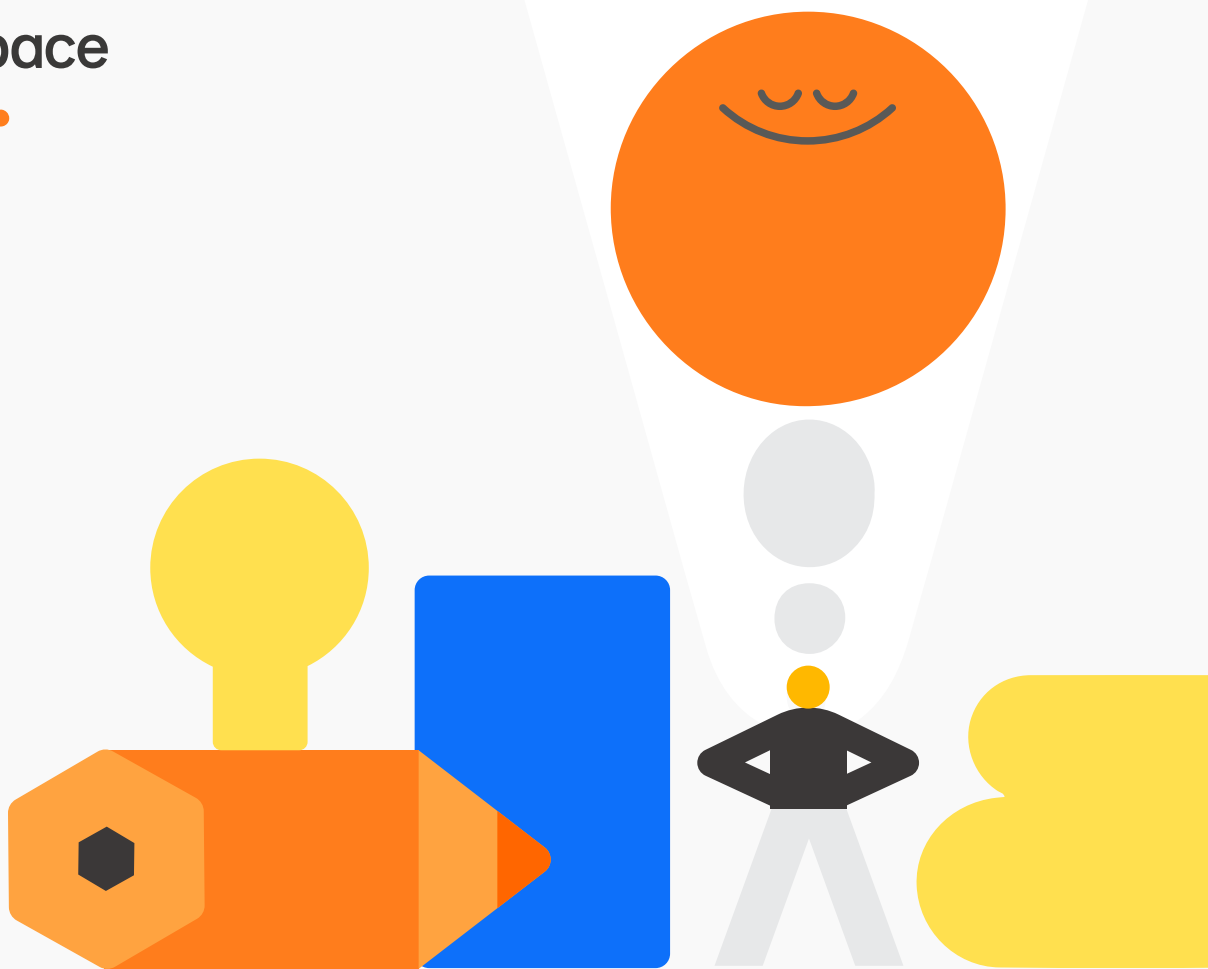


Leading By Example: Equipping Leadership to Support Mental Wellness and Build Happier, Healthier Teams

headspace
health.



**Great leaders...
Quite simply,
they lead by
example.**




GREAT LEADERS ARE COMPASSIONATE, PRAGMATIC, AND OFFER A CALM HEAD IN A CRISIS.

Presence, purpose, and leadership skills align, creating a sense of stability for their team, especially in the face of challenges and change. Quite simply, they lead by example.

The research shows that employees want leaders with a human touch, someone who can stand in their shoes and demonstrate care, empathy, and guidance in helping them navigate the stresses of work. This has only become more important in recent years, as employees navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, new remote working styles, and balancing unique challenges in both their personal and professional lives. Our 2022 Workforce Attitudes Report indicates that 81% of employees agree that employers have a responsibility to help them manage their mental health.¹

During a time of “Great Resignation,” when people are more likely to leave their jobs for a new role, it is critical that managers support employees’ mental well-being to drive engagement and job satisfaction. **Yet 59% of employees report that their managers do not provide adequate emotional support to help manage their stress.**² This stress often prevents a team from doing its best work by reducing creativity, collaboration, resilience, and productivity.

It can be even more challenging for managers to provide support for their employees’ mental wellness if they can’t first tend to their own. **Forty percent of leaders are overwhelmed and struggle to find their own focus, according to a recent survey by Forrester Research, in partnership with Headspace for Work.**³



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To create a healthy culture that puts diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging at the heart of mental health, organizations must invest in the skills and tools to help leaders be their best and support their employees to do the same.

¹Headspace Health (2022). *Fourth Annual Workforce Attitudes Toward Mental Health*. <https://go.headspacehealth.com/2022-wfa> ²Adams, et al. (2021). *Mind the Workplace Health Survey*. Mental Health America. <https://mhanational.org/sites/default/files/Mind%20the%20Workplace%20-%20MHA%20Workplace%20Health%20Survey%202021%202.12.21.pdf> ³Headspace for Work and Forrester Research (2021). *Mindfulness and the Leader of the Future*. <https://get.headspace.com/research-mindfulness-and-the-leader-of-the-future>



The Risks of Stressed Leaders and Burnout

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared burnout a work-related disease that is the result of “chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.” It leads to feelings of exhaustion, lower job satisfaction, and negative feelings about one’s job or workplace.

Effective leaders recognize when employees are demonstrating signs of burnout, but who’s looking out for the leaders? Leaders are in need of support as well — especially considering 6 in 10 of them report being spent at the end of each workday, with 1 in 4 contemplating quitting, according to the 2021 DDI Global Leadership Forecast.⁴

If people at the top are burned out, the stress can have a cascading effect across teams and organizations. And a stressed-out boss — one who doesn’t listen, lacks empathy, or is easily irritated — can affect employee morale, retention, and productivity, and fuel a cycle of resignation.

So it only makes sense that organizations take a proactive approach to address stress among leaders by providing them with strategies to recognize burnout and address the root cause, both for themselves and their team. This level of insight first requires self-compassion, mindfulness, and taking the time for self-care. As leaders develop more compassion, enjoy more clarity of mind, and experience more mental spaciousness, they can then support their teams in doing the same.



Mindfulness: A Core Leadership Skill

A mindful leader, who's calm and compassionate under pressure, creates a sense of stability for teams during times of challenge and change. Practicing mindfulness enables managers to lead with both compassion and kindness more effectively. Those who prioritize self-compassion and self-care are better able to cultivate a culture that feels safe and secure, allowing teams to thrive and flourish because they are doing it for themselves.

What does all that mean for the team around you? Consider a 2020 study by Qualtrics in which less than 47% of employees felt their manager was attuned to their well-being. Sixty-one percent of those who reported that their manager is not tuned into their well-being say they are less productive.⁵

Moreover, three-quarters of employees say they appreciate when their leaders speak about mental health. **Transparency is key: when leaders demonstrate behaviors in which they are kind to their own minds, teams feel more empowered to follow suit.**⁶

"When leaders take the time to care for their own mental well-being, and share their experience of its impact with their teams, it can create a ripple effect," says Ria Ingleby, Manager of International Leadership Development and Coach at Headspace Health. "Teams with leaders and managers who are curious and demonstrate self-compassion have a healthier culture with happier, more engaged employees."

⁴Development Dimensions International, Inc. (2021). *Global Leadership Forecast 2021*. <https://media.ddiworld.com/research/GLF2021final.pdf>

⁵Qualtrics (2020). *The other COVID-19 crisis: Mental health*. <https://www.qualtrics.com/blog/confronting-mental-health/3>

⁶Headspace Health (2022). *Fourth Annual Workforce Attitudes Toward Mental Health*. <https://go.headspacehealth.com/2022-wfa>

Compassionate Leadership Starts With You



Leaders are often laser-focused on achieving results and supporting their teams to accomplish tasks and goals. If they are also tapped into the emotional well-being of the people they manage, it makes a world of difference in how these teams ultimately feel about an organization and perform their jobs over time. **It's important for leaders to start with recognizing their own mental well-being, being compassionate to themselves and understanding what they need to feel healthy and happy.** Compare it to an emergency drill on a plane. By first putting on your life jacket and mask, you are better equipped to assist others and keep everyone else calm. It's time to recognize mental wellness as part of achieving business results.

"So many leaders I have met in sessions say they struggle with time for themselves," said Evelyn Lewis Prieto, Director of Meditation at Headspace. "A lot of leaders have such good intentions – wanting to lead, wanting to do well for their people, teams, and their own performance – but they are stressed, and that stress builds up into resentment for not having time for themselves or their team. In turn, their team interprets it as management doesn't care."

Self-compassion looks different for everyone. By taking the time to recognize what that may look and feel like for you, you enable yourself to better recognize thoughts and feelings of stress and the steps you can take to address them. A small break can make a huge difference in the impact stress can have on a team. The body, when stressed, releases a hormone called cortisol, which raises one's heart rate and blood pressure – blocking out rational thinking and triggering a fight-or-flight response. Stepping back to meditate, even for just a minute, or taking a few deep breaths can be useful for leaders to recalibrate and reduce their own stress as well as the stress of those around them. They are in a place to respond, rather than react.

Just as stress can spread between close individuals or teams, so can a sense of ease and calm.

Behavioral psychologists at Headspace for Work suggest that developing positive habits through meditation and mindfulness can help combat stress in individuals who work or live close together – essentially a cascading effect of resilience when faced with struggles, personal or professional.

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Letting Compassion Lead

Once you've carved out the time to prioritize yourself, a gentler, more empathetic approach can start to take over. Mindful leaders are clearer, calmer, and more compassionate, demonstrating an unshakeable composure. Consequently, they are more capable of attentive listening and of developing a deeper understanding for what people are experiencing.

Mindful leadership — the ability to have awareness with an open, present, curious mind and compassion for yourself and for others — leads to increased empathy. Employees consequently feel seen, heard, and acknowledged. **This is critical for employee morale, as our 2022 Workforce Attitudes Report revealed — 82% of employees want their employer to ask them how they are doing and actually care about the answer.**⁷

What's more, workers who say their manager doesn't care about them are twice as likely to be worried about job security, according to a study by Qualtrics.⁸ For employees struggling while working from home, those who say their manager doesn't care about them are twice as likely to quit their job.

Creating happier, healthier employees begins with leaders who care. "A common theme we've seen in research is that leaders are asking for help with skills like resilience, emotional intelligence, and developing the ability to be more human in the workplace to support the mental well-being of their teams," said Tom Freeman, head of engagement at Headspace for Work.

"We believe that compassionate leadership is an essential tool to help improve these areas for both employees and organizations."

Leaders who practice mindfulness act as positive role models, setting an example for those around them on how to stress less, focus more, and face challenges — big or small.

Essentially, compassionate leaders are creating mindful workplaces where everyone can strive and thrive. It is a culture where individuality and unity go hand in hand within an environment that is kinder, less reactive, and with more interpersonal awareness.



Creating a Culture of Mental Wellness

Research indicates that toxic workplace behavior is the biggest predictor of burnout symptoms and intent to leave. Managers who lead with presence, curiosity, compassion, and the desire to cultivate belonging for their teams create healthier, happier environments that can help reduce burnout and proactively support mental well-being.⁹

By using check-in conversations with employees as an opportunity to have supportive, nonjudgmental discussions about mental wellness and burnout, leaders open the door for employees to raise issues and seek support. This creates a safe space and an opportunity for leaders to offer solutions and techniques for self-care.

Check-in conversations can also help managers keep a pulse on their team's level of engagement and belonging, as 9 in 10 employees say they do their best work when they feel included and connected to their team.¹⁰ So, it's also important that leaders take steps to create community and a collaborative, positive work environment.

This includes working to create psychological safety in the workplace, which Harvard Business School professor Amy Edmondson has defined as “a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking.”¹¹ It means that employees feel safe to make mistakes, take risks, speak up, and feel a sense of belonging. Effective leaders must recognize the warning signs of a psychologically unsafe workplace. Leadership training can help managers adopt a holistic view of what this means, and strategies to bolster it.

By offering transparent, nonjudgmental support to employees and by knowing how stress and burnout can present themselves, leaders can create a safe, healthy workplace where employees feel comfortable, confident, and empowered to do their best work.

⁹Headspace Health (2022). *Fourth Annual Workforce Attitudes Toward Mental Health*. <https://go.headspacehealth.com/2022-wfa> ¹⁰Qualtrics (2020). *The other COVID-19 crisis: Mental health*. <https://www.qualtrics.com/blog/confronting-mental-health/> ¹¹McKinsey Health Institute (2022). *Addressing employee burnout: Are you solving the right problem?* <https://www.mckinsey.com/mhi/our-insights/addressing-employee-burnout-are-you-solving-the-right-problem>

How Mindful Leadership Pays Off

When mindfulness is actively encouraged and integrated, the benefits can create a ripple effect throughout the workforce. Leadership traits that are revered – motivating people, treating people with dignity and respect, and driving results – are inherent to mindful leaders.

There are many ways that developing mindful leaders can pay off:

Lower Stress

Feeling less stressed means finding more availability for teams, and showing up with a more positive demeanor.

Focus

A trained mind is a focused mind, reducing the prospect of easy distractedness, which, in turn, leads to clearer decision making.

Compassion

Meditation teaches emotional regulation and considered approaches, and increases the ability to stand in the shoes of others, with compassion in mind.

Emotional Intelligence

Self-awareness, open-mindedness, the ability to stay present, and nonjudgmental approaches to challenging situations are traits of mindful people.

Collaboration

Focus, empathy, and emotional intelligence combine to help people solve problems as a self-aware team.

Increased Productivity

A happy team is a cohesive team, which leads to improved productivity across the board.

Creativity

A culture committed to improving focus and collaboration leads to mental agility, curiosity, and improved morale.

According to Forrester Research, scientifically backed meditation and mindfulness helps leaders be more present and find more focus (42% of respondents), and creates a better mental state for employees to be more productive and feel more in control (56% of respondents).¹²

Leadership Training is Good Business Strategy

An illustration featuring a stylized human figure in dark grey, holding a large, bright yellow heart with a simple smiley face. To the left of the heart is a yellow hourglass, and to the right is a yellow lightning bolt. The background is white with soft grey shadows behind the elements.

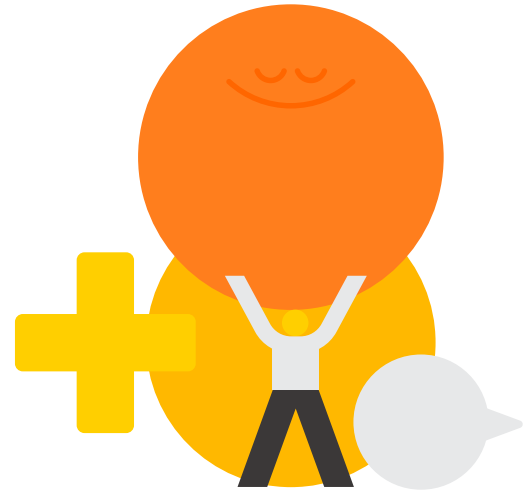
Given the costs of stressed, burned-out teams, investing in tools to help build mindful leaders makes good business sense. According to the CDC, stress-related absenteeism costs employers \$1,685 per employee each year, a number which has only increased since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹³ In addition, presenteeism – the phenomenon where employees show up for work but don't perform at full capacity – costs businesses 10x more than absenteeism. On average, employees are unproductive on the job for 57.5 days each year.¹⁴

When leaders can better empower their teams to be their best at work, it creates happier, healthier teams, with increased focus, improved overall well-being, and the skill set to manage emotions even in the most stressful situations.

“With the scientifically backed skill of mindfulness, leaders will start to develop a natural, nonjudgmental awareness and compassion for themselves and their teams,” **Headspace for Work’s Tom Freeman said.** “**This, in turn, will help them have better clarity, strength, and stability when it comes to communication, making decisions, giving feedback, and empowering their teams through both steady and unsteady times.**”

Leadership training teaches managers how to be present and fully engaged, and how to build greater compassion. At the same time, developing mindful leaders provides value to employees, who feel assured when led by a more emotionally intelligent and compassionate leader.

¹³Headspace for Work and Forrester Research (2021). *Mindfulness and the Leader of the Future*. <https://get.headspace.com/research-mindfulness-and-the-leader-of-the-future> ¹⁴Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022). *Workplace Health Promotion*. <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/publications/factsheets/workplace-health.html> ¹⁵Smith, S. (2016). *Presenteeism Costs Business 10 Times More than Absenteeism*. EHS Today. <https://www.ehstoday.com/safety-leadership/article/21918281/presenteeism-costs-business-10-times-more-than-absenteeism>



Headspace Health’s Leadership Workshop Series

Tailored to solve the day-to-day challenges of your leaders and people managers, our Leadership Workshop Series brings mindfulness to the workplace to create effective leaders and collaborative teams. By equipping leaders with science-backed tools, strategies, and immediately relevant action steps, your leaders can become champions of their own self-care and be better able to support mental health in the workplace.

Introducing the Leadership Workshop Series

Mindful Leadership

Enable your leaders to lay the foundation for a compassionate culture and lead by example

PART 01 Mindful Leadership: Self-Compassion

PART 02 Mindful Leadership: Compassion for Others

Managing Healthy Teams

Equip your managers with critical building blocks that will help them lead inclusively and effectively

PART 01 Bounce Back from Burnout

PART 02 The Art of the Check-In

PART 03 Psychological Safety: What, Why & How?

Single Workshops

Address your company’s most pressing workplace challenges with one of our popular workshops

PART 01 Mindful Leadership: Self-Compassion

PART 02 Bounce Back from Burnout

PART 03 Self-Care for Managers

The Leadership Workshop Series is hosted for your organization by our team of leadership coaching experts, who offer engaging, interactive experiences that deliver engagement and results. We also partner closely with you to ensure high levels of engagement, relevant content, and meaningful insights. Our Leadership Workshop Series supports an organization's specific population and needs, including promotional support, workshop management, and post-webinar reporting.

With a 90% workshop satisfaction rate, the Leadership Workshop Series is welcomed and appreciated by leaders. Our engaging, relevant content and expert coaches and facilitators enable leaders to identify challenges, improve mindfulness, and bring levels of compassion and empathy to their teams.

Interested in learning more about our Leadership Workshop Series and how it can benefit your teams? Contact us [here](#).



