. He co-founded the Quality of Life Research Center at the Drucker School of Management with Csikszentmihalyi and Jeanne Nakamura, where he was co-research director from 1999 to 2004.

He also holds an M.P.P. from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and a B.A. in East Asian Studies from Wittenberg University. He relishes extraordinary Chinese dumplings, and obsesses about modern architecture. He and his wife dutifully serve two housecats who live in Los Angeles.

He is a contributor to Mindful.com, is on the web at www.JeremyHunter.net and can be followed on Twitter at www.twitter.com/JeremyHunter123.
He gave a TEDx talk "How to Change Your Future".

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