

deepening presence

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***These worksheets were adapted from a larger body of work offered at Omega Institute by Jen Cohen and Paula Dunion.

Questions for those of you joining the call:

- Why does presence matter?
- What is presence?
- How does your presence impact you as a practitioner?
- How does your presence impact your business outcomes?

*“He who aspires to govern the city
needs to learn to govern himself.”*

–_Socrates

*“By staying present and aware of what is happening
the leader can do less and achieve more.”*

–The Tao of Leadership

from absence to presence

We can think of presence as our bodies, minds and emotions being in a specific place at a particular time. We can think of absence as our bodies, minds or emotions not being in a specific place at a particular time.

Being absent is a valuable way for children to protect themselves in an environment where there is either too much coming at them (sexual, emotional or physical abuse) or too little coming at them (emotional or physical neglect) Children are physically absent when they numb out physical cues which let them know that either too much or too little is coming at them. they are emotionally absent when they disassociate by distracting themselves from their emotions and mindfully absent when the stories they create are incongruent with what is actually happening.

The psyche maintains its commitment to protect us by automatically moving us to

some level of being absent, even if we do not need that degree of protection. The word presence comes from the old Latin term praesentis which has several meanings, amongst them being powerful, efficacious and resolute. We can think of being present as a way to deepen personal empowerment.
–Paul Dunion

presence and personal power

*We can think of personal power as deepening a capacity to identify and manifest our desire.

*two expressions of being present: Spontaneity and Mindfulness. Spontaneity is acting without intention. Mindfulness calls for separation where I am separate from my physical reactions, my emotions and the thoughts or stories I am creating.

*Being present through spontaneity can be helpful when we are playing, being sexual, creating or being adventurous. the tradeoff of spontaneity is that freedom can be diminished as options for supporting our desires are not identified.

*Being present through mindfulness can yield information coming from my body telling me that I am either comfortable or uncomfortable, a desire to move, a desire to protect, a desire to rest, a desire to touch or be touched, etc.

Mindfulness about my emotions (mad, sad, glad, scared, lonely, shame) offers me options to express these emotions in ways that keep me in integrity and support my connection to others. Mindfulness of my stories (thoughts) can greatly support my empowerment as I check my stories out with the reality of other people.

–Paul Dunion

the 4th alternative

* There are 3 primitive or archaic ways that we protected ourselves from feelings of fear and helplessness as children that we typically reproduce automatically in adulthood, diminishing our capacity to be mindfully present and more empowered.

*The first is domination where we attempt to influence the other, sending a message that the other's uniqueness is not valued.

*The second is adaption where we sacrifice our own uniqueness and take on the desires, beliefs or values of the other.

*The third is distancing where we emotionally and/or physically separate from the

other, sacrificing a potentially valuable connection to the other.

*The 4th Alternative includes: being mindful of which primitive protection we are presently employing and being willing to let go of it, we can replace it by knowing and expressing how we feel (mad, sad, glad, scared, lonely or shamed) and by giving a voice to our desire, we can also talk about the story we presently hold about the other, ourselves or the situation we are presently in.

–Paul Dunion

safety, trust and presence

*The more we trust that we will provide the safety we need in regard to physical, emotional and intellectual invasiveness, the more presence we will likely choose.

*When we trust ourselves, we hold two beliefs: 1) that we will treat ourselves kindly and 2) that we will let ourselves know our own truths as reported by our bodies, emotions and thoughts.

*We treat ourselves kindly when we provide ourselves with appropriate boundaries, i.e. walling off what might be toxic and allowing in what we perceive to be loving.

*We treat ourselves kindly when we are able to track internalized shame and commit to interrupting it. *We treat ourselves kindly when we commit to asking for what we want. –Paul Dunion

DEFINITION pres ~ ence

1. A person's bearing, especially when it commands respectful attention
2. the willingness to be in the present moment fully with no attachment to results – doing and saying what is needed in keeping with your highest truth (given the people we are with, the contexts, and the circumstances)

authenticity and presence

We all know individuals who attract our attention effortlessly, not by their charisma but by the quality of their presence. When they enter the room, energy levels rise and we anticipate something interesting is about to happen. Yet, commanding attention is an outcome of presence, not the essence of presence.

“The presence you bring to your role – how you show up, how you connect, how you speak, listen, act – every move you make combines to create the impact you have.”

Presence begins with an inner state which leads to a series of external behaviors.

In Leadership Presence: Dramatic Techniques to Reach Out, Motivate, and Inspire, Halpern and Lubar define leadership presence as the ability to connect authentically with the thoughts and feelings of others in order to motivate and inspire them toward a desired outcome.

Attention

Authenticity

Intention

expression

Presence is not innate. And although it appears that some people seem to arrive at it more easily than others, all of us can grow and develop our presence by cultivating our attention, our intention, our authenticity (acting from personal truth), and our unique self-expression (leadership style). Presence comes when our attention is fully aligned with intention which itself is aligned with our authentic self.

attention and presence: exercises in being present

Being fully present in the moment is important if we want to be a conscious creator (consciously setting intentions) and focus our attention fully in that moment. To be truly present, one must be physically grounded in the moment – you have to “be in your body” and stay centered.

Exercise no. 1 – get grounded (“find your feet”)

This exercise gets people present very quickly by simply getting them “back into their body” – literally, you find your feet. It can be done anytime, anywhere, and can be very helpful in moments of anxiety and stress.

1. Sit comfortably – back straight, shoulders relaxed, both feet on the ground.
2. Focus on the soles of your feet – notice how they feel in your shoes, how the ground underneath feels. Focus all of your attention (and energy) on that feeling. You are now fully in your body, and have gotten yourself grounded again.
3. Now wiggle your toes and return to the present moment (in the outside world) – you should notice that you’re more calm, more relaxed and focused.

Exercise no. 2 – centre yourself

Various martial arts base much of their work (and philosophy) on the notion of “hara”. Hara is seen as the vital centre of the self – a person’s source of balance, stability and energy. The “practice of hara” is one in which a person off-balance (e.g., unhealthy, anxious or low on energy) can find their balance again and tap into their central source of energy. As the point of centre in the body is just under the navel, the practice focuses on our breathing.

1. Sit or stand in a comfortable position, and start to focus on your breathing.
2. ensure that you are breathing from your stomach and not your chest – lay one hand on your chest, the other hand on your stomach, and notice where your breathing is. Focus on breathing from the stomach (helpful tip: imagine you are breathing through a straw).
3. take 3-5 deep belly breaths, and then go back to regular breathing – this should reduce tension in your body and help centre you. Both exercises adapted from Leadership Presence by Belle Linda Halpern and Kathy Lubar

the power of intention

Leadership is the wise use of power. Power is the capacity to translate intention into reality and sustain it. –Warren Bennis

Often we reduce the notion of intention to goals and overlook the opportunities that become available if we explore intention further.

Intention is a deliberate decision to create that sets a context for creative action to occur. Intention allows us to harness creative energy and by focusing our attention, allows us to notice opportunities that we would have missed without intention in play. Intention involves knowing what you want and exactly why you want it.

Intention includes the setting of goals as a way to measure the power of intention in our lives, however, intention is a more powerful and subtle force than simple goal achievement.

Many of us are operating in life with ‘Intention Deficit Syndrome’. Without clear and purposeful intentions life can feel meaningless and lack direction. It’s easy to understand how we can begin to feel helpless to create change.

When we take action and produce results based on a set of unconscious intentions, intentions hidden within our mindset, we produce results that seem different than what we think we intended. We find ourselves operating below the line because we fail to recognize our part in the outcome and refuse to be accountable.

As leaders, understanding and setting powerful intentions for ourselves and others, allows us to generate work environments where we automatically operate with intentionality above the line, aware of what we want to create and willing to be accountable for our individual and collective outcomes.

Books

Four Powers of Leadership: Cultivating presence, intention, wisdom and compassion, by David Kyle the Art of Possibility, by Rosamund Stone Zander and Benjamin Zander the Power of Full engagement, by Jim Loerh and tony Schwartz the Smart Spot: 4 Steps to Setting Intentions and Using Intuition to Achieve Success, by Dia North