

## How To Become A Mindful Leader

Adapted from Dr. Ronald Alexander's new book, *Wise Mind, Open Mind: Finding Purpose and Meaning in Times of Crisis, Loss, and Change* (New Harbinger Publications, 2009).

(598 Words Plus Bio)

Everyone can benefit from being a mindful leader, a mindful manager, a mindful, assistant, even a mindful parent, wife or husband as it applies to one's personal and business lives. My work as a transformational coach teaches individuals and those at all levels in the corporate and organizational culture how to become mindful leaders in all aspects of their lives.

A mindful leader leads from a position of mindful awareness, or what I call *mindstrength*, by knowing how to respond with awareness instead of reaction and how to make everyone on their team feel recognized, affirmed and valued. Mindfulness provides you with clarity and calm in a crisis, protecting you from the temptation to panic and jump from one bad situation to another, or blame others for the crisis and avoid looking at your role in it; plus it gives you the power to change it. Mindful communication is an extraordinary tool for problem solving. It allows you to tolerate the discomfort of confrontation with others and the embarrassment of discovering how you might have contributed to the problem. Mindfulness also allows you to find your creativity and resourcefulness, so that you can approach the situation differently and perhaps transform it. It helps you to easily tap into your core creativity to solve problems and achieve goals.

Most of us were taught that creativity comes from the thoughts and emotions of the mind. The greatest singers, dancers, painters, writers, and filmmakers recognize that the most original, and even transformative, ideas actually come from the core of our being. Core creativity emerges when we're in a state of open-mind consciousness, which evolves from a state of consciousness called mindful inquiry.

It isn't difficult to become a mindful leader if you are willing to make an effort to develop some type of mindfulness practice and be open to the process. The ideal practice is to cultivate a mindfulness meditation that is done twenty minutes once or twice a day. But it's better to start doing ten minutes once a day than aiming for the overall goal and then feeling overwhelmed by it and falling short.

Other ways to becoming a mindful leader is to develop your own type of meditation practice. Meditation allows us to listen and pay attention to what we might otherwise overlook—whether it’s a fresh idea or a new way of perceiving a situation—enhancing our creativity and letting go of our obstacles to innovation. I encourage my clients to take a five to ten minute break in the middle of their day to mediate so they can clear their head and tap into their core creativity. You can also access this creativity by exploring the Arts, walking in nature and through mindful movement such as martial arts, tai chi and yoga. Some of the most creative thinkers spent a great deal of unstructured time in nature in their formative years. It appears that many artists, philosophers, leaders, and thinkers throughout time have intuitively used mindful awareness to further their inner development.

As one learns to build their mindfulness practice, and applies the principal of developing a witnessing mind over time as a mindful leader they can increasingly build more and more mindstrength. A leader with strong mindstrength is one that can put into daily practice the principles of responsibility meaning the ability to respond with clarity and awareness and accountability, the capacity to take care of what needs to be done and to report to others with self Reflexivity. With a little effort one can quickly learn to focus, harness and direct the unruly and untamed aspects of the mind and learn to direct them with clarity, order and positivity.

**Ronald Alexander, Ph.D.** is the author of the widely acclaimed book, *Wise Mind, Open Mind: Finding Purpose and Meaning in Times of Crisis, Loss, and Change*. He is the director of the OpenMind Training® Institute, practices mindfulness-based mind-body psychotherapy and leadership coaching in Santa Monica, CA, for individuals and corporate clients. He has taught personal and clinical training groups for professionals in Integral Psychotherapy, Ericksonian mind-body healing therapies, mindfulness meditation, and Buddhist psychology nationally and internationally since 1970. ([www.openmindtraining.com](http://www.openmindtraining.com))