



500 WORDS ON LEADERSHIP & DEVELOPMENT

MINDFULNESS Makes the leader.

How has 2019 been for you? Are you starting to look back on the year and critically appraise how it has gone? Are there things you would have done differently or actions you took that make you feel great? And do you see a path ahead that you want to follow into 2020?

At this time of year many Christians will be celebrating the birth of Christ and rejoicing in

the renewal of hope, faith and love. Not everyone will relate to Christianity, or be part of a practicing religion at all, but that does not mean they do not have a sense of spirituality or mindfulness in their life.

The rise of mindfulness and the recognition of its benefits have led many to actively adopt it in their everyday lives.

Much has been written about mindfulness at work: it can bring **greater clarity, a defined sense of purpose and a calmer attitude** to deadlines and pressure, or to changes or situations you might not be fond of.

But the area we would like to focus on is how mindfulness builds resilience and why this is important, especially for those in leadership positions.

Overthinking is the antithesis of mindfulness. It can hinder the progress of working towards goals and can affect happiness and overall wellbeing.

Introducing and adopting mindfulness as an everyday practice can add more resourcefulness to the thinking process, aid in building courage to deal with obstacles and help us to develop the critical attribute of personal resilience.

But what is personal resilience?

Resilience is the capacity of an individual 'to thrive, to keep going, to struggle through or to give up in the face of a stressor' and is influenced by various factors such as attitudes, experiences and physiology, which differ across people (Ahern, 2006).

At work, resilient people – especially those in leadership positions – are able to **deal with challenges in a calm manner, without resorting to despair or panic**. This doesn't mean they can't show empathy or demonstrate feelings but, rather they remain strong during a period of crisis. In fact, compassion whether it is for oneself or for others is a defining feature of resilient people.

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention, on purpose, to the present moment in a non-judgemental way, according to a well-recognised and widely used definition coined by Kabat-Zinn.

In other words, it's being aware of what's on your mind. But it goes further than that. By focusing on what is happening right now and by stepping objectively away from your thoughts, you can see them as just that... thoughts and not facts. This allows you to be more consciously aware of what is happening in your mind and to be able to recognise when you are having positive,

helpful thoughts rather than damaging ones. It also helps you identify emotions for what they are, the underlying signals they are sending you and how this influences your behaviour.

This is especially helpful when used in a work situation. Being able to recognise your thought process and being able to determine which thoughts are of benefit and which are inhibiting can lead you to greater clarity and renewed focus.

How can i use mindfulness to develop personal resilience at work?

Allow yourself to analyse your thought-processes as they happen. By doing this, you will start to **recognise unhelpful patterns of thinking** and identify them as just thoughts, not facts.

You can categorise your thoughts into two – **the wisdom dimension and the compassion dimension** (Chaskalson 2014). The wisdom dimension means 'letting what is the case, be the case'. This means objectively looking at what is happening without denial. This will allow you to effectively deal with the situation. The compassion dimension allows for acceptance of yourself and others as you actually are – as opposed to wishing you were somehow different. This kindness helps resolve situations more easily and can prevent anger and negativity that can develop when times are challenging.

All of the above takes practice but mindfulness and personal resilience are intrinsically linked. **At CLP, mindfulness is a key component of our leadership development programmes** that goes hand in hand with a feedback culture: together, they help foster a climate of sane and more constructive communication in the organisation. By learning how to adopt these into your leadership style you will develop better coping mechanisms, and ultimately experience a happier and more fulfilling work life in 2020.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Yours,
Dr. Marcus Gottschalk
CEO at CLP

