


Purposeful Leadership: Investing In Our Own Well-Being

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I guide leaders away from overwhelm and burnout, to impact and legacy.

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There is more pressure now than ever before on leaders at all levels, particularly those who oversee other employees in the workplace. Work is changing fast, as well as the world around it, and people are increasingly reliant on their direct managers and senior leadership to make sense of their context, within and beyond the organization. This is a weighty responsibility that few of us were properly trained for, particularly given the dynamism of our age. It also provides massive opportunities for impact and fulfillment as professionals, and can become a differentiator for our organization.

There are six Spheres of Impact in which we can invest to rise to this challenge, leading purposefully to generate wellbeing for our teams, our companies, and the world around us. But among the six, the Self Sphere is the cornerstone, encapsulating the essence of physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual well-being. As leaders embark on the journey of mindful leadership, this Sphere becomes the compass guiding them towards holistic health and success.

Mindfulness: A Prerequisite

At the nucleus of the Self Sphere lies mindfulness, a practice with the potential to revolutionize our effectiveness as leaders. Whether through meditation, outdoor activities, or other personalized methods, mindfulness becomes the catalyst for self-discovery and resilience. It's simply a prerequisite to develop mindfulness practices that keep you connected to your current status and needs. And bring you back there quickly when you are inevitably thrown off.

A Blueprint for Holistic Health

The path to purposeful leadership entails strategic investments of time, attention, energy, and to some extent, money, in each element of the Self Sphere:

1. **Physical Well-being:** Grounded in the basics of sufficient sleep, balanced nutrition, and regular physical activity, leaders can maintain resilience and vitality.
2. **Intellectual Satisfaction:** An equilibrium between competence and continuous learning ensures leaders remain fulfilled and satisfied in their roles.
3. **Emotional Resilience:** A robust sense of self and nourishing interpersonal connections lay the foundation for emotional well-being, enabling leaders to navigate challenges with grace.
4. **Spiritual Connection:** Whether through religion, communion with nature, or personal beliefs, a connection to something greater fosters spiritual well-being.

The actions required for holistic well-being in these areas are as diverse as we are as individuals. Leaders can invest in their well-being in myriad ways, ranging from optimizing sleep to fostering meaningful relationships. Our responsibility is to identify which of these many activities are most effective for us, which may change over time.

Navigating Pitfalls in the Self Sphere

Many of the investments that matter for our wellbeing are not rocket science or unknown to us. And yet, we don't always do them. It's important to consider the pitfalls that get in the way of our adequate investment in the Self Sphere so we can anticipate and overcome them.

1. **Inaction:** The narrative dispels the myth that self-care is synonymous with selfishness. Leaders are encouraged to embark on a journey of self-investment, starting with activities that resonate personally.
2. **"Shoulding" in the Self Sphere:** Leaders are urged to resist external expectations and societal norms, fostering a mindset of experimentation and personalization in self-care practices.

3. Orthodoxy: Challenging outdated beliefs, leaders are prompted to compile evidence, seek supportive influences, and establish processes that reinforce self-care expectations, breaking free from cultural norms.

Crafting Your Unique Wellness Cocktail

So: what ingredients will you use to craft your evolving wellness cocktail? What are the things you know help you to feel better on a given day? Which are essential and which are nice-to-have? What keeps you from doing them? Start with what you know, and then track, reflect, and commit to refining the cocktail over time, as you learn what really works.

But do not skip this step. To have the positive impact you seek on the people and planet around you, you must prioritize these investments in your Self Sphere, in whatever mix serves you best.

Conclusion: A Call to Holistic Leadership

In today's demanding, uncertain, and fast-changing business and societal setting, the Self Sphere is the linchpin for purposeful and effective leadership. Consider this article not just a guide, but a call to action. A call for leaders to *Go First*, per my book title, to prioritize your well-being, embrace mindfulness, and embark on a journey towards holistic success. The Self Sphere is not just one of six investment targets to increase your impact; it's the essence of purposeful leadership in a world that demands resilient, mindful, and authentic leaders.

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