Uncovering Mindfulness

In Search Of A Life More Meaningful

Paul A Mudd

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Uncovering Mindfulness: In Search Of A Life More Meaningful
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"I – You – Intentionality"

(Georg Wilhelm Friedrick Hegel 1770–1831)

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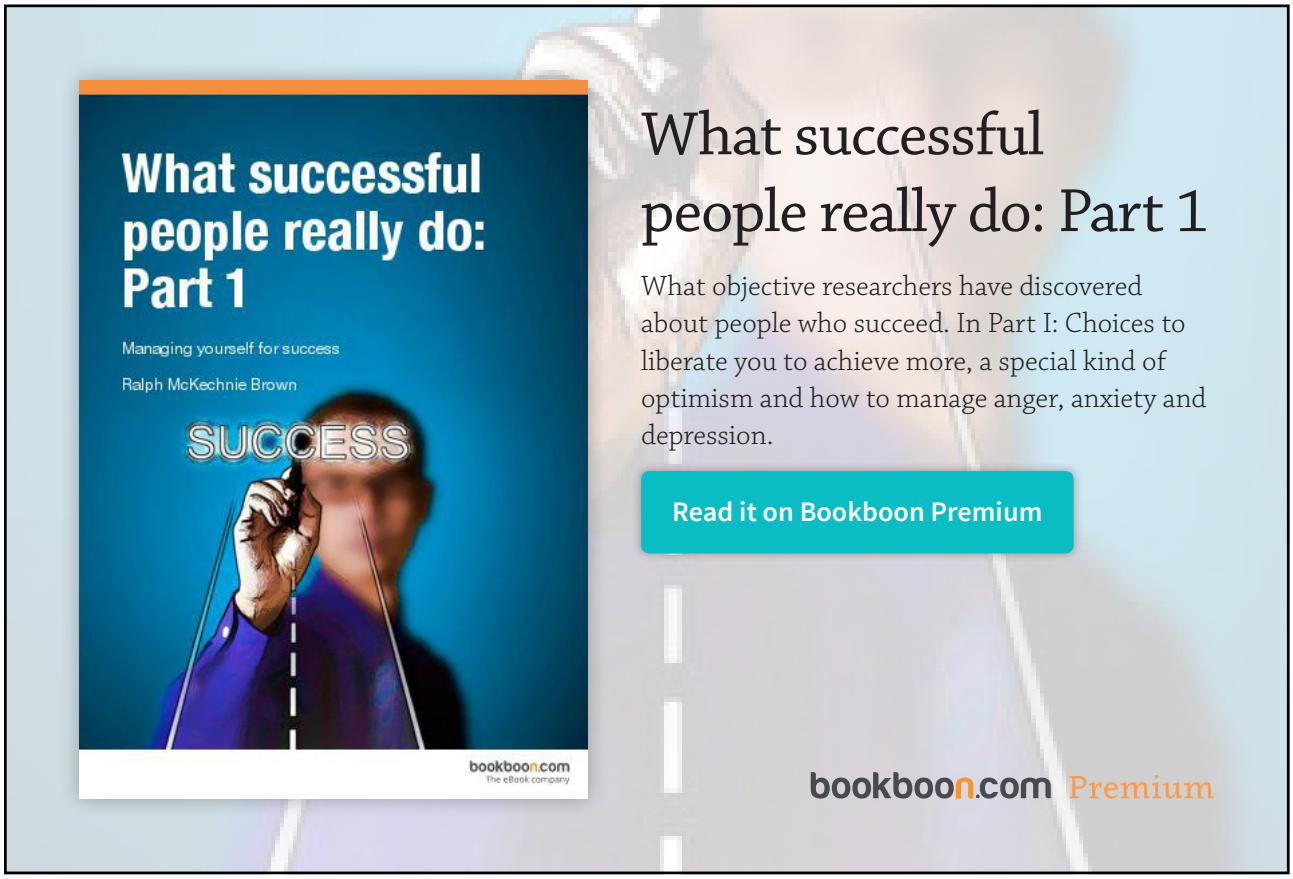
Contents

	Disclaimer	**6**
	Acknowledgements and Thanks	**7**
	About The Author	**8**
	Introduction	**10**
1	**"The Duvet Touching Your Toes"**	**16**
2	**"Roots and Shoots"**	**27**
3	**"The Brain Is Smarter Than You Think"**	**37**
4	**"The Compassionate You"**	**46**



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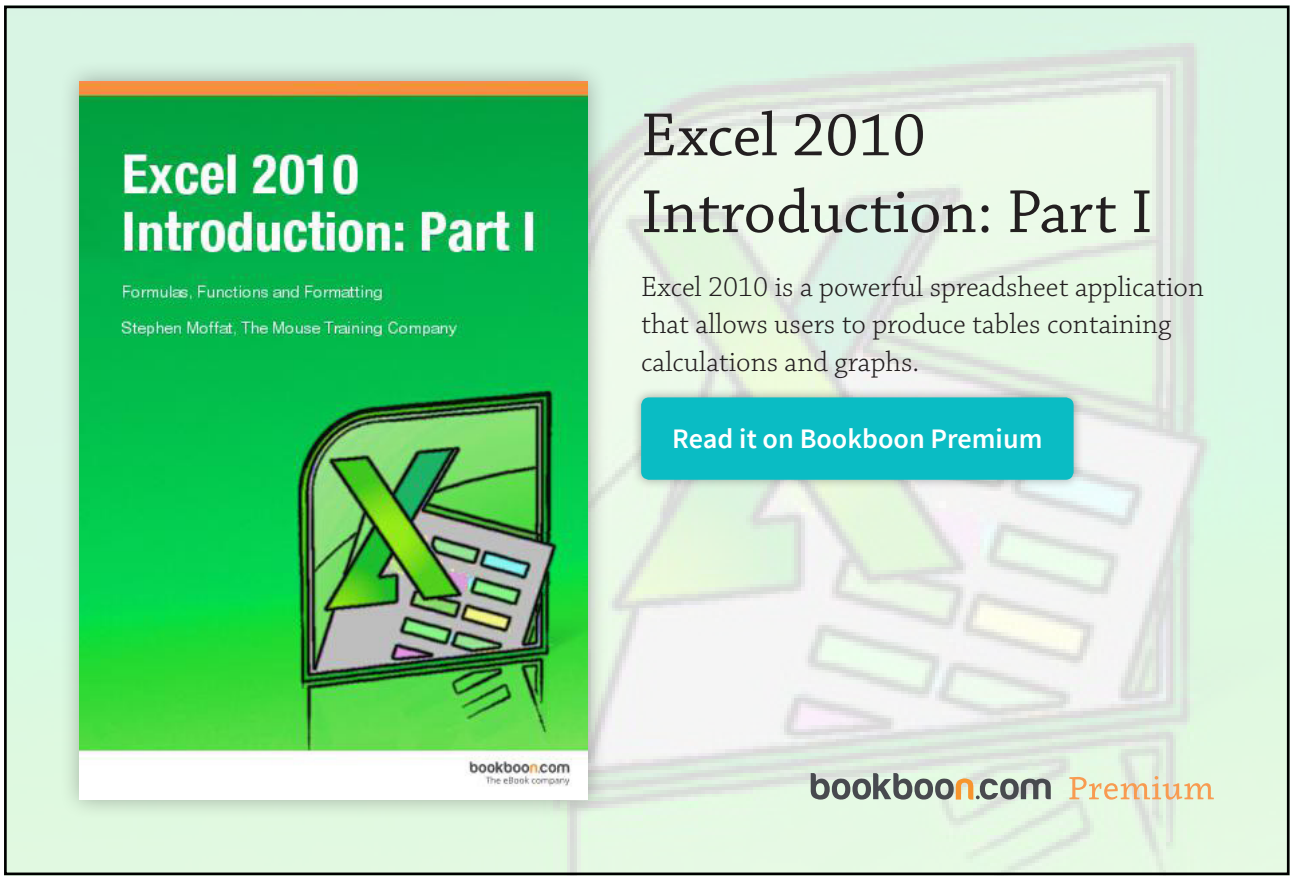
5	"Mindfulness In The Workplace and Every Other Place"	56
6	"How To Apply The Brakes? Tune The Instrument, Taste The Fruit!"	69
	Bibliography, Resources and Other Stuff	80
	Endnotes	83



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Disclaimer

Firstly, what this book is not.

It is not a book for Dummies, but neither is it a complicated book, or heavy with meaning hidden in every line.

It is not fantasy. It is not fiction. Neither is it a mystical or religious book.

In fact, it's very much about finding a practical way along a secular path, into something that could very easily change your life.

But it will talk about God and of Being, and, it will deal with some pretty big issues as well, that we are all facing in the world today.

I have spoken to a number of practioners of *Mindfulness* and related disciplines, as well as educationalists, medical specialists, executives and professionals in their fields, and, business leaders spanning a range of sectors.

I have watched a lot of TED Talks and other germane You Tube clips made by renound thinkers in their field and academics representing countless rich seams of research and study.

I have also read an *elephant's sufficiency* of literature covering the science, philosophy, theology, ideology and history of *Mindfulness* to arrive at a point where I feel I can begin my journey.

It's both an interesting and exciting time for *Mindfulness.* An All Party Parliamentary Group has been set up to report on it and how it can influence public policy across healthcare, criminal justice, education and the workplace.

What follows also looks at this and more. It has been written with passion and purpose. It is my interpretation – My perspective, set against some big thinking, challenging ideas and practical applications – and it's written in a way that I hope the reader can relate to, make sense of, pick-up and use in their daily lives.

Paul A Mudd, September, 2014

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Acknowledgements and Thanks

Firstly, I'd like to acknowledge Music and in particular Funk, Soul and Jazz, with a fairly hefty dollop of Country thrown in. Without the Goove that the Groove brings this book would have been much harder to write.

Secondly, a big thank you to everyone I've spoken to about *Mindfulness* – practioners, policy makers, educationalists, health specialists, managers, leaders, family and friends, and, of course, good old Joe Public.

And finally a special thanks to all the staff and customers of Blend Coffee Lounge (@BLENDTogether), Perth, Scotland, for giving me a place to Be during much of the thinking, writing and rewriting of this book.

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About The Author

Hello, I'm Paul Mudd.

I am a speaker, thought curator, teacher, author, coach, serial entrepreneur, co-founder of The Mudd partnership www.themuddpartnership.co.uk and father of five.

I am a Chartered Fellow of the CIPD, a Member of the Institute of Enterprise and Entrepreneurs, a Member of the Non Executive Directors Association, an Associate with Napier University's Edinburgh Institute of Leadership and Management, and an Associate with Tribal Education Group (UK).

I am a highly experienced Business Coach and Mentor, Facilitator, Leadership, Organisation, People and Change Management Specialist, with nearly 30 years experience working across both the private and public sectors in the UK and Europe.

I currently lead the Super Performance Series for Business covering leadership, performance management, employment policy and social business strategy. Whilst my writing and Blogs on business leadership, organisational complexity, motivation, resilience, managing change, influencing and employer engagement, super performance and most recently mindfulness are featured on a range of guest sites and platforms and reach a global audience.

My mission in life is a simple one:

"To make the complex less complex, the tough stuff not so tough and the unreachable within reach for everyone".

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And connect with me on LinkedIN http://www.linkedin.com/in/paulmuddcharteredfcipdmioee

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Introduction

"I am not lost for I know where I am. But however, where I am may be lost" (Winnie-The-Pooh)

So, Our Search Begins

What does Hollywood actress Goldie Hawn and Dan Siegal, author of 'The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Atunement in the Cultivation of Well Being' have in common?

What's got other Hollywood actors so enthused they went along with Goldie and talked about it with some of the world's most powerful leaders meeting at a Global Economic Summit in Davos, Switzerland?

What's engaged the interest of the great performance artist Marina Abramovic, who in the past has hung naked from a wall and used herself as an artwork?

What does the actress, broadcaster and now qualified therapist, Ruby Wax claim to be the secret to a happy New Year?

What have companies and organisations as diverse as Transport for London, Google, the US Army, Pernod Ricard, Facebook, Goldman Sachs and Carlsberg, got in common?

And what has brought together Olympic Athletes, Westminster politicians, peers of the realm and many more from the world of showbiz?

In A Word, Mindfulness!

Organisations ranging from City Banks and advertising agencies, to schools, government departments and third sector agencies are offering courses for their staff. There is even an All-Party Parliamentary Group on *Mindfulness* that will be reporting on mindfulness and public policy in healthcare, criminal justice, education and the workplace, in Spring 2015.

Why Though?

Do you check your mobile phone a 150 times a day? According to a recent Nokia survey a lot of people do! Or do you spend nearly nine hours a day on your mobile devices? According to Ofcom, if you do you're far from alone – however do you realise that is longer than most of us actually sleep each night!

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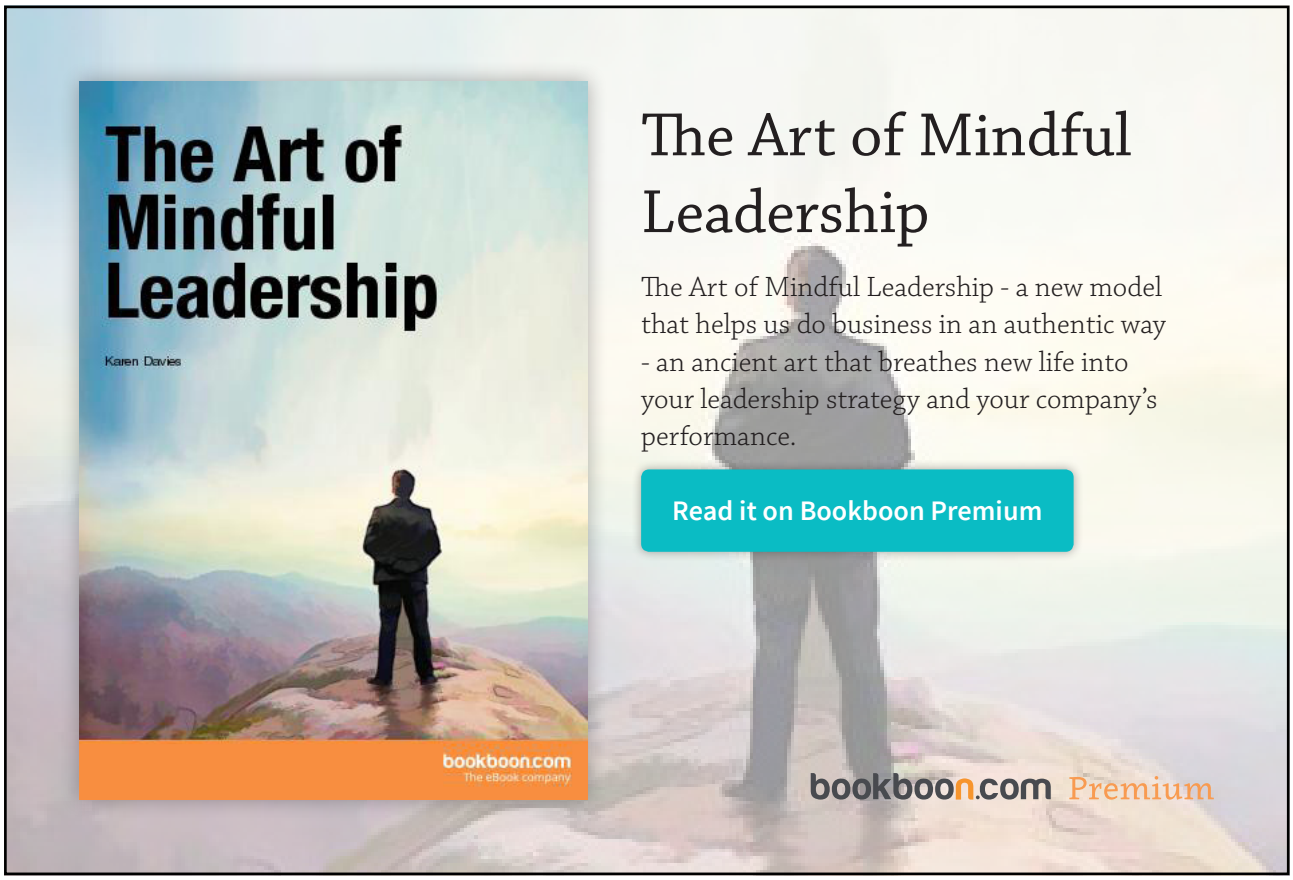
We are busier with excessive *busy-ness* and blinder than we think in today's complex and changeable world. The boundaries between so many things in work and daily life have become acutely blurred and not a tad confused in this Digital Age, yet we still have what is essentially a stone-age mind and a Lizard Brain – well, the oldest part of it as it's known. However, to try and make meaning – to seek to understand – is also a natural part of the human condition; driving each and every one of us ever forward and informing and shaping our engagement with the world and the people around us.

As well as being what Socrates might describe as *"active seekers after meaning"*, in the world today we live with the pressure and tension to find and define a mental space around us, where we can relax our boundaries, take some time to look inwards, reflect and recognise patterns, consolidate and hopefully learn from all that we experience. Well let me tell you, all this is not new. In fact over 100 years ago, Henry Ford observed that it was also part of the human condition to *"rush too much with nervous hands and worried minds"*, and people back then were also trying to find that ***plateau of peace*** although they might not have described it as such.



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Stopping To Think

Now let me ask you a question, like a certain Pooh Bear. Did you ever stop to think and forget to start again? Nancy Klein in her book 'Time To Think' (1999) identified *'Ten Components of a Thinking Environment'*. These provided a framework to enable people to think for themselves with rigour, imagination, courage and grace. The first component she identified was **Attention** and in her follow-up book 'More Time To Think' (2003), she described Attention as the *"Act of creation"*(page 33).

On the other hand William James in his book 'Principles of Psychology', first published in 1890, talks about – "*…the faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wondering attention, over and over again*" and describes it as being the *"very root of judgement, character and will"*.

In the practice of *Mindfulness*, Attention is also a key component, along with Intention. We'll be hearing a lot more about both these words in subsequent chapters and looking at what they actually mean in this context. Pre-suppositions are the assumptions that are built into the words we use. They are things that must be true for a sentence to have meaning and language and teasing out what words actually mean in a given context – the implied meaning and the derived meaning i.e. the meaning we actually take away based on how we unconsciously perceive words, both shapeing how we understand and relate to things – is a big theme of this book, along with why and how the Brain does what it does.

Indeed, the way we use language and the way the brain works are equally fascinating subjects. We are born with the ability to hear and make every sound in every language in the world and as you ask, that's around **6800**!

Meanwhile Neuroscience (the science of the brain) tells us we are born with the mental scaffolding already in place to learn language and as we do we increasingly become affected and our decisions and the choices we make are influenced by what we hear and what we read, both directly and subliminally.

We are primed by language from the get-go. Then as we mature, we are subject to programming by 'linguistic frames' operating outside our conscious awareness. These have a profound effect upon the way we both think about and perceive certain words, construct meaning and interpret language – and they are everywhere! We rarely notice them because our Attention is drawn (and held) inside the frame. The cognitive linguist, George Lakoff, believes that frames are in fact so powerful that they **trump facts** and that *"every word is defined with respect to frames"*.

Therefore it's important to understand this in relation to a construct like *Mindfulness* and the big themes of this book. For Nancy Klein the word Attention is used to mean an act of creation and should be understood in this context. Quantum Field Theory (QFT) tells us that everything is in fact created twice; before it takes form it exists as an idea. QFT also tells us that a higher domain thought always takes precedence.

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Schrodinger's Cat

Putting Schrodinger's Cat to one side though, Nancy Klein also suggests that the quality of a person's Attention determines the quality of other peoples thinking. Clearly then as we will see, this is not the same Attention that we need to understand and work with as we develop our practice of *Mindfulness*, because the practice of mindfulness is not an activity you do as an observer or recipient in relation to someone else. You may practice it in a room full of people, for example in a workplace or a school setting, but you are experiencing your body, your senses, your emotions and your thoughts in your moment. That is your sole focus and where your Attention rests.

Nonetheless, this interestingly illustrates a particular point I wish to make about how strands of popular thought, new theories, ideas and techniques on how to self-improve and lead better, more productive lives, all bid for an implied relationship with each other. *Mindfulness* as we will see in Chapter Two, has been around for a very long time. It predates much of the self-improvement, self-help genres by a couple of thousand years, although this doesn't stop the newer kids on the block assuming a prior relationship and borrowing some of the core principles of *Mindfulness*. They may inhabit similar territory with a traceable provenance to a similar discipline. They may be looking to make sense of, or meaning, and achieve similar things; but this doesn't make them ipso facto similar or related.

Implied Connections

A great example of this implied connection or forced relationship if you will, was contained in a recent piece in a Sunday Broadsheet. The writer here was trying to pair Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) that was developed in the 1970s with *Mindfulness*, by describing the latter as a form of eastern flavoured CBT-like problem solving using meditation.

A further example was to be found in a recent blog post on LinkedIn suggesting that *Mindfulness* is a key skill of effective public speaking and in this context mindfulness meant the ability to speak to audiences with total awareness of the task and the people. This does not suggest *Mindfulness* to me as much as bringing to mind the old question, *"What is the difference between a professional public speaker and someone who only does it occasionally?"* and its answer, *"The professional practices until they get nothing wrong, the amateur practices until they get something right!"*

Both these examples typify a sort of over-simplification that serves neither party well. It is though exactly what I want to unpick in this book; particularly as we go in pursuit of what I believe is the real functional, occupational, physical, mental, and, if you will spiritual value and purpose of *Mindfulness*. It might well be the missing link between cognitive therapy and positive psychology, but *Mindfulness* is also so much more, and, being a naturally disposed active seeker after meaning myself – or someone of whom Aristotle might say is driven, *"By nature and desire to know"* – I want to try and get to the bottom of it.

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A Personal Journey

So, in going in search of *Mindfulness* I am also going on a personal journey. I don't know whether I went looking for it, or whether *Mindfulness* found me – perhaps we'll just say it was serendipity. Let me put my cards on the table though. With five children, six grandchildren and finding myself once more in my life building a new business from scratch, I felt myself in *"clear and present danger"* to borrow a term from the US Military, of both personally and professionally short-circuiting. In fact, I'd been on an extended run of Mindlessness – a veritable 'World Tour' and for quite a while – **more concerned with having than being**: And living at speed, which Saint-Pol Roux described as a *'strophe'* in search of a *'cata'*.

So, what is Mindfulness and are you being Mindful or Mind Full?

In this book we will go on a journey, but a practical rather than a mystical one. It will also be an adventure that will take in the language and the philosophy of *Mindfulness*, as well as all the science behind it. Based on my conversations with practioners of *Mindfulness*, educationalists, leaders, managers and good old Joe Public, I'll explore how it can and does already impact on so many areas of our personal and professional lives. How it links with wellbeing, compassion, resilience, emotional intelligence, leadership and the practice of coaching. Together we'll also look at the practice and the practical application, particularly in the workplace and in schools.

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In the United States, Goldie Hawn, Daniel Siegal and Judy Willis, have come together to introduce a *MindUP* programme into the curriculum that goes beyond academics and teaches children how to be in touch with their emotions and manage stress through focussed breathing, focussed Attention, relaxation and awareness.

We'll look at this and ask why isn't this sort of initiative being taken forward in more countries, cities and schools around the world? I'll also be asking whether *Mindfulness* can really help the Human Race apply the brakes and save us from our *nervous hands and worried minds*?

On this journey in search of *Mindfulness* there will be no search for the *divine mother* or the *sacred space*. There is no intention to invoke a *spiritual awakening* and we will be having no truck with *vibrational fields*. We will though be looking at the science as well as the practical application and we'll also look at the contribution to our understanding of what *Mindfulness* is and what it can achieve, from a range of eminent – past and present – thinkers representing a plethora of disciplines, including *Mindfulness* itself.

Amongst others, Marcus Aurelius, Sharon Begley, Albert Camus, Michael Carroll, Michael Chaskalson, Richard Davidson, Angela Duckworth, Carol Dweek, Albert Einstein, Mark Epstein, Anders Ericksson, Barbra Fredrickson, Sigmund Freud, Bill George, John Gilbert, Paul Gilbert, Malcolm Gladwell, Daniel Goleman, Robert Greene, John Gribbin, The Venerable Henepola Gunaratana, John Haidt, Tim Hartford, Daniel Kahneman, Carl Jung, Jon Kabat-Sinn, Jenny Nabben, Shanida Nataraja, Nassim Nicholas-Taleb, Steve Peters, Daniel Pink, Andy Puddicombe, JM Schwartz, Peter Senge, Dan Siegal, Chade-Meng Tan (Google's, *'Jolly Good Fellow'*) and Eckhart Tolle.

Our line of enquiry will follow Simon Sinek's Golden Circle model: Looking at the why, then the how and the what. We'll ask many questions and we'll be looking for even more answers.

So thank you for coming along for the ride and let's be Mindful – **It's a complex world out there!**

Paul A Mudd

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1 "The Duvet Touching Your Toes"

This Chapter alights on the breath and asks what is *Mindfulness*? Are you being mindful or mind full? And how can you become mindful?

"All mankind's problems seem to stem from a simple inability to be alone in a room".

And one might add, *"Alone with their thoughts"*. Indeed, as far-fetched as it might at first appear, a recent experiment conducted in the United States and reported in the UK's Sunday Times (6th July, 2014) gave those who took part a simple choice. To either sit quietly in a room for 15 minutes and do nothing but think, or give themselves an electric shock. Two-thirds (mostly men) chose the latter option!

To be alone with one's thoughts then can be quite a trial and a test for many people, feeling a little uncomfortable and unnatural to say the least. It can feel kind of weird being still and not doing anything, don't you think? And it's not so simple!

So, here's the thing. That person on the High Wire crossing high above Niagara Falls is probably more present and being more mindful than you are being as you lay still, in your bed, with your duvet touching your toes.

Just look at the complete focus and control of the breath – each and every breath, and, the complete consciousness and the degree of Attention and Intention that this person on the high wire is demonstrating. They do not want to slip, or lose their footing and fall. They are wholly in touch with their senses and present with their interiority, breathscape, mindscape and landscape. These are all terms that the interested observer might recognise and understand as being part of *Mindfulness*; but is this what it actually is and is this high wire artist being truly mindful?

Some Definitions

A Taoist might describe *Mindfulness* as, *'Non doing'*, but lying in your bed you are doing – you're thinking of many things. Your mind is probably buzzing with random thoughts, half-remembered things and lists of stuff you've been putting off.

One of the world's leading exponents and practioners of *Mindfulness*, Jon Kabat-Zinn, defines it as *"Being fully in the moment"* and to be mindful is to be fully *present* in one's own space and time and fully inhabiting your interiority. Whilst the world-renowned performance artist Marina Abramovic, describes *Mindfulness* as a way of helping people find their way back to the present.

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It shares the same Latin root as the word *presence*, which is *praesent*; the literal translation of *praesent* though is to be *"present before others"*. Being mindful however is about being present just for yourself. A witness to your own thoughts, emotions, senses, as you experience them, as they come to you and as they go.

Mindfulness has been described as a psychotherapeutic method and also as a stripped-down mysticism free, meditation practice that involves becoming that witness. Is *Mindfulness* then, together with meditation, an example of a practice that essentially creates a *"container in which unorganised agents"*[1] in the form of observations, thoughts and feelings are welcomed? This is how Human Systems Dynamics (HSD) would have us understand it and HSD exponents would argue that in this form it's a manifestation of complexity theory, and, more precisely an example of adaptive capacity. For if in its purest sense you are honouring emergence and accepting whatever may show up, it follows that new insights and revelations (interconnections, patterns and re-configurations) become possible, which in turn can catalyse internal and external shifts within you.

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Looking For Patterns

In coaching practice this is understood as pattern management. The coach will make gentle reflections, observations and enquiries that pick up on threads from the client. There may barely be an actual question asked; instead there is an illumination of what the client says and does that serves to reveal old and new interconnections, patterns and interpretations, through which other possibilities and patterns emerge. Patterns can be dominant in all aspects of our life and in fact very little that happens is entirely random and without root in something that's happened before. There is a constant tension within each of us between individual and relational qualities and these have become known as the Driver, Visionary, Organiser and Collaborator[2].

In the past 40 years Neuroscience has shown us that the qualities we call the 'Mind' are not confined to the Brain. They are in fact intimately entwined with every system of the body. Moreover, the conscious mind or what we might call 'Thought', arises later than 'Emotion', which comes from the oldest part of the Brain – that Lizard Brain of ours as it invokes a fight or flight response.

In a coaching relationship there can be great value in working with the coachee to heighten their awareness of patterns in their behaviour and the relationship between thought and action. As patterns emerge the client's personal system shifts and the potential for transformation is activated. The client becomes unstuck and finds it possible to once again move forward with their life. In Chapter Five we will look at how the practice of *Mindfulness* can enrich coaching practice on the one hand, whilst on the other arguably serve to hinder it.

Another *Mindfulness* commentator, Rob Nairn defines it as *"Knowing what is happening, while it is happening, no matter what"*. The practice of mindfulness certainly cultivates self-awareness, so we can be more skilful at using our energy – mental, emotional and physical – in ways which increase our inner resources rather than deplete them, because where Attention goes, energy flows and as Albert Einstein believed – ***everything is energy!***

Be Aware and Pay Attention

Mindfulness can also be used as an umbrella term for contemplative practice and in that context it embraces four aspects:

- Paying Attention to experience in the present moment;
- Relating to the experience without judgement or resistance;
- Relating to the experience with the desire to alleviate suffering; and
- Understanding the nature of both experiences and the person experiencing.

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The latter two aspects are about compassion and wisdom, whilst the first two are more directly concerned with *Mindfulness* per se. We'll be looking more closely at the relationship between compassion and wisdom and the practice of *Mindfulness* in Chapters Four and Five. For us though *Mindfulness* means paying Attention on purpose to our present moment experience, with qualities like compassion, curiosity and an attitude of openness and non-judgemental acceptance. In very practical terms it is a life skill that can deepen our sense of well-being and fulfilment, and, in this context and understanding it is perhaps better served by using the Indian word *"Sati"*, which in translation means three things – Awareness, Attention and Remembering.

Here awareness would be understood as involving being conscious in your experiences, in the present moment and in every moment. Attention as a focussed awareness would perhaps best be described and understood as the ability to move and sustain your Attention wherever and however you choose: Whilst remembering would be understood in this context as paying Attention to your experience from moment-to-moment.

In fact, it is very easy to forget to try being mindful; the mindful state is not our natural way to be. Yet as we will see when we look at the science and Neuroscience behind *Mindfulness* in Chapter Three, this moment-by-moment Attention to what we are experiencing begets an awareness that can be transformative and pave the way for different decisions to be considered and made which in the long run have the power to change habits, behaviours, even lives; so maybe our adaptive capacity theorists are on to something?

Mindfulness Is More Than Just The Mind

Mindfulness though isn't just something that takes place in the mind; it involves the heart as well and here could be said to have contiguity both with heart-centred leadership and being present as a leader, which are both things we will also be looking at in more detail in Chapter Five.

Mindfulness is a way of being and involves kind curiosity. It's not a quick fix however and although changes can be felt relatively quickly, it takes time, practice and patience to hone the skill and we will be looking at some daily practices you can start to use when we ***"Tune our instrument and taste the fruit"*** in Chapter Six. What is important to remember though is not to be too hard on yourself and as much as anything else, meditation is meant to be a pleasurable activity.

Studies show that novice meditators often tend to put pressure on themselves to be successful and get there quickly – a very left-brain, *"Are we there yet?"* approach. Consequently, they take longer to benefit as the electrical activity in the brain recorded by EEG suggests that a relaxed state is harder to come by when you're trying too hard.

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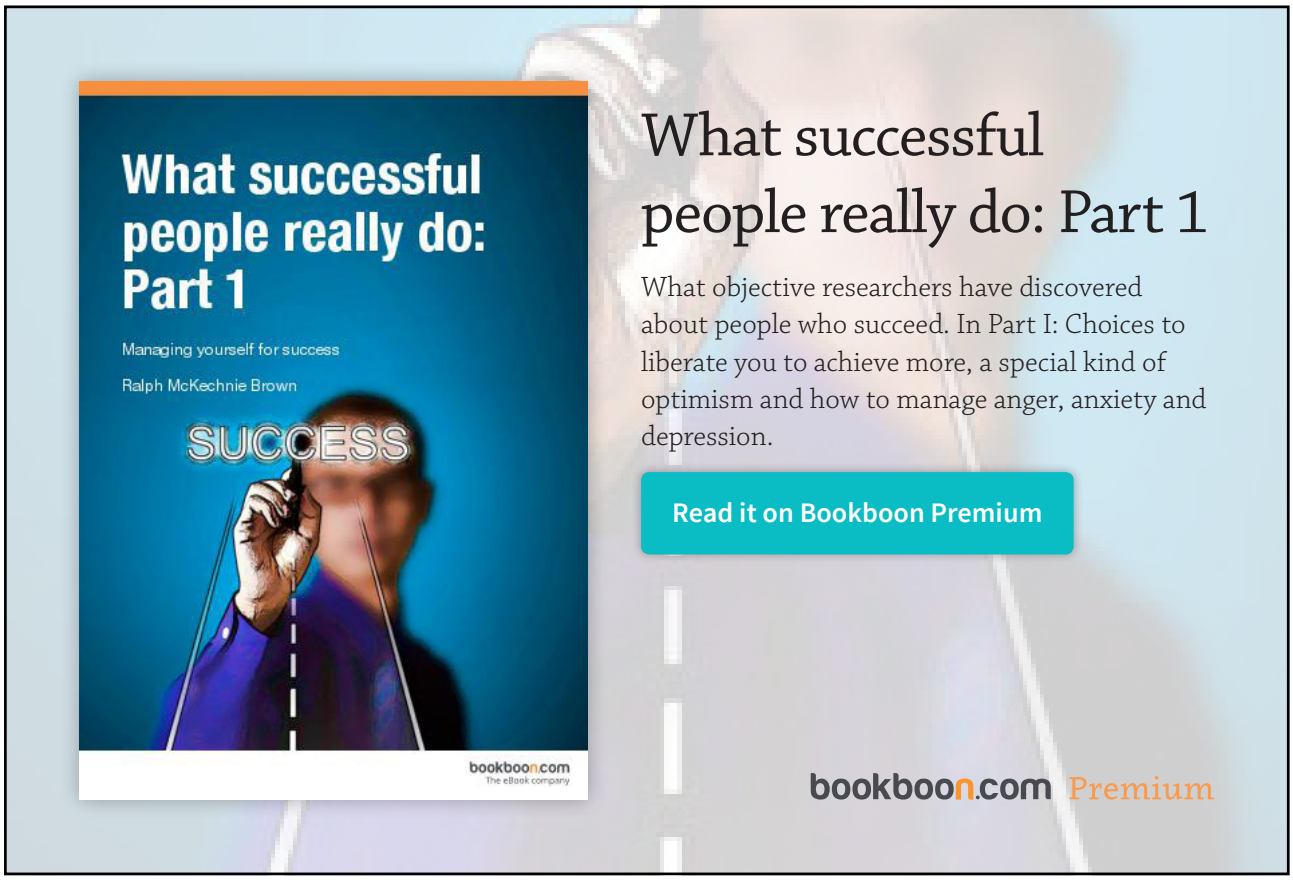
To begin then to boil it down and start to make our *"sweet liquour"*, *Mindfulness* requires two key ingredients for the stock – technique and attitude. The technique involves both formal and informal mindfulness meditation, with activities such as mindful walking or mindful eating.

Recent findings from a study of nutrition at the University of Aberdeen has found that the neurons responsible for signalling fullness at the end of a meal become more sluggish as we get older. These neurons that produce hormones called pro-opiomelanocortin (POMC) peptides, trigger signals to tell us to stop eating. As we reach middle age however, these neurons become naturally less efficient at releasing the POMC, but eating more slowly and mindfully can help to give the brain more time to respond to the signals from the stomach.

Whilst in the workplace such activities might include being mindful of emails or being in the present moment when in meetings and the attitude we bring to *Mindfulness* is equally important. It requires an openness and demonstration of kind curiosity, or compassion that is exercised without judgement or preference. In short, we are developing an attitude of accepting whatever is.



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Nothing Is Real

John Lennon famously sang, *"Nothing is real"* and maybe he was on to something too. We assume we know and understand the world that surrounds us. However this is purely an illusion. On average we can process five to nine items of the several million stimuli that surround us at any one time. This creates a limited picture of the world that we mistake for reality. *Mindfulness* perhaps provides us with a window on that reality?

In addition, the past is a concept – so is the future. Our actual reality is contained in moments. These are the only places where we can live our lives. They are very real. However, the notion of being mindful – being present, being more conscious of life as it happens – may seem contradictory. Particularly if like me, you've become accustomed to sacrificing living in the moment in pursuit of what you think you want.

A Personal Paradox

Here for me rests a personal paradox. For what has been the quality of the thought that has gone into thinking what I want and have I given myself time to think? Or as Nancy Klein would ask, have I given my thinking sufficient Attention?[3] As I think my way into *Mindfulness* and deepen my understanding through practice, I am beginning to question this more and more. Perhaps by cultivating *Mindfulness* I might achieve my goals and have a greater enjoyment of life? I might even change my goals?

As I've spoken and listened to more and more people, including some very experienced *Mindfulness* practitioners from around the world as part of my research for this book, it has become increasingly clear that being present in a Mindful way is the only way to really enjoy life to the fullest. For example, by being mindful you enjoy your food more, you enjoy your friends and family more, you enjoy anything and everything you do more.

Now as I said in the Introduction to this book, I didn't know whether I went looking for *Mindfulness*, or whether it found me. Was it a chance happening; a random series of events that came together to alight and lead me to the right place at the right time?

Was it serendipity or fortuitous happenstance? Was I like one of the Three Princes of Serendip[4] – from which the word serendipity derives – making a discovery of something I was not in quest of by accident? Or was I honouring emergence? Was I the subject of something universal and ancient, or was I drawn to something that was already inside myself through the interplay of unrecognised or unacknowledged patterns?

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Having An Open Mind

I certainly had an open mind and a kind curiosity, but I wasn't open-armed and ready for a wholesale embrace. I thought I retained a healthy degree of objectivity, perhaps even a little scepticism. However the evidence has continued to stack up and the practice can be incredibly simple. In fact, it actually defeats the purpose if you try too hard as we've already noted, or if you become too inflexible. For example, if you become fixated on a specific length of time that you should spend practicing *Mindfulness* and meditating each day, or if you feel that if you are going to do this then you must get it right, it can become very easy to give up. Or just give yourself sufficient excuses not to start at all. It's like joining the gym in January with the full kit and determined to go every day and lapsing before February's out, or throwing in the towel on the diet after a mad moment that led to a chocolate éclair.

It's also part of the human condition though to try and make things incredibly difficult for our selves, set unrealistic goals and overcomplicate things before we start something new. But *Mindfulness* is a goal-less activity; it's process orientated rather than goal orientated and if you become overly obsessed with goals you will focus on these rather than on the process. Committing to a regular period of formal practice though can be challenging and resistance is common. This however is where attitude is important, together with being prepared to pay Attention in the present moment, and, as you'll quickly learn when you start to practice you just keep coming back to the breath.

Be Curious But Accepting

If you bring to your practice the attitude of kind acceptance and curiosity – an attitude of self-acceptance and compassion for yourself – you can encourage and make your thoughts enablers of your intention, rather than disablers. Simply by being open and prepared to experience things as best you can, by accepting whatever is, by neither trying too hard nor giving up and acknowledging that your mind is bound to wander and that's OK, you will be taking your first steps along a *Mindfulness* path and towards living a Mindful life. You'll also come to recognise that in any form of meditation you don't need to search for anything at all. Everything is ok just the way things are, with *"Nowhere to go and nothing to do"*. In fact, when you start to do nothing for long enough, you start seeing through a veil of distraction to a new everything.

In Chapter Six we'll take a look at some Mindful exercises and practices that you can start to use and also look in more detail at how you can prepare yourself. Some things you can start to do right away though and one of these is to simply try and do just one thing at a time – *single task, rather than multi task.*

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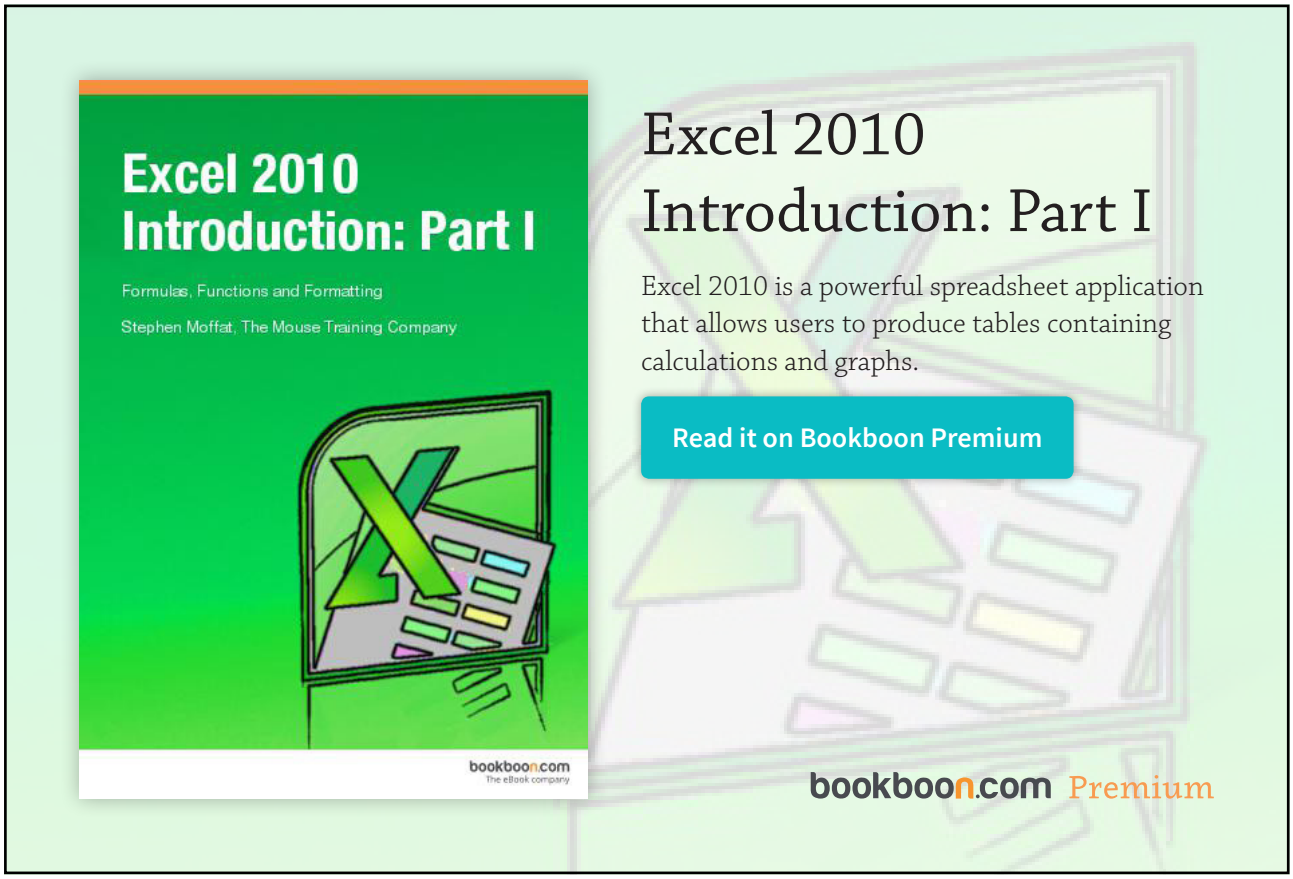
When Walking, Go Zen

A Zen proverb goes, "*When walking, walk. When eating, eat*". On hearing that though perhaps you'd be minded to retort that nothings quite as simple as that and recently I read a doctoral thesis that described the development of a conceptual understanding of an on-line mediated shared meal. Commensality and food it argued was all bound up with the connections we have with family, sociality and our identity. After all we live in an increasingly inter-connected world and the evidence tells us that as social animals we do better emotionally and intellectually in groups. We have a tribe mentality and the best things and ideas usually come up through socialising and sharing.

The thesis continued that the familiarisation and social importance of a shared meal fostered a 'meeting point' for new social relations and experiences with like-minded individuals. This however was in danger of being lost in an increasingly socially fragmented society that is incidentally a paradox created by the inter-connectedness as individualisation has grown, propelled by mediated on-line activity. Put simply, the more we've been able to connect and share on-line, the less time we're actually spending coming together physically. Well how far away from the simplicity of the Zen proverb does that take us?

The point is, behind just about everything is a complication and usually not just a single complication, introduced by the act of simply thinking about it. The complication didn't pre-exist and you wouldn't know it was there if you didn't go looking for it, but it is because of this that many of us believe that nothing is ever as simple as it seems: Messy solutions can be OK though, believe me on this!



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Fatigue

We live not in a universe, but a multi-verse; besieged by plurality and information overload. If we top that with the notion that there are multiple dimensions to our own being as well, then it is doubly reassuring that our Brain really is a wonderful thing! The plain truth of the matter however is its being over-stimulated by the modern world; the demands of technology, and, how we work and how we play.

According to recent Ofcom figures UK adults spend an average of 521 minutes on media devices each day. That's over nine hours and longer than the average nights sleep which is around 501 minutes. It is hardly a surprise then that according to figures from the Royal College of Psychiatrists, one-in-five people report feeling 'unusually tired', yet wired at one and the same time. These people wake up wondering whether they have slept at all because of the constant narrative buzz, chatter and burble that's been running through their head. Is this part of what causes stress and anxieties and is it something that you recognise?

As well as at a personal cost to health and wellbeing and it is estimated that around 7 million people[5] suffer from some form of anxiety and depression in the UK alone, there is also a business cost. Current estimates put the figure at £23Billion lost to the UK economy each year through stress related absences. Whilst one recent large scale survey of 38,700 British employees revealed that only 15% felt refreshed and revived by their nights sleep. In Chapter Five we will be looking more closely at both the financial and other consequences of stress and conflict, often compounded by fatigue in the workplace, and ask how the introduction of *Mindfulness* techniques and practices can help address this.

It does see*m* that we need something to break the cycle and allow us to step back and perhaps practicing *Mindfulness* to connect both physical and mental states, whilst being fully conscious of what's going on in our mind, our body and the world around us, is offering just that thing.

Preparing To Live Mindfully

So what else might you do to prepare yourself to be mindful? Well in addition to only doing one thing at a time, also take your time when you're doing it. Move slower than you normally would and be conscious of that, whilst making your activities deliberate rather than rushed or random. Be patient. Be tolerant. You can also do less and do these things more completely and with more concentration and Attention. It's not an easy thing to ask though is it? We've all been there – a day filled chock-full of things to do – big things and little things that set us rushing with our *"Nervous hands and worried minds"* – from one place to another, without stopping to think about what we're doing and why. But that's what having a purpose, being focussed and being busy is, isn't it?

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It's certainly how I might have defined and recognised it before I started looking at mindfulness and I wouldn't have thanked anyone who suggested I might start trying to do less. My raison d'être was never to have idle hands – to get things done and get them done quickly; a living embodiment of Saint-Pol Roux's definition of Speed, 'A *'strophe'* in search of a *'cata'*. However, if you stop to think about it, perhaps it's just a matter of figuring out what's important, letting go of what's not and acting with compassion to yourself.

Another thing you can do is to put space between all your activities; relaxing your schedule rather then seeing it as a badge of honour to have all your time filled-up, with no space and no gaps between anything. Think for a moment what this flexibility might enable you to do and achieve between the margins of all the things you are juggling. You could also spend at least five minutes every day doing nothing. Remember the meditative acceptance that everything is ok just the way it is, with *"Nowhere to go, nothing to do"*. Accept whatever is in the moment and just sit in silence. With those five minutes, use the time to become aware of your thoughts, focus on your breathing, notice the world around you and basically become comfortable with the silence and the stillness. There are some three-to-five minute exercises you can try in Chapter Six and remember a relaxed state is harder to achieve if you try too hard!

Don't Sweat The Small Stuff

Worry and anxiety are products of the imagination, but what can we do about that? Without imagination there would be no invention, no innovation, no progress, no world as we understand and live in today. You could stop worrying about the future though as another initial thing you start to do as you prepare to live mindfully. Try making yourself aware of when this is happening and then practice consciously anchoring your self in the present moment. A study at the University of California's Oster Centre for Integrative Medicine conducted by Martin Rossman MD, asked a group of students to write down what really worried them, kept them up at night or was ever present in either the foreground or the background of their minds. Between six and 12 months later these lists were pulled out and revisited and practically none of those really worrying things had happened, or come close to happening.

The future is a concept – it hasn't happened yet and by worrying about things, over which we have no dominion or power, is very unlikely to change whatever fate has in store for us. So practice bringing yourself back to the present, alight on your breath, focus on what you are doing at that precise moment and enjoy the appreciation and feeling of being present in that moment.

Another thing you can try is practice being present and consciously in the moment when you are talking with someone. Give them your appreciation and your full Attention. Don't let your mind wander and start thinking about what to say next. Actively listen. When walking practice tuning into what's going on immediately around you, the sights, sounds and smells. You will saviour all the new things that you'll see and discover.

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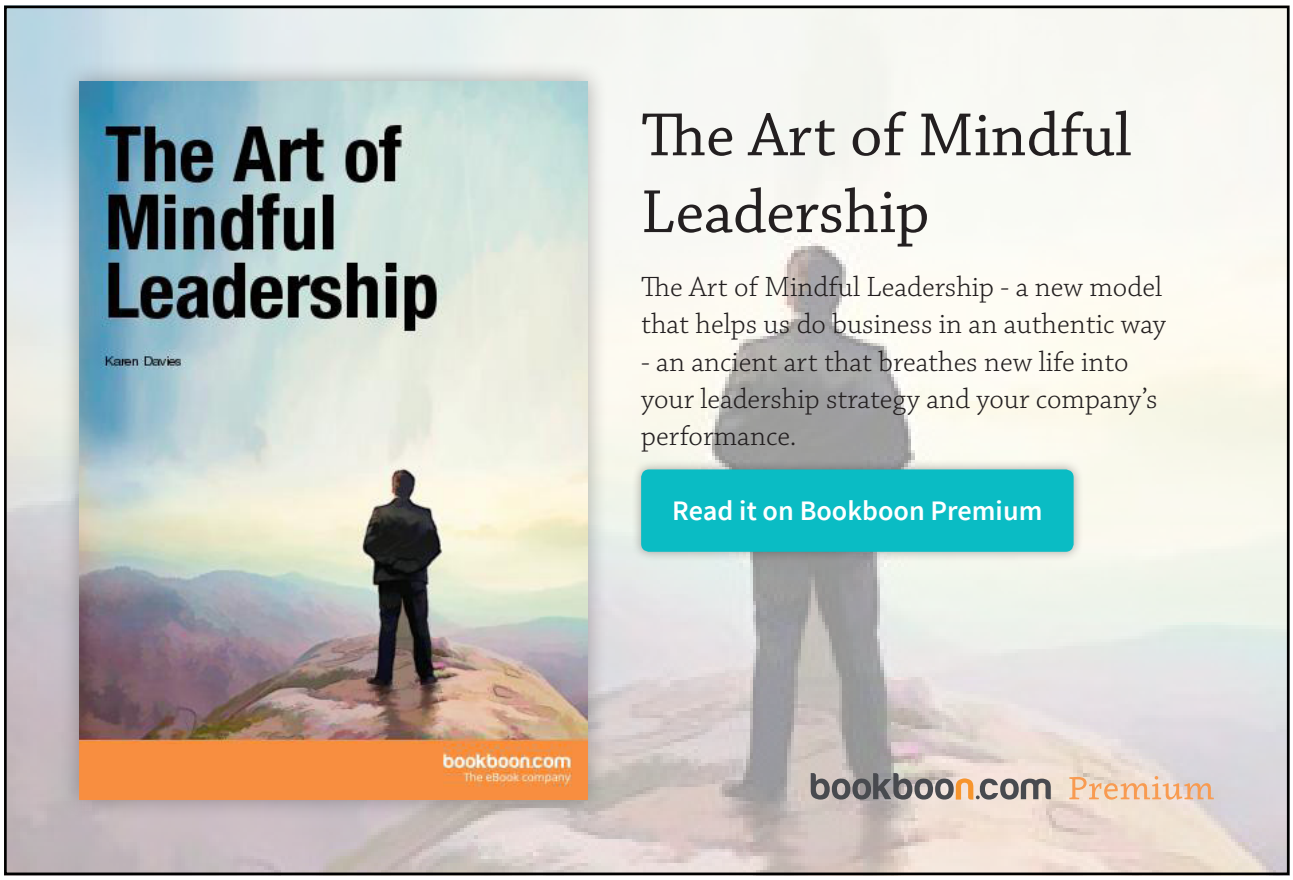
So, Be Part Of The Buzz

These are just a few simple things you can do and changes you can make right away. They will introduce you to *Mindfulness* and prepare you for making it a part of your daily life. You will notice a difference on both a personal and professional level and all you need to do is make some time, be open and be accepting.

As Jon Kabatt-Zinn has also said, "*The world is abuzz with mindfulness*"[6]. You might say with boundless opportunity too. A buzz is being generated in the world of work around how *Mindfulness* can reduce stress, increase productivity, the capacity to deal with demanding workloads, and strengthen employee engagement. A buzz is also being generated around how we live our lives, conduct our relationships and how we think about and act upon everyday things. So, let's look in the next chapter at how and where it all started. **Our ground zero!**



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2 "Roots and Shoots"

"What is the kingdom of God like? And to what should I compare it? It is a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree and the birds made nests in its branches" (Luke 13: 18–19)

Beginnings

This Chapter looks back to the seeds of *Mindfulness*. It explores how it has taken root, grown and how other more recent psychological, cognitive, behavioural, spiritual and proto-meditative and contemplative disciplines and practices have tried to make their nests in its branches. It also starts to set the scene for where things are perhaps going in the future that Chapters Four and Five will pick-up on and look at in more detail.

A Little Secret

Firstly though I'll let you into a little secret, there is no such thing as *Mindfulness*. It's a made-up word like *Influence*, *Relationship* or *Communication* and is what is known as a nominalisation; meaning that you take a verb – in this case the action to be 'mindful' – and turn it into a noun, *Mindfulness*, making it a thing or in reality a whole collection of things that you may do when you are being mindful.

But whilst *Mindfulness* might exist only in language and not in the lived experience per se, *as* a term it has a long pedigree and currency of use and is commonly understood (or fixed in our minds) to describe a particular way of paying Attention – on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgementally. Its roots lay in Hinduism and date back to circa 1500 BC in what was the birthplace of all Asian contemplative traditions. The word is derived from the Indian *Pali*-Term *'Sati*, which we looked at in Chapter One and the *Sanskrit* equivalent *Smrti*, which in translation also means – Awareness, Retention and Memory or Remembering.

Sati is also understood in usage to imply the characteristic of not wobbling or floating away from an object and being present as a guardian of perception and objectivity, whilst its function is to enable *non-forgetfulness*. It was originally used by Brahmans to describe the memorising of large bodies of text known as Vedic Scriptures that they would do by entering into a zone of clarity and presence, free of all distractions. Buddha subsequently adopted the Brahmanical usage and then broadened it to mean both the 'memory (of texts)' and the 'presence of mind (in meditation)'.

Smrti meanwhile literally translates as *"that which is remembered"* and is interpreted in practice as not letting what one knows slip away from the mind whilst preventing distractions.

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A Full Emptiness

Sanskrit also speaks of *Suchness* and this is understood to mean a *"full emptiness"*. A sort of *"Nowhere to go, nothing to do"* that we talked about in Chapter One. It is a central concept in Buddhism and Buddha referred to himself as *Tathagata – "One who has arrived at Suchness"* or **Full Emptiness**. *Mindfulness* though isn't about emptying the mind, its about living more in the moment, spending less time anticipating stresses or reliving past disasters, and, accepting what is.

So what then does Buddhism actually have to tell us about *Mindfulness* and why is it acknowledged to be the likeliest birthplace of what we now understand it to be?

Right Mindfulness

Right Mindfulness is traditionally the seventh part of the **Eightfold Path of Buddhism** that is the means by which enlightenment may be achieved.

The path is divided into three main sections – the **Wisdom Path**, the **Ethical Conduct Path** and the **Mental Discipline Path** – and the eight steps break down like so:

- *Right View*
- *Right Intention*
- *Right Speech*
- *Right Action*
- *Right Livelihood*
- *Right Effort*
- *Right Mindfulness* and
- *Right Concentration*.

Right View and *Right Intention* form the ***Wisdom Path***. *Right Speech*, *Right Action* and *Right Livelihood* constitute the ***Ethical Conduct Path***. Whilst the ***Mental Discipline Path*** is followed through *Right Effort*, *Right Mindfulness* and *Right Concentration*, and, by practicing these you can develop the mental acuity, rigour and stamina to cut through delusion and not become overwhelmed and lost in daydreams, anticipation, indulgences or worry.

Refuge to man is the mind, refuge to the mind is Mindfulness

A key concept in Buddhism is *Upaya* – that translates as *Skilful Means*. I suppose central for me in all this is that *Mindfulness* is a skill that can be learned, practiced and developed. It's uncovering and accessing something we already have and it isn't difficult – what is difficult is to remember to be mindful!

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Another fundamental thing for me here is that Buddha considered the mind to be a *sense* in itself and that Buddhism is a discipline and a process to be followed, rather than a belief system. Buddha didn't teach doctrines and enlightenment; he taught people how to realise and achieve enlightenment themselves through direct experience. Likewise *Mindfulness* concerns itself with what we experience directly with no mental filters or psychological barriers between the observed and the observer, what is being experienced and who is doing the experiencing.

In the book 'Voices of Insight'[7] the Venerable Henepola Gunarantana suggest that *Mindfulness* is an experience that lies beyond words, above symbols, metaphors and concepts, and, can help us see beyond these because at its heart it is, *"Pre-symbolic (and) not shackled by logic"*.

Around the 6th Century BC, Buddha spoke of four frames of reference for *Mindfulness*:

- *Mindfulness* of body (*Kayasati*)
- *Mindfulness* of feelings or sensations (*Vedenasati*)
- *Mindfulness* of mind or mental processes (*Cittasati*) and
- *Mindfulness* of mental objects or qualities (*Dhamnasati*).

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Whilst the Venerable Gunaratana writes over 2500 years later that *Mindfulness* comprises three fundamental activities. Firstly, it reminds us of what we are supposed to be doing. It brings us back to the moment. Secondly, it enables us to see things as they really are and that there is a whole self albeit with multiple dimensions, rather than a separate self. Thirdly, it provides veracity and allows us to see the true nature of things.

And whilst its origins may lay in Hinduism and Buddhism, *Mindfulness* is a completely secular activity. Although over the intervening centuries it has been taken up by Doaists in 5th Century BC China, Christianity and Judaism in the 5th and 6th Century AD and Islam in the 9th Century AD.

For instance, Christian *Mindfulness* flowered in the early Middle Ages with the introduction of communal monasteries and was developed through *centring prayer*. Jewish contemplative practises developed around the same time and central to this was *Qabbla* or *Kabbalah*, which involved a very close reading of Jewish scripture with reference to a system of numerological relations. Whilst the Muslims based their *Mindfulness* tradition on the practice of *Sufism*, which is predicated on a search for a direct confrontation with the Divine, visualised as Love or an all-consuming fire.

Nothing is Real, Again. Or As It seems!

Basic Buddhism teaches that the phenomenal world is an illusion and ultimate reality is tranquil and undifferentiated. As one of the most important and beautiful works in Buddhism, the 'Heart Sutra' puts it, ***form is emptiness; and emptiness is form*** and interestingly modern science provides a clear explanation for this Buddhist teaching. In your ordinary consciousness what you see is what it is – there is no illusion, it's real. Suppose though you were able to look through a gigantic, super powerful electron microscope. What would you see?

In fact, what you thought was form and substance, shape and colour, would turn out to be almost emptiness; you would see patterns of subatomic particles as far apart as specks of stars in outer space: And If you looked at yourself your body would have disappeared. Taking this further though, if you were then to look through a microscope with even more resolution, you would see that the so-called subatomic particles are actually not particles at all; they are concentrations, or as Neil Bohr describes in the 'Principle of Complementarity', waves of energy without any definite boundary.

Known as *wu* in Chinese and *kensho* or *satori* in Japanese, this would be to view and be awakened to the cosmic reality that there is no boundary separating one subatomic particle from another and no boundary separating you from anyone or anything else. In other words, from this viewpoint the whole universe is actually a continuous spread of energy or consciousness, without any differentiation and this is in part why I don't think that *Mindfulness* and compassion, for example, are things to be discovered and developed – they are rather to be uncovered and given space and freedom, as they are already within each and everyone of us.

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In Chapter One I suggested that our actual reality is contained in moments, as both the past and the future are constructs and being 'in the moment' is the only place we can actually live our lives. The practice of *Mindfulness* involves the acceptance of current reality rather than any systematic attempt to change things. The intentional non-judgemental awareness that *Mindfulness* brings though is viewed in Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) as a primary means for developing a greater acceptance of reality. Whilst with *Mindfulness*-based Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) the emphasis is on enabling the subject to appreciate that thoughts are experienced simply as events in the mind; bridging the gap between knowing that thoughts are not necessarily always accurate and experiencing thoughts as events in the field of awareness, rather than as direct read-outs of reality.

Incorporating *Mindfulness* into any of these and other therapies however seems to my mind a bit like closing the stable door after the horse has bolted. CBT like many other therapies including those to treat addiction et al, are used most often when people present symptoms – when they are ill. Wouldn't it be far better to use *Mindfulness* to remain well? This is not to say that *Mindfulness* is not being extremely effective as a treatment for many issues and problems and we will be going on to look at this whole area, which is also part of the terms of reference of a Parliamentary Select Committee on *Mindfulness*. How much more effective might it be though if *Mindfulness* became a life skill which you practice to stay in good health?

Is the Science catching up with the hype?

In Chapter Three we'll see there is a tremendous Oomph – weight of learning and increasing understanding – growing in support of the Science behind *Mindfulness* and what it can achieve. Those cognitive, dialectical and behavioural disciplines that have grown from rigorous study and grounded themselves in the Science of how the mind really works are onto something. Although again it might be putting another cart before the horse to describe *Mindfulness* as a form of eastern flavoured CBT-like problem solving using meditation, as we noted in the Introduction.

Some argue however that *Mindfulness* meditation contradicts itself and through practicing it you are not allowing stress, physical or emotional pain, feelings of discomfort or undesirable sensations to run their natural course. The argument goes that by observing and accepting non-judgementally in the present moment, you are not dealing with the problem and there is at least one post out there on the internet entitled, '*17 Ways Mindfulness Meditation Can Cause You Emotional Harm*', that really has problems with the idea that the present moment is the only place we can really live our lives.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau[8] an 18th century French Philosopher wrote, "*(We) are born free, are everywhere in chains*". These chains that bind us today are *busy-ness*, stress, guilt and anxiety – not being able stop and take time to pause, reflect, listen, experience, saviour, enjoy in the moment. *Mindfulness* offers us something real, tangible and meaningful and it's not a hard sell; it takes time to hone the skill but daily practice doesn't have to be time consuming and it's not some new age, self-help fad either. In fact, all the smart things people like about, what Eckhart Tolle writes in his book, 'The Power of Now'[9] for instance, were implicit in Buddhist teachings 2500 years ago. Admittedly though back then Buddha didn't have the populist power of an Oprah Winfrey championing him!

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Where East Meets West

Whilst it flows out from Eastern philosophy and Hindu and Buddhist teachings and practice, *Mindfulness* isn't inherently Eastern, just as electricity isn't inherently Western. Rather it is a quality of presence that is innate in all human beings and *Mindfulness* as we now understand it has grown in the past 10-to-15 years on a global scale and is now finding a place in a range of settings from nursery schools to prisons, from the shop floor to the executive suite, from preventative health care to Government. In Chapters Four and Five, we look at how and why the practice of *Mindfulness* enhances the ability to experience empathy, compassion, insight and other positive emotions. How it can help develop a greater tolerance of negative emotions and strengthen personal resilience. How it can inform and shape great Leadership, be used in coaching practice and lower stress and reduce absenteeism in the workplace. Although we shall also see that there is a level of unease from some quarters around using *Mindfulness* in workplace settings. The feeling being that many workplace cultures will be distinctly at odds with what *Mindfulness* is about and faced with the speed of much working life there will be a strong pull to compromise corporate *Mindfulness* training to meet the 'needs' of the organisation. Will it become *Mindfulness*-Lite, or a *Mindfulness*-Express takeaway?

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We will also be looking at how it is effective in the treatment of a range of medical and mental health conditions such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, post-traumatic stress, chronic pain, cancer, addiction, reducing blood pressure, treating psoriasis and depression. Being a sufferer of this latter condition is what originally drew the celebrity Ruby Wax to *Mindfulness*, and she now writes about how she uses it to *"see through a different lens"* [10].

A New Age Panacea

This all comprises a pretty substantial list of claims being made on behalf of *Mindfulness* don't you think? And just maybe *Mindfulness* is in danger of being called out for everything as a new age panacea; a cure-all for everything – but wouldn't it be great if it was just practiced as part of maintaining wellness?

As well as the Neuroscience – how it causes changes in the structure of the brain – which we're going to be looking at in the next chapter, there has also been a tremendous amount of work to see what is happening at the cellular level. This work has been pioneered, in particular, by Richard Davidson[11], whose studies have found evidence of a rapid change in the genes that regulate inflammation, pain and recovery from stress in people who meditate. Which is exciting because these genes have been at the centre of pharmaceutical research to develop new drugs for pain relief and it may well be that the meditative practice associated with *Mindfulness* could offer an alternative to drugs with the potential for fewer side effects.

The Power Of Metaphors

"The essence of a metaphor is the understanding and experiencing of one kind of thing in terms of another".

As I wrote in the Introduction, this book is also in part the story of my journey in search of and towards *Mindfulness*. Narrative convention tells us though that a story, particularly if its arc is a personal journey, needs a hero, someone to slay the monster, overcome adversity and be better at the end than they were at the beginning. A story also needs powerful metaphors to create a bridge between shared-experience and something new and unknown, so the reader can find a foothold, relate and engage.

Well firstly I make no claim to be the Hero of this story, nor will I be slaying any monsters along the way, but I do hope by just simply Being and engaging with *Mindfulness* with a purposeful intercourse, that I am better at the end of it and I also hope that this will be the case for many of you now reading. I also hope through my use of metaphors and metaphorical language that I am able to turn some quite complex information into a brain-friendly format that helps the reader map over knowledge from something they have a prior experience of to something that is new and different.

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Metaphors allow people to express and give form to complex feelings, behaviours, situations and abstract concepts and when we hear metaphorical stories, our brain searches for similar experiences and activates a part called the *Insula*. This helps us to relate emotionally and when we comprehend a metaphor this is because we recognise a pattern that connects two different things, which is known as *Isomorphism*. Understanding metaphors however, also takes a significant amount of brainpower. Firstly, it requires both the left and right regions of the *inferior frontal gyrus* to understand the concept. Then the *superior temporal gyrus* on the right side comes into action to help you understand the context, and, finally the *anterior cingulated* ensures you focus long enough to work through the metaphor. So, hard work, yes – but ultimately satisfying and rewarding because it gives us a broad and rich palette of images and enables us to fully understand. Which of course, is one of the goals for this book that I describe as: **To make the complex not so complex, the tough stuff not so tough and the unreachable within reach for everyone**.

A Star Gazey Pie

"We are all interested in the future, for that is where you and I are going to spend the rest of our lives", Woody Allen.

As Dan Airley suggests, the future is *"predictably unpredictable"* and I'm not a Futurologist, although I admit to occasional insights, some imagination and a little intuition. I am not into future gazing, Astrology, reading palms or scattering the runes though. I also make no claims to know anymore than the next person, but let me put some more of my cards on the table. I'm rather attracted to the idea of hope that *Mindfulness* offers – *"the fecundity of the unexpected"*, as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon might say. I think and perhaps you'd agree with me on this, the human race has some pretty big and complex challenges to face globally, geo-politically, environmentally, economically and socially. The capacity for enthusiasm for the future is dying. The fine insouciance of the post-war (mid 20th-century) period is forgotten; the happy days are behind us. It's sackcloth and ashes time, hair shirts and impending apocalypse. We have to go about our business with grave expressions on our faces and wrinkle our brows: And the perils are so numerous that we can hardly choose amongst them. Rather than preaching catastrophe and pessimism however, we need to develop a democratic and generous ecology that addresses specific problems in a practical way.

To paraphrase EF Schumacher, *"Any intelligent fool can make things more complex – it takes a touch of genius and a lot of courage – to move in the opposite direction!"*

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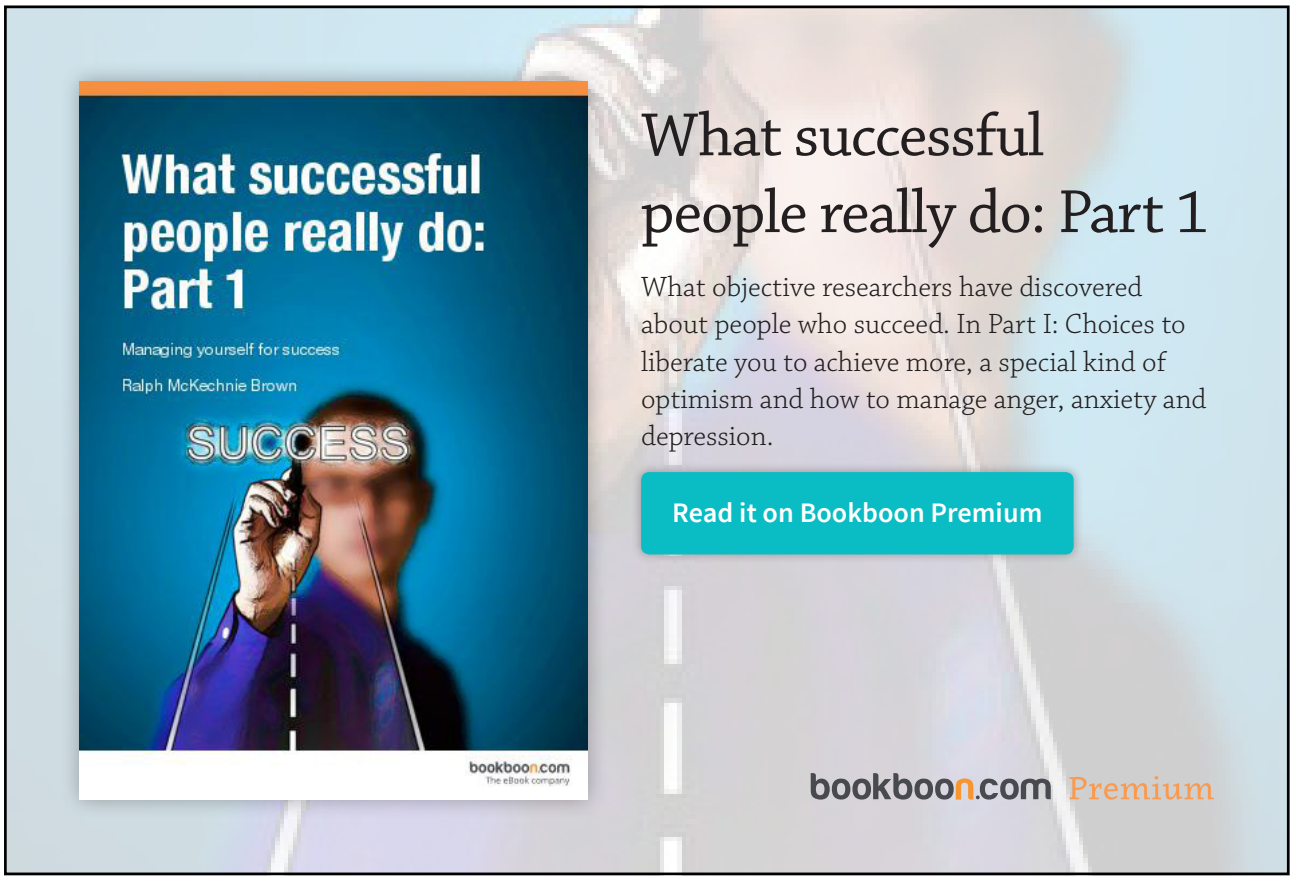
Unfortunately though the point we seem to have arrived at today is that most real-world problems are *Wicked Problems*[12]. They are more complex than we think because they have a human dimension, a local dimension and are likely to change as circumstances change. They are there on every scale and to be found at every level and are not going to conveniently go away. In fact, because of this propensity to change these wicked problems are messy and demand different approaches to what has been tried before. Universal solutions will fail, precisely because no situation, problem or issue is the same as another and at best there will always be slight, if not significant, variations.

We've got to do more

There will be no best practice to follow or possibility of transferring a successful solution from one problem to another, because a solution will rarely, if ever be repeatable, as it will more than likely change the root of the original problem, which will require new approaches to be taken and new solutions to be found. **We've got to do more than simply rearrange the deckchairs on the Titanic**.

Any solutions to these complex challenges will only ever make things better or worse, rather than be right or wrong, and, as daunting as that may sound, I really do think the evidence is out there that *Mindfulness* can offer us a lifeline and help us to become more collaborative, more compassionate, more humane, more generous, even more democratic – ultimately changing our collective mindsets – because as Albert Einstein famously said, *"You can't solve an existing problem with the same mindset that created it"*.



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And it is there within each of us to be uncovered!

Perhaps it boils down to power versus powerlessness. Or anger versus indignation. According to Ralph Waldo Emerson, *"For every minute you are angry, you loose sixty seconds of happiness"* and as we'll see in Chapter 4, happiness is rather important to overall well being – although not necessarily a straight-forward given or takeaway from any situation.

Both anger and resignation are corrosive emotions and ultimately destructive. Indignation on the other hand, is a state where you feel the pain and empathise, but you're out to change the world because it's the right thing to do: *Righteous indignation and it comes from power!*

Descartes famously said, *"I think, therefore I am"*. He didn't say, *"I'm busy therefore I am"*. We mustn't let *busy-ness* get in the way. We need to get less busy and shift ourselves more to 'being', rather than continually being driven to 'do'.

E Pur Si Muove

As Galileo was reputed to have muttered in 1633, when the Spanish Inquisition had forced him to abjure his theory of Heliocentrism – *"The Earth is moved"*.

Bottom line – I think we're talking about the emotional fitness and potential future well being of the human race and we need to listen, pay Attention and hear what's being said. So let's take a look and pay Attention to what the Science has to tell us in Chapter Three, because it is possible to change the way you think and act, and, our genes, hormones and upbringing do not have to seal our fate!

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3 "The Brain Is Smarter Than You Think"

"You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem and smarter than you think"
(Pooh's Grand Adventure: The Search for Christopher Robin)

So For The Science Bit

Well, a little bit, perhaps? Fact Number One – **The brain has as many neurons as there are stars in the Milky Way**! Fact Number Two – The positive effects of *Mindfulness* begin at the celluar level, altering levels of telomerase immune cells[13]. The study referred to in the Footnotes, appeared in the June 2011 issue of 'Psychoneuroendocrinology' and was the first to link specific celluar changes to *Mindfulness*. It concluded that the practice of *Mindfulness* also influenced how individuals perceive their stress levels, emotional state, sense of control and even, ***"purpose in life"***.

Nervous Hands and Worried Minds

As Henry Ford observed one hundred or so years ago, it is part of the human condition to, *"rush too much with nervous hands and worried minds"*. To his way of thinking we were all intrinsically impatient and he believed that someday we would come to know enough about intelligence and the realm of the spirit to create a deeper, more considered understanding.

Certainly our understanding of the brain and how it actually works has advanced immeasurably since Henry Ford wrote forth on the matter. Even though for most of the 20th Century we believed the brain to be unalterable after a critical period in childhood and even if as we now understand it, there are three brains (or central nervous systems) – the 'Head Brain', the 'Heart Brain' and the 'Intestinal Brain'.

The New Kid On The Block

Neuroscience however is now the *new kid on the block* and it's punching way above its weight. In fact, it's one of the most rapidly expanding fields of scientific research that has been driven by the development of new technologies such as *functional magnetic resonance imaging* (fMRI), *electroencephalography* (EEG) and *chemical neuroimaging* (Positron Emission Tomography or PET) to measure changes in brain activity under different conditions: fMRI, for instance, has detected changes in the brain resulting from how meditation impacts on Attention[14].

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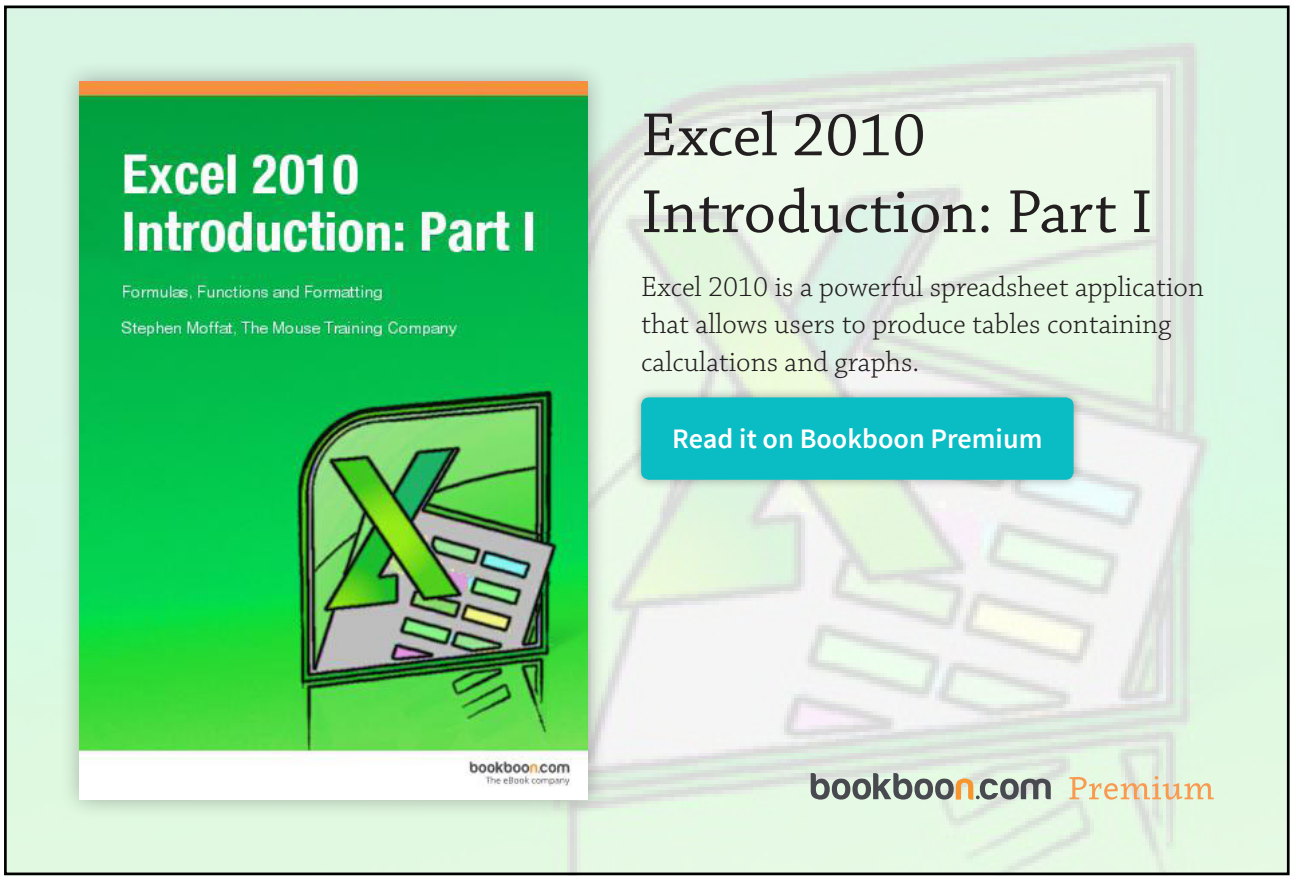
These new technologies allow scientists to map the hidden structures of the 'Head Brain' as well as study what's really happening across the Brain Network as groups of neurons fire-up and communicate. So slowly but surely we have been able to measure the neuroplasticity – the changes that occur in response to experience – of the brain and the nervous system. This in turn has challenged the long held view that the brain's structure was relatively immutable after a critical period – an epacme if you will – during early childhood.

So, the physical structure and physiology of the brain, as well as the most entrenched thought patterns can be changed!

New Neural Pathways

Every time we practise a new skill, or change our thinking, our habits, or how we might respond in a given situation, new neural pathways are built that can become ipso facto new default settings.



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Mindfulness is no different to any other form of skills acquisition that can bring about plastic changes in the brain. So, if we introduce daily practice into this context, enabling us to recognise and observe our thoughts in a non-judgemental and accepting way, perhaps you'll agree we have a very potent tool to use and ensure things are not left to chance. *Mindfulness* makes it easier to recognise when thoughts arise and can help us to identify the source of a strong emotion as its triggered and choose a more effective way to respond. Whilst the more we make new choices, create new thoughts and make positive emotional choices, the likelihood is based on the increasing evidence, that we will develop new positively charged neural pathways, providing new tram-lines in the brain for a new more positive and emotionally healthy way of being.

And given that the brain does have an in-built 'negativity bias' – for example, you are more likely to remember a critical comment or unpleasant experience over a compliment or something pleasant – all this can only be a good thing in helping you to restack the deck, increase resilience and mental toughness and achieve some objective distance.

Fast Or Slow – You Choose

So, where does *Mindfulness* fit, if at all, with what some of the current leading thinkers are saying about the brain and the mind – which is different to the brain – and how they both work? The behavourial economist, Daniel Kahneman has written a book, 'Thinking Fast and Slow'[15]. In it he outlines very clearly and precisely the 'dual process' model of how we view the world, together with all our embedded self-delusions. He calls the two thinking states *System 1* and *System 2*.

System 1 is characterised as being fast, intuitive, associative, metaphorical, automatic and impressionistic. It can't be switched off and its operations involve no sense of **Intentional** control, but it is very much the secret author of many of the choices and judgements we make. *System 2* on the other hand is described as being slow, deliberate, taking effort and its operations require **Attention**.

Most of our day-to-day decisions are produced by *System 1* thinking – they are automatic, habitual, sometimes perhaps oft-times considered rash in hindsight – and little Attention is required. Clearly this is not ideal and it isn't being Mindful! *Mindfulness* as we have seen is to acquire the habit of being continuously self-aware and self-observing. In this respect it is strikingly similar to what Kahneman describes as *System 2* thinking, which is also credited with the continuous monitoring of our behaviour and providing the checks that for example, keep us polite when we are angry and alert when we are driving at night.

However, *Mindfulness* also allows us to see through the forest of emotions, be open to experience – both pleasant and unpleasant – and maintain a connection with our intuition, which of course is characteristic of *System 1* thinking. So it is relevant to and operates across both states.

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Experiencing Your Experience

An earlier two-system (Network) model of how we interact with the world though was put forward a few years before the publication of Kahneman's book. It came from some groundbreaking work in 2007 that cracked open the understanding of *Mindfulness* from the perspective of neuroscience.

Norman Farb from the University of Toronto, together with six other scientists, worked out a way to study how human beings experience their own *moment-to-moment* experience[16]. They discovered that people have two distinct ways of *experiencing their experience* and interacting with the world, using two separate sets of networks. One was called the *Default Network* that becomes active when not much else is happening and you think about yourself.

Imagine the scene – You are on a beautiful beach, it's very hot and you have a cold drink in your hand. Rather than taking in where you are however, the sensations you are feeling and what's happening around and about, you begin to think about where you're going to eat later and what you might order. This is the *default network* at work and its business is to plan, to set about daydreams and to ruminate. It holds together the *narrative* of your life – Your history and the information and stories on all the people you know, and, when you experience the world using this *narrative* network you are taking in information from the outside world, processing it through a filter of what everything means and adding in your own interpretation. It invariably gets you thinking about the future, rather than allowing you to be in the moment.

The other way of *experiencing your experience* that the Farbs study identified was through *Direct Experience*. With this you are experiencing information coming to your senses in real time. You are not thinking intently about the past or the future, about other people or yourself. You are in fact giving your Attention to the moment and your *default* or *narrative* network is dialled right down and you don't see, hear or feel as much; **your focus becomes the present!**

In the Farb experiment, people who regularly practised monitoring their *default* and *direct experience* paths, had a much stronger awareness of where they were in a given moment and this correlated with the finding of an earlier study by Kirk Brown[17], that found people who regularly practiced *Mindfulness* were more aware of the unconscious processes and had more cognitive control coupled with a greater ability to shape what they thought, said and did, than non-practioners. They were also able to focus their Attention on the moment and enjoy the sun, the setting and that cold drink in their hand, because they weren't thinking ahead to Dinner!

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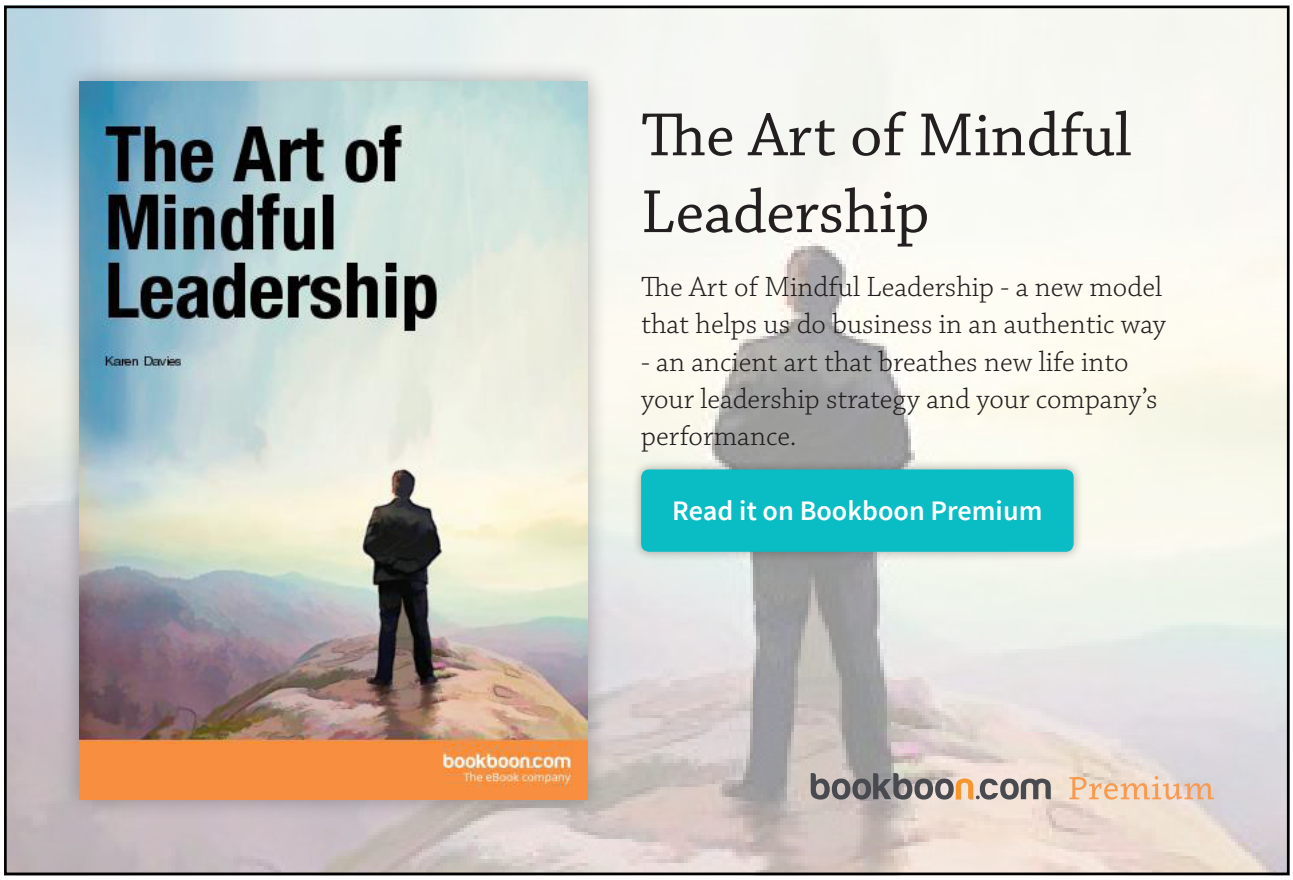
Neurological Reflexivity and The Chimp Paradox

Mindfulness is also an integral part of neurological reflexivity that allows us to close the 'social aspiration gap'. For instance, one must be aware of one's condition manifesting moment-by-moment, in order to allow awareness to transform the effect of these conditions. This moment-by-moment Attention again paves the way for different decisions that in the long run have the power to change habits and control that *Inner Chimp*.

With *Mindfulness* we can begin to quieten what Buddhists call the *"monkey mind"*, the chattering self that like an untrained monkey roams the house (our mind) alone, wreaking havoc, causing mischief and relentlessly generating distracting thoughts.

Bringing this bang up to date, Steve Peters in his recent best selling book, 'The Chimp Paradox', identifies the *Inner Chimp* which we all have and describes it as a seemingly irrational and impulsive being that inhabits our minds and is responsible for nagging self-doubt and the fear. As well as the trepidation or anxiety that we can all feel at certain times and which can have a such negative impact across so many areas of our lives.



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The Chimp sits in the *Limbic* Brain or emotional brain, the second area of the 'Head Brain' that works with the oldest part of the head brain, the brain stem or *Reptilian* (Lizard) Brain, to create emotion and with other areas of the *Neocortex* to create memories. Whilst the *Reptilian* Brain began to evolve when amphibians first crawled onto the land over 400 million years ago, the *Limbic* Brain reaches back – some 200 million years or more – to a similarily primitive, yet very essential time in human development. Its primary motivation is to survive and feelings, impressions, emotional thinking and gut instincts drive it. The Chimp in us will very quickly jump to an opinion and thinks quite literally in terms of black and white.

Sigmund Freud would have recognised the Chimp as the Id and perhaps you recognise this wee monkey and struggle with it from time-to-time? There are some strategies and techniques to manage this wee monkey suggested in, 'The Chimp Paradox! Don't Be A Chump – Get On Top Of Your Inner Chimp Today'[18]. These include trying to level the playing field between your 'Present self' and your 'Future Self' with what Daniel Goleman calls a 'Commitment Device'; developing and deepening your compassion; building your resilience and acting with a social conscience. Being mindful however and regularly practising *Mindfulness* can also be very effective in managing that Chimp too.

Training The Brain

Of course, as many people hit a certain age they often begin to notice their memory is not what it used to be. It becomes quite normal to forget where you put the car keys just moments before, or enter a room, or go to the fridge and have no recollection why, or for what! And some of us were barely senior before, as we tend to call them euphemistically, these 'Senior Moments' started to happen.

The fact is however it happens to most of us – but is it inevitable? Neuroscientists are increasingly showing that there's quite a lot you can do to address this and *"not go gentle into that good night"*, because the brain needs regular exercise just like our bodies. The right workouts can significantly improve basic cognitive functions and the neural connections we make are a direct result of effort and practise. By practising being mindful, being conscious, paying Attention, being aware of what's going on inside our mind, our body and the world around us, we can provide just that regular work out needed and make a very real difference to our overall wellbeing.

It can enable the brain to move from a switched-on 'Beta' state to a slower and more relaxed 'Alpha' state, and, beyond that lies the 'Theta' state where essentially your brain pretty much goes off-line. Think day-dreams and although this is beyond where you want to be in your daily *Mindfulness* practise, it is in this 'Theta' state where your creative powers increase and your resilience and mental stamina develop and are strengthened, which we'll be looking at in greater detail in the next Chapter.

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Focus and Attention

Have you ever suddenly noticed that you have a headache, or that your hands are freezing with cold? They've probably been like that for a while, but you haven't been aware because, for whatever reason, you weren't paying Attention.

Attention of course, is a key component in the practice of *Mindfulness*, but as we've already discovered being able to pay full Attention and remain fully focused is notoriously difficult, whatever you're doing and however well intentioned you may be. Our ability to concentrate is located in one part of the brain – in the *prefrontal region* – and we learn best with focused Attention, because the stronger our focus, the better our neural lock-in. But did you know that when reading, for example, your mind typically wanders 40% of the time[19]. **We very rarely in any situation give it a full 100%.**

Is that such a bad thing though? No one could fault Albert Einstein for not putting in the hours when he was developing his theory of relativity, but he famously claimed, *"The gift of fantasy has meant more to me than my ability for absorbing positive knowledge"*.

Nonetheless, both the ability to focus and pay full Attention are your secret weapons. They are the key to high performance and personal fulfilment! Attention works much like a muscle – use it only a little and it will wither; use it as much as possible however and it will grow and strengthen and as a mental asset, Attention matters enormously. It directs how we navigate life in an increasingly complex world, fraught with an seemingly unstoppable blizzard of distractions. It is key to how we contend and thrive in the midst of everything!

The psychologist Daniel Goleman has done a great deal of work around this whole area and writes of 'smart practice' which includes focussed preparation and recovery from set-backs; something akin to Nassim Nicholas Taleb's notion of *Anti-fragile*[20]. Taleb who famously predicted the financial crisis in 2008, divides the world into three categories. First there is *Fragile* – something or someone who is *fragile* is described as having nothing to gain from a seemingly random event. It will never improve things and randomness should be avoided at all costs. The second category *Robust*, on the other hand, is something or someone who doesn't break easily but is convinced they won't be improved by any shocks or changes. Whilst the third category *Anti-fragile* is something or someone who is more than just adaptable, resilient or robust and they don't just endure shocks and change, they benefit from them and actively seek them out.

The theory is universal and can apply equally to running a major organisation or parenting. It suggests that most of us start off on things without a road-map and our compass is usually the range of our formative experiences and influences, that can sometimes be in conflict. Big things – think Banks, the BBC, your CEO or the Board of your Company – can give the illusion of stability because, well they're big and important. In reality though when tested they can't necessarily withstand any shocks, or change, whether it's of their own instigation or unbidden from an external source. In fact, Taleb argues that it can often be the smaller organisation or the individual that no one gives a second thought to who are much better equipped – and the big question is why?

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Neither Taleb or Goleman suggest they have all the answers, but the latter does advocate continual learning, being positive, being engaged and connected with others, and, *Mindfulness*. All help, he argues, people to improve habits, add new skills and achieve and sustain excellence – with daily sessions of *Mindfulness* meditation focusing on the breath being what Goleman considers a key part of it all. In fact, he calls it building up the mind's muscle and writes that it is the mental equivalent of working out in a gym! Whilst according to Dan Siegal, founder of the Mindsight Institute http://www.mindsightinstitute.com *Mindfulness* practices are "daily brain fitness practices".

Using mindful 'second thoughts' to help tear yourself away from distractions is also recommended by Goleman. When you find yourself checking your email when you should be working on something else instead, just the seemingly simple acts of paying Attention, acknowledging the behaviour and telling yourself *"I'm distracted now"*, activates a brain circuit that makes it easier to drop what's irrelevant and get back to focusing on the work in hand.

The ongoing tension between focus and distraction takes place in the brain's neural pathways for resisting impulse. Using *Mindfulness* techniques each and every time you observe your mind wandering off and return it to focusing on the breath, will really pay dividends and strengthen your ability to concentrate – ***it is really like bulking up your Pecs!***

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So, Has The Science Kept Up With The Hype?

The evidence of the benefits of *Mindfulness* meditation in reducing stress-related disorders such as depression and elevated blood pressure for example, are accumulating. But in a scientific age reluctant to acknowledge the existence of anything that cannot be measured and quantified, there has been an increasing desire to establish whether or not these benefits are accompanied by changes within the brain.

In this Chapter we've paid Attention to the neuroscience and the other science around *Mindfulness* and, I think that the more we are discovering about neuro-physiological changes that accompany mindful meditation – independent of any spiritual or esoteric tradition – the more likely we will be to convince the sceptics of its value.

So, where are you on your journey? I hope in reading this book so far, that if you were in the sceptical camp at Page One, you have now at least started to move towards the slopes of cautious contemplation, with a view perhaps to try for the summit. There's certainly much more to tell and share with you. Before we move on to Chapter Four however, I am conscious that we have talked a lot about the brain but not so much about the mind and that is remiss.

Conventional science has long held the position that 'the mind' is merely an illusion, a side-effect of electrochemical activity in the physical brain. More recently however, the work of JM Schwarts, Richard Davidson, Sharon Begley, Dan Siegal et al, has shown that the mind in fact has a life of its own; it's an independent entity that can shape and control the functioning of the physical brain. That's why it's called…

…Mindfulness Not Brainfulness

So, let's be clear, the mind and the brain are different; they have different domains. The Neurological domain is the one of the brain and physical causes, which are the mechanisms behind our thoughts and emotions. The realm of the mind on the other hand, is the Psychological domain and is one of people and their desires, intentions, ideals and anxieties.

The mind is consciousness. It regulates feelings, thoughts and emotions. It captures experiences and plays host to our awareness of things. Whilst the physical brain and nervous system provide mechanisms by which energy and information flow throughout our beings. Because of neuroplasticity however, or to be more precise adult plasticity – the brains ability to be rewired not just in childhood, but throughout life in response to awareness, experience, thoughts and regulation – the mind through meditative practises such as *Mindfulness* can actually change the structure of the brain.

As I continue to make my case, let's now look in Chapter 4 at the emotional and psychological benefits of *Mindfulness* and its relationship and impact on, amongst other things, authenticity, compassion, emotional intelligence, mental acuity, personal wellbeing and resilience.

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4 "The Compassionate You"

This Chapter looks at both the psychological and emotional benefits of *Mindfulness* and the relationship and impact that Mindful living and the practice of *Mindfulness* can have on, amongst other things, personal authenticity and compassion, emotional intelligence, mental prowess and stamina, your resilience and wellbeing.

"Happiness doesn't lie in happiness, but in the achievement of it", Fyodor Dostoevsky

Want To Be Ten Percent Happier?

If only! We have already noted in previous Chapters that many of us wake-up each day wondering whether, in fact, we've slept at all because of the constant chatter and buzz going on in our heads. One-in-five people report feeling 'unusually tired', yet wired – and both at the same time! Collectively what does this say about the state of our minds – our levels of concentration on a day-to-day basis, or our mental stamina and resilience? What knock-on is all this having on our general levels of well being, on how compassionate we are able to feel both towards ourselves and others and in turn how grateful and happy we can be?

Would you like to be more positive and 10% happier into the bargain? It doesn't sound like a bad return on your investment for a relatively small amount of your time each day in the practice of *Mindfulness* does it? Social constructs have taught us to focus our Attention on the wrong things. We pay Attention to what we think makes us happy, rather than what actually does. Happiness isn't some grand overall life thing, and policy makers, teachers and philosophers take note – It's actually to be found in our subjective everyday experience. Day-to-day happiness should be at the heart of policy decisions and *Mindfulness* enables us to become more aware, pay Attention and appreciate these things moment-by-moment.

You might be surprised though if I were to tell you that a sure-fire way to increase your personal happiness is to set yourself some challenges. When the romantic poet John Keats was just starting off, he set himself the task of writing an epic poem of some 4000 lines in just a few weeks. This was to be based on all he had read about the classic poets and to teach himself to be the best poet he could possibly be. The poem was called 'Endymion' and Mr Keats knocked it out of the Park! This is what Robert Greene calls 'Resistance Practice' in his book entitled, 'Mastery'[21] and defines it as *"Taking the hardest option"*. You should also fully engage in all areas of your life – both at work and at play – and get yourself a really tough job. For the simple fact is that money by itself can't buy you love and neither is it the key to happiness, but some of the happiest people in the world do seem to have the hardest jobs[22].

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Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Professor of Business at Harvard, recently wrote in the Harvard Business Review (HBR), that whilst a good salary certainly acts as a fillip for happiness, in itself it's simply not enough and only applies up to a certain level. In fact, above an annual income of circa £60,000, the cash-to-happiness correlation levels itself out and doesn't seem to exercise any greater inducement to be happy.

Think Positive. Be Positive

And did you know that if each day you feel three positive heartfelt emotions for every negative one, then you're just above the Positivity threshold. Doesn't sound a great deal does it but the daily ratio for feeling positive and essentially happy in yourself is 3-to-1 and if you fall below this then you're on the tipping point for becoming unhappy and depressed. The trick as well is not to try and force these positive emotions – they must be genuine, authentic and heartfelt. So, it's certainly not the case where you can **fake it till you make it**!

Positive emotions build resilience and resourcefulness. They build mental stamina, hone emotional intelligence, enable you to see new possibilities, bounce back from set backs and adversity and become as Nassim Nicholas Taleb would describe, *antifragile*. They also encourage you to be as Bill George[23] would say, the best version of **You** – knowing then acting upon what is true and real inside You – to be open, appreciative, curious, empathetic and kind: **To be the authentic, the compassionate, and the truthful You!**

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If you want to find out what your *Positivity Ratio* is, Barbara Fredrickson[24] has developed a free on-line test that only takes two minutes – www.PositivityRatio.com

Truth Versus Being Truthful

Mindfulness though is not so much about finding the truth – a gender less truth – as being truthful and there's a difference. The close examination of one's own experience is highly subjective. The mind spins truth depending on what it wants from a particular situation. For example, when you feel threatened and really need to win an argument, your integrity might well take a back seat – albeit temporarily – with a little white lie.

Why then are we untruthful? Sometimes it's for gain (for example exaggerating our role in something so we gain praise); sometimes it's because of fear, or feeling threatened as mentioned above (we think that if people know the truth we'll loose face or personal esteem); and sometimes it's out of ill will or malice aforethought (and we just want to hurt someone). There are, of course, times when it's best to leave thoughts unspoken. We must not through our mindful practice simply try to be honest, we must also couple this to an awareness of being grateful, kind and compassionate and then translate this into affirmative acts.

Compassion and Kindness

"Our task must be to free ourselves by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty", Albert Einstein.

A traditional Western view of compassion is to sometimes see it is a sign of weakness, rather than as an act of courage. It is a strength and we need to recognise and accept that compassion towards one self can lead to an increased sense of happiness and well being.

We need compassion because quite simply, life is hard and as Hellen Keller (who was born deaf, blind and without the power of speech) reminds us, *"A happy life consists not in the absence, but in the mastery of hardships"*.

Compassion can be defined in a number of ways, whilst kindness is perhaps more readily observed and understood. At its essence however, compassion is a basic kindness with a deep awareness of the suffering of oneself and other living things, coupled with the wish to relieve it. Compassion requires the ability to pay Attention, to be open, to wish to connect and have attachments with others, and, to be non-judgemental and accepting.

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Not only is compassion encouraged as a spiritual and moral pursuit in many religions, it is also seen as a major healing process for our turbulent, or *nervous minds* and our troubled relationships. As we have already seen in Chapter One, it is important to bring to the practice of *Mindfulness* a kind acceptance, curiosity and compassion – both for your self and others.

Mahayana Buddhism is the school of the Dalai Lama and believes that developing compassion is like playing a musical instrument – it's a skill that can be developed and enhanced with dedicated practice. Perhaps though the brain and the human spirit are already ahead of us here and rather than developing or building something, it's more a case of uncovering what's already within us and allow it free-reign?

To paraphrase the Biochemist Leslie Orgel, *"Evolution is cleverer than we are"*.

Some More Science

The advances in neuroscience and the study of psychology over the past thirty years have rather turned things on their head, so to speak, as we have already seen. Meanwhile compassion, caring and pro-social behaviour have all been elevated to centre stage in the development of well being, promoting good mental health and our capacity to foster harmonious relations with each other and the world we live in: And compassion for oneself i.e. self compassion – is now widely recognised as an important predictor of psychological health and well being.

Richard Davidson and Dan Siegal have both written that our brains are, in essence, '*wired*' to experience empathy and compassion, and, the practice of *Mindfulness* serves to activate and strengthen areas of the brain associated with these emotions. Siegal suggests that *Mindfulness* is associated with 'empathetic joy' – the shared, interconnected experience of happiness and joy – and points to research that shows daily *Mindfulness* practices enhance neuroplasticity. Daily mindful workouts strengthen neural connections in the *prefrontal cortex*, the area of the brain associated with emotional regulation, Attention, insight, intention and empathy, and, stimulate the brain to change and repair itself.

A separate research study conducted using one hundred and twenty seven people looked at the correlation between *Mindfulness* and aspects of empathy and compassion[25]. Specifically, the study looked at three dimensions of empathy: *perspective taking* – which is a tendency to take on the point of view of others in interpersonal situations; *empathetic concern* – which is a tendency to have a positive regard and feelings of tenderness, sympathy and compassion towards others; and *personal distress* – which is the tendency to react with discomfort to the emotional experiences of others.

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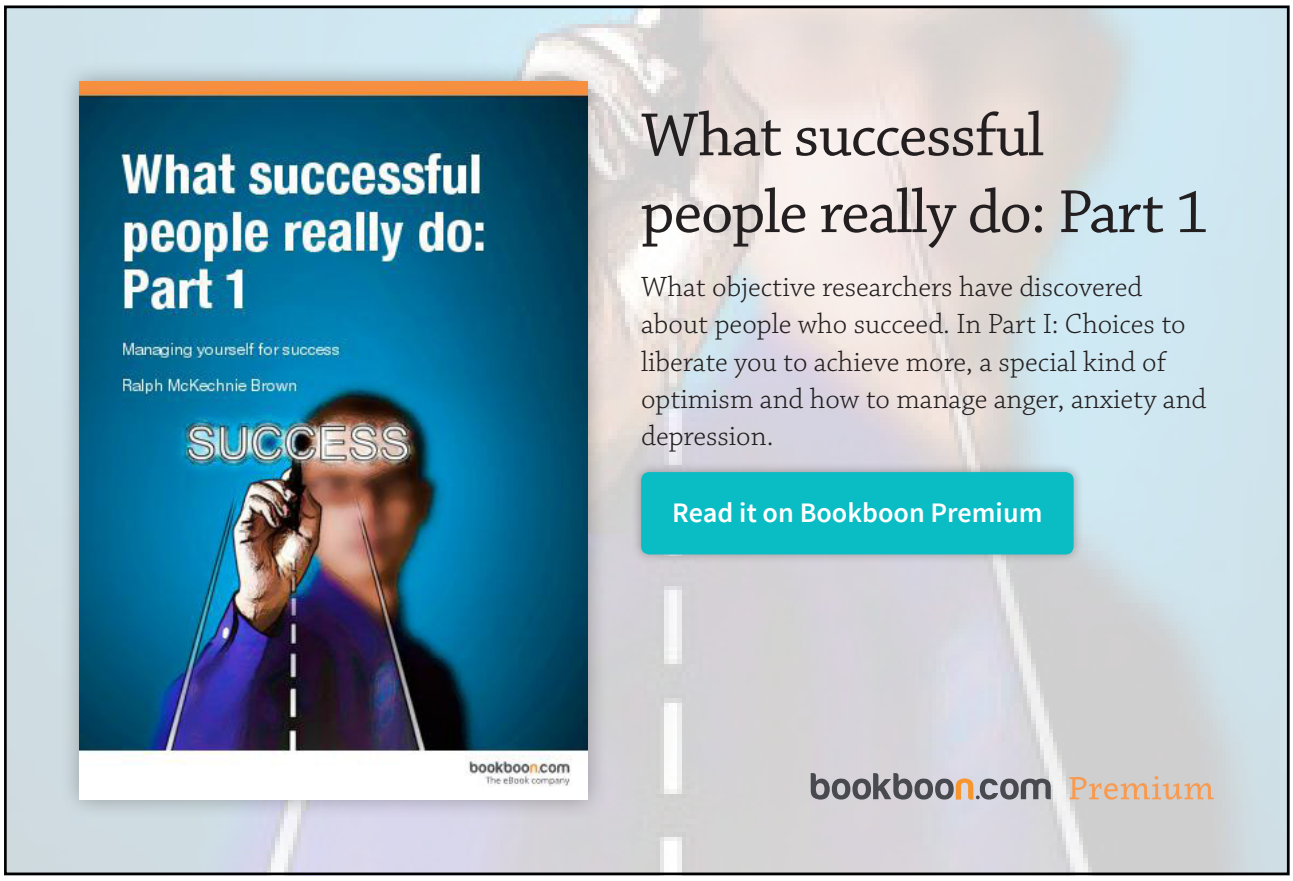
The findings established a strong correlation between *Mindfulness* and *perspective taking* and *Mindfulness* and *empathetic concern*, in that individuals with high levels of *Mindfulness* were more likely to report high levels of both of these and low levels of *personal distress*. Whilst non-judging and non-reacting were the components of *Mindfulness* that related most strongly to *perspective taking* and *empathetic concern*, suggesting that these two dimensions of *Mindfulness* play an important role in developing and enhancing feelings of compassion for oneself and others.

Can We Choose To Be Happy?

Mother Teresa said we should be, *"Happy in the moment that's enough. Each moment is all we need, not more"*.

In the faithful frame of mind we are made aware that Being is not simply a fact but a gift and aware that gifts have reasons. No life – no human existence – can be without physical loss and dissatisfactions; whilst our *New Brain* which is responsible for imagination, planning, rumination and integrating, keeps encouraging us to turn things over in our mind, question, revisit and relive the past and worry about the future.



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It is not our natural state to be miserable though. According to the Buddhist Monk Matthieu Ricard, who addressed a TED audience in 2004 on the 'Habits of Happiness', *"Our natural state of mind, when its not misconstrued under the power of negative thoughts is perfection. It is essential to inspire hope and confidence, since it is what we lack most and need most in our times"*. Ricard had volunteered for a study at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, to measure his brain waves. He was one of several hundred people selected because they had all practiced meditation. Each participant was rated on a happiness scale and Ricard scored off the charts. In fact, researchers couldn't find anything like it in the neuroscience literature. His brain scans showed excessive activity in his left *prefrontal cortex*, compared to its right counter part. This gave him an abnormally large capacity for happiness and a reduced propensity towards negativity. For him though, it was simply about living and being *authentically happy*, which was based on the long-term cultivation of wisdom, altruism and compassion, and, from the complete eradication of emotions and behavioural traits such as being grasping, ignorant, angry or hating: *"We vastly underestimate the power of transforming the mind"*, he noted.

The American poet Ralph Waldo Emerson tells us, *"For every minute we are angry we loose sixty seconds of happiness"*, but can we really choose to be happy? Again Ricard in his blog post in 2012 wrote, *"In truth anyone can find happiness if she or he looks for it in the right place"*[26]. The academic psychiatrist Colin Brewer though looks through the telescope from the other end and suggests that our misery rises to meet the means available for its alleviation. Conditions like anxiety and depression for instance, have largely been constructed by, amongst others, the manufacturers and purveyors of anti-depressants and anxiolytics. A salutary point indeed when the Health and Social Care Information Centre reported in 2013 that 50 million prescriptions for anti-depressants were issued in the UK alone. The highest number ever and 7.5 per cent up on the year before.

This is why compassion, emotional literacy, and resilience are so important, coupled with the ability to confront and forgive our mistakes and this needs to take place in a state of purposeful kindness, compassion and awareness. Living mindfully enables us to become aware of awareness; to make it our intention and to pay it our Attention, moment-by-moment-by-moment.

Want To Be Happy? Be Grateful!

Every given moment is a new gift and the particular gift contained in each is an opportunity. In a great TED Talk from 2013, David Steindl-Rast argued that becoming more aware of every moment as it happens is to live gratefully and that is the **Master Key to happiness**[27]. For him it isn't that happy people are grateful, but rather that living gratefully and feeling and expressing gratitude makes you happier and he equates grateful living with living mindfully: Which he defines as having the ability to **Stop**, become aware of the present moment and the present opportunity: To **Look** and give it your Attention: And to **Go** and Act!

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Mindfulness Is About Change

The word *Mindfulness* like, for instance, 'Meditation' triggers a broad spectrum of ideas and thoughts. At one extreme, some consider it to be a religious practice and just one component of a disciplined, faith-based lifestyle. At the other, it's regarded as a non-pharmaceutical approach to stress. Those in the proto religious camp want to change into enlightened beings. They want to transcend. However, the 9th Century AD Irish philosopher and theologian, John Scottus Erugena, described knowing enlightenment – or becoming enlightened – as being impossible. We cannot know what God is, he wrote, because God does not know what He is because he is not anything – He transcends being.

Of course, moving up the centuries and across continents, Dostoevsky wrote in the literal Russian translation, that if "*God didn't exist He would have to be invented*" although this later became Westernised and has become more commonly (mis) quoted in the 21th Century as, *"If God doesn't exist, all things are permitted*".

Those at the far reaches of the secular end also want to change too and for them the goal is to change their emotional reactivity, the pace they live their life, and, their blood pressure and parlous health. Which are exactly those things that attracted and encouraged me to start my journey and look at contemplative *Mindfulness* practice.

I want to become a better person, physically, psychologically and emotionally more healthy: To step back: To become the arbiter of my happiness and unhappiness. Certainly as the *Mindfulness* habit has taken root, I've accumulated data about my experience. I've noticed the way I describe myself to myself has started to change; I've become more accepting and less judgemental, which in fact makes me the arbiter of both my happiness and unhappiness. My approach to things has also changed and the quality of my relationships improved.

Do I now feel so stressed? Is there the physical tension, the nagging anxiety, the bubbling panic of feeling overwhelmed? According to the British Heart Foundation (BHF) more than seven million people in the UK suffer from heart and circulatory conditions, and we live amid an unprecedented epidemic of heart disease. The delayed-reaction time bomb that many of us set ticking through our thirties and forties with our diet, smoking, lack of exercise and excessive drinking, is compounded and cranked-up by stress. Feeling chronically pressured un-leashes a battery of physical responses that weakens hearts and blocks arteries.

Recent research has found that people working in stressed environments have raised levels of white blood cells. These cells, called monocytes and neutrophils, can combine with fats and cholesterols to build plaques on the walls of blood vessels. If the plaques break loose, they can cause blockages in arteries, stopping the flow of oxygen-carrying blood, and leading to a heart attack or stroke.

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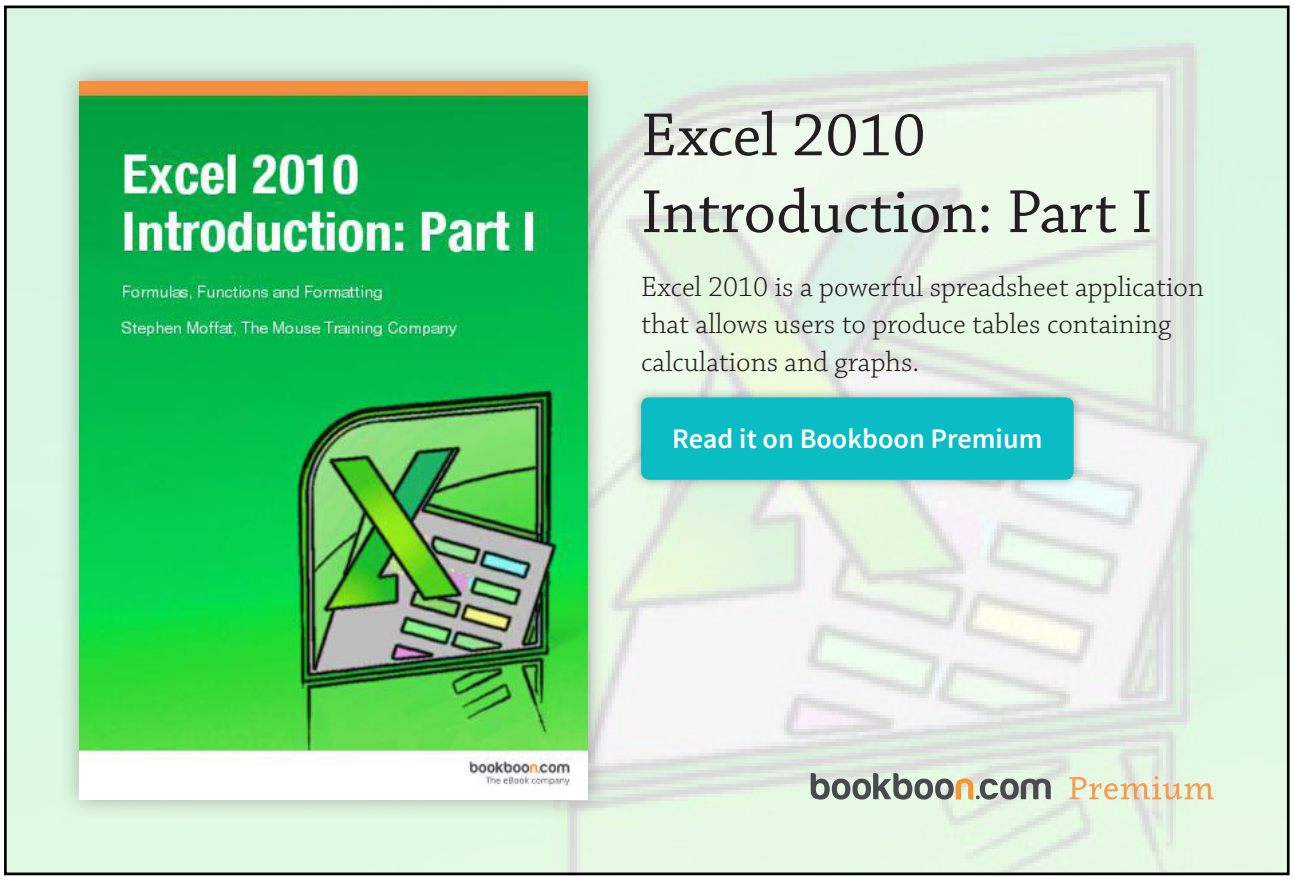
And the fact is that heart and circulatory disease now kills more women in the UK than men. Official figures show the annual toll to currently be around 82,000 women, compared with 79,000 men[28].

There's no escaping from stress and it's deleterious affects though. You're not safe if you live alone and you can't hide in a family either. The negative sides of social relationships – arguments and stress in the home, with regular conflict between husband and wife, parents and children, even with neighbours and between friends – appear to affect more men than women. According to new research based on the findings from a cohort of 10,000 people aged 36 to 52 studied over a ten year period, it was found that regular arguments more than double the risk of an early death for men[29]. One theory put forward was that the increased stress levels led those affected to take on unhealthy habits, such as misusing alcohol, smoking or running risks in other ways.

It rather begs the question though – **what difference might living mindfully make?** And as part of supporting wellness and wellbeing, instead of being used to treat the symptoms from the damage already done.



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An Invincible Summer

Has *Mindfulness* made me more resilient?

There are seven characteristics of a resilient person: They are optimistic, self-assured, open to ideas, they seek support, they are structured, proactive and also very focused. Some people seem to be born with the characteristic ability to bounce back from whatever life may throw at them. Rather than being down to nature though, perhaps it's nurture? As Dale Carnegie describes it in his book 'How To Win Friends and Influence People', perhaps these people have been brought up with *sincere appreciation*, or maybe they are what Daniel H Pink might call, 'bouyant' – with an innate inability to recover quickly from change, mishap or misfortune and quickly recover their shape and form.

I have for a long time been an adherent of the *Stockdale Paradox*, named after Admiral James Stockdale who survived seven years as a Vietcong POW by hanging onto two contradictory beliefs. Firstly, that his life couldn't be any worse at the moment, and, secondly that someday his life would be better than ever. I have also been willing to confront the tough facts whilst simultaneously maintaining absolute faith that the best will prevail in the end.

To my mind Albert Camus summed it up perfectly with these few words, *"Even in the midst of winter, I find within myself invincible summer"*. Doesn't that just inspire and lift like the architecture and designs of Edwin Landseer Lutyens? And what *Mindfulness* has done is to enable me to focus, acknowledge, embrace, really become aware and pay and give sufficient Attention in the moment to both the little things and to the much bigger things in my life.

And So To Well Being

Wellbeing is not as the 19th Century French Political Thinker and Historian Alexis de Tocqueville wrote, *"A distraction"*. If it was would the UK's Office for National Statistics have a Wellbeing Team? It is, in fact, the essence of human existence and manifests itself on physical, psychological and even existential levels: And research has shown that the domain of Wellbeing is just as important as each of the others[30].

Achieving wellbeing has been the concern of philosophers since Aristotle, but in recent years wellbeing has moved from the realm of philosophy to that of science with evidence to support this coming from a growing body of research. Studies have confirmed that key components of wellbeing now include a sense of individual vitality; engaging in meaningful activities; resilience to face changes beyond your immediate control; and crucially a sense of relatedness to others.

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Nearly two thousand years ago however, the Roman Scholar, Emporer and Military Leader Marcus Aurelius advocated doing every act of your life as though it were the very last act of your life and also wrote, *"Sanity means tying your wellbeing to your own actions"* [31]. In this line of just a few simple words, he captured an essential truth; a telling, profound and utterly recognisable modern message that many of today's new age and self-help gurus put forward – although not so succinctly.

It sets its hat against personal powerlessness and is all about self-empowerment; taking back the reins of your life. In part it's saying you can be the change you want, but it's also saying that you need to acknowledge things as they are, take responsibility and then choose to act as you want and need: Remembering, things are what they are, they were what they were, and, they will be what they will be!

We've already looked at language and how important it is in shaping how we think and feel. Quite simply the way you describe yourself to yourself is the arbiter of your happiness and your unhappiness. Likewise the choices you make and the actions you take set the path you follow. In previous Chapters I've put my cards on the table and suggested that *Mindfulness* should be practiced as part of wellness and maintaining wellbeing. Living mindfully, working mindfully, engaging in Mindful relationships and eating mindfully, are all core components of wellbeing. **Food is always a parable and a prayer for wellness**.

Another step along the path to my mind, is, as we build mindful practices into our daily life and experience the changes of mindful living, to try and live it all without words and labels. Language has connotations, makes assumptions, serves-up presumptions and carries a cart-load of baggage. We all have compassion, resilience, intelligence and emotional literacy, to a greater or lesser degree, so for me to be mindful is to uncover this rather than acquire it and this uncovering is part of the **science of meaningful living**. In the next Chapter we'll be looking at *Mindfulness* in the workplace and in every place.

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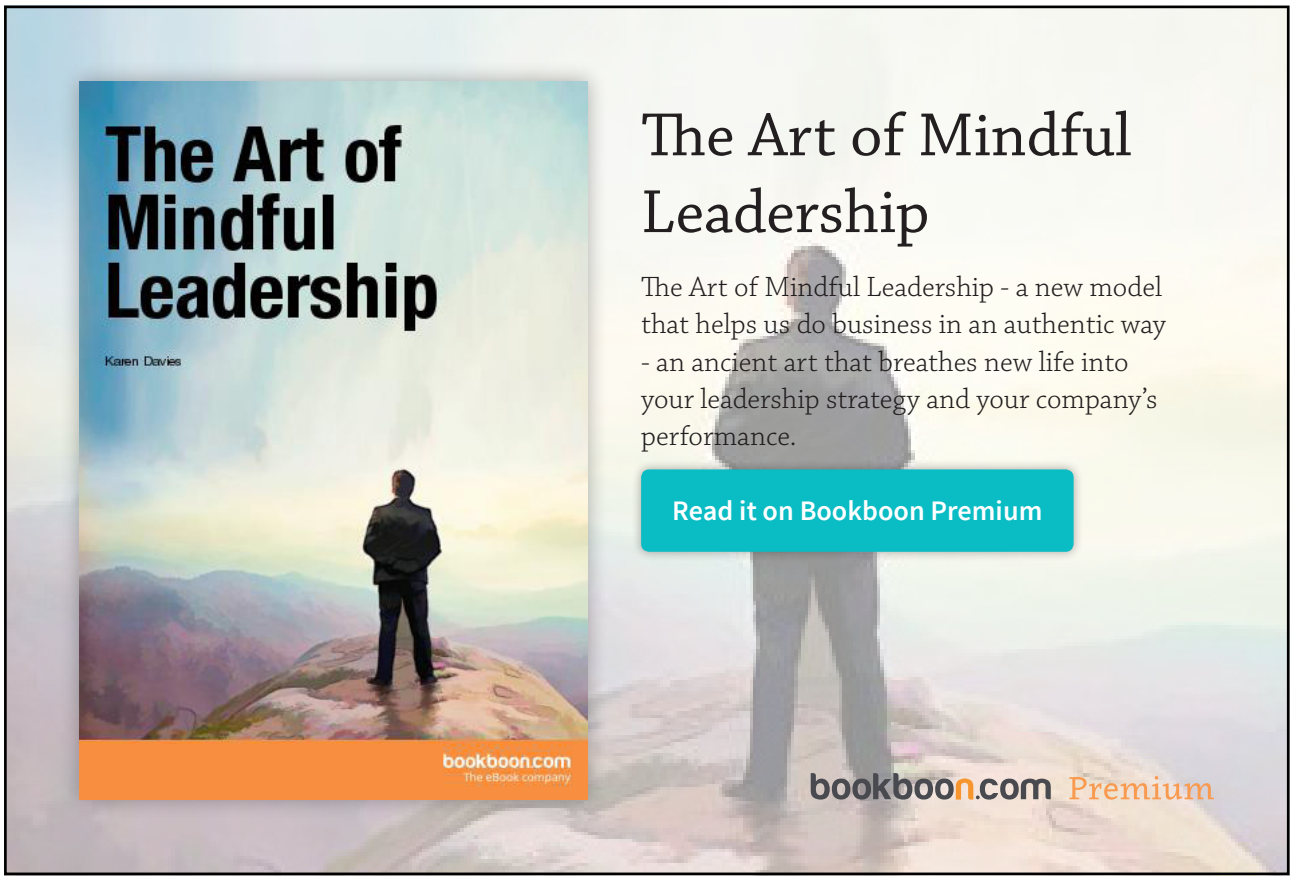
5 "Mindfulness In The Workplace and Every Other Place"

In this Chapter we look at *Mindfulness* and its relevance and practical utility in the workplace, particularly in reducing stress and tackling chronic and endemic absenteeism. Although according to Arlie Hochschild, a professor emeritus of psychology at the University of California, Berkley, the office is fast overtaking the home as many peoples 'happy place'. In her book 'The Time Bind'[32], she puts this reversal of home and office down to people increasingly seeing the workplace as a haven from the growing demands of the family. Nonetheless, it is estimated that in the UK alone stress-related absences from the workplace cost the UK economy a conservative **£23 billion each year**.

We will ask if *Mindfulness* can boost innovation and creativity and strengthen employee engagement. We will also look at it in relation to leaders and coaching and examine the practical benefits of introducing it in schools and making it integral to a policy of maintaining wellness throughout all levels of society.

"Everything is forseen except, naturally, what is going to happen", Rene Lardeit de Lacharriere.



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Two Questions

Let's begin this Chapter with two pertinent questions:

Should we be mindful of Mindfulness? and *Has Mindfulness been hijacked by business?*

When we are being mindful we become keenly aware of ourself and our surroundings, but we simply observe these things as they are. We are aware of our own thoughts and feelings, but we do not react to them in the way that we would if we were on our usual autopilot. If we do not label or judge events as they take place, we are liberated from our natural tendency to react.

But what if by not reacting we get it wrong? For example, by not screening information widely enough certain factors may be overlooked. Or by focusing exclusively on the present, not enough weight might be given to the future or the past? Through the awareness that *Mindfulness* cultivates, it gives us the ability to step-out of the situation, evaluate things and make a conscious choice. Paradoxically, instead of things passing us by or noticing less, we become more present and prescient. The quality of our thinking, Attention and decision-making becomes greater than the sum of its parts. We are less likely to be 'blinded' by past experience, which can militate against considering novel, adaptive and out-of-the-box solutions, as it stimulates the quality of creative and innovative thinking – and this qualitative element is far more likely to lead to success on a personal or business level than an *elephants sufficiency* of ideas on their own.

In the 1970s, the received wisdom was that the right hemisphere of the brain controlled creativity. Today that model seems a tad simplistic. Research by Alice Flaherty, Rex Jung, Hikaru Takeuchi and most recently Nancy C Andreasen, which she wrote about in 'Secrets Of The Creative Brain' (2014), point to creative ideas coming, in fact, from a network of regions of the brain. These include the right *dorsolateral prefrontal cortex* that relates to creative ability and the pathways between the *temporal* and *frontal lobes* that regulate creative expression. Put simply, the *temporal lobe* generates the ideas and the *frontal lobe* controls them, whilst the chemical *dopamine* also plays a key role in stimulating creative motivation and encouraging divergent thinking i.e. the ability to see uncommon connections and have those eureka moments.

Better Decisions, Really?

Mindfulness it would seem is becoming increasingly viewed as a powerful business decision-making tool and is being incorporated into negotiation training and leadership manuals. This is in addition to major corporates, smaller businesses and public sector organisations as diverse as IBM, Starbucks, Proctor and Gamble, Heiniken, the American Red Cross, Transport for London, the US Army and the UK Civil Service, all running programmes in the workplace – and these are just a few forming the tip of an increasingly large iceberg!

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A new study entitled, 'Improving Decision-Making Through Mindfulness'[33] wrestles with the paradox that whilst *Mindfulness* is conceived as encompassing an attitude of non-judgement, in fact it leads to better judgement, *"Precisely by helping us to let go of judgements and be less judgemental"*. The report argues that by reducing habitual and reactive behaviour, *Mindfulness* may increase self-determination and, therefore, encourage people to make decisions in a more balanced way.

Mindfulness can help at each stage of the decision-making process too, from framing a decision to be made and gathering and processing information, to drawing a conclusion and learning from feedback. The authors of the report also suggest that it can be used to avoid the time wasted making a decision when its not really necessary to do so and help people to realise when they spend too much time on **sweating the small stuff** – and, of course, as they say, **everything is small stuff**!

Mindfulness – Good For The Workplace, Good For You

In fact, soft stuff is the new hard stuff. Companies are starting to realise that they need to do more for their employees than simply command and control. In today's world it is more important that they are prepared to nurture, listen, share, praise and go that little bit further for their workforce, as we shall see.

It has long been accepted that physical exercise is good for the body. Likewise a balanced diet – high in vegetables and fibre, low in saturated fats and increasingly without any sugar, Full Stop! We have also seen in previous Chapters that the science is now telling us that daily *Mindfulness* practice is, in fact, *"daily fitness practice"*. Chade-Meng Tan, is officially known as Google's *Jolly Good Fellow*, and is as passionate about *Mindfulness* as you'd expect any Head of *Mindfulness* training at that company would be. His role, as he describes it, is to enlighten minds, open hearts and create world peace and he hopes that one day his role and Job description will be commonplace.

A growing awareness of the importance of emotional fitness is currently mirroring the same journey of acceptance that physical exercise took through the '70s, '80s and up to the millennium. As Tan says, *"If you are a company leader today who says your employees should be encouraged to exercise, nobody would look at you funnily"*. Arguably the same thing is now happening with meditation and *Mindfulness*: In part, because it has become scientific, but also because in those organisations and businesses where *Mindfulness* has been introduced, positive changes and increasingly a return on the foresight and investment are being seen.

Compassion is increasingly being viewed as good for business and also for becoming a great business leader. Jim Collins would define these as Level 5 leaders who demonstrate two distinct character traits, which may seem to be at odds – humility and ambition. These leaders in fact demonstrate a paradoxical blend of great personal humility and intense professional will. A rare combination that defies traditional assumptions about what makes a leader great[34].

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Empathy and Emotional Intelligence Drives Profit

The top seven benefits of a workplace *Mindfulness* programme have been identified as:

- Enhanced client and employer/employee relationships through actively listening, being appreciative, and demonstrating a kind awareness that translates into business success;
- Improved performance and productivity through improved cognitive flexibility, concentration and creativity (88% of *Mindfulness* participants within IF Insurance, Sweden reported an increased ability to stay focused);
- Reduction in levels of stress within individuals, reduction in costs of absenteeism due to stress and stress-related illness (Transport for London reported a fall of 71% in days taken off for stress, anxiety and depression);
- Greater resilience suggesting improved emotional intelligence, with people generally better equipped to cope with demanding workloads, deadlines and decision-making;
- Employees with a greater capacity for tolerance within the workplace through improved self-regulation of thoughts, emotions and behaviours;
- Increased staff retention through employee job satisfaction and employee engagement; and
- Enhanced job satisfaction through a clearer sense of **purpose**, and, enhanced interpersonal relations at work (Again at Transport for London, 80% of participants reported improved relationships).

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And giving employees the opportunity to build up their **Mindful Pecs** in the workplace can really only benefit both the employee and their environment. We don't separate the parts of us that carry out our job roles and send them off to the workplace every day, whilst the other parts of us that are about the home, family and friends, stay away and go someplace else. Life doesn't work like that. Our hopes, worries and priorities are carried with us at all times and when something is happening in one area of our life it will have an impact on all the other areas. When something causes even the slightest anxiety our cognitive capacity will be diminished because our brain will invariably focus on and be consumed by the problem. This leads to work life conflict and in the workplace it can drain our energy and undermine our confidence and performance. There is a strong correlative relationship between environmental workplace factors, wellbeing and performance, and, *Mindfulness* can be integral to achieving the right balance; particularly as employees begin to approach situations, clients and each other with an openness, awareness and keen interest.

Culture Fit?

There are concerns though, that teaching *Mindfulness* as a way of *"paying Attention on purpose in the present moment, and non-judgementally"*, can lead to an unfortunate uncoupling of the approach from its ethical roots and underpinnings, especially in a workplace setting where the prevailing culture may look a lot different from the 'right livelihood' of Buddhism's ***Ethical Conduct Path***. Indeed, much of the nature of work is driven by transactional rather than relationship-orientated behaviour. Whilst most contemporary management and leadership literature which still shapes workplace practices today, is a predictive recasting of 19th and 20th Century institutional thinking i.e. multi-tasking, planning, analysis, problem solving, being bigger, better, faster. In other words – **Work on steroids**! So faced with the speed of much working life, there could be a strong pressure (on course commissioners, teachers and participants) to compromise corporate *Mindfulness* training to meet the perceived 'needs' of the organisation.

This might manifest itself by corporate *Mindfulness* sessions becoming shorter, with the space for stillness and contemplation being sacrificed at worst or compromised and shortened at best. The emphasis might shift (and not necessarily deliberately) away from *Mindfulness* as an embodied expression of compassion, presence and awareness, and move towards providing a focus for preparing employees for increased workloads, working longer hours and increasing productivity. If that was to happen however it would quickly loose all credibility and the opportunity to promote and support individual wellbeing, compassion for oneself and others, improve relationships, heighten awareness, stimulate creativity and empower decision-making, would be lost.

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The Right Leadership For Mindfulness

The right way to address this in the workplace, of course, is with the right mindset at the top sending out the right signals and messages, and, with the right leadership modelling behaviours and driving things at all levels throughout the business or organisation. If mental and physical health is prioritised at the corporate level then it opens the way for it becoming a priority in the workplace as well.

If we Google 'Leadership' we will get around eight billion 'hits', whilst there have been upwards of 78,000 books on the subject published since 1970 and the leadership sector is worth globally £45 billion per annum. Yet the practice of leadership is a paradox and within this paradox lays a series of contradictions and tensions[35].

I believe in our modern world that we expect too much of our leaders. Our response when faced with the complexities and seemingly intractability of *wicked problems* that have no one-size fits all solution is to still look for a leader who will solve them. I think we have sleep-walked into an inflated sense of what leadership can achieve in today's world, yet many challenges and problems can be faced and solved by applying some perspective, intelligence and most importantly, wisdom coupled with compassion. In short, we need Mindful leaders who model the right behaviours. They have emotional intelligence, they are affiliative and able to connect and relate. They are humble and prepared to fail, whilst being open to embracing the learning that will come from that failure: Most of all though, our Mindful leader is present and has great integrity, heart, empathy and compassion.

But none of this is either straight forward, or easy

So many in leadership roles busy themselves with being strategic, whilst feeling compelled to act and do, without necessarily knowing what. Being present as a leader is about much more than simply showing up, or being in the room. Its about being in the moment, limiting multi-tasking, relaxing the body and applying *Mindfulness* to gather the necessary information, effectively weigh and judge the situation, and, ultimately make the best decision available.

By being present in *Mindfulness* a leader can consume the detail without being consumed, be attentive and notice all the little things – nuances and subtleties – that before may have passed by unnoticed. They will also lead with the heart as well as the head. They will lead with purpose, which is to make sense of things towards desirable ends[36]. They will also be connected to their values and through this connection also appreciate what really matters to those who follow them.

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The top seven benefits of a workplace *Mindfulness* programme on leadership have been identified as:

- Enhanced, more thoughtful and deliberate decision-making and listening skills;
- Enhanced self-awareness: Being able to pay Attention to the impact of response to oneself and others/other situations;
- Ability to **respond** rather than **react**, and, deal with situations more calmly and less judgementally;
- Greater ability to think strategically and greater clarity of thought and creativity;
- Greater personal energy and resilience;
- Clearer sense of core **purpose**/personal **purpose** and values; and
- Greater productivity and focus.

Did you notice? **Purpose** features in both sets of 'Top Benefits' and **purpose** is really rather important. In his latest book 'Happiness By Design', Paul Dolan, a member of the Cabinet Office's 'Nudge Unit' and the Office for National Statistics Wellbeing Team, defines happiness as the experience of both pleasure and **purpose** over time[37]**.** And **purpose** for Dolan who is also a professor at the London School of Economics, is defined as the day-to-day, lived experience, rather than the standard approach of evaluating whether our lives have any purpose overall. So, know your **purpose** – or as Shakespeare's Hamlet might have put it, *"Know thyself and to thine self be true"* – and you will experience better emotions and this is all pretty important, not just for individuals, but for policy makers too. Evidence shows that people who experience better emotions, *"Live longer, are in better health, recover from viruses more quickly, have less time off work, are more successful in their careers and have happier marriages"*.

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For *Mindfulness* to be successfully introduced and supported in the workplace also requires a clear understanding of the **purpose** and benefits for the business or organisation, together with commitment, visibility and promotion. In Chapter Six, there are some brief case studies featuring workplaces where *Mindfulness* programmes have been introduced, and all crucially using an experienced practioner and teacher of *Mindfulness*. Some have used internal 'ambassadors' to promote the initiative, others have started by simply running some introductory/taster-type sessions to give everyone a clear idea of what *Mindfulness* is all about. Some have introduced it obliquely, by suggesting initially that people try sitting still for five minutes to get a sense of how challenging, in a paradoxical way, *Mindfulness* practice can be. Others have started the ball rolling with introducing a three-minute 'breathing space'. Typically though sessions last around 90 minutes.

The most successful programmes have been focused on *Mindfulness* Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) techniques and interestingly where staff 'opt-in'[38]. In all cases a critical mass has readily been achieved: In part this may be down to the *Law of Diffusion of Innovation* in operation. This suggests that the 'Tipping Point' for change (or in this case generating sufficient interest) in any situation or environment, doesn't depend on engaging upwards of 30–40%+ of the workforce, to get close to the 'magic figure' of half, or 50%, but rather requires only around 17% to be initially active.

Change The Story

"By one conversation, one innovation, one leap of faith at a time".

One of the most significant developments in the world of workplace organisational development (OD) is the rise of 'dialogic' approaches to leading change as an alternative to, or to sit alongside prevalent top-down diagnostic approaches.

Dialogic change though is not about diagnosing the problem through systematic analysis, then creating a series of work streams or change programmes to solve the problem through a series of planned change interventions and managing the whole thing from the top of the organisation or system. Rather it is about creating change by changing the conversations that shape everyday thinking and actions. Its about bringing new, different and diverse voices into the change conversation and creating new perspectives, stories, texts, narratives and other socially constructed realities that impact on how people think and make sense of things – which in turn, impacts on how they act and the results they achieve from the changes they make.

Coaching For Mindful Leading

The role of the organisation is becoming less to organise work than it is to focus employees *passion* and **purpose**, and, central to this is using coaching in the workplace to act as a catalyst for not only crystallising the narrative, making meaning and settling-in the story, but also for increasing self-awareness and self-management.

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Coaching can provide valuable insights into behaviours, patterns and the relationship between thought and action, and, when coupled with *Mindfulness* or a mindful approach, individuals are able to jettison judgement and start to question ingrained beliefs or perceptual blind spots which might result in what Dan Siegal describes as, *"Oversimplification"*. In addition, if the workplace has hitherto been toxic with anxiety and stress unchecked and impeding creativity and performance, a mindful coaching approach can cultivate a renewed courage, confidence and openness to an unknown future. Together with an acceptance of the world as it is, the acknowledgement and equal acceptance of the different points of view of others, and, awareness and wisdom.

From a practical perspective however, is being a Mindful coach possible? In Chapter One we set out that not only would we look at how *Mindfulness* and coaching could enrich each other, but how they might work against each other?

Using *Mindfulness* a coach will perfect a form of conscious and comfortable simultaneous Attention to themselves, their coachee, the relationship between them, and the mental, emotional and relational dynamics occurring in the moment. There are three aspects of *Mindfulness* that have a particular relevance to coaching:

- *An empty mind;*
- *Non-reactivity; and*
- *Permissive Attention*

An *empty mind*, or being what Gestalt therapists would refer to as an 'empty vessel', is key to letting something happen in someone else and it's the essence of coaching and can't be achieved by greater effort or more action. It's not about what you do, but how you are – it's about your demeanour, your approach, your style and, most importantly of all, about your awareness of the present. With an *empty mind* judgement is suspended and full Attention is given to the coachee, which enables them to feel their real substance and the value of being heard. To achieve this the coach centres them selves in the present, or the 'Be here now' place, as it is called in John Heron's *Catalytic Toolkit* model[39].

On the other hand, *non-reactivity* on the part of the coach gives the person being coached room to roam from perspective to perspective – trying on this, or that – from one incomplete thought to another until they become whole thoughts and the basis for change and growth. The coachee can in fact feel invigorated by this space to explore – an emotional space without any landmines! Whilst *Permissive Attention* is about the focus that is set and maintained that allows the coachee to stay in the moment and remain open to new perspectives and different answers.

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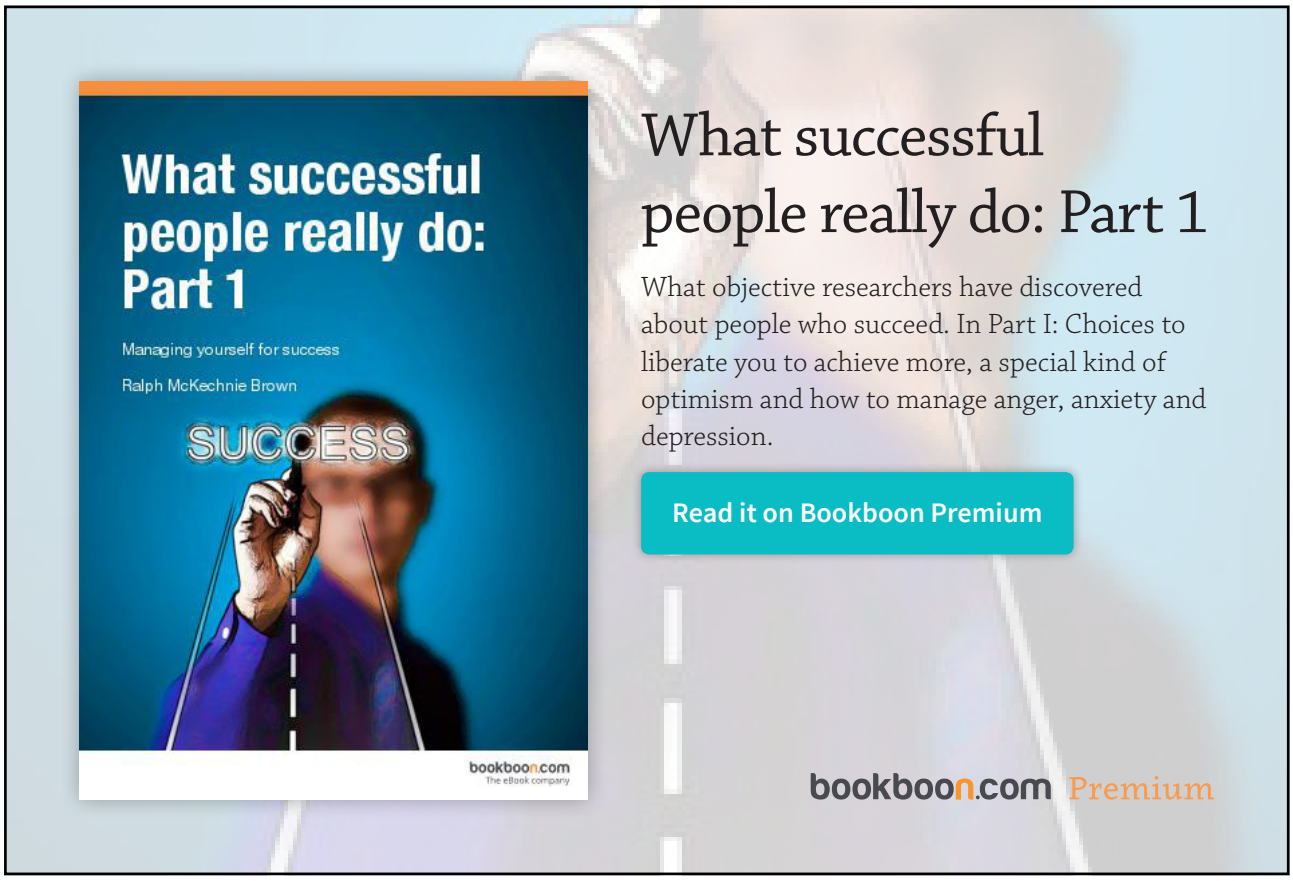
Essentially coaching is a humanistic practice, where as described by Carl Rogers, the concepts of congruence and empathic understanding are available to the coach as Awareness. This then enables the coach to facilitate psychological change and growth and provide an environment in which the client can flourish through congruence. Whilst being empathic creates a support structure necessary for the client to feel the presence (or focused Attention), the support and the understanding (without judgement), of the coach: And as the coach facilitates change in another through the coaching experience they are invariably changed them selves in some way, shape or form, whether it be through understanding, learning or gaining new knowledge, or improving their skills.

The evidence would suggest then that the role of *Mindfulness* in coaching is, if anything, very important. It enables a coach to hone their mind to be sharp and aware of what is currently present so they can intuitively pick up what is going on but not be engulfed by it: Also to develop and maintain focus within the coaching session and manage an emotional detachment; able to enter each session with **fresh eyes and a free mind**[40].

And So Back To School

Hands up if you were ever taught to be aware. Or if you were given lessons in school on developing the ability to reflect. Were you taught to pay Attention, or just conditioned to sit at your desk and be a passive receptacle for each lesson?



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It is increasingly being recognised that *Mindfulness* practice can be beneficial for children, for the same reason it helps adults – contributing to reduced stress, improved sleep quality and a heightened focus. In a recent Chinese study *Mindfulness* training was found to improve the self-control in groups of four year olds. In the USA as we noted in the Introduction, the actress Goldie Hawn, Daniel Siegal, and a clinical professor of psychiatry at UCLA School of Medicine and neurologist Judy Willis, have come together to introduce a MindUP programme in schools.

The MindUP programme actually started in Vancouver, Canada in 2005 and is fundamentally about **changing education as we know it**. It's been designed to teach children about the brain and become more aware of their own thoughts and emotions. In essence to begin to learn and develop the ability to think about thinking – or *metacognition* – and in turn develop a social and emotional skill for living smarter, healthier, happier! The awareness as it develops gives them better control over their own mind, the ability to direct their Attention more appropriately and improve learning, as it prevents stress from shutting down the executive functions of thought, action and emotion,

Currently teachers in over 65 schools across the U.S., 150+ in Canada, nearly ten in the UK and one in Venezuela are using the MindUP programme, which is based on a curriculum of 15 lessons. Children learn about the brain, how to become aware, how to think and how to make responsible decisions. Also as part of the programme the children have 'three minute' sessions where they concentrate on breathing, to promote calm and sharpen Attention. They are taught about happiness and compassion as well: For example, that random acts of kindness matter and you become happy or happier when you give to someone else, which is a lesson in line with the teachings of the Dalai Lama.

And they keep *gratitude journals* to regularly write down what they are grateful for which in turn helps to build better relationships.

Is It Working?

According to the research findings currently available it would appear that the programme is having a very positive effect. For instance, the young students self-reported feeling of happiness have markedly increased, along with a liking of school and sense of wellbeing. Tellingly though it has also been shown to be reducing cortisol levels, suggesting that it has lowered stress in the classroom whilst improving the children's executive functions.

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Dream Big

It's Goldie Hawn's dream that programmes like MindUP should become a priority and implemented in every school in the world: Practicalities aside in some locations around the world – Why Not in principle? It's certainly something we'd hope that the All Party Parliamentary Group on *Mindfulness* will be looking at and Education Policy needs to be on the front foot. Something needs to be done, as we don't want Britain to catch up with the U.S. where 11% of American children aged 12 over use anti-depressants. Drugs are becoming more nuanced, but there's still the element of the *chemical cosh* and if medication is mainstream it breeds confusion about what's normal – ***Society looses sight of the shore!***

On the other hand, *Mindfulness* – approaches, techniques and practices – can be mainstreamed and made accessible to all from pre-school age upwards. Then perhaps Society will have a fighting chance and we are actively encouraging an appreciation, expectation and acceptance of wellness and wellbeing from our formative years onwards. This has got to be preferable – financially, morally et al – to treating symptoms as they present years later. Stressful events in childhood can increase the risk of developing physical and mental health problems as an adult, but it may also happen much earlier because of the changes that can be triggered in a child's neurodocrine and immune systems[41].

A Mindful Revolution

What we need is what Susan Kaiser Greenland, author of 'The Mindful Child' calls a **mindful revolution in education** and let's add to that, in the workplace and every other place as well!

Of course, many changes need to take place and many other things need to happen, perhaps most crucially putting day-to-day happiness at the heart of all policy making. Happier people are more productive, socially, emotionally and in the workplace and to perform at our very best requires emotional intelligence and awareness. People engaged with compassion in meaningful and purposeful activities equal better health and social integration. Perhaps it really is a case that the **welfare of the present is the oasis of the future** and we need to go back to basics, identify what jobs we will need for a future economic system to be fuelled most effectively and be prepared to reshape employment and workplaces accordingly, where digital and analogue co-exist and intersect and **business is social**.

Perhaps we are talking about getting rid of traditional jobs and moving away from the full-time, part-time, permanent, fixed term, interim contract and zero hours roles, that are all nicely packaged in favour of the organisation. Perhaps we are talking about a merger of the jobs and contractor markets and a move away from engineered processes, towards placing an emphasis on human ingenuity and collaborative power. With people in employment working at what they are best at and for two or three companies instead of one: People driven by purpose, rather than by process and profit.

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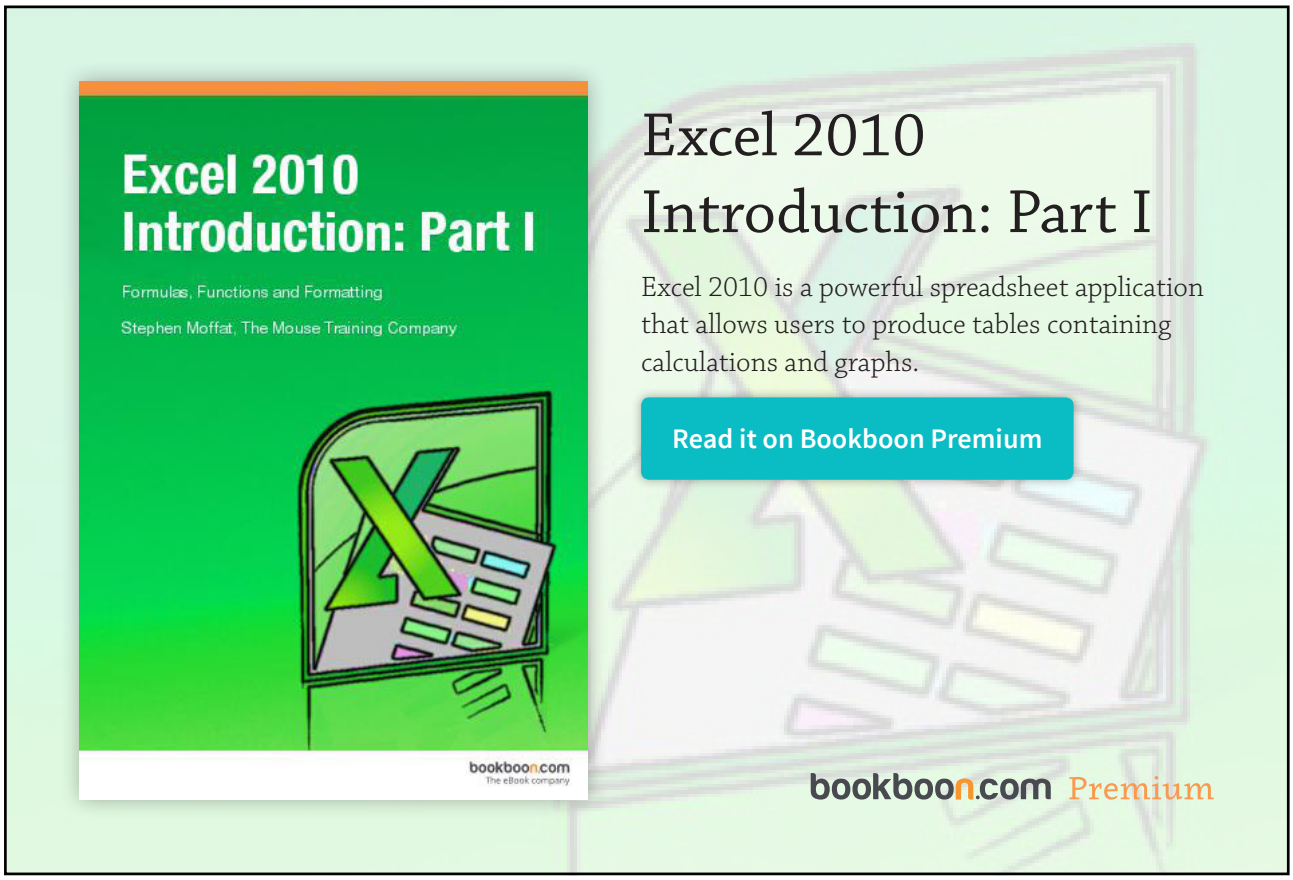
The psychology around work and its organisation (industrial, occupational and business psychology) is arguably still in its infancy. Perry Timms, who has done some ground breaking thinking around the future of work and the role of HR, believes that whilst we clearly know more than we did in 1813, 1913 or 2013, by 2025 our knowledge and understanding will *differ considerably*[42]. He predicts some big shocks, including the *"beginnings of the fall of the megacorporations"*, accompanied by the realisation that there's a different way of doing things and we're better off in many different ways other than shareholder-fuelled supersize organisations. It will also make sense to build flexible helix like communities or *heterachies* – of living and work – where people actually care about each other.

We need to **find the love** and in Chapter Six we will be doing just that, as well as **tuning the instrument and tasting the fruit**.



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6 "How To Apply The Brakes? Tune The Instrument, Taste The Fruit!"

In this Chapter we will be looking in more detail at what we can do to prepare ourselves to live Mindfully and also take a look at different exercises and practices to try. There are plenty of guided meditations on You Tube too and links to some of these together with other useful information are included in the 'Bibliography, Resources and Other Stuff' section at the end. We're also going to look at some related exercises and techniques that can be used to promote greater wellbeing and at some case studies where *Mindfulness* has been successfully introduced in the workplace, before we ask whether this is the end of the journey?

Let's Tie A Knot In It!

"Mindfulness is a habit, its something the more one does the more likely one is to be in that mode with less and less effort. It's a skill and it can be learned. It's accessing something we already have. Mindfulness isn't difficult. What is difficult is to remember to be Mindful!"

This quote comes from John Teasdale, a former Research Scientist, first at Oxford and then Cambridge[43]**.** and tells all we need to know before we start with our formal practice. Of course, the sentiment is also out there on the Net, expressed less eloquently perhaps, but with no less cogency and a certain "*va va voom*" as:

> *"Oh Crap, I forgot to be Mindful today!"*

It would certainly make a great slogan for a T'shirt, don't you think?

The bottom line is we need to start with the intention to make the practice of *Mindfulness* a daily habit. Many of us will quite understandably think that any form of meditation is hard and requires hours and hours of silence and stillness on our part. In fact, the formal practice can be incredibly simple and it certainly defeats the purpose if we try too hard, or become fixated on a specific length of time that should be spent practicing *Mindfulness* each day. For Jon Kabat-Sinn PhD, the real Mindful meditation practice takes place in how we live our lives from moment-to-moment. He will tell you that we don't need the iPhone et al, because humans have the most exquisite apparatus in the known universe sitting right inside their heads – **The most complex organisation of matter in the entire universe**.

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Mindfulness is a goal-less activity. Simply by being open and prepared to experience things as best we can – by accepting *whatever is*, by neither trying too hard or giving up, by acknowledging that our mind is bound to wander and that's Ok – we will be taking our first steps along a path leading to *Mindfulness* and living a truly Mindful life.

We know that we are being consumed day-by-day by the demands of the modern world; working increasingly longer hours, spending on average nearly nine hours a day on mobile and media devices – that's longer than most of us sleep each night – and checking our phones upwards of 150 times each day. We know that we really shouldn't be rushing so much *"with nervous hands and worried minds"*, but instead should be taking more time for and with each other, and, in our relationships being as Rainer Maria Rilke describes, *"the loving guardians of each others solitude"*. Yet one-in-five adults admit to having checked their phones while having sex and half of us admit to feeling anxious if we are separated from our phones for any length of time. So, the reality is it can be incredibly hard to invest and take that first step in anything that might actually make things better – or equally, become quickly deterred if things don't seem to be working or happening fast. After all it's about change, isn't it, and that can be very scarey? But we are not talking here about some esoteric, mystical practice done by hippies in baggy orange clothes – **Don't be put off from taking those first steps**!

Did You Know?

Brief *Mindfulness* exercises can be effective in improving mood and in reducing anxiety and fatigue after only four days of practice[44]. and a measurable change can be achieved in as little as 100 minutes. If you have been reading from the start, then of course you do, and you will also now know that other studies have shown that longer-term practice permanently rewires the brain, increasing the growth of new neurons and neural connections. People who have engaged in more than 10,000 hours of daily *Mindfulness* meditation practice have been found to have permanently changed the way their brains function. They have significantly increased the activation of their brains left-side *anterior region*, an area associated with the experience of positive emotional states. Research also shows that enhanced activation of this area of the brain also occurs in individuals who practice *Mindfulness* meditation for only eight weeks and a fundamental impact that can change lives can be achieved in as little as fifty-two hours of practice – That's not years and years!

Slowing Down

As the Zen proverb says, *"When walking, walk. When eating, eat"*. As we prepare to live Mindfully and practice *Mindfulness* there are a number of things we can do and some of these we already started to look at in Chapter One.

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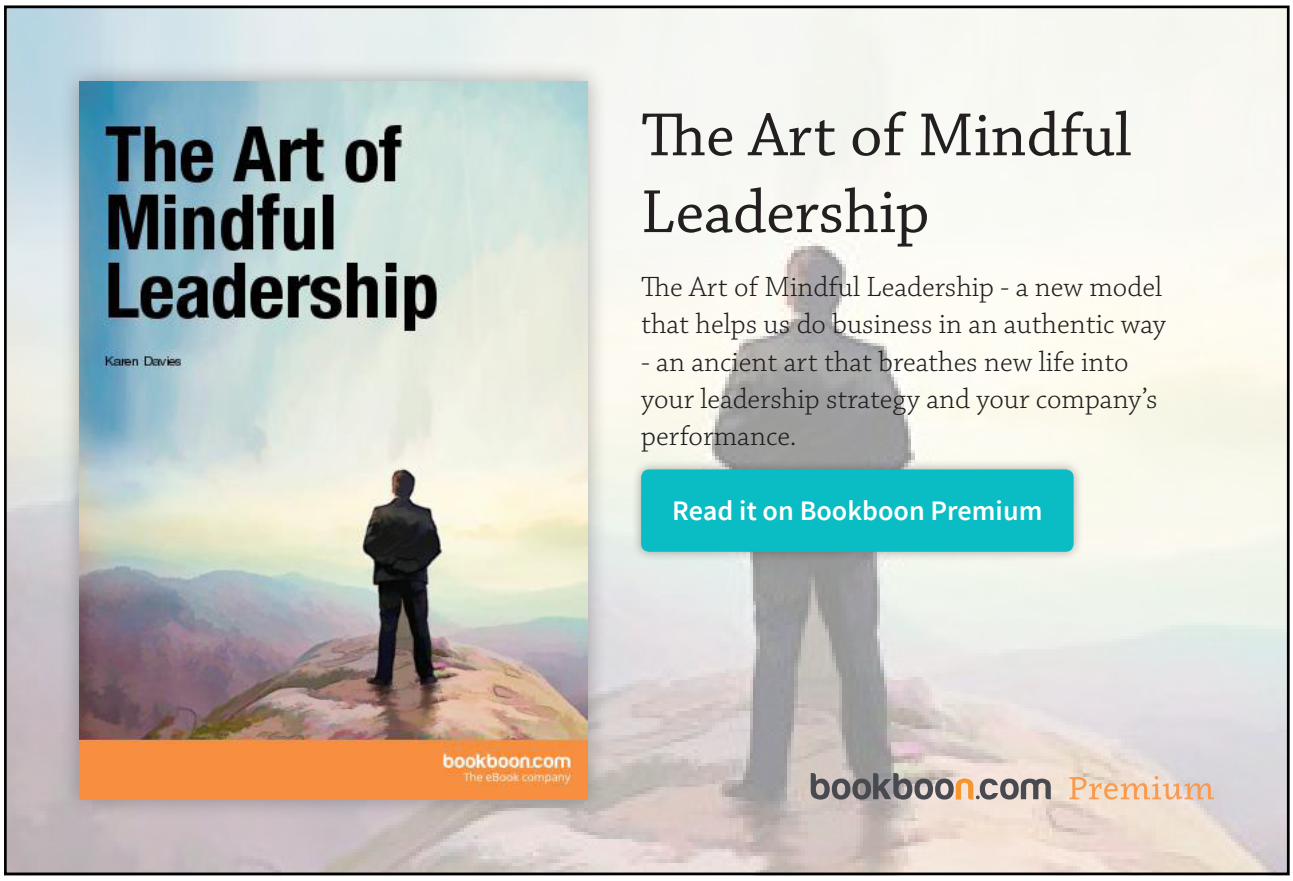
Here are my **Top Eight** that will all help to promote a slower, more deliberate consciousness that engages the *prefrontal cortex* of the brain, regulating our emotions and ability to think clearly:

- *Eat Mindfully*: Don't just eat to eat. Make eating a meditative experience. Take in the smells, the appearance, texture and taste of each mouthful. Savour each forkful as it enters the mouth and you begin to taste it. Chew slowly and set a rhythm for your body by eating at the same times each day, whilst giving your system a rest by allowing four or five hours between each sitting. Also be Mindful where you eat. Make the meal about the food (and the company), so keep the table clear of everything but food – no TV, phones, books, paperwork or mail. Not only will these changes help you to feel more satisfied and sated, they will also give the neurons responsible for signalling fullness at the end of a meal a chance to catch-up and tell the brain to stop eating. As we get older this process becomes less efficient, but by being Mindful when we eat the *hypothalamus* has a chance to release the neurons to produce the *pro-upiomelanocortin* (POMC) peptides that signal fullness and can stop us overeating – good news if you're watching your weight.



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- *Limit Screen Time*: The *family guys* behind Apple, Facebook Google et al, all appear to have one thing in common, beyond the obvious… Each limit screen time and access to other technology at home. The tycoons of Silicon Valley are modelling the way by strictly regulating how their children use these products. In part this will be to protect them from the risks of on-line bullying, pornography and what hours of unchecked iPad use might do to a developing mind. However, according to Nick Bilton, a technology writer, screens are banned from the bedroom in most of the tech moguls homes and their children under ten are often limited to between 30 minutes and two hours of iPad use over the weekend, while ten to 14-year olds are allowed to use computers on school nights only for homework. TV has become part of the background chatter of our lives – many of us have it on while working, as motivating background noise. Does it make us any more efficient though? About 30% less so in fact, according to recent research, and when added to the other fact we discovered in an earlier Chapter that our mind is already prone to wondering around 40% of the time, then isn't it **about time** that we cut it down and try to just be present;
- *Turn Off The Car Radio*: Similarly, don't have the car radio, or CD player on habitually. Switch off and try focusing on the scenery as it passes or the sounds of the world moving around you. Notice the things that usually get missed whilst driving and give them your Attention. How many of us to go to work not remembering how we got there – a sure sign of a *busy mind* – but also a sign that we are just acting on autopilot, which opens the door for our mind to start to wander and to worry about stuff. We need to surprise ourselves, perhaps by taking a different route for a change and noticing what's new and different. Also try mini-meditations during hold-ups. Concentrate on breathing, focusing on each breath in and each breath out. Count the vehicles as they pass – pick a colour and keep score!
- *Exercise Without A Backing Track*: Pull out those in-ear headphones and let's give ourselves a break from the music and the chatter. Lets start focusing on what's happening around us and what's happening to us when we exercise. Notice your breathing, pulse, the physical sensations and changes as you warm-up, and notice the sound of the exercise equipment in use, and of your feet pounding the track or pavement.
- *Set A Step Challenge*: As we walk let's start counting our steps to stay in the moment. Notice the pace. If we are rushing, lets slow down – unless, of course, we are unforgivably late.
- *Don't Be A Slave To The Rhythm*: Start deciding in advance of any social media activity – whether at home or work – what's going to get done and how long's going to be spent doing it. How long will be spent checking and responding to emails. How long will be spent on Twitter, posting on LinkedIn, tweeting on Twitter, updating the status on Facebook, pinning on Pinterest etc. It's all too easy to just drift along with any of these on-line activities and suddenly find that an awful lot more time has passed than we thought and we're then pushed and up against it with all the other stuff we need to be doing. Start making a game plan in advance and sticking to it.

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- *Just Do Different*: Let's open ourselves up to the unexpected by being unexpected. Smiling more than we want. Stopping to talk to people we don't normally talk to – who knows what interesting conversations we might strike up and what we may learn. Let's start walking rather than driving everywhere and if we are already walking lets be Rad and change the route. If we normally take a lift, let's use the stairs instead. Let's try parking our car in a different place in the car park, or sitting in a different chair when attending a meeting. Let's also rearrange the furniture at home.
- *Mindfully Vacuum*: Housework has to be done, but let's do it being Present. If it's washing dishes or filling the dishwasher – let's take time to enjoy the texture and feel of the soapy water, hear the clink of the crockery as we place it in the machine, notice the difference between the hot water and the cold steel of the knife and fork before we wash it. When we polish let's take time to enjoy the smells and when we vacuum, let's pay Attention and hear the dust and dirt getting sucked up, whilst appreciating the change as things look and feel cleaner and more ordered.

Some Workplace Case Studies

In the workplace as people around us speed up, let's try the opposite and slow down. A lot of people believe the busier they are the better they are doing. By slowing down however, we buy ourselves time to think things through and pay Attention to what really matters. This also helps us to align our actions with our attitude and give the appearance that we are calm, composed and considered in thought and deed. So, if we want to be really memorable, impressive, credible, genuine, trusted and liked, we need to be Mindful and Mindfully slow things down.

And slowing down means being patient and doing things purposefully – **95% of business is waiting; waiting for the opportunity to do the right thing** – and then you act with passion and purpose!

To get things done more quickly while slowing down we need to start prioritising using the quality of decision-making that regular *Mindfulness* practice can cultivate. A good way to approach this and start-off is to identify three things that need to get done and focus on them – whilst remembering that the actions of effective people never seem rushed or forced.

We looked at *Mindfulness* in the workplace in Chapter Five, but what in particular have companies big and small been doing to introduce and promote *Mindfulness*? Here is a selection of mini case studies[45]:

- **AOL – Time Warner**: In 2006 the conglomerates sales and marketing group was slashed by a third and *Mindfulness* classes were introduced to help employees deal with the new working arrangements – the classes were regarded as being very successful in helping those employees who remained to function much better.
- **EBay**: The San Jose company hosts two Meditation rooms where employees are encouraged to sit in silence and enjoy the solitude.

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- **Reebok**: A large sports manufacturer and naturally big on the physical health of its workforce, took steps to look after employees mental wellbeing as well by introducing meditation sessions to help reduce stress and strengthen focus.
- **United Online**: A vice-president of business development at this American Internet service provider very publically started *Mindfulness* meditation practice to improve business results and reduce mistakes.
- **Astra Zeneca Pharamcueticals**: The company regards *Mindfulness* programmes as relatively inexpensive compared to the cost to the business of employee absences due to stress and anxiety – meanwhile employees regard these as a positive 'job perk' which has also had a positive knock-on affect on staff motivation and retention.
- **Transport For London**: An internal review in 2003 found that mental health issues were one of the two top health concerns affecting employees – the company offered a six week programme teaching *Mindfulness* techniques to any of its 20,000 employees who met the referral criteria – over three years absences for stress, anxiety and depression among those who attended a programme fell by 71% – in addition, 80% reported improvements in relationships, 79% improvements in their ability to relax, 64% improvements in sleep patterns and 53% improvements in happiness at work; and the
- **US Army**: US Marines have reportedly been receiving *Mindfulness* based fitness training (MMFT) prior to deployment, to militate against the effects of prolonged and repetitive stress – as a result deployed troops self-reported perceptions of stress decreased in correlation to the amount they practiced *Mindfulness* [46].

Tuning The Instrument, Tasting The Fruit

"I saw a medley of haphazard facts fall into line and order…but it's true,
I saw for myself, it's very beautiful and it's very true." [47]

"To see the world in a grain of sand, And heaven in a wild flower, Hold
Infinity in the palm of your hand, And eternity in an hour." [48]

"Its not that Mindfulness is the answer to all life's problems. Rather, it is that all
life's problems can be seen more clearly through the lens of a clear mind."

Three quotes and each has been quite deliberately chosen. The first comes from the physical chemist, CP Snow, who in particular lamented the gulf between scientists and *"literary intellectuals"* (see his 1959 lecture 'The two Cultures'). The second is a verse from the poet William Blake and the third comes from *Mindfulness* guru, Jon Kabat-Zinn: Three very different people each coming from very different times and places, but each arriving at a very similar place – A place of awareness and clarity – A place of unique perspective and understanding – A place of acceptance and gender-less truth.

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And whilst only Jon Kabat-Zinn speaks directly of *Mindfulness* each have a relationship of intention and purpose and each hint at a subtext – *"Wherever you go, there you are"*.

So there is no need to set goals around *Mindfulness*, no need to feel that we're not any good at it or compare ourselves to anyone else – we already have what we are looking for, or as John Teasdale said, *"Its accessing something we already have"*. We just need to connect with it and uncover it through Mindful living and daily practice.

We've looked at some steps along the path to Mindful living, so let's now turn to some practical exercises you can start to incorporate into your day-to-day living. You Tube has an *elephant's sufficiency* of guided *Mindfulness* practices – three, five, ten, 20 and 30 minutes long – and only a quick on-line search away. You can explore these at your leisure.

There are also a plethora of techniques to get us up to the plate, going under a number of acronyms. For example, **R**.**A**.**I**.**N**. – **R**ecognise when a strong emotion is present – **A**llow or acknowledge it is there – **I**nvestigate and bring self-inquiry to the body, feelings and mind – and **N**on-identify with what is there i.e. by recognising that the emotion is just another passing mind state and not a definition of who you are, cultivating a wise understanding and an objective distance.

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There is also the **S**.**T**.**O**.**P**. technique to help create a space to come down from a worried mind and back into the present moment by – **S**topping what you are doing – **T**aking a deliberate and conscious breath – **O**bserving your thoughts and feelings and emotions, and reflecting about what's on your mind and noticing that thoughts are not facts and are not permanent – and **P**roceeding with something that will support you in the moment.

But let's keep it simple and focus on **five** quick *Mindfulness* exercises – each needs no more than three-to-five minutes of focussed Attention:

Exercise One

Close your eyes and imagine yourself on a mountain. Imagine the weight, the solidarity, the earthbound characteristics of the mountain. Feel that sensation in your body and sit with that feeling. Also imagine that there is a storm going on around the mountain, with the trees and bushes being torn up and thrown around by the wind. Observe the scene but focus on the mountain and your presence, remaining solid, strong and untouched by all that is going on around you.

Exercise Two

Imagine as you breathe that cold air comes in with the in-breath and warm air is exhaled with the out-breath. Whenever the mind strays come back to an awareness of the breath, remembering that it is the bridge between your body and your mind and makes it possible to feel oneness in the moment.

Exercise Three

Adopt an erect standing or sitting posture and shut your eyes if possible. Start to acknowledge what is going on with your body and what you experience right now. Firstly, investigate what thoughts are going through your mind. Acknowledge these thoughts as 'Mental events' floating past like clouds in the sky. Secondly, investigate what feelings you have. Notice any uncomfortable or unpleasant feelings without trying to suppress or change them. Thirdly, gently explore with your mind what body sensations you have. Scan the body for any sensations of tightness or tension. Again acknowledge them but do not try to change them. Now redirect your Attention to the physical sensations of breathing and in particular the sensations in your lower abdomen as it gently expands and contracts with each breath. Use each breath to anchor yourself into the present. If the mind wanders into the past, into daydreams, or starts anticipating future events, acknowledge the fact uncritically and non-judgementally and then gently escort your Attention back to the breath. Finally, expand your field of awareness around the breathing so it includes a sense of the whole body – including your facial expression and posture – as if the whole body was breathing. If you become aware of discomfort or tension, imagine your breath could move into and around the part of the body where those sensations are and explore and befriend them, rather than trying to change anything.

Exercise Four

*Mindfully **tune your instrument** of 'self' like an instrument. Sit comfortably and focus on your breath. As you inhale say to yourself "in" and as you exhale, say to yourself "falling away". Note your thoughts, feelings, the sounds, tastes, smells and other physical sensations that you are experiencing in the moment, but don't try to analyse anything – simply witness and be present. **This will tune the brain to be in a Mindful state throughout the day**.*

Exercise Five

*Mindfully **taste the fruit**. Sit comfortably and have a piece of your favourite fruit in your hand. Look at it and examine the fruit as if you've never seen it before. Imagine it as it grows from a seed and through all the stages until it is what you are now looking at and become conscious of the shape, texture, colour, size, hardness or softness. Smell it. Anticipate eating it, but don't. How does the fruit feel in your hand? Now place it in your mouth and become aware of your tongue and the feeling inside of your mouth. Note the sensation. Chew three times and then stop. Describe the flavour. Describe the texture. Complete chewing and swallow. Then sit quietly noting your breath and being aware of what you're feeling.*

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Some More Slowing Down

"Polish the mind through ceaseless training; that is the key to effective technique", Kyuzo Mifune.

Don't worry none of this has been about advocating a regime of *Mindfulness*. In fact, it's important to be less harsh on our self and act with a kind compassion to who and what we are. Anxiety is normal – it's a hard-wired response programmed into the brain to protect us. Without it we couldn't survive. However, it becomes problematic when we start to view non-critical situations as threatening. This is why awareness, perspective – that enables an objective distance – and a kind compassion, are so important. We need to be able to slow down and get beyond our gut response to things, stop obsessive thoughts and not focus so fiercely on either our self or others. We also need to acknowledge what frightens us and confront these things, staying in and with each situation until those feelings diminish.

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Be clear, life isn't an audition, so we shouldn't be afraid to experiment, let go of stuff, or embrace change. If we start asking ourselves the right questions, we are more likely to start to get the right answers. So everyday as part of a new Mindful living routine ask yourself the following:

- Did I work towards my goals today?
- What bad habits do I need to stop today?
- What motivated me today?
- Have I been the kind of person I want to be today?
- What mistakes did I make today and what can I learn from them? and
- What am I grateful for today?

This additional practice will augment and strengthen our awareness, presence, positive self-regard and overall sense of self.

And also remember to exercise, be social and eat well.

End Game

"The barrier to change is not too little caring, its too much complexity", Bill Gates.

Underpinning my overarching thesis is this belief that we live in a complex world and *"rush too much with nervous hands and worried minds"*. As I wrote in Chapter Two, I am rather attracted to the notion of hope that the practice of *Mindfulness* introduces into the human equation. It can have a profoundly positive effect. I believe it can help **apply the brakes** and it is within us all to be uncovered. Just look at the child at play, absorbed in what they are doing, wholly in that moment. They don't feel the need to put it into language, or acknowledge it as part of their personal narrative – It is just them Being.

Each and every one of us is born Being with *Mindfulness* – What happened? **Life just got in the way!**

In my view we should be taking an even greater look at how *Mindfulness* can impact on humankind. As we've already noted any intelligent fool can make things more complex, however it takes a touch of genius and a lot of courage to move in the opposite direction. Pablo Picasso said *"An amateur borrows – a genius steals"* – **So, let's be geniuses and steal back our future!** And here's a **five-point plan** to make the welfare of the present a real oasis of the future:

- Let's begin by changing the story, one conversation, one innovation, one leap of faith at a time;
- Let's give common humanity, compassion and collaboration real weight and value;
- Let's recognise and make *Mindfulness* a key part of maintaining wellness and promoting wellbeing;
- Let's ensure that day-to-day happiness is at the heart of every policy decision; and
- Let's proactively uncover our *Mindfulness* and live it without words; just allowing it to be part of who we are.

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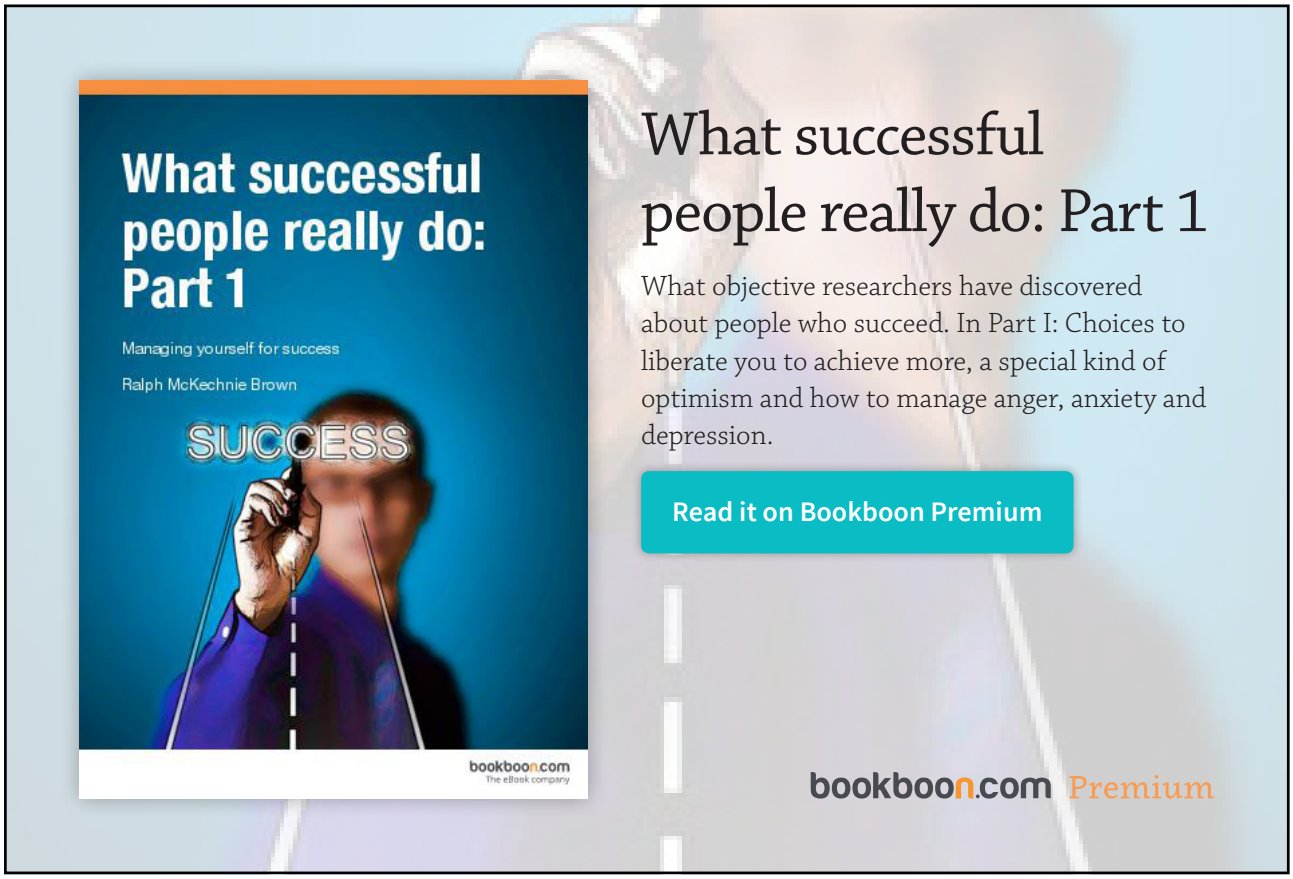
Is this the end of the journey then? Clearly not, but it is the end of the beginning of the journey.

Thank you for reading, take care and be Mindful!

"This is a Train… This is a Train… This is a Train of Thought…", Van Morrison, Madame George, Astral Weeks.



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Resources and Other Stuff

Some Useful UK Mindfulness in the Workplace Web Links:

A Head For Work – http://www.aheadforwork.co.uk

Bangor University's Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice – http://www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness/

Mindfulness Works – http://www.mindfulness-works.com

Mindfulness4Scotland – http://www.mindfulness4scotland.com

Mindfulnet.org – http://www.mindfulnet.org

The Mindfulness Exchange (TME) – http://mindfulness-exchange.com

Some Links To Guides Mindfulness Meditations:

www.freemindfulness.org/download

And The Following Provides Multiple Links For Guided Meditation Practice – A Sort Of One-Stop Shop – Including Audio, Video, Body Scan, Open Monitoring and Metta (Loving Kindness Meditations):

http://contemplativemind.wordpress.com/how-to-meditate-links-for-guided-meditation-practice/

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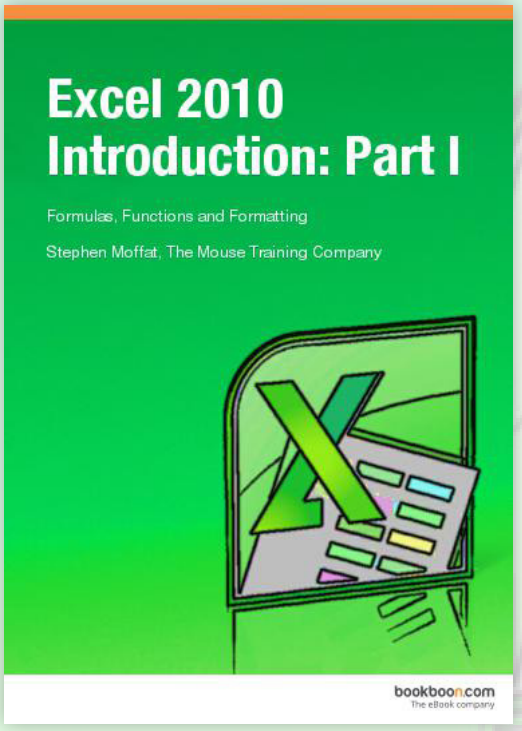

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