

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

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Congratulations! You have made the bold decision to live and work intentionally. I am thrilled to be going on the journey with you to create a more successful career and a richer, more meaningful life. Consider this book your how-to field guide into a world I call *Mindful Performance*. Contained within these pages are dozens of proven business strategies, success tools, and powerful nuggets of inspiration that will help you reverse the harmful effects of an unbalanced, overwhelmed life and unleash your fullest potential both professionally and personally. **With mindful performance, you can and will make more time, get more done, earn more money, and have more fun.** Is there anyone among us who wouldn't want (and need) more of those?

In a nutshell, you will get more of what you want and less of what you don't. Many of us now have less of what we need: fewer resources at work (while having more to do than ever before), less money to pay for college education, costly medical bills or retirement funds, and worst of all, less quality time spent with the people we love, doing what is truly important to us.

Life is getting more complicated by the minute, and stress levels are at an all-time high. You can see it in people's faces and in the ways they conduct themselves. Most are either angry or have their heads buried in their phones. It is becoming increasingly

rare to find people who actually enjoy their lives and create the success they desire. Many are too busy with shiny objects and self-medication to notice that life is passing them by. According to the American Psychological Association, 75% of adults have experienced moderate to high levels of stress in the past month and nearly half reported that their stress has increased in the past year.<sup>1</sup> The American Institute of Stress reports that 80% of workers feel stress on the job, and nearly half of the workforce says they need help learning how to manage stress.<sup>2</sup> People are reaching for bottles, pills, processed foods, and electronic devices in an attempt to quell the pain of living in an overstressed, distracted and increasingly frightening, fragmented world. Life expectancy is actually lower than it has been in decades. *People are literally dying from the stress.*

Based on my experience as an organizational consultant, professional speaker, and personal development expert, I believe the answers to our most pressing issues are found in the practices of mindfulness and mental mastery. Mindfulness itself is a relatively simple concept to understand—**being fully aware of the present moment and choosing intentionally**—but is quite challenging for most of us to actually execute on a daily basis. Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, the founding Executive Director of the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, is widely considered to be the father of modern mindfulness studies. His revolutionary program, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), is the standard-bearer for mindfulness training and has been implemented in organizations all over the world for years. Dr. Kabat-Zinn’s definition of mindfulness is “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally”.<sup>3</sup> This definition is brilliant in its simple clarity and serves as the backdrop for all the strategies contained in “Mindful Performance”.

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My goal is to make mindfulness and its relationship to performance as easy to absorb and implement as possible. These practices aren't for a select few; they are for all of us (even those of us who are highly stressed). It involves demonstrating awareness, focus, and conscious choice in a variety of challenging scenarios and uncontrolled environments that we all face each day. It's about being aware and accountable without judging yourself or others and taking conscious action toward a richer, more meaningful life for yourself and those around you. We perform better in the human race when we practice these techniques on a regular basis.

There is growing evidence emerging every day that highlights the critical correlation between our thoughts and our physical realities. One only needs to Google "Mindfulness Scientific Research" to uncover hundreds of rigorous studies across a variety of environments which have definitively demonstrated the profound impact our minds have on our desired outcomes. High performance athletes utilize it. Inspiring leaders utilize it. Sales ninjas utilize it. Great thinkers utilize it. Educators utilize it. Soldiers utilize it. Children utilize it.

Mindfulness can have a transformational impact on every single person who chooses to take up the practice. Consider the below examples:

- Elite athlete Michael Jordan used mindfulness training under the brilliant leadership of Phil Jackson to win six NBA championship rings with my beloved Chicago Bulls.
- Innovative juggernaut Steve Jobs used meditation practices to quiet his mind prior to his highest-stakes product launch presentations.

- Genius Albert Einstein regularly sat in quiet solitude before discovering some of his greatest theories.
- A military veteran with PTSD uses mind-body medicine to treat his debilitating pain.
- Antsy elementary school students use sitting still to address their behavioral issues.

Thankfully, the science of neuroplasticity—the brain’s ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural pathways throughout our lives—shows us it is never too late to make substantive improvements in our brain chemistry, and thus our life experiences. When you couple the theories of mindfulness with proven strategies of high performance management, a powerful framework is formed that can and will create the kind of success you dream about. In my humble opinion, **you are holding in your hands the answers to every critical need you have in every area of your life: physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, financial, vocational, relational, and recreational.** Pretty exciting!

If you are like me, your first question may be, “So why should I listen to what this person has to say? What makes her so knowledgeable?” Here’s a bit more about my background so you can be confident that I know what I’m talking about. I began my professional career as a temp and administrative professional (back in those days I was called a secretary). Thanks to the early teachings from my powerhouse single mother/direct sales superstar, I have always felt confident tackling new opportunities and challenging scenarios. I could get projects done quickly and effectively, approaching them as puzzles to be solved. By combining my affinity for problem-solving with an authentic, energetic

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demeanor (I was named “Most Enthusiastic” by Mr. Moseman, my second-grade teacher), I rapidly grew as a professional. This resulted in my holding increasingly challenging positions in leadership, project management, and consulting. In my last corporate role, I was in senior management in Marketing and Product Development for a Fortune 100 company, directly responsible for more than a hundred million dollars of annual revenue. I was making more money and quickly moving up the ladder. Then in 2003, my life had what I call the first of many “snow globe moments”—you know those moments when life swirls you around, flips you upside down, and you don’t have a clue which end is up.

Because of a company-wide reduction in force, I found myself job hunting and finding no success. Instead of landing another traditional management role in Corporate America, I took a 180 degree turn into a career in mind-body medicine. (I always had an affinity for intuitive studies, creative visualization, and complementary and alternative medicine, so it wasn’t entirely outside my wheel-house.) Over the next several years, I attended massage therapy school and expanded my understanding of energy medicine, states of consciousness, and mental training. I owned an alternative healing center in Sarasota, Florida where I performed healing and coaching sessions for individuals struggling with a variety of physical, mental and emotional ailments. In addition to my private practice, I became a Reiki Master and Approved Provider from the Nationally Certified Board of Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork, conducted weekly yoga and meditation classes, and facilitated deep-dive personal development retreats. In addition to my work in the healing center, I was a contributing columnist for a health magazine and a local newspaper, focusing on how one can use practical, proven mindfulness techniques to deal with the stressors we face every day. Since I was part hippie and

part hardcore businesswoman, I was able to blend the esoteric with the practical, helping people to actually improve their lives through presence and conscious action.

What I discovered—and continue to discover—is that mindfulness expertise does not come solely from reading books, attending lectures, or earning certificates. Its true power lies in the practice itself. In my studies of mindfulness, I have participated in a breadth and depth of experiential learning from masters in the field of mind-body medicine. Whether it was in a classroom, at a meditation circle, in a sweat lodge, on a mountaintop, at sacred sites, or simply on my yoga mat, I have clocked thousands of hours exploring my inner landscape, allowing me to embody the mindfulness teachings you will learn in this powerful how-to book.

**You will discover how to make your life  
healthier, more meaningful, more abundant,  
and just plain easier.**

Don't worry if you are a newbie to mindfulness. In fact, being a beginner (or having a beginner's mind) is an ideal place to start on the path of mindful performance. It's perfectly fine if you have never had one drop of exposure to meditation, visualization, purposeful breathwork, or mental toughness training. Whether you are brand new or a seasoned mindfulness practitioner, I guarantee **you will learn memorable, highly-effective, actionable strategies that will unlock your true potential** and make life more abundant than you can possibly imagine.

**Just imagine creating a life where you ...**

- **Make more time** for yourself, your relationships, and your passions
- **Get more done at work**, at home, and within the community
- **Earn more money** as a leader and salesperson (we all are)
- **Have more fun** to truly relish life instead of merely enduring it

“Mindful Performance” will show you how to leverage the massive power you possess in the six inches between your ears. You will receive the essence of critical mind training so you can stop paying partial attention and start being fully present. You’ll hone your ability to focus on the important work while letting go of the noise and distraction that are keeping your stress levels higher than they need to be.

So, let’s practice a bit. I invite you to perform the imagination exercise I just described, but this time with a little more thoughtful awareness brought to it. In the bullet points above, I gave you some starting points for creative visualization, using your mind to mentally create your circumstances before they come to fruition in the *physical state*.

As you perform the exercise again, take a few moments to settle into your chair a little deeper. Shrug your shoulders a few times and do some neck rolls to release any excess physical tension. Take several big, deep, cleansing breaths, maybe even make a sound as you exhale out any tension. Really settle into your body

and notice any sensations. Give yourself permission to spend at least one minute visualizing every one of the bullet points. Fill in the details—the people, the places, and the activities that would be involved. Pay particular attention to how the thought of accomplishing each of those particular objectives *feels*. Eliciting the feeling state, or what is referred to as kinesthetic visualization, is critical in order to maximize the effect. Allow your life movie to play out in your mind's eye exactly how you wish it to be.

Now let's read those again, but this time with a mindful approach, spending at least a minute visualizing each bullet point:

**Imagine, really imagine, what it will feel like to:**

- **Have more time** for yourself, your relationships, and your passions.

(Go ahead and imagine it!)

- **Get more done** at work, at home, and within the community.

(What specific projects would you complete?)

- **Earn more money** as a leader and salesperson (we all are).

(How much more money? What is the number?)

- **Have more fun** to truly relish life instead of merely enduring it.

(What activities would you love to be doing right now?)

How different did the exercise feel after making conscious adjustments to your breath and body, giving you more time to be fully present and savoring each example instead of rushing through them? Slowing down and really thinking about it made it more vivid, right? Hopefully the exercise elicited some positive, expansive, and motivating feelings.

**That's the goal of mindful performance:  
to consciously create a feeling state of  
success, contentment, and empowerment in  
order to bring about your desired reality.**

I promise that when you embrace the teachings and strategies contained in “Mindful Performance”, you will intentionally create all of these scenarios and so much more. You will possess a mindset of growth and contentment that will permeate all you do at work, at home, and in your community from this point forward. People will be attracted to you. Time will slow down. You will be able to intentionally move into what positive psychologists call “the flow state”, the optimal state of consciousness where we perform at our best and feel our best. Sounds great, right?

Yes, mindful performance really is that amazing! By reading and taking action on the strategies in this book, you will intentionally create a life and a career that are more profitable, productive, and purposeful.

Are you ready to ditch the stress and take back control of your health, your career, your schedule, and your relationships? Let's do this!



# CHAPTER 6

## MEETINGS

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Regardless of our career choice, we likely have had the need to at least once sit down across the table or over the telephone with a colleague to have a meeting. Meetings are formal discussions designed to work through one or more (hopefully) important issues. They are a critical component of the collaborative process and necessary for any organization to flourish. Poorly-run meetings are also nearly universally loathed because of their annoying, time-sucking nature. Whether it is a project update meeting in the

office or a house rules reminder meeting with your teenage child at the dinner table, knowing how to mindfully conduct a purpose-driven conversation will save you an inordinate amount of time and aggravation. You'll be able to deal with unclear expectations while dramatically improving bottom-line results and relationship dynamics.

## **AT HOME**

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Meetings don't just take place in the workplace. Far more important meetings happen within the confines of our own homes with our loved ones. Yet, we aren't really taught how to have those kinds of meetings, instead opting to wing it and hoping we will get the results we want. When that doesn't happen, other behaviors kick in (such as passive aggressiveness or blame). Suddenly we aren't talking about the meeting topic anymore but rather the poor communication habits of the parties involved. Feelings get hurt. Words are said (or not said) that are harmful. Relationships fracture. Stress grows. It's a recipe for disaster, all because we haven't been educated on how to have a mindful meeting at home.



### **HOUSE MEETING LOGISTICS**

When an important discussion is needed at home, treat the logistics of the meeting with the same degree of import you do when hosting meetings at work. Make sure all parties know—even the children—who will be at the meeting, what will be discussed (try to keep it to one or two items, not the laundry list of gripes), where it

will be held (preferably in a neutral location), when it will happen, and most importantly, *why* you are calling the meeting.

The more weight you give the importance of the discussion, the more weight others will give it. If you try to have a casual conversation about something that merits more seriousness, then you are setting yourself up to be disappointed at the cavalier reaction you may receive. Springing major issues on people will only cause them to be defensive or disengaged. Rarely will they be as vested as you are, which automatically skews the conversation dynamics. Just imagine—you have been obsessing over having “the talk” for hours, practicing all your best lines in your head, psyching yourself up to go to battle, and your family doesn’t have a clue what’s about to hit them. That’s not playing fair. Instead, let them know you want to carve out a mutually-acceptable time to chat about Topic A and sincerely, respectfully ask them to participate. Be open to what works for them. Don’t be tempted to get into the conversation at that point; just redirect any deeper discussions to the allotted time of the meeting. You want them to willingly come to the table ready to discuss something important to the well-being of your relationship.

Showing respect for the W5 logistics—Who, What, Where, When, and Why—will automatically make for a more meaningful, respectful exchange of thoughts and ideas.



## COMPLETE CONVERSATIONS

My experience as a coach has given me a snapshot into hundreds of damaged relationships, many of which are suffering from the

effects of having partial conversations. We are creating a half-baked conflict when we don't think through exactly why we are upset or the mitigating circumstances surrounding it, opting instead to blurt out our dissatisfaction in the heat of the moment. We aren't articulating the entire issue because we haven't thoroughly considered it. This is especially true for relationships that are suffering well beyond someone having a bad day or a tough few weeks. We often address only the latest in a series of issues, allowing a dysfunctional relationship to continue without honestly addressing the full scope of the conflict. If you are in this type of relationship either at work or at home, I highly encourage you to get neutral, third-party professional support to unpack the complexity (power dynamics, manipulations, fears and threats, long-term impacts, and so on) to truly understand what kind of *real* conversation needs to happen.

Nearly all the clients I have counseled who go through a breakup admit that they knew they should have ended it long before they did. Instead, they endured years of endless agony, hoping things would change.

## **Hope is not an effective relationship management strategy.**

If they had the clarity and a network of support to assist them earlier on, they could have had one whole difficult conversation instead of two dozen painful half-conversations.

Even for less serious conversations, remember to have the *whole* conversation. That may mean you compliment your children on the activities they do well, in addition to talking about their poor

choices. For example, if you want them to be more present at dinnertime instead of being distracted by their devices, remind them about how wonderful it is when they really participate in the family experience by giving an example. Having a whole conversation may mean that you own your role in the conflict more fully. We'll be discussing owning our own messes in Chapter 10.



## EMBRACING EMOTION

When you are having a discussion with your loved ones—or anyone else for that matter—don't forget to bring in more than just your words. Saying words without having any authentic emotion fueling them can fall flat in the hearts and minds of those with whom we are trying to communicate. An expression of genuine emotion can be the difference between someone going through the motions versus truly understanding us.

Make sure your emotions come from an honest, non-manipulative place. If we are hurt, we should say, "I am hurt." Don't turn the hurt into anger and then go on the attack by saying, "You always do this. You make me so angry!" That person doesn't *make* you do anything; you have allowed yourself to feel hurt. I encourage people to go deeper than the surface emotion and see what vulnerability lies underneath it. Sure, you can be frustrated, but what's underneath the frustration—worry that you aren't a good parent, fear that you won't be able to handle the challenges facing you, or doubt that you know the "right" approach to take?

Don't be afraid to show your joy as well! So often we damp down our happiness in favor of being perceived as "serious". People are

attracted to those who have a sunny disposition. Let your excitement, enthusiasm, and passion come through! People respond most to what they feel, not just to what they hear or see.

Be courageous when embracing your emotion. Use breathing techniques and meditation practices discussed earlier so you can healthfully express any negative feelings without losing control. It takes strong people to own their tender side. Let your empowered emotions be a part of your meetings when appropriate, and you will find that others will share their truths as well. When that happens, you will soon be on the path to true communication and collaboration.

## AT WORK

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Have you ever had to endure a seemingly endless discussion, only to discover that you sat through an entire hour-long meeting just to talk about having another meeting? Isn't that frustrating? While you may not be able to immediately streamline every single meeting you attend, you can begin to make a difference in the level of performance, output, and time utilization by running your own meetings like a Jedi.

Gallup's report, *State of the American Manager: Analytics and Advice for Leaders*<sup>10</sup>, showed that when managers engage in regular meetings with their employees, the employees are almost three times more likely to be engaged compared to those who don't. If you are an organizational leader, please do everyone a favor and train your people on how to conduct effective meetings. Make sure you are doing them yourself as well. You will not

only be the most popular person in the office, you'll quickly see a dramatic increase in performance and team unity. This stuff works.



## MONEY VALUE OF TIME

When conducting mindful meetings, we need to consider the Money Value of Time. There is a cost an organization pays when a group of people gather together to have discussions versus “doing actual work”. Every minute counts. When we make each meeting minute mean something, we are being responsible stewards of the organizational resources.

If you are the facilitator, show up with plenty of time to prepare the room. If you tend to be late, set the start time in your calendar for an earlier time so you are never, ever late. If you called a 9:00 a.m. meeting, then at 9:00 a.m. *on the dot* start the meeting no matter who is around the table. There is always at least one person who honors the process. Don't disrespect them by having them wait for late arrivals. Yes, those first few times you may get grimaces from the latecomers, but that's okay. When they walk in, don't make it a big deal. If they say, “Whoa, you started already!”, respond jovially, “Yep, we had a start time of 9:00 and I want to honor everyone's schedule.” Just keep going. If they want you to backtrack, politely decline, saying you won't be able to hold to the agenda if you circle back on content you've already discussed. Assure them they will catch up and, if they have any questions after it is over, they can ask you or read the minutes.

When you sense that people are repeating themselves or treading over discussion points that have already been addressed, don't

be afraid to say so. With your most polite voice and approachable body language, gently suggest that the issue (not the person) has been appropriately discussed at this point and ask if the discussion (not the person) can move on. Don't make the focus the people talking too much, or you risk insulting them publicly; rather, make time the ultimate master. Blame the clock. Honor the agenda. Tell them you are committed to nudging the group forward to adhere to the meeting timeframes no matter who is talking. That's your job as a responsible facilitator and custodian of the organizational resource of time. The other folks around the table will be eternally grateful to you for your steely resolve, and they will also think twice before running off at the mouth willy-nilly. Projects get completed on time. Relationships flourish. Money is made. People succeed. Everybody wins.



## UNIFIED ARRIVAL

How many times have you sat down at a meeting after having rushed to get there? Your mind is still on the conversation you just had or the traffic you just endured, and you are annoyed that you “have to” be at this meeting. You are crabby, hungry, tired, stressed, and not at all prepared to have engaging conversations about the upcoming topic at hand. Guess what? Your negativity is contagious. This sets the tone for the entire meeting: one of disengagement, disappointment, delays, and distraction.

Several highly-successful, forward-thinking companies are now seeing opportunities to combat this productivity-sucking habit by using mindfulness techniques at the start of their meetings. They

allow time for people to arrive, not only in body, but also in mind and in spirit.

Take the Eileen Fisher company, for example. When a meeting start time arrives, a facilitator (there should always be someone in charge) rings a bell or chime, signifying that the meeting has begun. For the next minute, everyone around the table stops everything they are doing, and just starts being. They put away their devices, close their eyes, and breathe. Simply breathe. They take those few precious moments to clear their heads of distraction that may still be lurking, allowing them to come to the table with a focused, open mind. After just a minute of silently breathing in unison, everyone feels like they are ready to be present and will contribute far more meaningfully. The facilitator rings the chime once again to signify that the arrival portion is complete, and the discussion can continue as planned. Everybody is finally there to do the work needed.

At your next meeting, consider taking one minute to allow people to quiet their minds, settle into the present moment, and get focused on the objective. Using a timer will help everyone relax and trust that their time isn't being "wasted." Fostering a unified arrival builds cold steel group concentration.



## MINDFUL MEETING MASTERY

Hosting a mindful meeting requires much more than reserving a big enough room or sending out a meeting notice. Did you ever look around a meeting room and calculate each person's hourly rate? When you total that up, a meeting could be costing

thousands of dollars an hour. If you want to maximize the time, money, and energy it takes to bring a group of people together to discuss an issue, then a certain amount of discipline is required not only on the part of the facilitator but also on each attendee. By investing extra energy in the critical pre- and post-meeting phases, you will not only dramatically improve performance, you'll also be cultivating a much stronger, healthier, more respectful, and more collaborative relationship among the team members.

Do these critical items every time you host a professional gathering:

- **Define the meeting's purpose.** Why are you getting people together in the first place? Is it merely to make your life easier? Meetings should only take place when you are discussing complex issues that cannot otherwise be reasonably handled over email or other methods of collaboration.
- **Identify must-have attendees.** Don't be lazy when it comes to the invitee list. In fact, consider indicating on the invitation *why* each person is being asked to attend and what he or she will be contributing to the discussion. Your colleagues will appreciate you acknowledging their unique value and will be more prepared to have meaningful discussions.
- **Craft the agenda.** Document meeting logistics, who will be in attendance, and the exact start and end times for each section. Allow for some breathing room, but don't be too generic in your scheduling. An agenda that is too general gives people an excuse to skip the meeting.

## Meetings

- **Make scheduling easy.** Consider using a polling website to avoid the email scheduling ping-pong. Identify a few possible meeting dates and times that work with your calendar. Start with the most important attendees and make sure you get them to commit. Then you can send a secondary invitation for tier-two attendees.
- **Assign critical pre-work.** Don't be afraid to ask people for written status reports prior to the meeting. You may get some push-back at the beginning, but by modeling good behavior yourself and showing how much more time is saved, attendees will start doing the front-end legwork. Make this process public and simple to complete so people are more apt to get their reports done.
- **Allow sufficient time.** Don't wait too long to schedule a meeting. Nobody likes last-minute fire drills. It makes you look unprofessional and only undercuts their desire to work collaboratively with you.
- **Be crystal clear.** When the start time arrives, start the meeting, regardless of who is around the table. Thank your attendees and remind them of the purpose of the meeting. Dive into the agenda immediately. (If you want to schedule a few minutes of unified arrival or quick personal sharing, then do so. But treat it like any other item on the agenda; don't let it get out of hand.) This is about business, not play time or screen time. You can (and should) be pleasant, but don't be overly casual.
- **Make the clock your co-host.** Have a clock visible so everyone can see you will be managing each agenda item

to its assigned timeframe. A minute or two before the next section is slated to start, politely indicate to the person speaking that time is wrapping up for this section. If more time is needed, either decide to steal a few minutes from another section or table the discussion for another conversation. Do *not* go over the allotted time of the meeting. Ever. It's rude and will come back to haunt you in the form of disengagement.

- **Follow up immediately.** Track all decisions and actions that stem from the meeting, and distribute the minutes within 72 hours. Be specific as to the expectations that were discussed and the timeframes for completion. Invest the time to make those meeting minutes rock. You want people to read them, forward them, and refer to them.
- **Don't allow slackers.** If/when people don't do what they should do, from skipping the meeting altogether to multi-tasking during the meeting to blowing off their action items, directly communicate with them in private about how their choices are harming the group. Be understanding, be neutral, and be specific about what is required. If there is a legitimate reason as to why they shouldn't be involved, then take that information and act accordingly. But don't let anyone sandbag your efforts. Other attendees will be watching how you handle the slackers. Don't give them a reason to be one too.

Yes, running a mindful meeting takes additional time on the part of the host. It requires forethought, organization, effective communication skills, and discipline. However, when your attendees realize you mean business when it comes to hosting ninja-like meetings,

they will make time for you and your event. Over time, your organizational influence quotient will skyrocket, and you will have people clamor to be on such a high-performance team! (OK, maybe they won't be clamoring, but they also won't need to be dragged to the conference room kicking and screaming.)

## ALL DAY

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In addition to creating effective meetings at home and at work, you can also use these easy-but-powerful strategies for your everyday meetings with friends and strangers alike.



## NAME-CALLING

One of the most important things you can do when meeting people is also the most obvious: USE THEIR NAMES. In his book, "How to Win Friends and Influence People," Dale Carnegie, the success communication guru of his time, said, "A person's name is to him or her the sweetest and most important sound in any language." Using someone's first name, especially when cultivating a warm connection, accomplishes several significant objectives in building a network, leading a team, and growing your tribe of supporters.

Here are but a few benefits to training yourself to address those around you by name:

- It shows you value them enough to remember who they are. **Don't let yourself off the hook by telling yourself you are terrible with remembering names.** Make a commitment to strengthen that mental muscle by confirming you have the name correctly and are saying it right, repeating it several times throughout a conversation, and writing it down to solidify it in your brain. If you are on the phone, jot it down and use it a few times to build rapport and connection. You can also use a creative memorization technique by linking that person's name with another person or a concept. "Mike likes to ride bikes" if he is a motorcycle enthusiast. "Lucy is as funny as Lucille Ball." "Theresa Rose is as sweet as a flower." These silly tricks are how you can solidify someone's name into your brain.
- It nudges you toward a more collaborative, service-oriented mindset as opposed to being more self-centered (literally centering oneself on his or her own responses and objectives). Demonstrating this level of presence with another is noticed and will subtly have others more committed to your efforts and the project.
- It shows that you are not a selfish dunderhead. The more you can widen your circle to bring others into the conversation by using their first names, the more you will be perceived as a nice person. And nice people make better connections, which makes for more quality output, higher sales, fewer complaints, and more engagement.
- It will get your emails read. Start every email with a personal greeting, even if it is to more than one person. (If it is a huge distribution list, use a reference to the "XYZ

Team” and then find ways to embed relevant names within the body of the email itself.) I recommend not only using a person’s first name at the beginning, but also toward the end of the email. There is something far more engaging to read, “Thanks, Bob, for all you are doing to make this project a success,” than “Thank you for your cooperation on this matter.”

A good rule of thumb is this:

**If you see someone wearing a nametag,  
say the name on it at least once.**

I personally try to acknowledge by name every restaurant server, bartender, clerk, and doorman I encounter. You never know when having that extra connection will not only provide better service (because it does), but it also may prove incredibly important if/when you need a helping hand.



## **SUPERSTRATEGY: STORY OR SPREADSHEET**

If you are like me, you have taken a personality test sometime in your life that indicates what type of person you are. Whether it’s Myers-Briggs, DISC, True Colors, StrengthsFinder, or a multitude of other assessments, there are no shortages of solutions out there that help us understand ourselves and those around us. My problem with those assessments isn’t that they are incorrect; it’s

that they are too complicated.

Complicated is bad. Complicated isn't done anymore.

Instead, I offer up a straightforward way to identify who is in the room with you or across the table from you. It's what we all know, and the simplicity makes it implementable. I categorize people into one of two primary traits: You are either a story person or a spreadsheet person. The names alone are enough for you to understand the difference.

Story people are the ones who love to provide narrative to situations. They paint pictures with their words. They are the first ones at happy hour. They are in the hallways chatting with their colleagues. They are remarkably successful in establishing and maintaining rapport with others. They flourish in marketing and sales roles. They don't mind a little chaos if it is in support of building relationships. They love people, and it shows based on the verbal and non-verbal language they use. They use a lot of commas, question marks, and exclamation points in their emails. They are awesome!

Spreadsheet people are those who just want the data. They would rather just cut to the chase and get the nuggets of information they need and move on. They like order, logic, and process. They are always on time. They bolt from the meeting as soon as it concludes. They are nowhere to be found during the optional reception. They thrive in finance, accounting, and IT. A well-written report makes them happy. They provide the foundation from which all great organizational initiatives are developed. They use periods in their emails—maybe—if they write an email longer than two words. They are awesome!

## Meetings

When you think about a story person versus a spreadsheet person, you can see how one can aggravate the other easily. The story person is annoyed or hurt that the spreadsheet person is cold and distant. The spreadsheet person wishes the story person would just shut up already and get to the point. The problem lies in the fact that we often communicate based on our personal style versus the style of the person with whom we are meeting.

Since this isn't a scientific assessment but rather a broad personality trait, we must rely on our observational skills in conjunction with our intuitive abilities to identify which one is in play in ourselves and others. Ideally, we are a balance of both, but for the purposes of understanding the tool, think about how the most important people in your life would categorize you as. How would your significant other, trusted co-worker, and best friend describe you? *Story* or *Spreadsheet*? Trust what others observe in you.

Now that you know what your primary tendency is, start thinking about all the people with whom you communicate. How do they talk about their personal lives? Are their emails long or short? How many friends do they have, both in real life and in the digital domain? Does everyone know them, or are they a hidden gem? Do you want to get driving directions from them? There are dozens of indicators you can keep an eye out for, so you can conduct the most effective meeting possible.

If you are a story person and you are meeting with another story person, your biggest challenge will be to get to the business at hand without wasting a bunch of time chit-chatting about nonessentials. Make sure you identify the must-haves of the meeting and get those out of the way as soon as possible. Agendas will be especially helpful to keep the two of you on track.

If you are a story person who is meeting with spreadsheet people, make sure you understand exactly what information they need, and give it to them right away. Tone down the chit-chat and thank them for taking the time to meet. Acknowledge that they are busy and get right down to business. They'll love you for it.

If you are a spreadsheet person meeting with story people, your challenge is raising your energy to their levels. Before you meet, think about one or two things you really enjoyed recently and be prepared to bring them up as small talk before the meeting begins. Take that extra swig of coffee and put on a smile to make them feel like they aren't a burden to you. Admit that you really like getting all of your ducks in a row and ask for their help in making that happen for the good of the project. Add a little extra friendliness in your emails. By amping up your own social energy, you will build deeper relationships that will serve you well in the long run.

Finally, if you are a spreadsheet person meeting with another spreadsheet person, your meetings are probably two-and-a-half minutes long. You both want to get out of there as quickly as possible with the relevant data. Start with some brief pleasantries and crank through that project punch list (or sales presentation or employee review or any other high-value meeting) as efficiently as possible. Get that agenda out and stick to it. The best way to optimize a meeting of two spreadsheets is to minimize distractions from story people. You may even want to put your agenda items at the top so at least you get the data you need at the beginning and can mentally check-out when the story people take over!

When you understand the Story or Spreadsheet SuperStrategy and can cater your personality to the person across the table from you, you will find that both your work and personal lives will get

easier. You'll have fewer conflicts. You'll get things done faster. You'll make greater sales. You'll retain better talent. You'll enhance your day-to-day interactions. It's a simple and very powerful tool you can use right now to dramatically improve your meetings.



## PERSON OF INCREASE

Imagine each person you run into during your day with a small plus sign or minus sign on his or her forehead. We are either plusses or minuses at any given moment. We either add to a conversation or take away from it. We either optimize a situation or undercut it. When we are in the store and impatiently grumble at the overwhelmed cashier, we are making the situation worse, not better. When we are in a meeting and we respond to someone's idea with, "We've already tried that, and it didn't work", we are detracting from the discussion instead of fostering a collaborative, innovative environment. When we choose to put our own interests ahead of others, we are fundamentally robbing our counterparts of the opportunity to have their needs met as well.

Have an eye toward finding new ways to increase profits and make your organization more efficient. When you are in a meeting, regardless if you are hosting it or not, be on the lookout for ways in which the process can be improved. Without undercutting anyone's authority or influence, make a note of innovative ways that meetings and other communications can be enhanced and then *offer to drive the implementation*.

That's the power of being a person of increase. It isn't enough to know how to make something bigger, better, or more profitable;

one must also have a sense of service to make the enhancement come to fruition. We don't have to do it all by ourselves, but we need to take ownership of the tactical aspects of completion.

## **Nobody likes a know-it-all who is also a do-nothing.**

If you see a way to make something better, name it and then offer to help.

This strategy is one I have taken extremely seriously in my own life, both professionally and personally. Every single day as part of my manifestation process, I describe how I am going to accomplish my big visions by "being a person of increase in every exchange." I originally heard of this concept many years ago when I participated in a life coaching program by Mary Morissey, whom I highly recommend. Just like campers and hikers who are advised to "leave the land better than how you found it", so too can we utilize this principle in every transaction, every day. Here are a few examples of how you can become a legendary person of increase:

- When you are in a retail store, instead of surfing on your phone, look the cashier in the eyes and say, "Thank you, (Name)!"
- Leave a generous tip for that scrappy server who is doing her best.
- Clean up the conference room of extra papers and other trash that accumulated throughout your meeting.

## Meetings

- Sort the project action item list the way the team prefers it before sending it out.
- Start every networking conversation with a genuine offer to help and before that conversation ends, identify specific suggestions on how you could help.
- Say “Thank you” as much as you possibly can to every single person who helps you in any way, from the volunteers who are sprucing up the neighborhood in the spring to the tired cleaning person who is wiping the sinks in the airport restroom.

By becoming a person of increase in every exchange, you broadcast to the world that you are a solution-provider, not a problem-creator. When you genuinely become a bright light for everyone you meet, the Universe begins to conspire in your favor. It starts to put the perfect person in your orbit who will help you reach your goals. Thanks to the Law of Reciprocity, it will nudge others to want to help you in any way they can. And most importantly, you will be able to sleep well at night, knowing that in a very difficult and challenging new world, you are a bringer of goodness, not of bitterness. Lastly, as a bonus, your body will run better and last longer.

**Now more than ever, the world needs  
more people who are committed to  
adding to the collective goodness  
versus taking away from it.**

Civility training is on the rise, and for good reason. (One could argue that civility training should be a requirement before anyone runs for political office. Just sayin'.) People are just not being *nice* anymore. They aren't listening, aren't showing respect to those who hold different views than themselves, and they find it perfectly acceptable to only do what *they* want to do. This is causing significant divisiveness in our organizations and in our world. The news is full of descriptions of people suffering from the repercussions of bullying and harassment. We need to combat this divide one smile, acknowledgement, and thank you at a time.

By bringing greater focus and awareness to our meetings at home, at work, and in our communities, we are paving the pathways to success while also contributing to a more compassionate, charitable, and civil society. Mindful, effective discussions are critical, as all great accomplishments are a group effort. Our visions become a reality when we create in conscious collaboration.

# SELF-REFLECTION: **MEETINGS**

What are your strengths in this focus area?

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What are your opportunities for growth?

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What specific life experiences came up for you as you read through this chapter? What was the impact to you personally and professionally?

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*Mindful Performance*

How would improving your activity and awareness in this focus area help you reach your goals?

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What are the strategies that resonated with you the most?

- **House Meeting Logistics**
- **Complete Conversations**
- **Embracing Emotion**
- **Money Value of Time**
- **Unified Arrival**
- **Mindful Meeting Mastery**
- **Name-calling**
- **Story or Spreadsheet (SuperStrategy)**
- **Person of Increase**

What is one action you will take to increase your performance in this area, and by when will you do it?

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