

# **Accelerating the development of global leaders: What needs to change for us to meet the challenge**

*HRDF Conference & Exhibition 2016*

December 5, 2016

Dr. Jean-François Manzoni

Professor of Leadership & Organisational Development  
and Incoming President (January 1, 2017)

IMD (Lausanne)

[jean-francois.manzoni@imd.org](mailto:jean-francois.manzoni@imd.org)



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**Are leaders born, or are  
they made?**

**The answer is YES!!**

# Condition number 1 is:

*You must believe that you can!*



Research on the “growth mindset” is gaining huge momentum

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XomgOOSpLU>



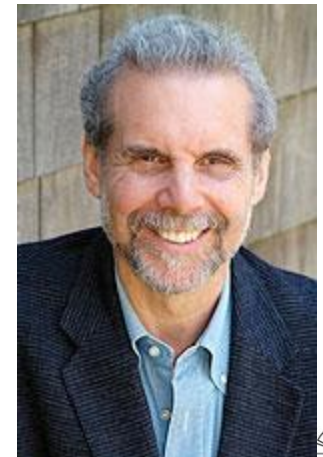
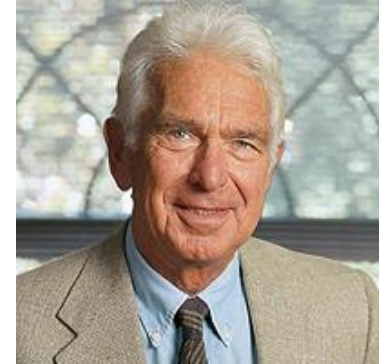
# Good news: Ongoing development *is* possible!

“The truth is that **major capacities and competencies of leadership can be learned, and we are all educable**, at least if the basic desire to learn is there ....

Furthermore, ... **nurture is far more important than nature** in determining who becomes a successful leader.”

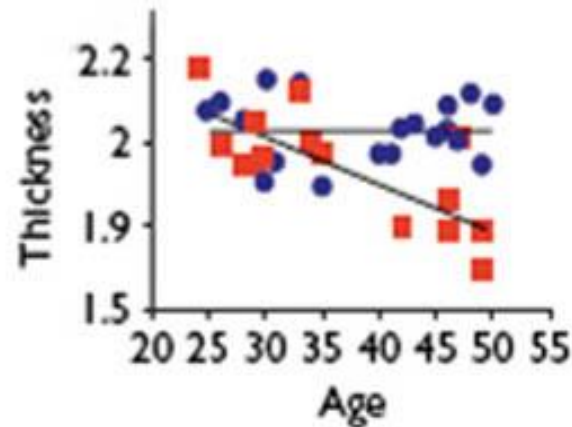
“We have seen **evidence that points emphatically** to (this conclusion): Old leaders *can* learn new tricks.

**Leaders can and do make significant, in some cases life-altering, changes in their styles ...”**



# Recent discoveries (invalidating what many of us were taught earlier in life)

- Neurogenesis



- Brain plasticity

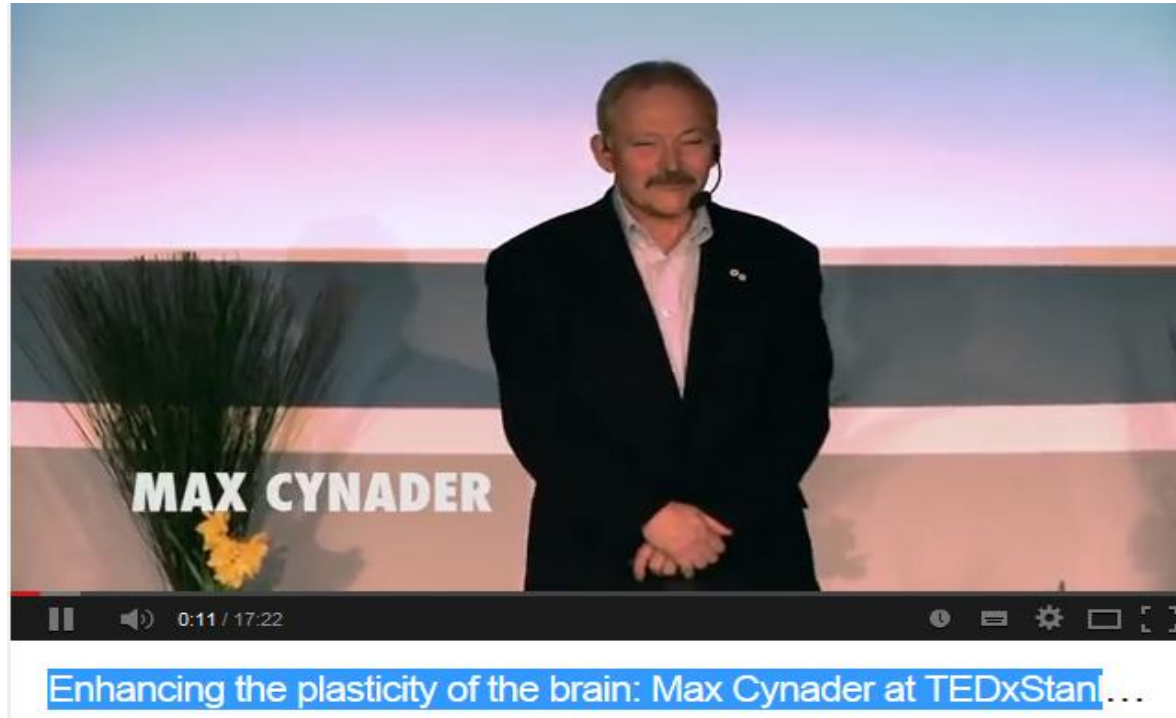
At the end of the London cab drivers' training, their hippocampus — a part very involved in visual-spatial memory — is *measurably thicker*.

In other words, **neurons that fire together wire together**, even to the point of being observably thicker.

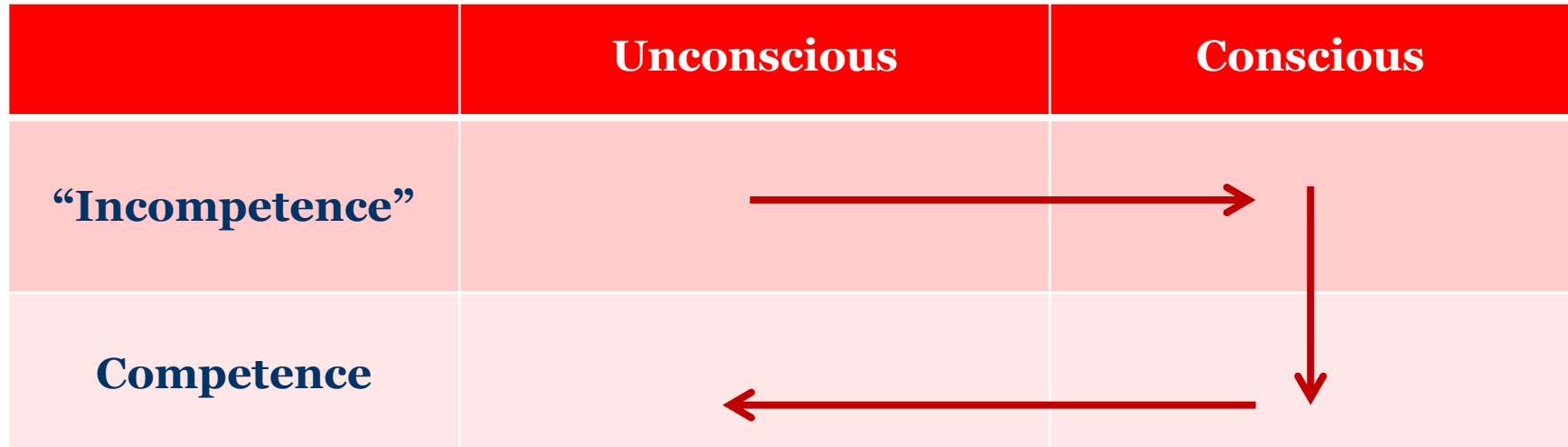
# Brain plasticity

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Chr3rQ6Vpcw>

- Neurons that fire together wire together
- The more repeatedly they fire together, the stronger the wiring together
- Human beings produce new neurons every day throughout our life
- To enhance brain plasticity:
  - Sleep
  - Exercise!



# The goal: Help Executives to develop new leadership capabilities



**Awareness!!**

**Practice!!**

# Proposition:

**Executives face  
3 major challenges  
in their efforts to  
develop new capabilities**



# 1. Insufficient awareness of the need for change

- First step in any change process is «why this, why now?»
- Executives increasingly (think they) know quite a bit!
- *I know I should do it... so I'm doing it!* (Right?)
  - Human beings tend to be unaware of their own biases (Bias Blind Spot)
  - Executives are effective some proportion of the time (especially...)
  - Add to this
    - ✓ *Confirmatory Biases ...*
    - ✓ *Reduction of Cognitive Dissonance ...*
    - ✓ *Increasingly limited (honest) feedback...*

# 1. Insufficient awareness of the need for change

■ Fix...?»

■ => It is extremely easy (and tempting) for executives to

- over-estimate their leadership effectiveness
- under-estimate the need for them to continue to develop their capabilities

■ => EDIs often collude with Senior Executives on this front...

## 2. Insufficient (investment in) knowing and in learning to do

### a. Insufficient effort to *acquire knowledge*

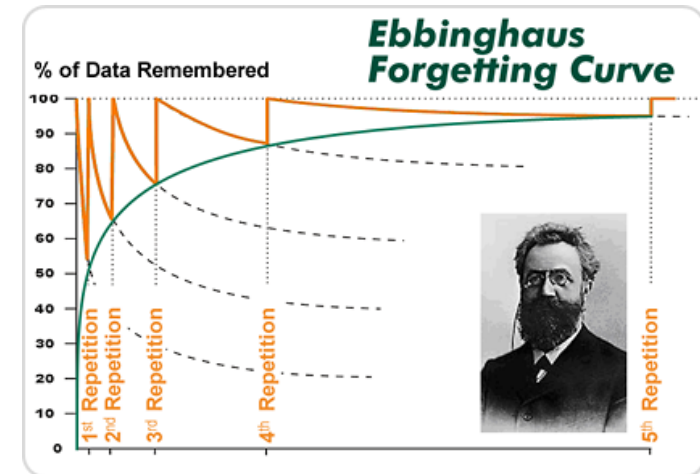
- *If it's not in your head, it's not usable!*

- *Neurons that fire together, wire together!*

- Fluency illusion

  - ✓ often reinforced by programme design & delivery (& objectives)

- The role of group work...



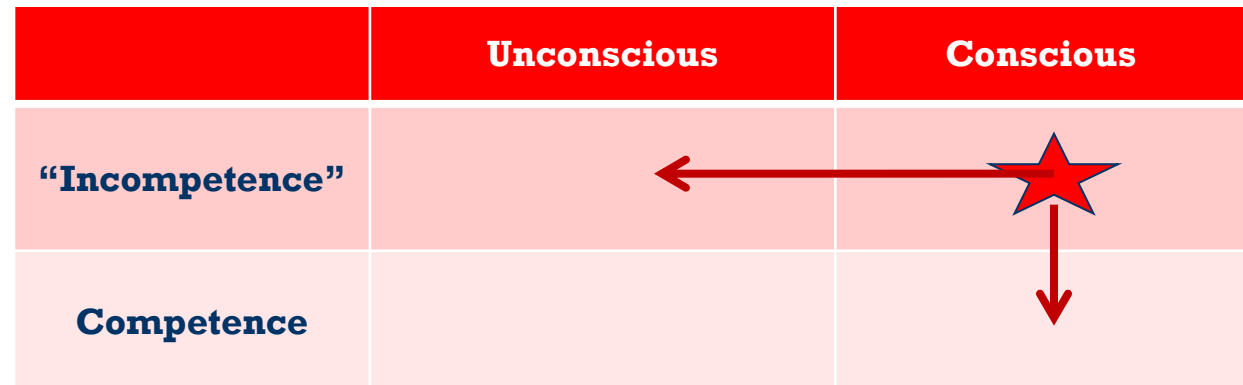
## 2. Insufficient (investment in) knowing and in learning to do

a. Insufficient effort to acquire knowledge

b. Under-estimation of implementation challenge

- At 10,000 feet, problems always look pretty small!
  - ✓ And instructors often stay at 10,000 feet...
- Management knowledge often looks deceptively simple
  - ✓ And the way instructors present it reinforces this illusion
- E.g., Fair process
  - ✓ Identify the actionability gap => fear of failure  
=> refrain from implementation
  - ✓ Not identify the actionability gap => failure!

# 3. Insufficient persistence...



- Feeling Consciously Incompetent is painful...
- Temptation to make the pain go away
  - Rationalising the gap away
  - Return to Unconscious Incompetence

# a) Producing non-habitual behaviour is hard!

- Learning a new skill from scratch is hard enough
- Learning to **modify habitual behaviour is even harder!**
  1. Intercept the habitual response / Catch the cue
  2. Find a more appropriate response
  3. Produce that other response

... in real time and under performance pressure!

# Hurdles getting in the way of this three-step process

- Automatic pilot / lack of mindfulness

# A Wandering Mind Is an Unhappy Mind

Matthew A. Killingsworth\* and Daniel T. Gilbert

Unlike other animals, human beings spend a lot of time thinking about what is not going on around them, contemplating events that happened in the past, might happen in the future, or will never happen at all. Indeed, “stimulus-independent thought” or “mind wandering” appears to be the brain’s default mode of operation (1–3). Although this ability is a remarkable evolutionary achievement that allows people to learn, reason, and plan, it may have an emotional cost. Many philosophical and religious traditions teach that happiness is to be found by living in the moment, and practitioners are trained to resist mind wandering and “to be here now.” These traditions suggest that a wandering mind is an unhappy mind. Are they right?

Laboratory experiments have revealed a great deal about the cognitive and neural bases of mind wandering (3–7), but little about its emotional consequences in everyday life. The most reliable method for investigating real-world emotion is experience sampling, which involves contacting people as they engage in their everyday activities and asking them to report their thoughts, feelings, and actions at that moment. Unfortunately, collecting real-time reports from large numbers of people as they go about their daily lives is so cumbersome and expensive that experience sampling has rarely been used to investigate the relationship between mind wandering and happiness and has always

more of 22 activities adapted from the day reconstruction method (10, 11), and a mind-wandering question (“Are you thinking about something other than what you’re currently doing?”) answered with one of four options: no; yes, something pleasant; yes, something neutral; or yes, something unpleasant. Our analyses revealed three facts.

First, people’s minds wandered frequently, regardless of what they were doing. Mind wandering occurred in 46.9% of the samples and in at least 30% of the samples taken during every activity except making love. The frequency of mind wandering in our real-world sample was considerably higher than is typically seen in laboratory experiments. Surprisingly, the nature of people’s activities had only a modest impact on whether their minds wandered and had almost no impact on the pleasantness of the topics to which their minds wandered (12).

Second, multilevel regression revealed that people were less happy when their minds were wandering than when they were not [slope ( $b$ ) =  $-8.79$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ], and this was true during all activities,

including the least enjoyable. Although people’s minds were more likely to wander to pleasant topics (42.5% of samples) than to unpleasant topics (26.5% of samples) or neutral topics (31% of samples), people were no happier when thinking about pleasant topics than about their current activity ( $b = -0.52$ , not significant) and were considerably unhappier when thinking about neutral topics ( $b = -7.2$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ) or unpleasant topics ( $b = -23.9$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ) than about their current activity (Fig. 1, bottom). Although negative moods are known to cause mind wandering (13), time-lag analyses strongly suggested that mind wandering in our sample was generally the cause, and not merely the consequence, of unhappiness (12).

Third, what people were thinking was a better predictor of their happiness than was what they were doing. The nature of people’s activities explained 4.6% of the within-person variance in happiness and 3.2% of the between-person variance in happiness, but mind wandering explained 10.8% of within-person variance in happiness and 17.7% of between-person variance in happiness. The variance explained by mind wandering was largely independent of the variance explained by the nature of activities, suggesting that the two were independent influences on happiness.

In conclusion, a human mind is a wandering mind, and a wandering mind is an unhappy mind. The ability to think about what is not happening is a cognitive achievement that comes at an emotional cost.

## References and Notes

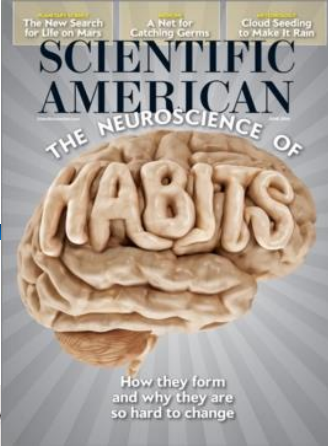
1. M. E. Raichle et al., *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A.* **98**, 676 (2001).
2. K. Christoff, A. M. Gordon, J. Smallwood, R. Smith, J. W. Schooler, *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A.* **106**, 8719 (2009)





# Hurdles getting in the way of this three-step process

- Automatic pilot / lack of mindfulness
- Habits are powerful shapers of behaviour...



# How the Brain Makes and Breaks Habits

by [Ann M. Graybiel](#) (MIT) and [Kyle S. Smith](#), 1 June, 2014

The encoding involves multiple parts of the brain

The behaviours are encoded in packages/“chunks” of neural activity

## BRAIN ACTIVITY

### How Habits Form

We use three steps to learn and lock in habits: explore a new behavior, form a habit, then imprint it into the brain (colored numbers). Although scientists have not refined all the details, the striatum (center) coordinates each step. Even though we seem to carry out habits “without thinking,” the infralimbic cortex (bottom right) still monitors what we are doing.

- 1 New behavior explored:** The prefrontal cortex communicates with the striatum, and the striatum communicates with the midbrain, where dopamine aids learning and assigns value to goals. These circuits (solid and dashed lines) form positive feedback loops, which help us figure out what does and does not work in the behavior.
- 2 Habit forms:** As we repeat a behavior, a feedback loop between the sensorimotor cortex and the striatum becomes strongly engaged, which helps us stamp routines into a single unit, or chunk, of brain activity. The chunk partly resides in the striatum and relies on dopamine input from the midbrain.
- 3 Habit imprinted and permitted:** Once a habit is stored as a chunk of actions, the infralimbic cortex seems to help the striatum further imprint the habit as a semi-permanent brain activity. Aided by dopamine, the infralimbic cortex also seems to control when to allow us to engage in a habit; shutting down this region can suppress deeply ingrained routines.

### THE EXPERIMENT

#### Acting without Thinking

Tests on rats revealed that the brain treats a habit as a single unit of behavior. The rats learned to run down a T-maze and turn left or right toward a reward, depending on an instruction sound. During early runs (first colored 7), activity in the brain's striatum was high (yellow and red) most of the time. As a habit formed (second 7), activity quieted (green and blue) except when the rat had to decide to turn or to drink. Once a habit set in (third 7), activity was high only at the start and finish, marking one unit of behavior.

Activity of Neurons in Striatum  
Low High

# Hurdles getting in the way of this three-step process

- Automatic pilot / lack of mindfulness
- Habits are powerful shapers of behaviour...
- Ego depletion (running out of self control/willpower)

# Extraneous factors in judicial decisions

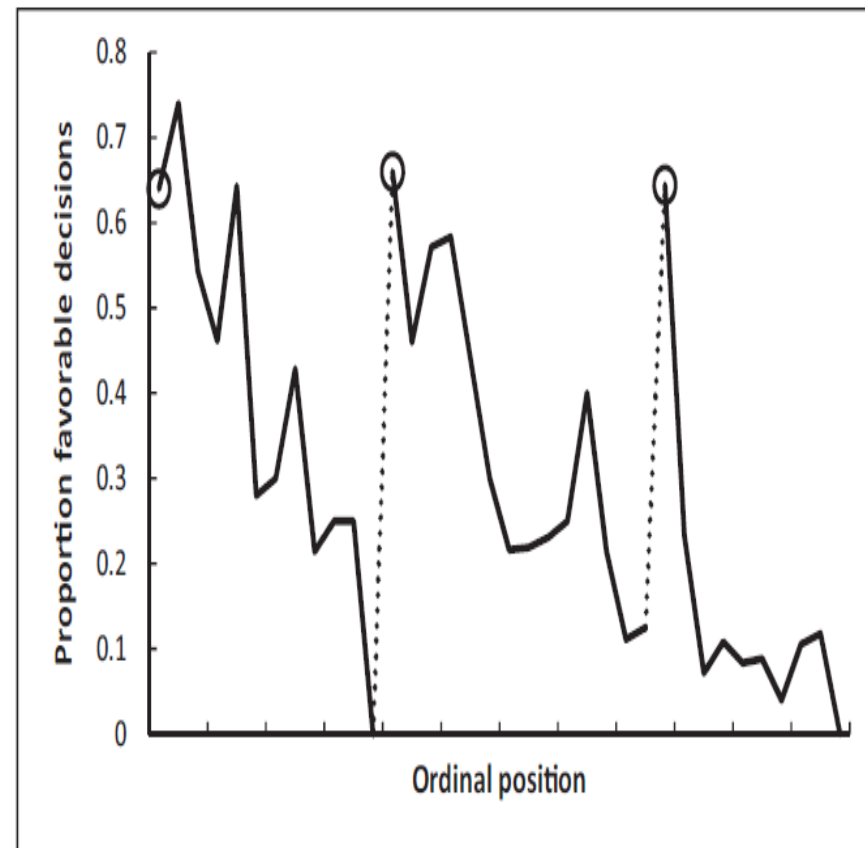
Shai Danziger<sup>a,1</sup>, Jonathan Levav<sup>b,1,2</sup>, and Liora Avnaim-Pesso<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Management, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Beer Sheva 84105, Israel; and <sup>b</sup>Columbia Business School, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027

Edited\* by Daniel Kahneman, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ, and approved February 25, 2011 (received for review December 8, 2010)

Are judicial rulings based solely on laws and facts? Legal formalism holds that judges apply legal reasons to the facts of a case in a rational, mechanical, and deliberative manner. In contrast, legal realists argue that the rational application of legal reasons does not sufficiently explain the decisions of judges and that psychological, political, and social factors influence judicial rulings. We test the common caricature of realism that justice is “what the judge ate for breakfast” in sequential parole decisions made by experienced judges. We record the judges’ two daily food breaks, which result in segmenting the deliberations of the day into three distinct “decision sessions.” We find that the percentage of favorable rulings drops gradually from  $\approx 65\%$  to nearly zero within each decision session and returns abruptly to  $\approx 65\%$  after a break. Our findings suggest that judicial rulings can be swayed by extraneous variables that should have no bearing on legal decisions.

decisionmaking | legal realism | mental depletion | expert  
decisionmaking | ego depletion



# Hurdles getting in the way of this three-step process

- Automatic pilot / lack of mindfulness
- Habits are powerful shapers of behaviour...
- Ego depletion (running out of self control/willpower)
- Retrieving knowledge under stress is not easy
- Creating «new, innovative» answers under stress is even harder
- And then, each of us faces some individual, specific challenges
  - Genetic make-up
  - Personal history
  - Competing commitments

- The anxious executive
- The very direct entrepreneur

# Competing commitments



# Hurdles getting in the way of this three-step process

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# 3b) Insufficient support by the eco-system

## a. Observers don't always notice our efforts

- Our “quality” is imperfect for the reasons discussed above
- They have labeled us + suffer from confirmatory biases

## b. Beyond noticing, we need key stakeholders to support our efforts!

- *Acceptance*: People around you may not welcome the change!
- *Support*: Are they willing and able to give you the support you need?

Is the organisation's culture consistent with your new behaviour?



# 3 challenges to on-going personal and professional development

## 1. Insufficient awareness

*I'm doing it already*

## 2. Insufficient investment in knowing

*I know I'm not doing it, but now I read/heard once how to do it, I'm going to do it easily!*

## 3. Insufficient persistence

### a) because of implementation difficulties

*It's not working as well as I hoped/it should...  
maybe I am the way the I am...*

### b) because of insufficient support from eco-system

*They're not helping!...  
maybe we all are the way we are...*

# Bad news: It gets worse as leaders get closer to the top

## 1. Insufficient awareness

## 2. Insufficient investment in knowing

## 3. Insufficient persistence

a) because of implementation difficulties

b) because of insufficient support from eco-system

- Less (honest) feedback at the top
- More (superficial) knowledge
- Less time to 'study'
  
- Habits more deeply ingrained
- Less spare bandwidth/self-control
- Less tolerance for Conscious Incompetence
  
- Personal brand more firmly established
- More dislike for vulnerability / harder to ask for help

# If we took impact seriously, how would our ED interventions change?

- More clarity upfront on programme focus and desired outcomes
- More training in intact teams
  - Customisation of the intervention's focus & content
  - Team can hold its members accountable
- ... &/or intensely enough to ensure critical mass quickly
- More homogeneous programme, with fewer concepts explored in much greater depth

# If we took impact seriously, how would our ED interventions change?

- More emphasis on developing *awareness*

- Experiential learning
- Coaching support of group work

- More *practising* during programme
  - with special attention to trade-offs & competing commitments
    - ✓ e.g., “provide honest feedback” vs. “be caring”

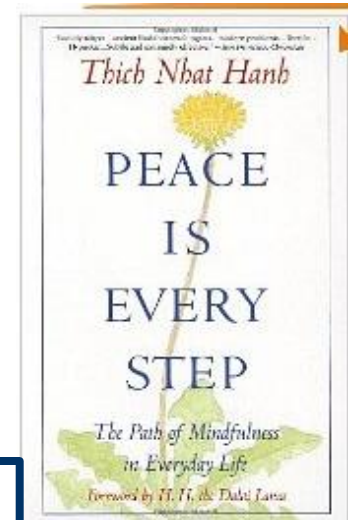
# If we took impact seriously, how would our ED interventions change?

- Definitely include *Mindfulness* and *Reflectiveness* in every programme!

# Develop your **Mindfulness**

- Very few executives spend much time here-and-now!
  - Past
  - Future
  - Everywhere!
- **If you're not here-and-now, the habit wins!**
- Learn to bring yourself back here-and-now
  - Conscious breathing exercise... (Thich Nhat Hanh)
  - Plan breaks into your schedule
  - Meditation practice

- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thich\\_Nhat\\_Hanh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thich_Nhat_Hanh)
- [http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/9074.Thich\\_Nhat\\_Hanh](http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/9074.Thich_Nhat_Hanh)



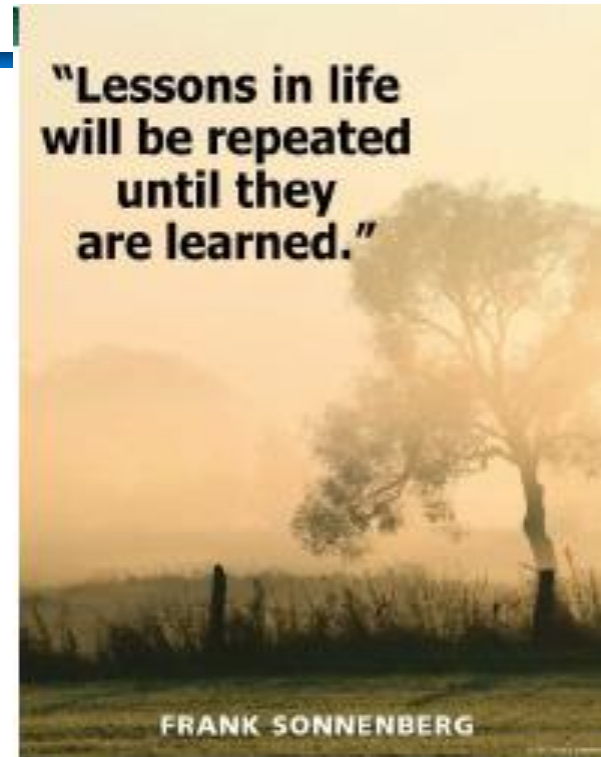
# Mindfulness Apps

by [Stephany Tlalka](#) from Mindful Magazine

- [Stop, Breathe & Think](#)
- [Calm](#)
- [Mindfulness Training App](#)
- [Headspace](#)

# Develop your **Reflective Practice**

- Deliberate practice
- Think ahead
- Think back
  - On what worked, what didn't
  - Why did you behave this way?
- Solicit feedback – observe others' reactions
- Write up your reflections – consider developing a writing ritual

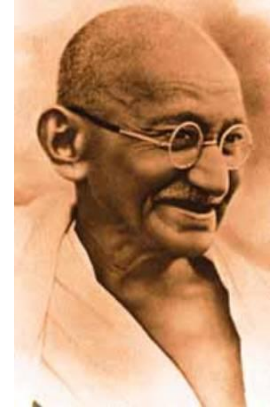




# Develop your **Reflective Practice**

- Mahatma Gandhi

His secretary, Pyarelal, reported that well into his seventies, Gandhi daily “held a silent court with himself and called himself to account for the littlest of his little acts. Nothing escaped his scrutiny. He gave himself no quarter”.



- Warren Buffett:

“I insist on a lot of time being spent, almost every day, to **just sit and think. That is very uncommon in American business. I read and think.**

So I do more reading and thinking, and make less impulse decisions than most people in business. I do it because I like this kind of life.”



*Warren Buffett is one of the best learning machines on this earth*  
(Lucas Remmerswaal)

# If we took impact seriously, how would our ED interventions change?

- Definitely include Mindfulness and Reflectiveness in every programme!
- More serious selection of A&D items, action planning and re-entry planning at the end of the programme/module
- More modular training, for
  - Repetition
  - Progressive deepening of discussions as new implementation difficulties surface
- More support pre-, between- and after-module, using
  - technological support
  - Learning teams/home groups

# Knowing vs. being able to do!

As an educator, I fear world-class business schools and high-performance businesses overinvest in “education” and dramatically underinvest in “training.”

**Human capital champions in higher education and industry typically prize knowledge over skills.** Crassly put, leaders and managers get knowledge and education while training and skills go to those who do the work.

That business bias is both dangerous and counterproductive. (Navy) SEALs can't afford it.

**“Under pressure, ...you don't rise to the occasion, you sink to the level of your training. That's why we train so hard.”**

When I see just how difficult and challenging it is for so many smart and talented organizations to innovate and adapt under pressure, I see people who are **overeducated and undertrained**. That scares me.

*How the Navy SEALs Train for Leadership Excellence,  
Michael Schrage, May 28, 2015*

<https://hbr.org/2015/05/how-the-navy-seals-train-for-leadership-excellence>

# On Practice \*

~ Matthew Kelly from *The Rhythm of Life*



**Any questions,  
comments or  
other forms of  
observations?**

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**Good luck  
and  
best wishes  
to you!**