



LEADING WITH EXCELLENCE:

MINDFUL LEADERSHIP TRAINING TO FOCUS YOUR MIND AND GROW EXCEPTIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

In part three of our three-part discussion on mindfulness in the workplace, I speak with Janice Marturano, former Vice President and Deputy General Counsel at General Mills and Founder and Executive Director of The Institute for Mindful Leadership. As the first person ever to be invited to speak on mindful leadership training at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland this year, Janice is a visionary trailblazer paving the way for employees at Fortune 500 and other organizations including Target, Medtronic, Intel, the U.S. Army, U.S. Air Force and the American Red Cross by teaching them how to discipline their minds and find the space to collaborate, innovate and lead with excellence.

Q: Every journey is a personal story—how did you discover mindfulness?

Janice: My journey to mindfulness really began at the turn of the 21st century. It was a time when I was juggling everything and wearing many hats: executive, spouse, mother, daughter of aging parents and community volunteer. I was a vice president at General Mills charged with leading the FTC clearance of a high-profile merger. I was in charge of a wonderful team of people working 12 hours a day, seven days a week. What was supposed to take a few months became a nightmare process that dragged on for 18 months. We were all carrying an enormous amount of extra responsibility. Then six months into the merger, my mother passed away. Six months after that, my father passed away. Their loss was deeply felt. At the end, the deal would close, which meant that many thousands of employees would not lose their jobs, which I was told at the outset could happen if the deal did not get clearance. I finally

had a little more space to go back to my normal juggling and to grieve the loss of my parents.

Even though I thought I was starting back into a routine of normalcy, something inside felt incomplete—lost. I had this keen sense something was missing. It was anything but normal, though I continued to go through the motions. I confided in people I trusted, and someone suggested that I take time away to recharge. Go to the spa. Eat good food or just rest. But I already felt I had spent too much time away from my family. Taking off a week didn't feel right, but when a friend sent me a link to a spa, something out of the ordinary caught my eye. It was information about a mindfulness retreat—training for the mind—offered by Jon Kabat-Zinn. I was curious, and when we talked it over, my family encouraged me to go see what

it was all about. I didn't know what to expect at first from six days of training, but today I rank the experience as one of the top-ten most life-changing things I've ever done.

Q: There are so many definitions of "leader." What does that term mean to you, and what do you think are the fundamental characteristics of an effective leader?

Janice: My view of a leader in today's society is quite simply anyone with influence. And if we think about those who come to mind in our own lives, the people we consider as most influential don't necessarily have big titles. They're not necessarily responsible for massive budgets or promoted most often. Leaders in our personal lives can be members of our family or people serving in our communities. They're the people

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who have a real presence and make us feel something special. The connection we have to them is both strong and authentic. We notice their presence and their ability to be present. Training our minds to be in the present allows us to connect with others and with the larger picture. That's how we begin to experience influence and define the meaning of leader.

The extension of that is that someone who leads with excellence has the ability to skillfully initiate or work with change. Change is a fact of life. Everything is changing around us in our organizations, businesses, communities and families. As leaders, we need to see the changes clearly for what they are and welcome certain changes so that we can meet them with more creativity or minimize any harm or hurt. Ultimately, one's ability to connect deeply with oneself and others, and to be skillful in meeting changes, are critical components for leading with excellence and for being a mindful leader. And it's those people that have the greatest impact in our lives.

There are four fundamentals of leadership excellence that support our ability to connect and our ability to skillfully meet change, and they are at the center of the definition of a mindful leader. A mindful leader embodies leadership presence by cultivating *focus, clarity, creativity* and *compassion* in the service of others. These fundamentals of leadership excellence are true whether you're leading your own life or leading a team, classroom or a multibillion dollar company.

Q: How does the integration of the four fundamentals of leadership excellence with mindful leadership training enable leaders to succeed?

Janice: Let's take a look at the four fundamentals of leadership excellence—*focus, clarity, creativity* and *compassion*—and look at what mindful leadership training is about. As an example, let's look at one way we use mindful leadership training to cultivate focus. In this particular training, the instruction is very simple: pay attention to the sensations of the breath, the entire in-breath and the entire outbreath. If you were to take a few moments to practice this training, you'd notice your mind jumps pretty quickly to thinking about your to-do lists or a memory of something that recently happened. Suddenly, you've moved away from focusing on the breath's sensations. The distracted mind pulls us away, even when we want to pay attention to the breath sensations, or to a meeting or

an important conversation. So the rest of the instruction is to notice when the mind drifts away and redirect it to the breath.

Through mindfulness training, we learn to notice when we're no longer paying attention or being present. That redirection, when our mind is drifting away, is how we begin to aim and sustain our attention. A natural consequence of this awareness includes our ability to see our conditioned behaviors and our assumptions about what's happening in our organizations. They may be just that—assumptions. It's important that we recognize our unique filters so that we can learn to be open to what's actually here before us. In order to be my better self, I need to be able to recognize when my mind defaults to assumptions and clouds my ability to be present. Mindful leadership training cultivates focus. Through additional training, it cultivates our ability to see clearly; to have the spaciousness for creativity; and to embody compassion at work and at home.

Q: There's been conversation and debate across communities about whether mindful leadership training is a type of religious practice. Can you share your view on what this training means to you as you teach it?

Janice: The essence of what we're talking about is training of the mind. Just as we train our bodies to be stronger and more resilient, we can train our mind's innate capabilities to be more present, focused, clear, creative and compassionate. It's what I consider a personal but universal training experience. And although there may be aspects that have similarities to other world religions, it doesn't interfere with anyone's religious beliefs. There's been some misunderstanding regarding

ability to notice those moments in your day that you previously may not have recognized when you weren't present.

Q: Gallup's 2013 study, "State of the Global Workplace," revealed that 24% of employees are "actively disengaged," and 63% are "not engaged" in their work. That's a whopping 87% of global workers. What do you think are some of the contributing factors and is this something mindful leadership training can help address?

Janice: Yes, one of the things most commonly felt throughout many organizations is employee disengagement. More and more, organizations are recognizing that their employees aren't feeling fully engaged in their work. As part of our research here at the Institute for Mindful Leadership, we've conducted surveys in partnership with human resource managers at well-regarded organizations. For one of the survey statements, people were asked to respond to how they related to a statement: *I go through my day without really paying attention to anything I'm doing.* And what was startling to us, was that this statement was true for a very large percentage of the employees surveyed—around three-quarters of them. So what happened between the time when they arrived at the office and went about their busy days rushing from meeting to meeting, to the time they're looking at their watches at the end of the day? People report frequently that their attention was mostly spent on what's urgent instead of on what's most important.

Very often, we found ourselves in situations where we only have time to do the important

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the origins, teachings and applications of mindfulness training. Some categorize it as being new age or have the expectation they must burn incense and meditate on cushions. The bigger picture we're training to achieve is the vast expansion of our repertoire in the ways we access and connect with the critical moments in our lives. It doesn't require you to change the way you go about your world. The training offers the

work (a.k.a., the strategic work) late at night when we're not at our best. Leaders must look to find the space that enables them to focus more on the strategic, not urgent work. When we lead by expectation, then we don't have the time to lead by inspiration. Leading by expectation is really a form of check-the-box leadership. As a leader, this is what I expect. Here's how you do it. Now, go execute it. That type of leadership is

robotic. It can significantly impact discretionary effort, and it reinforces the disengagement issues in many organizations. On the other hand, I often hear from people we survey that if leaders create some space for their teams, they much prefer and will respond to a leadership approach that inspires and makes them feel like they're co-creating something important. And no matter what it is, it's been my experience that leaders can always find a way to make others feel inspired in the work they're doing. That's because it comes from more than just intellectual understanding. It engages and comes from our whole, authentic self. What results from that level of engagement will far surpass the outcomes of anything you might have set as an expectation.

Q: Today, we're hearing new terminology ascribed to business organizations such as "conscious business" and "conscious capitalism." Do you think it's possible for such organizations to exist?

Janice: I've spent a lot of time researching and writing on this topic, but I often arrive at one simple truth. An organization from a business viewpoint is just a piece of paper usually from the state of Delaware. Inspiration comes from the people. Whether or not the organization as a whole can be present and mindful, depends on the employees, leaders, the board of directors, even the community. Can it be done? Yes, absolutely. It has happened. Is there a greater need for mindful organizations and is there more that we can do? Absolutely.

of mindfulness. In fact, I believe we're just at the tip of the potential that exists in every organization. It's the primary motivation for what I do. I absolutely believe it's our best chance to address the global issues that we're facing. It will come from the people who have access to the resources and are awakened to their fully authentic selves. And if we move in a direction where space is created for everyone across an organization as a whole, the ripple effect will be limitless.

Q: For the first time in history, the 2013 World Economic Forum held in Davos, Switzerland included mindfulness on the agenda and you were invited to speak on the topic. So far, we've discussed how mindful leadership helps train the mind, but can you also talk about the importance of mindful communications?

Janice: We saw leaders from all around the world in Davos. They came from diverse backgrounds to speak about world issues. They also wanted to learn, share with others and make a difference in a global way. I noticed that during the mindfulness workshop, a consistent theme unfolded. There was this universal dialogue among participants: *I don't feel like I have any space to be myself. I don't have those windows where I can bring my learning, my heartfulness and my ethics and principles together in a way that breaks the mold and allows for change in our individual organizations or communities.* That experience, for many, brought to the forefront how mindful leadership training helps us to enhance our communications.

The opposite and more engaging scenario would be that we went into a meeting where the manager was fully present to the conversation. The manager listened deeply and whether that manager agreed or not, we still left feeling respected and fully heard. That back-and-forth communication leaves no doubt that a higher level of presence was felt.

When we multitask when having a conversation, there's virtually no engagement going on. It's an enormous loss when people are not taking advantage of those informal moments to just pause, listen and enjoy each other's company. And although technology makes us believe we're more connected on the surface—dig a little deeper. You'll realize that the more we rely on technology to communicate, the more we feel isolated and acutely less connected. It's important that we choose to look at what's actually happening in our lives and develop more capacity to consciously choose how we're going to spend our day. This includes times when you're going to cherish that connection with others and feel the need for humanity. There's nothing wrong with technology. IPHones and computers are important, but when technological devices become our principal source of communication, the resulting sense of isolation can feed, in many instances, a greater sense of disengagement.

Q: Are there reading resources you'd like to recommend for those seeking more information on the exploration of mindfulness and training?

Janice: I encourage readers to explore online resources like Mindfulnet.org and Mindful.org, especially for those interested in aspects of neuroscience and how they relate to the universal training of mindfulness. And of course, I'd like to invite readers to check in from time-to-time and read the series of articles the Institute for Mindful Leadership contributes regularly for The Huffington Post. In 2014, the Institute will also introduce online courses that will allow you to participate in mindfulness training in a virtual format from remote locations.

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At the Mindful Leadership Institute, we've hosted many leaders from, and created customized programs for, prominent organizations across a variety of industry sectors including Honeywell, Medtronic, Cargill, Mayo Clinic, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Duke University and others. Based on their participation, we're seeing tangible results in how leadership training can significantly boost one's ability to transform individually and collectively through the cultivation

Mindful communication is one of the most important and empowering aspects about an individual's ability to lead with excellence. All of us recall situations when we were in meetings and had something important to say. And while we were communicating, we saw our manager looking right at us and nodding. Yet, after leaving the room, we felt deflated. We left with the sense that our manager really didn't hear a word we said.



Janice Marturano
Featured Guest

Janice Marturano is the Founder and Executive Director of the Institute for Mindful Leadership, a nonprofit organization dedicated to training and supporting leaders in the exploration of mindfulness and leadership excellence. She founded the Institute for Mindful Leadership after ending her 15 year tenure as Vice President, Public Responsibility and Deputy General Counsel for General Mills, Inc.

Janice was a strategic leader within General Mills for nearly 15 years before leaving to dedicate herself full time to the Institute. While a corporate officer at General Mills, she co-developed the very first mindful leadership curricula at the University of Massachusetts Medical School's Center for Mindfulness where she served as a volunteer member of the Advisory Board. As a certified teacher of mindfulness and experienced former officer of a Fortune 200 company, she brings the intensive training of mindful leadership to leaders from all forms of organizations—corporate, nonprofit, academic, government and military. In 2013, she was invited to share her understanding of the importance of mindful leadership at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Janice's work was featured on the BBC, HuffPost Live, and in the NYTimes, Financial Times, Saturday Evening Post, Forbes, Green Futures (UK), Success magazine and LA Times.



Janice's new book, "Finding the Space to Lead: A Practical Guide to Mindful Leadership," published by Bloomsbury Press, will be available for purchase through Amazon and other retailers January 7, 2014.



Michelle Maldonado
Series Creator

Michelle Maldonado is a former corporate attorney with more than 17 years of leadership experience in strategic planning, operations and partnership development across the e-learning, technology and online media industries. She currently serves as Associate Vice President of Corporate and Strategic Relationships for American Public University System (APUS) and is the creator and editor of The Authentic Leadership Series. Michelle is passionate about talent development, coaching and the mentoring of professionals to support organizational success and sustainability. Utilizing an authentic and consultative approach, Michelle collaborates with industry organizations to form education alliances that support overall talent and institutional growth strategies. She also represents APUS in conferences and other venues on the topic of leadership authenticity and its convergence with emotional intelligence, mindfulness and other "conscious leadership" practices that inspire culture transformation. Michelle's work has been featured in Chief Learning Officer, Human Capital Insights, Leadership Excellence, and Training magazines.

To learn more about how American Public University System's programs and services may help you with your talent development and retention strategies, please visit: www.StudyAtAPU.com/Solutions or contact Michelle at mmaldonado@apus.edu.



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James Thompson is Senior Writer and Content Strategist at American Public University System with more than 16 years' experience as a communications leader, marketing copywriter and creative author. He draws insights from his executive experience leading human resources and corporate communications, and recruitment and talent management programs for Fortune 500 organizations.

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