



Mindfulness

Thoughts on leadership

by Karl Pister



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This word can cause a different response in most of us. For some, it is a serious part of their spiritual path. For others, it may be a bothersome buzzword used in a lecture about preventing burnout. For others, it might be something they have heard about, know it is important, but don't have the time to pay attention to.

I have read enough to know that this topic is way beyond that of a bothersome buzzword and talk to enough people to know that there are very few who pay attention to it even though the research indicates that they should.





I also know that when I conduct what are called Mastermind Groups, which allow high-level professionals the opportunity to slow down, converse, listen, and reflect, the most common comment I hear is *“we don’t do this enough”...*

Megan Reitz, a British researcher whose specialty revolves around this topic presented a marvelous talk on this which I listened to the other day. I took some notes that I would like to pass along.

A significant part of her description of mindfulness is merely being present in the moment. Now, for some, this might seem just way to ‘new age’ to be ‘present in the moment’ whatever that might mean.

Bluntly, what it does mean is that you are paying attention. Some boxes you might want to check:

1. Am I paying attention to the person talking?
2. What is the message they are delivering?
3. Where would I rather be right now?
4. Why am I being distracted?
5. Is my phone out of reach?



We use the phrase in the world of emotional intelligence of “how you show up is important”. Again, what does that mean? It means that the research indicates that sixty percent of a message is carried through non-verbal communication. It always makes me laugh when people actually say:

I don't know how they came up with that conclusion...I didn't say anything

Not verbally they didn't, but the same research would say that only eight percent of communication comes through the spoken word. So the words might not have been expressed, but the physical non-verbal was screaming.

And being present is greatly enhanced by being silent. Or in Reitz's words, “shutting up instead of speaking up”. So very difficult to do for so many people. To reiterate the acronym that I have shared before:

WAIT – Why Am I Talking?

I challenge you to write that at the top of your notepad as you sit in your next meeting. Lest you think that paper and pen were part of the dark ages, they are actually part of very effective ways to concentrate better. In the next meeting, take written notes on those aspects of the conversation that need to be developed more. Note specifically what people said that impressed you. Take time to ask questions on those items. The very act of writing increases the focus that great leaders have.



And, sorry to say, recording those same things on a tablet or mobile device is not the same. The brain processes the hand-written word differently and locks in the data gathered much more productively.

Further, you know as well as I do that any use of electronics during such meetings takes away from the focus and can send the wrong message to those around you that your attention is less than optimal.

Take time to implement some of these steps. Reitz's research notes that just ten minutes of enhanced focus per day can make a significant difference in our capture of vital information.

Certainly worth that investment!





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