



Performance Matters

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Newsletter

Increase Individual and Organizational Performance through Mindfulness

“Mindless habitual behavior is the enemy of innovation.”

-- Rosabeth Moss Kanter

We are all striving for more – whether that is more time, more money or more possessions. We look to the future with hope that tomorrow will be different and we reflect on yesterday with nostalgia or regret. Yet, the only way to create a bountiful future is through the present and the choices that we make moment by moment. The struggle for most, though, is harnessing the thoughts and emotions so that we can be aware and attentive to what is important and receptive to signals and cues of what is happening around us.

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Robin Wilson is the founder of Reach and Achieve Associates, a performance and development coaching, training and mentoring firm that specializes in helping companies access, coach and retain key talent. The programs are designed to develop, support and maximize the people resource of an organization.



Robin has facilitated presentations with groups of 150 or more, and has been a guest speaker for several well-known organizations, including the New York State Conference of Mayors, The Governor’s Office of Employee Relations, and the New York State Society of Medical Assistants Annual Convention.

She co-authored the book *Maximize Your Mind; Peak Your Potential* available on her web site.

Her article “Ethics in Sales” was published in the HRDQ Press.

For a complete listing of products and services visit our web sites at: www.ReachandAchieve.com and www.PerformanceLeadershipTools.com

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Awareness and Attention

The concept of quieting the thoughts and emotions comes from the Buddhist teachings around mindfulness which centers on awareness and attention. According to Kirk Brown and Richard Ryan from the University of Rochester – “Awareness is the background 'radar' of consciousness, continually monitoring the inner and outer environment and attention is a process of focusing conscious awareness, providing heightened sensitivity to a limited range of experience.”

In this day and age, there are so many things competing for our attention that we tend to operate on overload and our attention and awareness is fractured, causing us to partially shut down to what is happening inside and around us. Our minds are going in several directions at the same time: we may be thinking about a prior meeting with a team member and at the same time having a conversation with a colleague about another issue that needs our input. Imagine how our effectiveness could be increased if we were able to be more present and our attention was focused in the moment

Questions to Consider:

- 1. What situations or activities in your work and life connect you with your best source of inspiration and energy?*
- 2. What voices and emotions are keeping you in habitual ways of responding to the present?*

Self Knowledge

Through my many years of coaching others, I have found awareness to be the springboard for incredible change and transformation. Most people don't stay stuck because they want to, they simply are not aware of what is holding them down so they fall victim to that which they cannot see. Most of us see it clearly in others. Their behavior gets them into trouble. They get feedback from a variety of sources but nothing changes. Others throw up their hands in frustration and walk away. Yet, the problem is not an issue of wanting to change but an issue of awareness. The person is simply immersed in that which holds him or her back the most. It's like a fish being immersed in water and being unable to see the vast world that lies outside. This lack of self-knowledge is what holds us victim to our habitual thoughts and emotions. It is only through the journey of self-awareness can we see above that which keeps us in the mire of our habitual actions and reactions.

"The future depends on what we do in the present."

Mahatma Gandhi

Attention – The Voice of Judgment, Voice of Cynicism and Voice of Fear

When we begin to understand ourselves, the voices within that keep us disconnected begin to be heard. Being able to hear our internal dialogues is one of the first steps in being able to attend to what is happening around us. According to C. Otto Scharmer, author of *Theory U* and an MIT professor, we can break these voices into 3 distinct areas. The Voice of Judgment, The Voice of Fear and The Voice of Cynicism.

Voice of Judgment - This is our internal voice of should/shouldn't/can't/won't. It is based on the past and holds us captive to our inner fears, keeping us from hearing and believing what is possible.

Voice of Cynicism - This is our inner voice of doubt, mistrust, pessimism and suspicion. It keeps us disconnected from ourselves and others and closes our hearts to empathy and understanding.

Voice of Fear - This is the voice that keeps us stuck and does not want us moving forward. When we are confronted with a crossroad, this is the voice that keeps us on the same path and often steers us away from new beginnings.

Create and Respond to the Present to Prepare for the Future

These voices are the filters that decide what we attend to and what we hear. It is the ability to sift through these voices that allows us to respond to events at a much fuller level.

In today's changing world, awareness and the ability to attend to what is happening inside and around us is not a wish but a necessity. Without these our goals and actions become a manifestation of our past rather than the future.

Let us rise to the challenges of today by connecting to the present.

"If we are honest with ourselves, most of us will have to admit that we live out our lives in an ocean of fear."

■ Jon Kabat-Zinn

"Worry pretends to be necessary but serves no useful purpose."

■ Eckhart Tolle

"People only see what they are prepared to see."

■ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Stop Technique

When we are curious, engaged and not worried about making mistakes learning becomes natural and performance is enhanced. Problems arise when we try and force things to happen without taking into account what is happening around us. We hinder our effectiveness through the internal voices that judge, criticize others, and distrust our abilities. Hidden fears such as fear of failing, losing control and messing up have a direct impact on our behavior through the actions that we take or don't take and the words that are spoken or not spoken.

Letting go of the judging process and silencing the inner voices is a key to Effectiveness. Once we can start to be aware of our inner voices, we can learn to move beyond that which limits us and keeps us where we are. A great technique in silencing the three inner voices is the STOP tool that Timothy Galloway talked about in his book the *Inner Game of Work*.

- *Step back from action and emotion*
- *Think about what's most important at this moment*
- *Organize your thoughts to create coherence*
- *Proceed when purpose and next steps are clear*

Next time you hear the internal voices – STOP and think about what's important at that moment.

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