

PersonalPower

*The Power
that drives
Performance*



Graham Williams

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performance**

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Foreword

I have worked with Graham and seen first hand the results that Personal Power can achieve.

This is a new, refreshing and stimulating approach to people and performance. This practical book captures the very essence of what enables people to perform at their very best, whether as an individual, leader or team.

Personal Power provides the drive and determination to be successful at what you choose to do. It has a simple, yet powerful concept that can be applied from the first moment you read it which, through practice, will enable you to grow – positively.

I would recommend this book to organisations as an investment for its most valuable resource – people.

Ann Daniels

Arctic Explorer and Motivational Speaker

Ann is one of the world's leading female polar explorers. In the year 2000, as part of an all women expedition she walked from the edge of Antarctica to the South Pole and in 2002 walked from Canada to the North Geographic Pole to become the first all women's team in the world to manually haul a sledge to both the North and South poles.

In 2009 and 2010 she was involved in a scientific project to measure the thickness of the North Pole ice cap and led a 3-man ice team over 1000 miles of frozen Arctic Ocean to the North Pole.

Background to the author

Graham is at the leading edge of applied positive psychology. Together with a former colleague and dialogue with psychologists and established business leaders, a new model and approach was developed based on natural learning™ and focused performance. This unique combination provides people with those insights and practical tools to develop their own Personal Power directly linked to performance. Bringing this unique approach to the world of work, in a very practical and business focused way, achieves a much higher return-on-investment for clients as it focuses on attitude and behavioural change as well as tangible results.

This book is predominantly intended for people who are in work, whether as employers or employees. However the very essence of Personal Power is a life skill and understanding it and developing it, leads a person to becoming life fit.

Graham Williams MA, Chartered FCIPD, AMBPS, MCAPP

During his career in the Police Service, Graham was among the first to embrace a coaching style of leadership and empowerment. As a former senior officer in Liverpool he demonstrated the benefits of an engaging leadership style and developing dynamic teams to perform at both operational and strategic levels. Graham has handled several major projects including two which had a national impact. He successfully delayered an organisation from three to two tiers involving five thousand people. He has in-depth experience of training, coaching and developing leaders and high performing teams in both work and physical environments. His sporting achievements encompass alpine mountaineering, and, for five years, leading a skydiving team, performing displays at major events throughout the UK.

Acknowledgement

The research and development leading to this book, Personal Power - the power that drives performance, took place over ten years. It is the culmination of a close working relationship between myself and Dr Alan Beggs. I fully acknowledge that this book would not have been written without the joint effort of us both and in particular, the setting of high standards by Alan who insisted that what was said had to be scientifically sound.

Graham Williams

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Preface

“There is one thing stronger than all the armies of the world: and that is an idea whose time has come.” (Victor Hugo)

This book marks one of the many outcomes of a highly creative and dynamic partnership between a psychologist and curious pragmatist. They had very different life journeys, arriving together at precisely that point where their collective experiences, knowledge and skills could be brought to bear on their shared passion – helping people excel at whatever they do.

The result, a unique process we call Learned Powerfulness® which develops personal power through enhanced psychological fitness. In this book I will refer to psychological fitness as mind fitness. The combination of mind fitness with knowledge fitness leads to personal power.

What this book is about

This book is one outcome of this still continuing voyage into the unknown. It describes what I found – no less than a brand new model of what it is to be a human being, and a groundbreaking way to help individuals perform at their optimum. It describes how these insights apply to individuals, leaders, teams and organisations and how to change. It provides people with the 'know-how' to become personally powerful, and revolutionise performance and not just the 'know-what'.

The first big idea - how to understand people in the real world

People are notoriously complex, and yet I have found a way to boil down all this complexity into a simple concept which people tell me is very understandable. My model of the psychology of personal characteristics is holistic and it's wide-ranging. It takes into account virtually every part of the mind, both conscious and unconscious. It encompasses those rare people who are quite outstanding and achieve great things in their life; it also embraces people who are really not coping with life very well at all. But most importantly, it applies to each and every one of us, with our unique mix of qualities and foibles. And yet – it's simple.

The most exciting thing about my work is that it explains where many of our personal characteristics come from. On the nature/nurture debate, I am firmly on the side of nurture. I totally accept that we are all born with some assets – and some liabilities. By and large, there is not too much that can be done to change these. My focus, however, is on the way we have learned to deal with life, and the lessons about ourselves and the world we have picked up on the way. The truth is that some of us have learned well - and some of us have not.

On its own, this model could have remained as an academic curiosity. However, I had to go one step further. I realised that if peoples' negative learning could be changed, it would have a real impact on them. And not only that, it would impact whatever they were doing. The model becomes the driver for action as many people have discovered.

The second big idea - turning concepts into practice

The second breakthrough was the development of a very effective way to create personal change. My practical work is genuinely transformational and results in the great majority of people making sustained changes to themselves. It helps unleash people from their perceived limitations and weaknesses so that they are no longer condemned to a life of unfulfilled promise.

Considerable benefits flow from this re-learning. Life-changing is a common theme in the feedback received, almost always because people understand and can better deal with a lack of confidence.

This might suggest that my focus is about building confidence. It is - but it goes much wider than this. Today as a Mind Fit Performance Specialist, working with other like-minded people, we help people stay focused on what is important, to improve their resilience and to connect meaningfully with others. A boost in confidence is often one of the by-products of this holistic approach.

We help individuals from all walks of life. We link the changes they make to works teams, leaders and organisations so they become stronger, leaner and fitter. It also works with people in education, the unemployed or disabled. It enables people to discover their personal power. This gives them the inner

Preface

drive and determination to excel. What I have found is something universal, something that everybody can understand and from which they will benefit.

What you will find in the book

Section one describes the basic concepts. In many ways, these may seem rather simple and obvious; paradoxically, this is often the mark of something which has the ring of truth. I would hope your reaction to this part of the book will be "Of course!" These chapters are about the ways in which we are all very similar to each other.

In Section two I change the focus. Here I am concerned with the differences between people. You will meet some familiar people and more importantly, recognise yourself. You will begin to understand why you are the way you are. I hope your reaction to these chapters is "Now I understand".

In Section three I look at the wider picture. I know that in the world of business, there are real concerns about finding the right man or woman for the job – and keeping them there. I believe the ideas will be helpful in understanding how this could work better. I describe what makes for a good employee, a good leader and a good team. And for organisations interested in improving their performance – however that is measured – I outline the way an empowering culture could be developed.

Finally, in Section four I pull it all together. I hope your reaction to this final section is "That makes a lot of sense and it is usable."

At the start of each chapter, I have included a quotation which I believe is relevant for the content which follows. When I looked at the range of these quotations – from antiquity to the present day, from business and the arts, from every continent of the world – I realised that what has been written, is universal. It's about being a human being, and all I have done is create some road maps to help understand this most complex creature.

Whether I have been successful, only you can judge.

All the testimonials and stories in this book are true, although I have changed the names of individuals and organisations.

Please enjoy the book. I hope you find it useful and thought-provoking.

Section one:

**What we share with
each other**

Setting the scene

"The greatest discovery of our generation is that human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their mind, can change the outer aspects of their lives." (William James, the Father of Modern Psychology)

In this chapter, I introduce you to the central ideas contained in the book. Taking a cue from the study of outstanding people, and deriving a simple yet very powerful model which helps us understand why they are so different from the majority of us.

I also suggest that our basic understanding of organisations is flawed and outdated, and that much of the woes of workplace – stress, absenteeism, disengagement – are down to habitual and outmoded ways of thinking and behaviour which need to change.

What's the basic idea?

At the start of the 21st century, we have high hopes and expectations. We have aspirations to be happy, healthy, forward thinking and empowered, with extraordinary personal relationships and highly productive working lives. However, you only have to pick up a newspaper, or even just look around you for a moment, to see that many of us are not achieving our goals. The world is changing and so must we.

In spite of our growing cultural predilection for 'navel gazing', therapy and self-help books, the divorce rate, conflicts, stress and domestic violence remains high. People complain of isolation and loneliness. Six out of ten people in Britain say they find work 'a misery'. It seems that thinking and talking about our problems is not enough. What we need are simple, practical tools to apply our thinking to everyday life and work, in order to become effective and happy. The personal and organisational benefits can be huge; more time, more money, less stress and greater productivity.

However, all is not lost. I realised that we can learn something from high-profile figures in sport and business who epitomise everything we want to be. They seem to lead lives full of initiative and personal empowerment, and this extends to their failures, as well as triumphs. Every time Sir Richard Branson fails to fly around the world in a hot air balloon, he picks himself up and builds another balloon. Now, some may find the exercise itself a little eccentric, but no-one can fail to be impressed by the man and his determination to reach his goals in life.

Chapter 1 Setting the scene

Individuals like Sir Richard – and there are many more in the realms of business and sport – seem to possess the true secret of success. We have come to realise that this secret may lie in the constellation of characteristics exhibited by these people. They have an ability to focus on what is important, to be resilient, confident and committed, and have an unrivalled ability to inspire and involve others in their endeavours.

These are the hallmarks of mind fitness. When a person is mind fit, they can find success in any area of life to which they choose to apply themselves. It sounds so simple, and yet many of us struggle to achieve this level of mind fitness. So where are we going wrong?

What's the problem?

The modern working environment is tough, stressful and insecure. The idea of a 'job for life' is a distant memory, belonging to a quaint and forgotten era. A perceived need to achieve, achieve, achieve has led to a work culture in this country where long working hours and unbalanced lifestyles are the norm. Paradoxically, this has not led to higher productivity, and there has been much media attention concerning the problem of sickness, absenteeism and poor motivation in the workplace. In fact, stress has increased by tenfold since the 1960's.

It has been shown time and again that a culture of unhappy, unhealthy workers leads to unproductive and unprofitable companies. And this is the nub of the problem for organisations. Instead of high achievers, they are „making do“ with people who are not performing anywhere near their optimum.

This problem is deep-seated, and attempts to re-engage people have in the main failed. The predicament that management find themselves in is as follows. Organisations want *committed* but *compliant* staff – but they cannot have both. How compliant do you imagine Lord Sugar or Sir Richard Branson are?

Commitment and compliance are like chalk and cheese. By seeking compliance, commitment is eroded, and people are demotivated. In their search for compliance, organisations have removed more and more options and control from their people. And in doing so, they have unwittingly rendered them mind unfit.

Why do we have this problem?

The perceived wisdom in most aspects of our experience is that the world is linear and logical and that small changes or actions have small effects and

only large changes and actions produce large effects. Consequently it is easy to overlook and underestimate the potentially huge effect of a trivial or obvious action. The disaster of the credit crunch almost certainly happened as a result of a myriad of small decisions and actions.

And the opposite is also true. Many large changes at work, such as training and appraisal schemes, generally have a small impact on actual performance. Huge injections of money often seem to have little or no effect. The UK's National Health Service is a case in point.

Unfortunately, because most people still cling to the old-school 'mechanical' thinking about how the world works, they imagine that control is needed. We speak of 'captains of industry', of 'levers of power', of 'cogs in the machine'. It seems natural and obvious to exercise control over the industrial and commercial juggernauts we have built. As we shall see, this way of thinking is deeply flawed and takes away personal engagement and responsibility.

"Not my job, mate." "Better to keep your head below the parapet – not worth the effort." "I can't do that", "We don't do it that way here." How often have you heard those kinds of remark in your workplace? We are talking about an attitude of mind which is so different from that of the high-flyers of this world that it beggars belief. And yet it is so commonplace we accept it as normality. mind unfitness is rife, and is only aggravated by the flawed thinking which produced the systems and processes which take control away from people.

This in turn has produced levels of under-performance which threaten the very existence of organisations who fail to recognise and deal with the problem. This is a particular problem during and after a recession, when over controlling mindsets adopt a 'slash and burn' approach in order to survive.

How have organisations responded?

Organisations have responded in the crudest possible way by attempting to increase only the *skills* of their workforce, and putting in place initiatives such as competency profiles and talent management. Supporting this approach to improving performance is a range of traditional human resource structures and strategies, policies and procedures.

But does this approach really work? Experience tells us that structures and strategies, policies and procedures do not provide the passion and energy to excel. Although crucial, they do not create the environment that produces people who are driven to perform, who want to go that extra mile, who are engaged. Instead, work-related stress, sickness, absenteeism, conflict and under-performance are all on the increase. So what is going on here?

The brutal truth is that the development of skills and knowledge may lead to increased ability, but on its own it does not lead to increased performance or productivity. The old adage that you can lead a horse to water, but you can't force it to drink is particularly appropriate here. Indeed, you could send the horse on a training weekend to develop its skills and knowledge in the arena of drinking and general thirst quenching, but if it does not have the personal interest and motivation to drink, you have wasted your time and money.

What is the solution?

Simply put, we need to show the 'horse' the value of drinking. We need to create an environment where not only does the 'horse' want to drink, but can also take itself to the water's edge, leaving you to get on with your own work. We need to make it both able - and willing. But how?

The answer is simple and straightforward: Increase mind fitness.

What is mind fitness?

You will know some people with a strong sense of dynamism who are often the most effective, motivated and hence productive workers. They have a desire to work and create, to cooperate with others in a team, willingly take on extra responsibility, be quick to praise others and admit their own mistakes. These are people who have a naturally high level of mind fitness.

Their energy and dynamism comes from two sources. When competence to do the job is added to mind fitness, this combination leads to a sense of personal power. It is this personal power which provides the energy and drive to excel at whatever you do.

It is therefore essential that leaders understand the importance of increasing both skills and knowledge *and* mind fitness amongst their staff. This book provides the understanding you need to re-energise yourself to start this process.

How does mind fitness work?

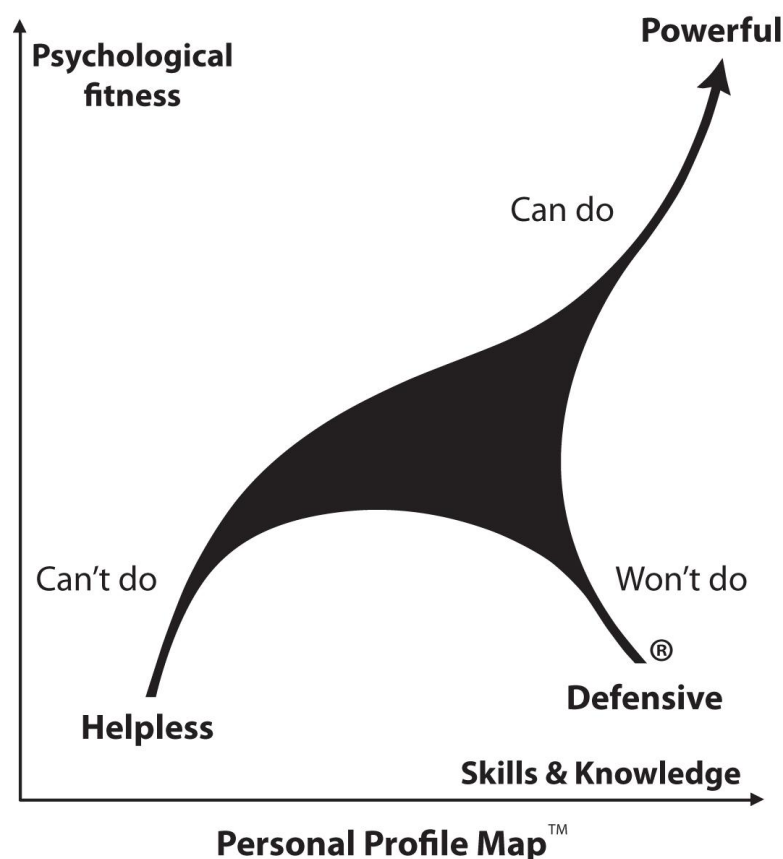
To perform and deliver against business imperatives, people need to understand and focus on what really matters. They need to be highly goal driven and engaged and they need to be resilient and able to bounce back from whatever setbacks they encounter. When these attributes are present they are mind fit.

Chapter 1 Setting the scene

But not everyone is like this. You will know people in your organisation who dither or are disorganised and have a 'can't do' attitude. Others may be awkward and confrontational, resulting in a 'won't do' attitude. Neither of these groups of people is mind fit – and unfortunately they are in the majority.

They fall into two categories. People who feel more or less 'helpless' and lack energy; and people who are 'defensive' and have a tendency to protect themselves and their position. These differences between people are explored in detail in later chapters.

Like any journey, maps are a prerequisite! Imagine trying to find your way around London Underground without the lines to show you how the stations relate to each other. We have created a simple and accessible road map, the Personal Profile Map™ that puts these three different states, powerful, helpless and defensive, together in a way that is intuitively right.



There are actually very few people at the extreme ends of the map; they would be very peculiar indeed. Virtually all of us lie somewhere in the middle area, with our own personal mix of powerfulness, helplessness and defensiveness. You will have a sense of where you fall on this map, and you

Chapter 1 Setting the scene

will readily recognise that sometimes you move up, and sometimes down. Usually we attribute this to what happens to us, but by increasing our mind fitness, we can control the effects of external forces and, in so doing, start to control our feelings of negativity, helplessness and defensiveness.

By understanding and learning exactly what we need to do to sustain our sense of powerfulness, we gain control and power over ourselves, and our world. Our process, which we have called Learned Powerfulness®, takes people on a journey of self-discovery and personal change. The outcome is greater mind fitness, with all its attendant benefits.

So what do we do?

Our system of Learned Powerfulness® starts looking at the concept of mind fitness in its component parts, so that each can be explored independently. This makes it easier to understand how you can increase your ability in each area, and improve your *focus, resilience, commitment and ability to make meaningful connections with others*.

The key to success is to begin to use better 'tools' in each area. These tools may be tangible and practical, they may be a mental process, or even involve a change in behaviour that serves to increase your mind fitness. The result is an increase in your sense of personal power, leading to better performance and productivity.

Tools can often seem simple and straightforward, even rather humble, but we know that where they are applied with enthusiasm and commitment, the results can be very positive. People often talk about the 'straw that breaks the camel's back'. This usually refers to a negative outcome, but we know from our experience in workshops that the saying can also be true for positive outcomes. A small change, when sincerely meant and properly thought through, can have a very considerable impact on motivation and commitment.

Summing up

This book will give you the insights, the techniques and the tools to implement change, both in yourself, your team and within your organisation. You will develop a greater awareness which will help you to see that you are the master of your own thought patterns and behaviour, and thus begin the journey to greater mind fitness. This leads to increased personal effectiveness and improved performance and productivity. It also leads to a better quality of life.

Chapter 1 Setting the scene

The outcomes will vary depending on the organisation you are in, your job and your lifestyle. However, taking control rather than allowing your inner feelings and self limiting beliefs to dominate is infinitely more preferable than succumbing to a life of misery and worry, or one of negativity and confrontation.

The benefits for individuals, teams and organisations of people becoming mind fitter will become apparent as we unravel the process throughout this book.

Once the elements of mind fitness are understood, you and your team are on the way to the corporate Holy Grail of focus, resilience, commitment and connectedness. Then you can sit back and enjoy the benefits and rewards of mind fit individuals and teams that are dynamic, co-operative and productive.

Learning to be mind fit

"I forget what I was taught; I only remember what I've learnt." (Patrick White)

In this chapter, we explore how mind fitness – and unfitness – is acquired by what we call 'natural learning'. Although our theoretical foundations are very wide-ranging and originate in some of the most up-to-date science around, we base our practical work on recreating natural learning in our workshops.

What's the basic idea?

All people are born with the potential to be mind fit and healthy. Babies are naturally curious, inquisitive and fearless in their search for new information and knowledge. As life goes on, however, outside factors begin to have an effect. Absent or unsupportive parents, unkind or overstretched teachers, bad experiences in the playground and later the workplace all take their toll. And this effect can take the form of a negative, helpless or defensive approach to life. In short, a lack of mind fitness is a learned rather than innate behaviour. We can all learn to become more mind fit, with a "can do" attitude – or mind unfit, perhaps with a cynical, negative attitude to life.

Two types of learning

What we now know is that there are two main types of learning, and two types of knowledge. They exist in different parts of the brain, and interaction between them is very poor. Crucially, one of these is much more important for mind fitness than the other.

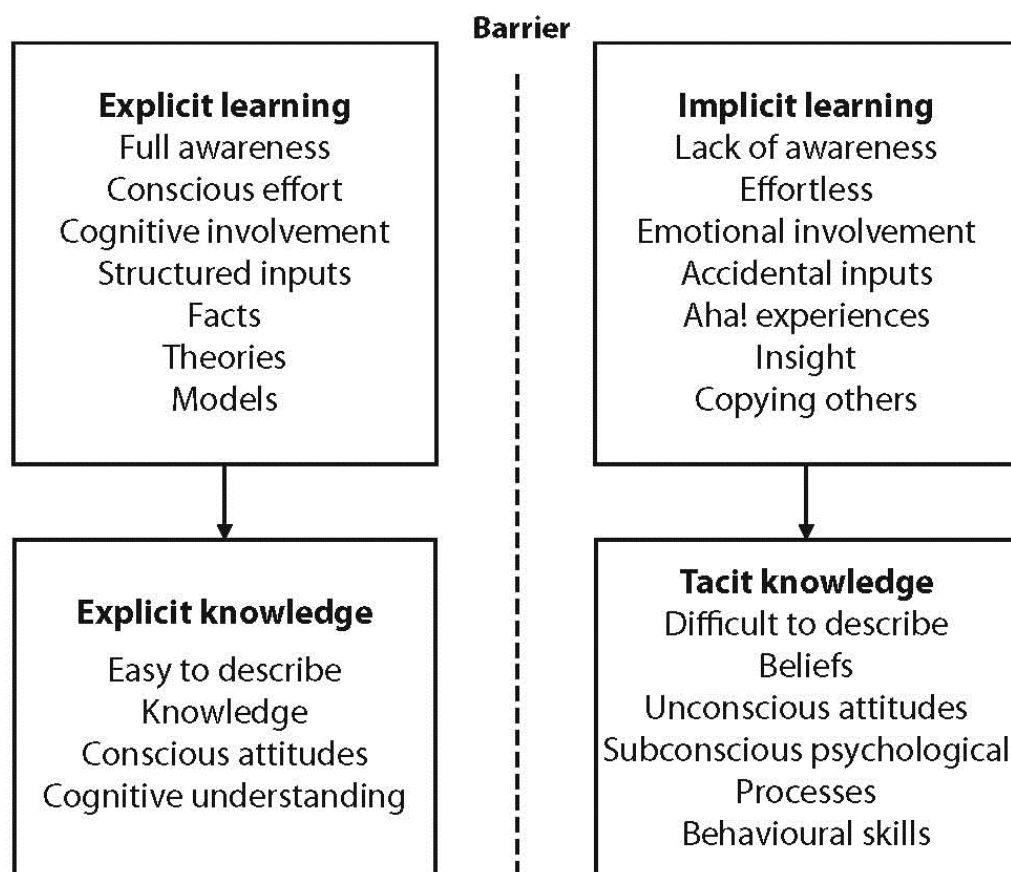
The familiar academic 'book-based' approach to learning is easier to quantify in some ways. Discussing theories and looking at diagrams is reassuring and a wall full of certificates certainly lends an air of legitimacy to the proceedings. This is called explicit or educated learning. Knowledge passed down from generation to generation, from some of the greatest thinkers in history, can open our minds to new ideas and lead to a shared learning experience which is edifying and exciting for all involved. But academic study is only one kind of learning of which humans are capable.

We have all heard phrases such as "learning the hard way", "coming from the school of hard knocks", or studying at the "University of Life". All these sayings usually refer to a level of 'street-wise' knowledge where the individual has learned how to survive through experience, watching others and listening to stories and fables. This often takes the form of an ingrained 'how-to' knowledge and can lead to great successes. One very visible champion of

this sort of learning is Lord Sugar, who has worked his up through the system using a combination of instinct and experience, as well as considerable factual knowledge. Interestingly this type of 'natural' learning is hard to pass on to others. It is highly subjective and lies deep within the individual. It is the kind of learning that we use to become mind fit – or unfit.

People do not go on courses, or to schools, to learn how to be mind fit or unfit. They just 'pick up' some personal ideas, strategies and beliefs as they go through life. Psychologists call this implicit learning – we think of it as 'natural' learning, examples being how we learn to tie a shoelace or ride a bike. For most of us both are easy to do. However, try to explain to someone how to do either.

We realised that to change a person's mind fitness we need to mimic this natural process yet add 'focus' to it rather than learning in an ad hoc way. That is why we work in the way we do. Explicit learning does not create the kind of skills we seek to develop. The diagram below clearly shows the distinction between these types of learning.



Two types of learning

It is a sad fact that these two essential learning models – 'school of hard knocks' and academic study – are often set against each other. Book

learning is dismissed by those who have 'come up the hard way' as full of unrealistic and irrelevant theories. Academics turn away from the 'inarticulate non-academics'. It is a terrible shame when the two camps do not work together as they are equally important in all our lives.

Imagine combining the two approaches of educated and natural learning so that people feel confident in what they know and do. This combination enables the appropriate focus, passion and resilience to be where it is needed to meet the personal or organisational challenges that they face. That is what personal power is all about.

A word about theories

It seems an obvious thing to point out, but people often forget that theories are not truth or fact; they are just 'best guesses'. A good scientist or academic will allow his or her theory to be analysed, tested, evaluated and criticised. Weak theories are exposed, but some stand the test of time and lead to a greater understanding of the world around us.

Some theories simply go out of fashion, but even in these we can find inspiration and a kernel of truth. In 1940 American psychologist Clark Hull published his Mathematical Learning Theory. It was an attempt to impose strict mathematical principles to the process of learning. It was discredited and is now largely forgotten, and yet it contained one of the most widely used phrases in education and business – the 'learning curve'. So an unwieldy theory from over half a century ago has given us a useful pictorial insight.

We have looked at a very wide range of theory and practice from many areas of psychology. It would be inappropriate to try to expand too much here on these specific theories, but they have been both instructive and inspirational for us. We can truly say our work is based on the best of the best science. When we took this academic study, and put it alongside real life experiences of our own and those we have taught, our own ideas and unique approach started to naturally emerge.

So what do people learn?

We have developed a process within which people can learn naturally. It does not rely too heavily on any one theory and also fully incorporates other types of learning. As such, it leads to real self-knowledge, creates awareness and control and takes people on the journey to personal power. This is the type of learning as shown in Chapter 1 which moves people up the Personal Profile Map™.

Key to it is the realisation that in order to improve their mind fitness, people need to know where they are on the Personal Profile Map™, which shows the full spectrum of thought and behaviour. And crucially, they also need to know why they are there.

The way we work

There is an old Chinese Proverb that says, *'Tell me, and I'll forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I'll understand.'* In spite of our academic background, we do not use theories in our programmes. Nor do we lecture our clients. Instead we have adopted a variety of approaches designed to enlighten, inspire and intrigue participants. The best type of learning occurs naturally when people are immersed in a process where they are allowed to discover things at their own pace. We use:

- Maps – we find people need maps to help them see where they are going
- Stories – we all remember good stories, and the lessons endure.
- Thought provoking activities – to intrigue these provide new insights and often cause the 'Aha' effect.
- Physical activities – to illuminate key learning.
- Exploring and experimenting – these may be conducted around real issues, and engage the learner, discovering what they really need to know about.
- Pictures and drawings – a powerful medium for visually aware people.
- Learning with others – interaction amongst the participants enables ideas to be explored and developed.
- Breaks – people need time to absorb ideas and the material.
- Informal break-out groups – to foster learning in a casual and informal setting.
- Passion – to encourage personal growth.

We use such a wide range of techniques because the learning needs of each one of the people with whom we work are different. In our view, no 'one size fits all' approach to personal development can possibly be effective. This 'person-centred' strategy ensures that each person takes away exactly what they know they need from their encounter with us – not what we think they need.

In all of our practical work we use a 'drawing out', rather than a 'pouring in' approach. We operate in what we call a robust coaching environment. And we find that within a group of people, there are invariably enough insights,

knowledge and personal skills for all of us to learn a lot. We have never been disappointed in our reliance on the wisdom of others.

Linking natural learning to the ability to focus on what is important enables people to control what they do and how they do it. This benefits them personally and results in more positive and productive outcomes at work. Unfortunately, a majority of people drift through life as they exist in a wide range of naturally learnt habits and thought processes, some good and some not. They enable people to survive, maybe even feel OK, but not as effectively or exciting as it could be. It is also a lot of wasted effort.

Instead, our process helps people understand the importance of gaining as many experiences as they can in a focused way and that the focus needs to be on what they actually do – not the end result. An Olympic runner knows the importance of appropriate focus when racing. They focus in the here and now; where they put their feet, length of stride and exactly when to increase speed – not dreaming of winning. That was done before the race. How many organisations demand an increase in performance yet fail to focus on what they need to change to achieve it? No wonder so many people at work are frustrated and give up.

Focus on what is important in the here and now. It stops wasted human effort and for organisations gives a real return on investment.

This new-found self-knowledge and personal competencies are linked to business needs. We make strenuous efforts to ensure that the work context for individual and collective change is made explicit. It is this which leads to real impact back at the workplace. We achieve this by closely liaising with our clients. This partnership approach makes certain that their needs, and the needs of the delegates are met and that accordingly, the intervention we design has as much relevance as we can achieve.

The benefits of developing greater mind fitness

Most of us will have learned skills and knowledge the hard way – with dedication and effort. The good news is that picking up better mind fitness is not like that because it is learned naturally.

- Learning naturally is easy.
- It requires focused practice which is deliberately targeted on what is important.
- It is sustainable - once you have learnt to ride a bike you cannot go back to being a non bike rider.

You will be better at focusing on what is important, better able to resist knock-backs, be more confident and able to relate well with the people around you. Combine this with the painfully acquired skills and knowledge that education and training brings, and you have the recipe for personal power.

Learning to let go of old habits - The story of Penny

We first met Penny on one of our two-day courses. She was a middle manager in her company and very vocal during the first day of the workshop. She was highly intelligent and had a very broad base of knowledge in a variety of areas. She was always happy to speak out and give her opinion, and was keen to emphasise her intellectual abilities. She had a slight air of 'knowing it all' about her.

Over the course of the day, we noticed that some of her colleagues didn't seem to be enjoying her interjections. By the end of the day, people were rolling their eyes whenever she spoke and one man even let out a heavy sigh. We tried to start a dialogue within the group and the man admitted that he found Penny's persistent need to expound on every theory she had read about frustrating and controlling. Penny was visibly upset and came to see us after the session had ended.

Over the course of this private conversation, Penny told us that she had had a troubled personal life for many years, and had undergone many different types of counselling and therapy in the hope of finding some inner peace. She said that these endeavours hadn't particularly helped, and in fact had left her more confused than ever, with a head full of facts, figures and theories about personal development. She resented the amount of money she had spent over the years, and wanted to feel that she had some knowledge to contribute. She also told us that academic achievement was highly prized in her family, whereas a more emotional, spontaneous attitude was frowned upon.

We thanked Penny for being so frank, and suggested that perhaps, on the second day, she should be a little freer to just take in what was happening around her, and not be so concerned with playing the 'expert' in the group. Part of natural learning is intuitive and we can learn much from simply observing and listening to those around us. Penny took our advice, and the next day she was a much quieter presence. Over the next few weeks, with our support, Penny learned a greater sense of self-awareness and through personal effort succeeded in controlling her urge to intellectually dominate the people around her all the time. We cannot claim to have solved her personal issues, but she was certainly a more popular and trusted figure in the office, which had a direct impact on her happiness and productivity at work.

Hot tip

When we are panicking inside it is easy to revert back to old ways that make us feel safe. If you were academically gifted in your youth, you will tend to cling on to academic solutions. If you were more practical, you may tend to have very emotional or instinctive responses. There is nothing wrong with having basic inclinations that are personal to you, but to be really healthy and balanced it is good to have a mixture of resources to draw on in times of stress and change.

Summing up

Children do not start out mind fit or unfit – they learn it through their experiences with parents and other significant people in their lives. This process of learning is so familiar to us that we call it 'natural learning'. It lies deep within us, is completely personal, and notoriously hard to talk about.

The traditional approach to learning has been to focus on theories, information and data, the success of which is measured by certificates, diplomas and degrees. Unfortunately this is not enough to equip us for a world that is emotionally complex and constantly changing. In the development of our approach, we have drawn heavily on the best of the best theory and practice around – but we do not talk about them. We do not want to fascinate people, but to help them change.

So instead, we work with 'focused natural learning™' because this targets the kind of skills that we seek to change. The process of becoming mind fit involves learning new skills, habits and ways of thinking. In some cases it may even involve unlearning some old habits! Put simply, we take people on a journey of self-discovery during which they find the gems which are relevant to them, and then build a personal 'toolkit' appropriate to their needs in the chaotic and complex world of work.

When learning works best

“What is necessary to change a person is to change his awareness of himself.” (Abraham Maslow)

In this chapter, we describe the two fundamentals which we have found underpin the development of greater mind fitness. They are awareness and **control**.

What's the basic idea?

Central heating is a common and helpful piece of household technology. The ideal central heating system maintains the most comfortable temperature, adapting smoothly and appropriately to environmental changes. Your central heating system needs to be **aware of the room temperature** in order to function properly. That's the job of the thermostat.

But awareness is not enough. There must be an element of external control in order to maximise the effect. Before the system can provide the best possible service, it must be told by you exactly what is required – using the knob on the thermostat **you set the temperature you want**, and the central heating responds efficiently.

The concepts of awareness and control are inseparable. They are the determinants of mind fitness and underpin any success you and your colleagues will have in creating healthy individuals, a dynamic team and organisations.

How do we achieve awareness?

In our work developing mind fitness, we often talk of people 'going on a journey'. For any successful journey, we need a map. If you are going on an 'inner journey', you will need a map of yourself. Self-awareness is the best map you can have, but over the years your map may have become battered, out-of-date or even have holes in it! If your map of your internal geography is wrong, it is very difficult to become fully functioning and mind fit.

It may sound trite but it is a constant surprise to us how uncommon true self-awareness actually is. Most of us are really quite ignorant about what is really going on inside. One of the many drawbacks of long hours, hard deadlines and hectic personal lives is that we never really get the chance to sit down and think about it. As Frank Sinatra once said "I'm not one of those complicated, mixed-up cats. I'm not looking for the secret to life.... I just go on from day to day, taking what comes."

Over time we all cultivate our own patterns and habits of which we are now blissfully unaware. Unfortunately, one of the problems with this 'automatic functioning', acquired through natural learning, is that we act without thinking and without awareness. Sometimes, like a broken central heating system, our behaviour is out of date or inappropriate to a new situation or environment. We may even ignore or discount vital information because it doesn't fit with our outmoded ways of responding. Our internal map is then at odds with the external situation.

A man with a distorted sense of himself - the story of Dean

When we first met Dean he was in his late twenties and a team leader in a major manufacturing company. Dean told us that he had left school with no qualifications and the fact that he was dyslexic had only added to his problems. He had been told he was 'thick' by various people during his life, including his own parents and his current manager, with whom he was attending a development programme.

Later in the session Dean became quite upset and emotional. He had realised that his life's journey so far had left him feeling totally inadequate. He told us he felt that he had nothing to offer the company and had no special skill or area of expertise. He felt so desperate that he was on the verge of leaving both the programme and the company. Dean's internal map was covered in negative geographical features, with landmarks such as failed exams and unsupportive teachers.

We persuaded him to continue with the session and he bravely agreed to explore his issues with his colleagues. The group really pushed him to come up with something he felt he was good at, and amazingly Dean revealed that he was a talented high jumper and could clear over six feet (183 cm). His colleagues were very impressed and began to chip in with supportive and positive statements about Dean's personality. This in turn gave Dean the confidence to make further revelations. He told us that he liked to analyse information, coming up with new ideas and could even build his own computers. Far from 'thick', Dean was in fact fit, creative and innovative – attributes any company would count themselves lucky to have in a manager.

As a result of the programme and Dean's commitment to updating his 'awareness map', his self-perception was completely transformed. Within days of completing the programme he began to play a critical role in the company. He generated numerous ideas on how to improve production assessed where the blocks were and even invented new ways of working. Within three months he was reporting directly to the production director and a highly valued member of the company.

What's the lesson?

Over time and with a wealth of negative experiences, Dean's internal map had become much distorted. Once he started to think positively about himself, and recognise he had many valuable attributes, he realised that his self-image was very out-of-date. In fact, he was so caught up in old patterns of believing himself to be 'thick and useless', he had acquired a skills and knowledge base without even noticing! And because of painful experiences from the past, he had never asked for feedback from his colleagues.

Mind fit people take care to develop high levels of awareness about themselves, others and the world around them. They do this by ensuring that they focus on all the available information, rather than being selective, or choosing to believe only those things that confirm their prejudices.

Hot tip

If you are nervous about seeking out feedback in an area you are already sensitive about, try going first to people you trust and who are generally positive. Once you have some supportive comments to nourish your self-esteem, you can gather feedback from a wider group, and you will be more able to handle critical comments.

Remember, constructive criticism can be as valuable as complimentary feedback. We tend to remember the negative comments far more than the positive, so write down the positive comments to look at when you feel you are focusing on any negative feedback.

How do we achieve control?

The word 'control' appears in many, many management books on subjects as diverse as personal empowerment, team-leadership and group dynamics. The exercise of control is widely considered a vital ingredient in the good health of any organisation. But how does it relate to mind fitness?

Remember the metaphor of the central heating system at the start of this chapter? An initial element of control was necessary to make the heating work properly, but one would not want to go back every five minutes and readjust the thermostat – it would be inconvenient and confuse the whole system. So it is with management. If you have a mind fit team, all operating with good levels of awareness, your control of the team will be infrequent yet highly effective. In actual fact, good leadership can involve a *lack* of control, by giving control to the team members closest to the issues. Anyone who has had an engaging and inspiring leader will know how empowering this feels.

Unfortunately, many leaders retain an excessive amount of control through the over-use of positional power, using an authoritarian, domineering style of communication. In extreme cases this can even tip into bullying in the workplace. This is usually the result of a combination of factors, including pressure from higher up in the organisation, insecurity and lack of awareness on the part of the leaders, and a general distrust of the workforce. The effects on the mind fitness of their people can be disastrous.

Control the controllable

If controlling other people is fraught with difficulties and dangers, what can you control? The answer is simple – yourself. And that is what mind fitness is all about. With self-awareness comes the possibility of self-control.

With awareness, you have the opportunity to make decisions about what you want to stop doing, and what you want to do more of. Your current level of mind fitness is simply a set of habits, and you do not have to be a slave to them. You can take control rather than giving or taking control from others.

Hot tip

Most people say one of the most important factors in a happy work life is being thanked and feeling acknowledged. It only takes a moment to thank a member of your team, or to say 'well done', but it makes a world of difference. People feel more in control when they are thanked, rather than feeling like just another unacknowledged cog in the machine.

No longer crushed by the system - the story of Simon

Simon had been working for a number of years in a public sector organisation. He had reached a senior level, taking responsibility for the strategic development of services. The culture in which he worked was one where the senior staff were expected to put in many extra hours of work, without any financial compensation. Simon, like everyone else, complied with the oppressive and controlling leadership style. His work/life balance was severely compromised, but he didn't feel there was anything he could do about it.

Simon had built up a national reputation in his field, making major contributions at seminars and in published works. This had not gone unnoticed outside of his organisation, and one day he was invited to undertake a year's secondment to Whitehall, a government department. He accepted, having no idea just how profound an effect this move would have.

From the moment he arrived at Whitehall Simon was given an enormous amount of responsibility. He acted as a government advisor, liaised directly with the Minister on matters of policy and attended the House of Commons during debates. He was being trusted to use his skills in an independent way, and as a result was having a real effect on people's lives. Being given this amount of personal control in such a high-powered and exciting environment meant that Simon fell in love with his job all over again.

Simon told us one of his greatest moments whilst on the secondment came during a meeting with a group of consultants. Simon's Whitehall boss was present, and when asked which of the two men was in the senior position, the boss replied that although he was technically higher up the ladder, it was Simon who had greater knowledge and experience. It was this acknowledgement, which stemmed from a healthy and self-aware leader that allowed Simon to regain control of his own life and work.

Simon knew that he could never return to his old organisation, where micro-management was the order of the day. He resigned and now runs his own highly successful consultancy business.

What's the lesson?

Simon's mind fitness was restored by his time at Whitehall, and he realised the poor leadership at his original place of work was the cause of the damage to his mind fitness. They lost a great member of the team because they would not allow him an appropriate level of control over his own life, and did not acknowledge his skills and experience. As a consequence, the performance and productivity of the team suffered greatly.

Simon's experience is very common. People tell us time and again that they would like to be trusted to get on with the job, and they find constant interference from leaders frustrating and disruptive. Unfortunately, many leaders are too frightened to relinquish any degree of control for fear that it will be abused. Of course, there will always be the odd member of a team who will abuse a freer, less tightly controlled management structure, but the consequence of over-control is an unfit mind, demoralised and disengaged workforce who suffer from stress, conflict and under-performance. If leaders realised the risk they are taking by over-controlling, they might think again.

The benefits of becoming more aware and in control

Being aware and in control takes individuals to a different place whether as individuals, team members or as leaders. Conversely, people who are not

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aware or have no sense of being in control merely function and their performance is much lower.

Some of the benefits of greater awareness and personal control for individuals and organisations include:

- Less stress
- More time for managers and leaders
- Better decisions being taking by people at the coalface
- Individuals taking on more responsibility
- Increased performance
- Greater productivity

What is there not to like about that?

Hot tip

The reality is that most people perform best when they feel trusted, empowered and in control of their working lives. Allowing members of your team more individual control may seem frightening at first, but if it is backed up with supportive appraisals, realistic goals and deadlines and an open door policy for feedback, their journey to mind fitness and greater personal power can truly begin. Individuals, teams and the organisation benefit.

Summing up

Sustaining and improving on one's position on the personal profile map demands a level of personal control. Mind fit people *feel* in control even when the outside environment is trying to take control away from them. They will tend to focus on the things they can control, retaining a positive attitude to their work.

Sadly, outside influences can remove many opportunities to take control of life in the workplace. The consequences are disengagement, stress and ultimately poor performance. If you are in a position to give appropriate levels of control back to people you lead, take that opportunity. You will be rewarded by a more committed, more positive and more productive team.

The complex self I: The thinking and feeling selves

“I love dogs. They live in the moment and don't care about anything except affection and food. They're loyal and happy. Humans are just too damn complicated.” (David Duchovny)

The complex self is our second map. It helps people think more clearly about themselves. In this, and the next chapter, we explore the component parts of our complex psychological make-up which collectively give us our individuality, determine how we respond to other people, the world we live in and the challenges which we all face. As we do that, we discover why some of us learn to live our lives in a state of helplessness, defensiveness or powerfulness.

What's the basic idea?

For most of us, other people can often seem mysterious creatures; erratic, emotional and unpredictable - and that's just the ones we know well. Even our own behaviour can come as a surprise from time to time! So how can we hope to manage the many and varied agendas and perspectives of those at work, whether in a group situation or one-to-one?

There is a popular maxim in psychology – 'you are like nobody else, you are like somebody else and you are like everybody else.' Later in the book we focus on how best to uncover your unique qualities as well as those of each member of your team. First, let's examine the ways in which we are all similar.

We all share a core genetic make-up. Every human being across the planet is fundamentally the same. Our bodies may be made up of similar parts but we all come in different shapes and sizes. While some of this is due to genetic factors, environmental factors and the way we treat and nurture our bodies can make a massive difference to whether the body functions to its full potential or not.

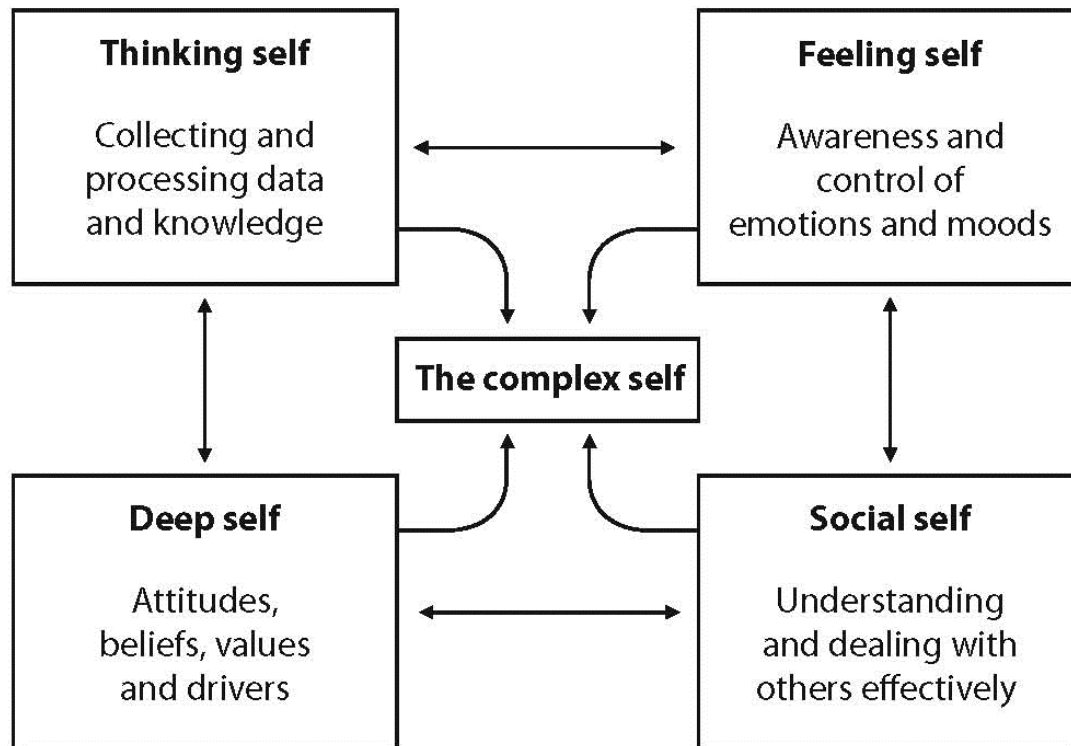
Behind the eyes, the psychological domain is also made up of core parts, each of which is similar to the next person's and yet each person is unique - and above all complex. This unique mind is also greatly influenced by how we use it.

The complex self

In the 20th Century, psychologists showed that intelligence and performance are linked, and a measure of intelligence - IQ - became familiar. More recently, the importance of emotional intelligence - or EQ and social

intelligence – or SQ has begun to be recognised. Organisations are beginning to take on board the fact that the performance of their people is not just based on knowledge and brain-power.

Of course, people are even more complex than these simplistic ideas would suggest. Our model of mind fitness is holistic – it includes the totality of what it is to be a complex human being.



A Map of Self

This model is a quantum leap in thinking. It includes the crucially important idea that every part of us is interconnected with every other, and changes to one part will have a knock-on effect to other parts. This means that any single focus for interventions, such as emotional intelligence, is doomed to fail.

Becoming mind fit simply means tuning up our own very personal complex psychological system. In everyday language what the model tells us is that people who operate effectively in each quadrant are able to:

- Think flexibly and focus appropriately (The thinking self)
- Be emotionally competent and resilient (The feeling self)
- Be confident, committed with integrity and a real sense of purpose (The deep self)
- Connect meaningfully with other people (The social self)

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we were all like that!

Chapter 4 The complex self 1: The thinking and feeling selves

These people are mind fit, of course. If they were not mind fit, they would be very different, indeed disorganised, easily distracted, prone to stress, lacking in confidence, untrustworthy and hopeless with people. Do you know anyone like this?

Like any complex system a small change can have a large impact, some negative and others positive. You may recall a few years ago a certain Gerald Ratner, who ran a chain of jewellery shops. In the last quarter of the 20th century, he virtually single-handedly created a mass market for keenly priced jewellery, and was very successful. Until, that is, he made a speech at a private function where unfortunately a reporter overheard him making a derogatory remark about his own products. He foolishly claimed that a pair of the earrings he sold were *"cheaper than an M&S prawn sandwich but probably wouldn't last as long."*

When the story came out, an unbelievable £500 million was wiped off the value of his company. That has got to be the most expensive fourteen words he ever uttered, but illustrates perfectly the real nature of the complex system - the market - in which he operated.

What the sorry affair of Gerald Ratner illustrates extremely well is that complex systems are non-linear. Small changes in one part can have enormous implications. For an individual, a relatively modest change in the way they use their mind can have a relatively huge impact, both at the psychological and behavioural levels. The good news is that in contrast to Ratner's negative experience, small positive changes can have disproportionate positive benefits.

Let's start to explore these elements.

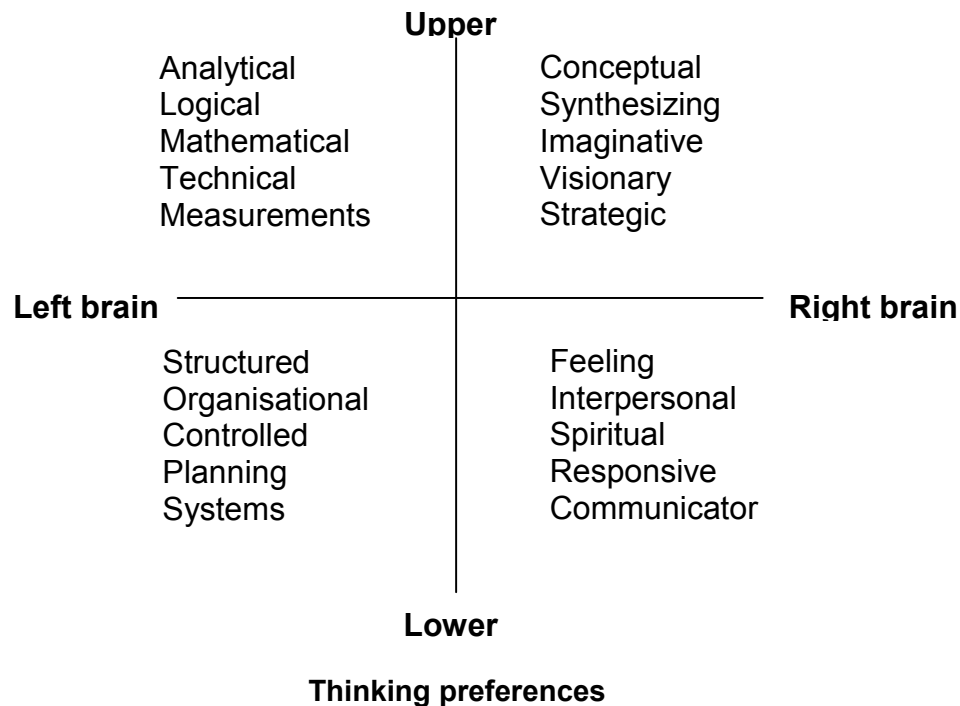
The thinking self

This part of our complex self is about the way we prefer to think and our ability to focus on what really matters.

When we are born we come with the capability to think in different ways. However, through our experiences over time, many provided by parents and schools, we often develop habits or preferences of thinking which can, quite understandably, be reinforced by what we do. Engineers obviously think differently to artist. Accountants think differently to health workers. So what we end up doing supports our preferences and may limit us in what we can achieve. Understanding these preferences enables us, through practice and perseverance, to increase our thinking capability.

Thinking preferences

Several years ago, Katherine Benziger and Ned Herman independently identified four thinking preferences based on our brain structures. They talked not only about the familiar left and right hemispheres but also of the upper and lower parts of the brain. The diagram below expands this further, adding key preferences found in each quadrant.



The key is to use the appropriate thinking preference in the context in which you are operating. For example:

- Upper left thinking will enable you conduct logical reality checks by gathering information, knowledge and data.
- Lower left thinking puts 'things' in order and creates structure
- Upper right thinking generates vision and ideas at strategic and tactical levels
- Lower right thinking involves awareness of others and how to communicate effectively

We have all developed preferences about the way we think, or don't think and, unsurprisingly, we use those preferences in our various roles. This does not mean we cannot change, although some people stay stuck, overusing one kind of thinking.

These thinking preferences determine the way people process information, make sense of their world and interact with it. Mind fit people recognise their preferred way of thinking and learn to use other methods through practice and

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perseverance. Of course, the truth is that for some of us, certain ways of thinking are difficult. Research shows that only around one person in twenty has truly balanced thinking preferences. Nevertheless, with practice, other thinking facilities can be built up and turned into new strengths.

When we apply thinking across all quadrants to the various challenges that we face either at home or in work, then the solutions that arise and the decisions that we take will be more valid and rewarding.

Recognising which quadrant or quadrants we prefer to work in is major in developing our mind fitness. This is because thinking is linked to our feelings, our deep and social self. Understanding some of these connections leads to greater self-awareness, more control and better focus. For example, our thinking is often influenced by our feelings. Notice what happens to our thinking when our feelings are negative and strong, such as frustration and anger. Our thinking becomes simplistic, one-dimensional and the decisions we make and how we behave may not be of a particularly high quality. This interplay between feelings and thinking – and vice versa – goes on all the time in both negative and positive states.

For example, choosing between eating an apple and a banana is never a logical process; it is heavily influenced by our feelings. People will often say, 'I feel like eating a banana' rather than 'the logical thing to do is to eat a banana right now'. Feelings and thinking are intimately intertwined.

Thinking differences work to our advantage when people recognise and value each others thinking preferences and use them to the full to tackle the challenges that are omnipresent at work. For example, a very creative and energetic person who cooperates with someone with a very analytical and organised approach to problems can make a very effective team. They are simply using their preferences collectively to make a 'complete' thinking being.

And there is more to thinking - focus

Applying thinking preferences to other methods of thinking that we all use instinctively ensures that the results are very powerful. The key is to know what to focus on and when, in order to achieve the best outcome.

Some people prefer to think and focus very wide and in pictures. Others work in small and narrow bite-size chunks. Working with architects who build bridges, it soon becomes apparent that some of them start by imagining the end result whilst others build the end results by putting lots of pieces together. Two very different but very effective approaches.

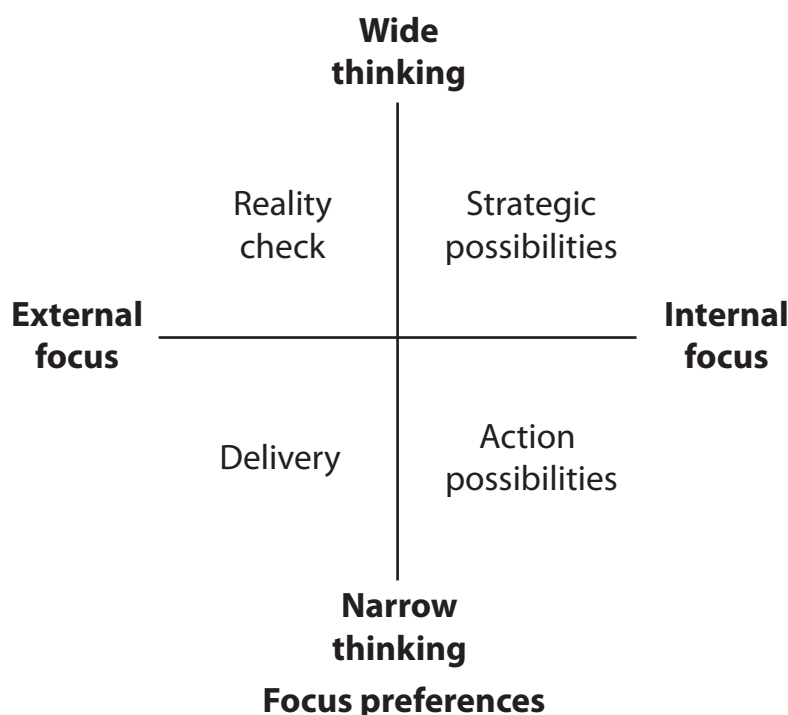
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In addition, some people look outside themselves, externalise, to think things through, such as with the internet, or with colleagues. Others will internalise it by trawling through their internal library and personal capability to work through challenges.

Combining wide/narrow and external/internal thinking increases the impact of thought.

Just like thinking, which is about *processing* information, people vary in the way they *collect* information. Learning to control our focus, to maintain it on what is appropriate and to vary it as required is a considerable skill but once again, one that can be acquired through practice.

The map below shows these different kinds of thinking focus. It suggests, in each quadrant, how we could use our thinking preference and appropriate focus, to solve our day-to-day problems and challenges.



Each of these stages demands a very specific style of focus. There is considerable evidence that 75% of decisions are wrong because people failed to conduct reality checks before decisions are made. In other words, their focus strategies were defective. Typically, they may be stuck in reactive 'delivery' mode – busy, busy, busy. They are working without real understanding of the context. They are not thinking, just doing.

Many people have developed ineffective habits and are unable to maintain focus well. For example, many of us are all too easily distracted by external

events or by what we are thinking about. The irresistible 'ping' of the email, the urge to twitter, to gossip or a tendency to daydream. Sound familiar? This unfocused effort may be personally enjoyable; however, it is costly in time lost at work.

Finally – thinking in time

And of course, some of our thinking may be stuck in the past or in the future which means we are missing out on what is actually happening right now. One manager from a local authority told us that his focus was on retirement because he believed that was when he would be truly happy. He was already counting the years, months and days to his retirement. The sad thing was that he was in his late thirties. Linking his retirement to the only time he expected to feel positive emotions was a sad indictment on his level of mind fitness.

Think in the time you need to be in. When planning you can learn from the past, identify where you want to be in the future and focus on the present when doing.

Quite simply, helpless thinking often results in a sense of being overwhelmed whilst defensive thinkers adopt a rigid approach. – "I know best". Powerful thinkers understand their own focus preferences and take care to stay focused on the things they need to. They are not easily distracted; they can take a broad view or concentrate on the task, as required.

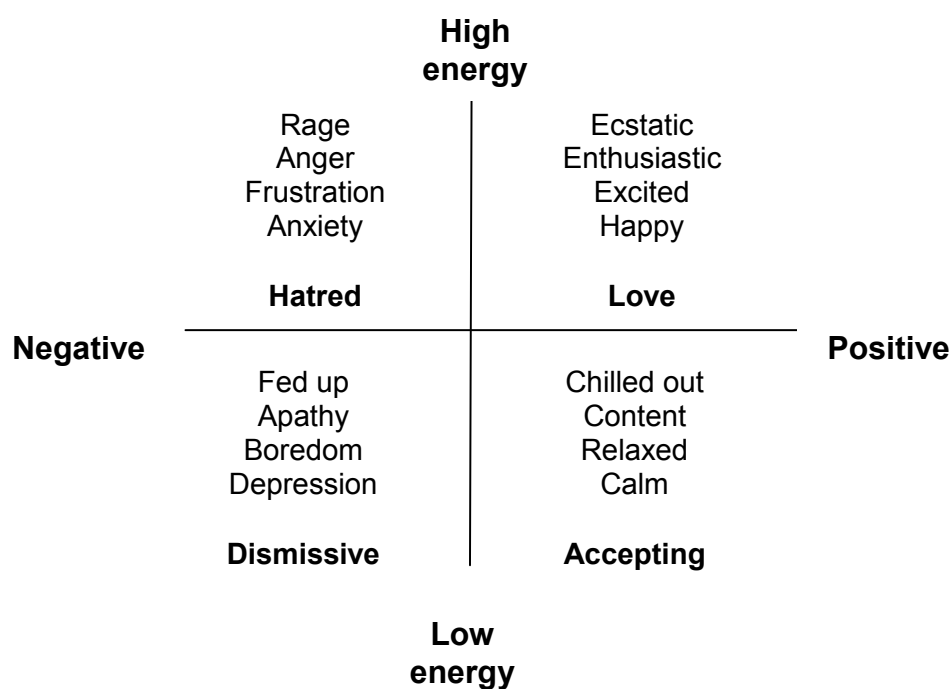
The feeling self

Without a basic ability to manage our feelings, mind fitness is just not going to happen. Our emotions or feelings are part of who we are. A first and crucial step in the process is being aware of our feelings at any moment of time. We meet some people, perhaps working in a very detailed and analytical way, who have lost conscious touch with their feelings. For them to describe what it is like to feel frustration or anger is really difficult. Feelings do not form a great part of their conscious lives, even if they may be boiling away beneath the surface.

Dealing with such a person who is not aware of their feelings can be very challenging but not impossible. Because they are literally unaware of their feelings, voluntarily changing them is as difficult for them as consciously regulating their blood pressure. To assist these people to understand their feelings we have found that a simple 'feeling map' helps them make a tentative first foray into this unknown territory. The map below places both internal and interpersonal feelings in four quadrants.

Chapter 4 The complex self 1: The thinking and feeling selves

Classic feelings are shown in each of the quadrants together with a descriptive word on how we might feel towards others.



A map of feelings

We all experience many feelings in the normal course of our lives. During a day at work we may go through many of the feelings found in each quadrant.

A key step to becoming mind fit is to accept this, and to recognise the different feelings when they come along. So many people believe that feelings "happen to them", that there is an external cause for these internal states. "He makes me so angry"; "Work is getting me down". These people are helpless to deal with their feelings.

Mind fitness starts with knowing about the true nature of feelings, and knowing that you are in charge of them. Take a situation when you are driving to work when a car suddenly pulls out in front of you causing you to brake hard to avoid a collision. The natural response is to feel anger which may be expressed by a hand gesture at the offending driver. What happens next indicates the level of control a person has over their feelings – and their mind fitness.

A person with a helpless tendency may end up crying and having to stop whilst they think of endless catastrophic possibilities that might have happened if they had been hit, such as how they would get to work or collect the shopping. A person with a defensive tendency may start shouting at the offending driver or sounding their horn whilst driving as close to the other driver's car as possible. In both cases these people have learnt to hang on to

negative feelings. They may continue to experience these feelings all day and may even share them with their colleagues.

A third, more mind fit person may instinctively respond with anger to a threat but then rationalise the incident. No one was hurt and neither car was damaged. The fault was with the other driver, who may be having a domestic or work problem, and in any case, we all make mistakes. By a different reality around the incident in these kinds of ways, mind fit people mentally dismiss the incident and move onto something more positive.

The benefits of being in control of your thinking and emotional processes

The combination of operating effectively in your thinking and feeling selves leads to a person being:

- Adaptable
- Pragmatic
- Flexible
- Comfortable, and
- Having a great sense of well being

Understanding how these parts of the complex self works in different situations gives a great sense of personal control.

Better organised and less pressured - The speech therapists' story

Forty-two delegates from a public sector organisation attended a programme underpinned by mind fitness, focusing on leadership and team working. They were all professionals, each with a University degree. All were passionate about their work which was to provide support and development opportunities for children who had speech and language problems. With high workloads, many were feeling stressed at work, citing a lack of time and difficult relationships with other professional organisations as contributory factors.

After three months, feedback from participants showed that all but two people had made significant improvements to their mind fitness. They claimed this had improved the quality of their lives, enhanced team working and helped them achieve tangible results for the organisation.

There was a theme from these participants. Through greater awareness of what was actually going on in their sphere of work, and use of some quite simple tools that they had received and acquired on the programme, it had

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resulted in improved mind fitness. Both their work and personal lives had been transformed for the better.

Hot tip

Sometimes, intuition is the better guide to action. At other times, cold logic is appropriate. Do not confuse one with the other or allow either to dominate in your life.

Summing up

Like virtually all things in nature, human beings are best understood as a complex system constantly adapting to our environment. We all share the basic structure – the thinking, feeling, deep and social selves – but we all differ, too. We have each adapted to our life's experiences and, as a result, we all function differently.

Have you ever met someone who you found very difficult to understand? Perhaps they seemed to be talking in some other language, about something which seemed quite obvious to them. Creating a shared understanding can seem impossible when two individuals think very differently. How many conflicts take place because people have no awareness that their method of thinking about a situation is fundamentally different from the next person?

To some people feelings are a mystery whilst others become overwhelmed by them, often in a negative or helpless way. Others can be very defensive and difficult to deal with, too. We never know how these people are going to react, simply because they have no way to understand or control one of the most important aspects of themselves – their feelings.

The good news is that awareness and control enables us to make small changes in the way we think and feel, with knock-on effects to our other selves. A small change in one part can have a disproportionate impact on these other parts, and on how people feel about themselves and perform in the real world.

The complex self 2: The deep and the social selves

"I'm complicated, sentimental, lovable, honest, loyal, decent, generous, likeable and lonely. My personality is not split; it's shredded." (Jack Paar)

In this chapter, we consider the final two parts of our complex selves; our deep and our social self. In many ways these are even more important than our very 'internal' thoughts and feelings. They are about how we understand ourselves and our world and interact with those around us.

The deep self: beliefs, values and drivers

Beliefs

Beliefs are a very important factor in mind fitness. Each of us forms a whole raft of beliefs about ourselves, others and the world we live in. Some psychologists argue that these beliefs are what we understand as our 'reality'. Largely, we learn our beliefs naturally and unconsciously from those people with whom we are closely linked. Obviously, parents or guardians have a major influence on us. Their early attempts to socialise us may include teaching us how to behave in company, about religion and how our place in society can affect what the future holds. Other people that we meet during our life-long maturation process can be very influential in building our belief systems.

And let's not forget the media in its various guises. These sources of 'facts' also have a major influence on our beliefs and thinking. We come to rely on reporters who provide us with information on a daily topic of interest. The danger comes when we start to believe what is reported. There will always be a slant on the news. It is this that we tend to incorporate and use to reinforce our own belief systems. The belief systems of, say, a tabloid reader and a broadsheet reader are undoubtedly very different.

Differentiating between fact and 'spin' is difficult. Sadly, most of us are happy to stick with our beliefs about reality, and don't allow the facts to get in the way.

Most importantly, we all hold beliefs about ourselves, many of which are disempowering. How often have you said "I could never..."; "I am no good at...", "I can't"? And just like beliefs about the world, we never challenge these. We are happier to say "that is just the way I am". Well, that's just not the case. You are what you believe yourself to be, and you just might not be entirely accurate about the real you.

We get people to challenge their beliefs. We often ask "How effective or efficient are you at doing your job?" Not surprisingly most people believe that they are good at their work until we get them to conduct their own reality check. They subsequently discover that they are doing 40% of someone else's work, endlessly prevaricate, talk on the phone far too long and spend too much time on irrelevant emails. Many people acknowledged spending too much time at unnecessary and unproductive meetings. Typically, and worryingly, no one challenges these 'realities' as the belief that 'it is just the way we do things around here' is so strong.

What is the real cost to an organisation of wasted human effort?

Mind fit people recognise that beliefs are not reality and take care to test reality before taking action. And that includes beliefs about themselves.

Values

For many people, values are very important and personal, and living life according to their values is fundamental to them. And yet, values are often difficult to understand, let alone talk about.

When we ask groups of people what values are important to them they easily generate a list of words that usually include trust, openness, honesty, integrity, respect, fairness, diversity and so on. All very admirable. But when we ask the group to identify the *behaviours* that are associated with each value, it turns out that these words have a slightly different meaning for each person. Take honesty; what does this actually refer to? Is it simply about not taking other peoples' property or admitting a mistake or telling someone what you think about them? Are there times when it is not the best policy?

Our starting point is that values are simply a set of behavioural codes. We should behave 'like this' in our dealings with people and the world we live and work in. Our approach helps people clarify what the 'value' words mean in practice, by placing the value-driven behaviours in the context in which they work. For example, we came across this set of letters which were displayed throughout a car manufacturing company – IDWISIWD. Apparently meaningless at first glance, but what they stand for is '*I do what I say I will do*'. Here is an example of a behaviour illustrating several 'value' words such as respect, trust, honesty, and integrity. This is something people can agree to do, and by keeping to that rule, they change the climate in which they work and their workplace becomes truly value-driven.

Mind fit people live their values by behaving appropriately. They are respected for it.

Drivers

For years psychologists have struggled to understand what drives us to behave as we do. Hierarchies of needs have been created and lists of motivators have been identified but the reality is that none of this has really taken us much further forward. Some of the drivers that have been identified include the need for power, security and freedom; being part of a community, self-expression, or personal growth. We consider that looking for the definitive list of drivers is a lost cause. Someone will soon find another, and the usual academic arguments will start.

Simply put, we think the focus of much of the work that has been done by psychologists has been flawed, such as Maslow. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a linear explanation of human motivation. It suggests that the lower level need (food and water) has to be satisfied before a person can move up to the next level. The higher needs, in order, are shelter, social, esteem and self actualisation. Maslow's hierarchy of needs may be interesting and have some element of truth in it, but it certainly does not motivate anyone. The reason being that mind fitness is not about the drivers we all possess. Instead, it is about how you satisfy these drivers. Some people will do this well – and others will do it less well.

Take these examples relating to satisfying a power need through promotion within an organisation. On achieving positional power a defensive person may adopt an autocratic style of leadership or use anger and confrontation to advance their career. A helpless person may hide in their office and use policies and procedures on defensive staff to maintain control, albeit tenuous. On the other hand, a powerful person may use their position to achieve more by adopting a coaching and engaging style of leadership, taking charge during an emergency or becoming an authority on a specific subject. Such people use personal not positional power to achieve results and take full responsibility for their actions.

Another common driver to be satisfied is personal growth through acquiring knowledge. A defensive person may attend every course they possibly can so that their knowledge base is huge. When confronted with a person who has less knowledge they may belittle them by using this knowledge to give an illusion of superiority. Conversely, a helpless person may attempt to learn but the drive is weak. They may use television or attend some courses as a means of improving their knowledge and understanding. However, it is likely they will not know how to apply that knowledge. They will wait for someone to tell them what to do. Both of these approaches, unfortunately, tend to stifle creativity. Meanwhile, a powerful person might embark on a degree course,

Chapter 5 The complex self 2: The deep and social selves

become part of an action learning group or just engage in acquiring knowledge from any source available.

Some other drivers and examples that may need to be satisfied include:

- Freedom - this could be through travel or thought.
- Curiosity - constantly wanting to learn about how things work.
- Security - within a job or the level of physical security at home.
- People – coexistence with friends and family.
- Effectiveness - to make a difference at what you do.

Mind fit people find adaptive ways to satisfy or meet their needs, and the satisfiers used by less mind fit people tend to be maladaptive or even destructive of themselves or others.

The social self

The social self concerns the way we connect with other people. Partly, it is about our ability to create shared meanings with them, so that we understand each other. But it is much more than this. It is also about inspiring others, understanding them, and being able to control the impact you have on them.

This is a combination of mindsets towards others, empathy and communication skills.

Mindsets towards others

Many people are uncomfortable with difference in others. Whether this is age, ethnicity or sexual differences deep attitudes can get in the way of our interactions. People who are able to maintain what is known as 'unconditional positive regard', a term borrowed from counselling, are much more likely to be able to connect with a wide range of other people. In other words, they accept people for what they are - regardless. You may not agree with their point of view, however, you accept them. This takes real mind fitness.

It will come as no surprise that these will be powerful and confident people, fully in control of their psychological processes. Defensive people, on the other hand, will wear their prejudices on their sleeves, and their interactions will be very different. Primarily, they will be suspicious of other people.

And what of helpless people? They are most likely to be affected by status difference, and appear shy, tongue-tied or over-compliant. This is because, underneath it all, they fear other people.

Empathy

Empathy is about being able to 'put yourself in the shoes' of another person. To feel what they feel. Powerful people know that they need to control their focus and their own internal emotional state if they are to read another's feelings. They bring their mind fitness into play and, as a result, can get behind the words and understand the personal meaning and emotional background to what is being said.

For many helpless and defensive people this sounds impossible, and the reason is quite simple. They are so self-focused they fail to pick up the subtle cues that each of us sends out about what is going on in our heads. Here, we are talking about body language, facial expression and some even more fleeting cues that flit across our faces in a fraction of a second as we experience feelings. As humans, we are designed to read those subtle messages that we each give out. Although many people think it is some kind of 'gift', everyone can learn to do it well. It is part of being mind fit.

This is not a soft option. Mind fit people may be able to empathise; however, they will also challenge people who moan or are difficult, perhaps by saying, "So what are you going to do about it?"

Communication skills

Empathising is only one important part of our communication abilities. We also need to be able to develop a shared understanding about what is happening around us. This is a crucial skill for leaders and team members if they are to engage fully with each other in order to achieve.

The familiar phrase 'good communicator' is probably one of the most unwieldy we come across. What does it all mean? It means being able to get people to understand you, it means being able to understand them. It also means being able to engage them in your ideas and projects, and to make them feel good as they do so.

People who are personally powerful appear to have an effortless ability to connect with other people. They always seem to have time to talk and they do so as an equal. They listen, they ask questions. They demonstrate respect. The simple reason is that they are in control of their complex self.

In contrast, defensive people may bully or manipulate and, in the process, create disengaged people with no allegiance to either them or the organisation. It has been said that people do not leave organisations, they

leave people. It is a good bet that the people they leave behind are defensive and unaware of the toxic effect they have on others.

Shy, ineffectual people, people who cannot say 'no' inhabit the realms of helplessness. The effect of their poor mind fitness on their ability to communicate can be profound. They don't listen well; they cannot control their anxiety and are thus unable to find the words they need because they are focusing on their own anxious feelings. As a consequence, many will retreat into a kind of social isolation, becoming bound up with objects like computers – or in days gone by, trains.

The benefits of being in control of your deep and social self

An ability to challenge our own beliefs in a positive way can really open up our lives. Instead of limiting ourselves, we discover there is so much more to us and what we can do. This unleashes the energy and passion to live life to the full, both at work and in our private lives.

By living our values, we command the respect of others – and we show them how it's done. The chances are people will learn naturally from an inspirational leader like this, and the team and the organisation will develop a strong sense of its own value base.

Combining this with improved mutual understanding and better communication with each other leads to the emergence of new ideas, more efficient systems and a significant reduction in conflict. The organisational benefits are immense.

One small step can make a difference - The story of Annaliese

Annaliese is a biochemist with a large pharmaceutical company. Her life is one hectic round of meetings, analysing data and sharing it with colleagues, managing deadlines, keeping up to date with projects throughout the company and ensuring she is in touch with advances being made in the industry. The result - a very stressed individual. She described her day as being frantic from the moment she got up. Nothing ever seemed to go right when she was getting ready to leave for work, the traffic hold-ups were always bad so that by the time she got to work her mind was already over-flowing with negativity and she felt awful. Her days were a continual rush. She could not see a way out of this situation.

With some of her colleagues she attended a programme to enhance mind fitness. As a direct result she re-examined her daily routine and identified where the problem lay.

She quickly discovered that when she got up she 'knew' - or 'believed' - that things would always go wrong. So that was exactly what she saw and experienced. Her solution was to get up fifteen minutes earlier 'knowing' she had plenty of time. And the result? The rush to get ready was gone, the traffic was lighter so that by the time she arrived at work she was in the right frame of mind to tackle her job. She was able to focus better, communicate with her colleagues more professionally and within three months she said that she felt 100% better.

Hot tip

A small change can have a big impact.

Summing up

One of the marks of a mind fit person is the impact he or she can have on others. By inspiring others, by making them feel valued, by showing and generating respect, the ripples can spread throughout the team and even wider. Some of this is down to communication skills.

Great communicators take people as they find them, and seem effortlessly able to stay on their wavelength. They engage them and inspire them to make great contributions to the team. Less mind fit people bully and manipulate, or else are too shy and ineffectual to make a difference.

But much of this ability to have an impact comes from a deeper level. Someone who lives their values, who has integrity and authenticity, and who exudes confidence, can have a deep impact on others around them, acting as a beacon and a model for them. We often refer to this as strength of character.

And never forget that in our dealings with the world, we rely almost entirely on our deeply held beliefs about how it is, and how we are. All our beliefs are picked up naturally, and they are not necessarily true. Once we become aware of this, we can do something about it, by challenging, by questioning and by remembering that there really is no tooth fairy. Beliefs which may once have served us well might just be false.

Section two:

**How we differ from
each other**

Learned Powerfulness®

“Give me a lever long enough and a prop strong enough and I can single handed move the world.” (Author Unknown)

In this chapter, and the two which follow, we focus on extremes. In reality there is almost no-one who is totally powerful – or helpless or defensive. We are all a mixture of each of these states. But for the purposes of understanding, it is helpful to think of them separately, just as we thought about the four selves to understand mind fitness more clearly.

Here we explore some of the basic principles involved in understanding personal power and all the benefits it can bring. Powerful people are energetic and excited about developing new abilities. They cope well with constant change. They meet fresh challenges with a positive outlook. All whilst remaining grounded in reality.

These are 'can do' people. They are proactive, they perform well, and the benefit to their organisation can be enormous.

It is important to give a reminder here. The learned part of powerfulness, as with helpless and defensiveness is natural and effortless, as described in Chapter 2. Powerful people have learnt to be powerful.

What's the basic idea?

A sense of personal power is very precious. If we could bottle it, it would sell faster than any celebrity-endorsed fragrance. Many of those who operate at the very top of their professions, whether it is sport, business or entertainment, have learnt to harness their own personal power. However, we also find powerful individuals in all walks of life, from cleaners to chief executives, mechanics to nurses.

Being powerful is not about being big and loud and arrogant. Quite the opposite. The irony is that those who have a real sense of the power within them also have a high level of humility – Nelson Mandela is a perfect example of this. Such people can endure great hardship, and yet do not become bitter and, as such, they remain effective and driven. There are two reasons for this. First, they have a sense of inner self-respect, which in turn creates an equal respect for others.

Second, while they have a real awareness of their own abilities, their solid and secure understanding of their own power helps them acknowledge and accept that it is not possible to control every aspect of one's professional or even

personal life. True power comes not from control, but from recognising that you can only control the controllable.

So what are the characteristics of powerful people?

Powerful people have the ability to inspire and engage with others, both as leaders and team players. Many of their strengths can be found in those leaders who are described as 'transformational' and 'inspirational' – two words ascribed to President Barack Obama. These are leaders with a real sense of purpose, are committed and determined, who have a sense of self-confidence yet are selfless, and know how to involve others. When things go wrong they are able to perform under pressure and bounce back quickly. They are trusted, respected and 'looked up to'.

And perhaps more crucially, they are easy to be with. They often provide a sense of control when everything around them seems to be falling apart. They always seem to get things done instead of moaning about it. They are proactive instead of waiting for something to happen.

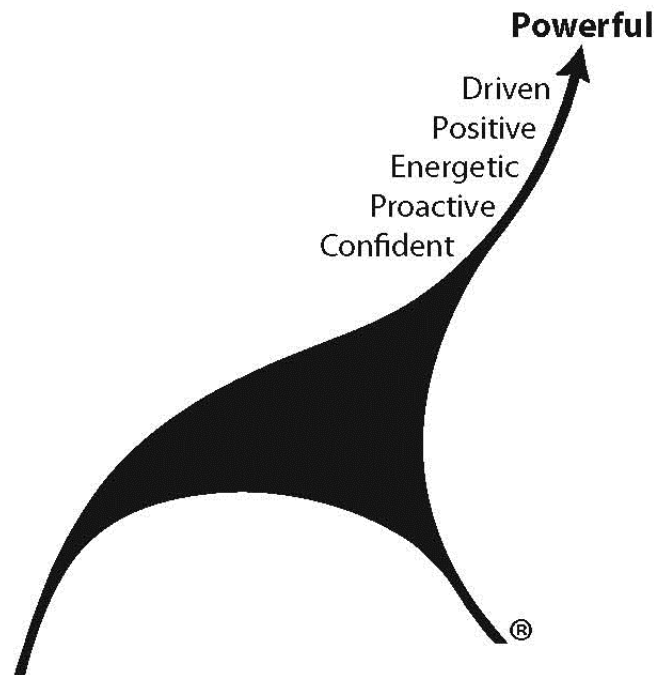
One thing it is easy to observe about powerful people is that their energy levels are high and their feelings are mainly positive. This does not mean that such people do not occasionally feel frustrated or even angry. But those negative emotions are almost always appropriate and do not last long.

Powerful people combine optimism and realism, creating a sense of pragmatism. You will often find such people making 'reality checks' – canvassing opinions, reviewing their work, seeking feedback, asking for facts and figures and so on – instead of assuming they know what is happening.

They will remain calm and unthreatened in the face of criticism and take time to listen to others as well as themselves. This helps them better understand what is actually happening so that they can plan or act as appropriate.

They also know that these high levels of energy and positivity are not sustainable indefinitely, and have learnt that the ability to 'chill out' is also crucial. Energy is cyclical, rather than linear, and therefore whatever is taken out of the system must be put back in. Powerful people make sure they build in time to think, or even enjoy a moment's relaxation. This is all part of self-awareness, which in turn contributes to mind fitness and personal power.

The Personal Profile Map™ shows some of the strengths of powerful people.



What is in a powerful person's toolkit?

Powerful people do not waste time and energy worrying about every little thing. Rather, they find ways of stopping that nagging, negative internal voice which damages so many people and leads to stress, a sense of helplessness and even apathy and depression. Acceptance that sometimes things do not always go to plan can lead to a far more positive outlook and much healthier approach.

They seem always to have a positive mental attitude. Imagine a Premier League footballer taking a free kick. He will assess the situation, quickly measure the difficulty of the kick against his skill level, decide on a plan and take the kick. If it does not go exactly to plan, he will re-enter the game immediately and continue playing to the best of his ability. There will be no endless replaying of the missed kick but a quick assessment - and then move on. He is combining self-awareness, with control of his focus, a positive mental attitude and resilience.

Powerful people usually have good social skills. A stand-up comedian has to use his or her power with great subtlety. They may hold the microphone, but if they read the audience incorrectly, the power can shift and they will be heckled or even booed off stage. They have to make a quick assessment of the strangers in front of them, and if they make a mistake, they have to

readjust and recover quickly and move on to the next joke. There is no room for blame or negative thought patterns.

In our programmes, we cover many practical ways to improve your personal power. Many people who attend are surprised that the powerfulness element of the session often focuses on checking reality, listening to others, keeping calm and effective delegation. But many of these attributes are the hallmarks of the truly powerful person. Sometimes the ability to take feedback, both positive and negative, in a calm fashion is the most powerful act of all.

The abuse of power

We have all come across someone in our lives who exerts the wrong sort of power. This abuse of power is usually based on one of two things: expertise or position, and overuse is very defensive. These two attributes are not bad in themselves, but when they are wielded without any other leadership skills, the results can be devastating in the workplace. While obvious expertise in a leader can lead to a kind of grudging respect, there is almost certainly some sense that once they slip up, all credibility will evaporate – and people are just waiting for that day. Their relationship with their staff is often based on suppressed resentment.

The abuse of positional power is based on fear and destroys relationships. It is akin to bullying, and its consequences are just as serious. Just like bullied children, adults subjected to a steady drip-feed of bullying leadership feel the pain too. They may not express it as such, but they may lose confidence, become apathetic or look for escape routes. Or they may rebel against the bully, becoming confrontational and 'difficult'.

The abuse of power and the removal of personal control and choice lead to or aggravates mind unfitness, made manifest in helplessness or defensiveness. So we have a cyclical situation, where the systematic abuse of positional power begets a workforce that is mind unfit. When members of the team then reach management and leadership status, they lack the personal power to inspire their team. And so it goes on... We will explore defensive attitudes and behaviours in more depth in Chapter 8.

How do I embrace my personal power?

Embracing your personal power may be the most important decision you ever make.

First of all, it is important to be clear that personal power does not come from physical bulk, position, expertise or wealth. Mother Theresa is often cited by

world leaders as one of the most powerful people who has ever lived and she possessed none of these things. The first step to personal power is to recognise what is happening, and have the courage to make small but lasting changes to your mind fitness.

Why do people do it?

Being a powerful person has enormous advantages. Powerful people are liked, looked up to, respected and find it easy to get others to engage with them.

In addition, they will have considerable protection from many of life's long and short-term illnesses. They will know how to deal with stress and they will thrive on challenges.

The benefits of becoming more powerful

Powerful people are in control of themselves. This provides an immense sense of confidence and well-being. Their ability to check what is really going on, stay with positive feelings and think about what they say, is beneficial for all of us.

At work, this personal control is demonstrated by deliberate and focused actions. Powerful people are proactive and constantly seek ways to improve their own and others' performance. They are pragmatic and practical.

Being in emotional control does not mean that a powerful person does not experience negative feelings about events - but they know how to deal with them effectively. They do not suppress their negative feelings, but neither do they leave them to fester. Instead, they create positivity around them.

In relationships, this level of emotional control helps prevent those damaging remarks that can so often come out before we think about the impact they may have. And the self-evident integrity and confidence of powerful people means that their relationships will be productive, particularly when they are in a leadership role.

Humility and power go together – The story of David

David was a senior police officer who had committed himself to improving the performance of his police force by introducing a coaching culture. This was against a backdrop of a traditional authoritarian leadership style based on rank and discipline, where making a mistake could lead to severe consequences.

His first big challenge occurred when a conflict between a major union and a company began to turn nasty. The stakes were high; the dispute threatened serious consequences for the thousands of people who were customers of the company. And tempers were running high, too. A group of workers were determined to cause disruption to anyone near the area of the dispute, whether or not they were directly involved. David was tasked with leading the police response, basically aimed at ensuring that peace between the parties was maintained.

The operation took considerable planning, involving negotiating with the different parties and eventually included many hundreds of police officers, all of whom had to be briefed on their specific roles and responsibilities. David was actively involved in all these areas, where he had a real opportunity to apply his coaching approach, empowering people as appropriate.

At the end of one very long and difficult day, when not everything had gone to plan, a debriefing session took place. The police officers who had been involved were all present, with David in the chair. He reminded people what the purpose of the police action was, explained how the plan had been developed and summarised what had actually happened. Then he said "I got this part wrong".

This was greeted by a stunned silence because no one in authority ever admitted a mistake – it went against the prevailing culture. And to hear it from a very senior police officer was absolutely unheard of. David followed this up with a question, "We need to prevent it happening again. What would you do in a similar situation?" After a moment, a sergeant made a particularly scathing comment which David ignored – but then asked "So what would you do?" The sergeant said nothing but eventually ideas started to come from other officers. David collected them on a flipchart and then asked which would be the preferred options of the officers present. He thanked everyone and next day the amended plan, with the group's ideas included, was introduced to them. And it worked.

What was more important in the long term was that David had demonstrated that it was OK to admit to mistakes, because it is important to learn from them. By accepting responsibility for his error, a signal was sent through the force that helped immeasurably with the introduction of the new culture that he was helping to develop. In time, the performance of this force was greatly improved, with all its Government targets exceeded.

There was no doubt that David was highly energetic and very professional. But this was not the reason for the huge impact he had. Simply put, David inspired his force. The risk to which he exposed himself demonstrated that he

had a very strong sense of his own personal power. This personal power was the source of his success, a story which is all the more impressive when the prevailing culture and history is considered.

Hot tip

Remember that genuine strength does not need to hide behind bluster and bravado. To err is human, and people will think the better of you when you come clean.

Summing up

Powerful people are successful – at work, at play, in life. They bring not only a real capability to perform to bear, but also a unique capacity to carry out that performance against all odds. They are 'can do' people. They have learnt to operate in a powerful state resulting in higher confidence, resilience, proactivity, curiosity, commitment and social adaptability.

What sets them apart from many other people is the range of positive tools that they use to build and sustain their mind fitness. They are very focused, great planners and reality checkers. They also have an unrivalled self-awareness and the ability to understand and control their feelings. They have great strength of character – they are value-driven, with great integrity. This, plus their strong sense of purpose and unshakeable self-belief, combined with appropriate humility, makes them uniquely inspirational. And, with a well-developed ability to communicate with and influence others, they make great leaders.

With all these personal advantages, they have no need to abuse either their expertise or position in an organisation to achieve what they want. Rather than creating compliant subordinates, they create willing enthusiasts.

They also make great parents, great team members and great spouses. Personal power is the glowing core which ensures that people achieve their potential in literally every sphere of their life.

Learned Helplessness

“I did not direct my life. I didn't design it. I never made decisions. Things always came up and made them for me. That's what life is.”

(B. F. Skinner)

This chapter explores Learned Helplessness. This is an extreme state where individuals are both mind unfit *and* believe that they lack the skills and abilities to perform tasks, particularly new ones. In the absence of genuine psychiatric complications which require expert medical attention, helplessness may develop into the mindset that overcoming life's problems is just too difficult. Once again the learning is natural. People are not aware that it is happening.

This 'can't do' attitude can have a considerable impact on people's performance at work, and in life, leading to a lack of energy, stress and poor performance.

What's the basic idea?

At some stage most of us have experienced a feeling of helplessness, whether this has been triggered by a problem which seems insurmountable upon first inspection or an old issue which will not go away, no matter what we do. It can be a crippling, even debilitating condition. For those people who have a healthy level of mind fitness, these feelings of helplessness are normally fleeting, and relatively easy to overcome. For other less fortunate people, helplessness can become a way of life and is often linked to clinical conditions such as depression.

No-one is born helpless or inherently incapable of handling themselves effectively in new and stressful situations. In fact, we are all born with the potential to survive and adapt to an ever-changing environment. For sure, we start by needing a great deal of support from our parents, but as time goes by, we are driven forward by curiosity and a need to explore. We start to create our own childhood challenges before entering the brave new world of the schoolroom, where we meet other children, make friends and learn to socialise and adapt to the needs of others.

And yet, some adults seem to lose their adaptability, curiosity and the desire to learn and take action, and seem unable to develop healthy adult relationships. So, what exactly is it that turns a happy, friendly, curious child into a frightened, miserable, helpless and isolated adult?

Answers from the lab

Back in the sixties, Dr Martin Seligman and a group of psychologists at the University of Pennsylvania conducted a pioneering series of experiments to help to better understand why some people seem unable to pick themselves up when the going gets tough.

The scientists placed a group of dogs in individual cages from which they could not escape. Back then, the use of animals in experiments was not even slightly controversial, even though these days we may squirm a bit about what they went through. Once in their cage, the dogs were subjected to a series of uncomfortable electric shocks through the wire mesh floor. Eventually they gave up struggling to escape from their cage and just put up with the shocks.

Later the dogs were placed in a different cage from which they could very easily escape and were again subjected to the same series of electric shocks. Quite unexpectedly, most of the dogs did not move; even though they could now escape, they remained passively in the cage and resigned themselves to even more shocks. Seligman called this state of inertia, even in the face of pain, 'learned helplessness'.

Seligman later tested this concept of learned helplessness on people. Thoughtfully, he substituted a loud noise for the electric shocks, and instead of imprisonment, he substituted a dummy switch which did not turn off the noise. Once again he found that even when a genuine switch which *did* control the noise was available, most of the people ignored it.

Now, it is easy for all of us to believe that we would simply have flicked the switch and turned off the horrible noise, but the majority of Seligman's subjects did not. In fact, they were almost exactly the same proportion as his helpless dogs. Somewhere between two-thirds and three-quarters of people and dogs learned to be helpless when a significant degree of control of their environment was removed.

Back in the real world

Like the experimental subjects, the major problem for helpless people is that their present and future actions are based on what they have learnt from the past. Seligman's work helps us to understand that their life experiences, probably from an early age, will have shaped their understanding of 'how it is in their world' and how they use this understanding to live in the here and now, and predict their futures.

Helpless people come to perceive the world in general as a bad place where most things go wrong, most of the time. This state of affairs is further aggravated by the conviction that they are part of the problem. They believe that the dreadful state of the world that they inhabit is largely their fault because there is nothing they can do to put it right. They make statements such as "I can't do that" or "Everything I touch goes wrong" and, "I used to be confident but I've lost it. I can't remember things. I'm useless". This toxic trinity of beliefs where the world is a bad place, where everything goes wrong and it's my fault can lock them into a state of paralysis, condemning them to a life of victimhood. Their focus is turned inwards and it is inevitably on the 'I'.

Helplessness, like every other state, is self-sustaining. It works like this. A lot of us believe we have real or imagined weaknesses. How often do you hear people saying, "I can't use computers", or "I'm no good at presentations"? A lot of people *will* do something about these weaknesses. They will sign up for a course on IT skills, or deliberately develop their presentation skills. However, people who are feeling helpless tend not to address their weaknesses. Instead they develop, often unconsciously, tools and techniques to avoid exposing themselves to any threat of failure.

This is a disastrous policy. This avoidance means they are removing things they *could* actually control from their own agenda, and the outcome is that they learn to become even more helpless. This is how people spiral down into deep levels of helplessness, all on their own.

Helpless people reinforce their beliefs by hanging around with like-minded people. Have you ever come across a group of people around the water-cooler who 'moan' constantly, who only see the negative side of life? The talk is all about the fact that nothing positive ever happens around here and if it does it is just luck. They become stuck in a shared view of a life where nothing is right. And crucially, they fail to run any robust reality checks. The 'evidence' for their beliefs is all around them, from headlines in newspapers to constant change at work; but only because they cherry-pick the evidence to suit their own views.

How to recognise signs of learned helplessness at work

If you feel you are in a negative spiral at work, and that you are incapable of coping with new and stressful situations, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you feel that bad past experiences still affect the way you think, feel and behave today?

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- Do you feel that most of the control over your working life lies with your manager or other people?
- Do you find you have to stick to a fairly rigid 'script' or ways of doing things?
- Does your level of commitment to your organisation feel low?

The way you answered these questions may give you some indication of how much control you feel you have over your work, and what this means for you. Answer yes to three of these or more and you are almost certainly showing the symptoms of learned helplessness.

Once again some of the key attitudes and behaviours or weaknesses that helpless people display are shown on the model.



The role of organisations

We cannot place the whole blame on organisations for creating a helpless state amongst employees. Some people will arrive at work with the seeds of helplessness having already taken root from past experiences and growing strongly within them. However, their helpless mindset can certainly be confirmed, even exacerbated, by poor practice at a corporate level. Key to this is the way control is distributed between leaders and staff.

It is our experience that in many organisations either the control rests entirely with the management team, or there are strict policies and procedures forcing every worker to conform to one way of doing things even if that is

inappropriate. And the relationship between leader and staff member is often based on the abuse of positional power – the all too common "my way or the highway" approach. Such an approach is common in leaders who operate from a Learned Defensiveness® state which we will explore in Chapter 8.

The truth is that people are much more productive when they are given the space to work more autonomously. Sadly, too many organisations are driven by conformity, which leaves workers feeling either frustrated or helpless. The more mind fit people will resist helplessness, and instead show a lack of commitment and become disengaged from the company. When workers are not committed to a company, they will happily leave at a moment's notice. Organisations bring this upon themselves. A survey by MORI in the USA put the proportion of staff who become disengaged, after just six months employment in a new organisation, as high as 71%. Over-control can be a lethal weapon, creating helplessness, disengagement and high staff turnover.

Organisations can also unwittingly support people in a state of helplessness. In many ways they are a model compliant employee, and they certainly don't rock the boat. Organisations offer a range of support such as counselling which may be beneficial but can lead to a dependent workforce. Do helpless people fully contribute? Almost certainly not.

What can be done about it?

Learned helplessness is not a deliberate act. The learning has taken place at a natural level so that people are not aware of how distorted their beliefs are. And although it may feel 'normal' to the individual, the knock-on changes in their thinking and behaviour can have a significant impact on their life and work.

Most people at work will have only partially slid down into the deepest realms of helplessness, although they may have a sense of hopelessness, despondency and apathy. It is down to organisations to recognise that in the implementation of their policies and practices, they need to invest as much control as possible with the people at the coalface.

The leadership style that permeates an organisation has a major impact on creating and sustaining helplessness. The authoritarian style which still dominates too many British workplaces in both the public and private sectors has much to answer for. It is long past the time when more people-centred approaches aimed at inspiring and engaging people, such as coaching, engaging or transformational leadership, should become the norm.

In our practical work, we have found that it is perfectly possible for people to quite quickly leave much of their victimhood behind. This is done by helping them to become more self-aware, and to start to take control and make choices to change some of the personal tools and strategies which sustain the helpless state. Our experience shows that when people do this, they begin to move up the continuum towards more personal power. However, because for helpless people change is threatening, they may need more initial support to achieve lasting change.

Why do people do it?

There are real benefits at work of being helpless. For instance, such a person is often beyond criticism as they do exactly what is expected of them – but no more. They are often supported more than other staff and targets that are set for them may be lower than those set for their colleagues. And, of course, they do not have to make decisions. People may feel sorry for them and look after them. It can be an easy life for a helpless person, with no real incentive to change. They are certainly not achieving all they can for themselves or the organisation. And if they persist, the slide towards severe helplessness leads to a poor quality of life and ill-health.

The benefits of becoming less helpless

As people move away from being helpless and take personal control, small changes start to make a real impact on the individual and performance.

The benefits they can expect include:

- Less stress
- Increased performance
- Less supervision
- More responsibility
- A better quality of life

Our experience has been that people who have developed greater mind fitness and moved away from victimhood say they so value these kinds of benefits that they will never go back.

Taking control - The story of Amish

We met Amish when she was a manager working for a local authority. She was responsible for a team of people processing hundreds of parking tickets and other traffic offences each week. Her working environment was highly

demanding and, as any one who has ever had a parking ticket will know, she was somewhat unpopular with the public!

For some time Amish had been under pressure to deal with a backlog of over six thousand tickets. Knowing she had neither the time, nor the number of workers to deal with the issue, she turned to her manager for help. Unfortunately her request for help coincided with a time of structural change within the council offices, with the introduction of new technology, staff training days and general upheaval. Amish's problem got lost in the ensuing chaos, and it was made clear that it was up to her to sort it out, and that no-one was going to help. With the backlog increasing daily, and the total lack of support from her managers, Amish felt the problem was insurmountable. She was ready to give up.

Amish attended a programme where she was taught the basics of mind fitness in the workplace. When the Personal Profile Map™ was explained to her, she realised that she was firmly in the 'helplessness' section. Amish soon came up with some practical tools to move her out of the rut she had fallen into, which meant that she finally felt she had the power to take control of the situation.

With our support, Amish conducted a reality check. She worked out what she could reasonably do to start to clear the backlog of parking fines. As she gained confidence, she even explored new and rather radical solutions to the problem, which met legal requirements, but did not necessarily conform to the local authority's entrenched policies. When Amish returned to work she decided to take some small, but significant risks in the way she dealt with her staff and their time. She found that a more flexible approach was more effective, and that by involving the whole team, each member felt some personal level of responsibility for the problem.

Seven weeks later the backlog was cleared and the local authority recovered most of the fines which amounted to several hundreds of thousand of pounds. Amish learnt that she was not helpless in the face of the challenge, and even passed a sense of empowerment on to the rest of her team.

Hot tip

Don't live in the dark – check out if your negative beliefs accord with reality. This will give you the ammunition you need to do something about things.

Summing up

None of us start off being helpless. It is a learned state which can occur naturally and out of conscious awareness. Of course, all of us can feel helpless occasionally when facing a big challenge, but mind fit people overcome this feeling. Some people, however, can slip into feeling helpless more or less permanently. In this state, they lose contact with the reality around them and eventually a sense of 'things being out of control' dominates their very existence.

For a small proportion, this state of victimhood is self-sustaining. It is continuously reinforced by their view of the world. Negativity becomes the norm and other people they associate with confirm this. Their pessimistic collective focus is generally on the 'awfulness' of life, and how there seems nothing they can do to improve matters. And worse – it is all their fault.

Although some individuals will come to work already possessing a degree of learned helplessness, the way they are treated at work has a big influence in whether this improves or becomes more firmly ingrained. Organisations and leaders can drive people into a state similar to victimhood by over-controlling their environment and by a rigid authoritarian style of management.

The learnt weaknesses linked to Learned Helplessness include: compliance, apathy, can't do, can't be bothered, functioning or a sense of hopelessness.

Learned defensiveness®

“Defensiveness is always a red flag; it shows that we have once again become stuck in a point of view. We are pretending to be solid, and we want everyone else to go along with it.” (Genpo Roshi)

In this chapter, we explore some of the characteristics of defensive thinking and behaviours, and offer some solutions and advice on dealing with your own defensive traits, and working with other members of your team who are defensive.

Defensive people are often prickly and awkward. They are the rigid, 'won't do' people so familiar in the workplace. Although some may perform at work to a reasonable level, their behaviour can cause conflict and helplessness in others.

What's the basic idea?

People exhibiting defensive behaviours certainly fall within the unfit mind part of the Personal Profile Map™. Defensiveness could be seen as the 'ugly sister' to helplessness. Although it manifests itself rather differently, their parentage is the same - fear. In helpless people, this is a general sense of insecurity. In contrast, defensive people feel vulnerable and view the world with suspicion and resentment. For them, "you can't be too careful" is a watchword. As a result, where a 'helpless' person may inspire sympathy as well as frustration in their co-workers, a defensive member of the team is often unpopular and sometimes even feared by others. In consequence, they often gather around themselves a clique of like-minded negative people.

A person who behaves in a defensive manner is usually unaware of their own actions, or even what is motivating them. They will emphasise the negative, and look for it even where it does not exist. They will always find something that is not working and ignore all those things that are. For such a person, the work environment feels out of their control, and therefore survival becomes an obsession. Unlike people who have learnt to be helpless and have surrendered all control, defensive people desperately seek to retain as much control as possible. The result - they over control.

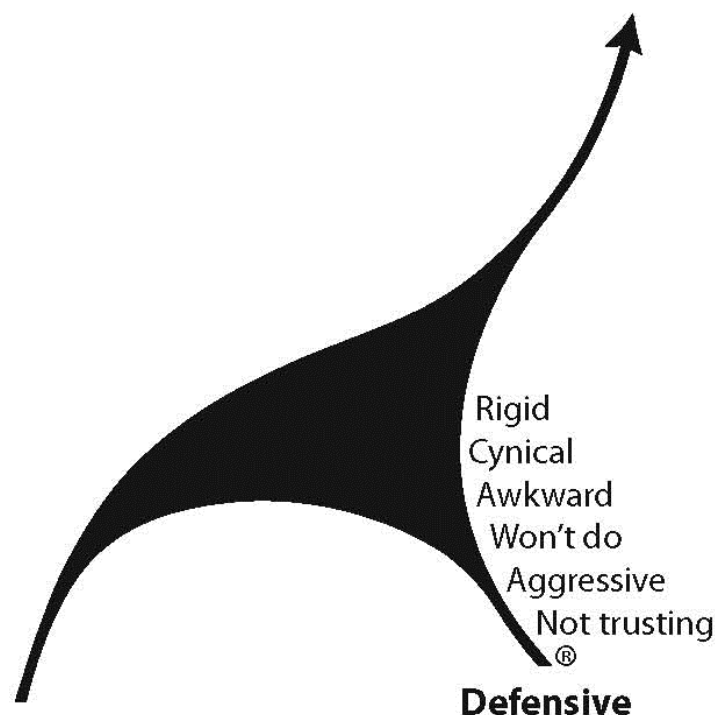
What are the characteristics of a defensive person?

Defensiveness is reasonably easy to spot. Accusations of blame are usually liberally thrown around, although the admissions of personal culpability are thin on the ground. For the defensive person, there is always a problem, and it is always somebody else's fault. Many defensive people use their skills and

knowledge, experience and position to control those around them, and to demonstrate they are right – regardless of the truth of the matter. This comes from a deep fear that the world is chaotic and unpredictable – and threatening.

Such people often seem to have an overbearing sense of their own importance and rectitude in all aspects of life. They can appear arrogant, cynical, highly opinionated and very inflexible in their thinking. Their focus is external and when things go wrong it is the fault of someone else - anyone from the receptionist to the Prime Minister. At its extreme, defensiveness is dominated by high-energy negative emotions, fuelled by a disproportionate awareness of everyday mistakes and mishaps.

The map below shows some of the attitudes and behaviours that are common in defensive people.



How to I recognise the signs of defensive behaviour?

If you are concerned that it is you who is exhibiting defensive behaviour, first of all, congratulations! You have made the first step towards mind fitness – you are becoming aware of your own actions, and are prepared to be honest about how to relate to your work and others.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you worry that if somebody isn't doing something correctly, it is up to you put them right?
- Do you feel that there is no point in trying anything new as, in your experience, most of the time it is pointless?
- Do you feel that the world is against you, even down to the inefficiency of public transport or the bad weather?
- Do you feel most comfortable with a small, select group of people who tend to agree with you?
- Do you think that anger and threatening behaviour is usually the best way to motivate people, even if it is not always popular?
- Do you always know best?

If you answered "yes" to at least three of these questions, then you are probably exhibiting defensive behaviour at work. Admitting this is an important and significant step, and means you are on your way to a healthier psychological state. Defensive people consistently externalise the cause of the problem whereas helpless people internalise it.

Why do people become defensive?

Like Learned Helplessness, Learned Defensiveness® is something a person picks up from an early age. Rather like helpless people, they believe the world is a pretty bad place, but they refuse to believe this has anything to do with them. They defend themselves from this threat to their self esteem by putting up thick protective walls around themselves. Every one of their defensive tools can be seen as serving this end.

Unfortunately, defensive behaviour and its roots has become the staple of the media industry. Lurid tabloid tales can grab hold of the imagination, giving a sense of disorder and violence in the world, even when this is not born out by personal experience. Lifestyle television programmes focus on a 'reality' where bad relationships, poor health and financial troubles are the norm. If you listen to a defensive person talking, they will often use stories from print and broadcast media to reinforce their negative and suspicious view of people and world events. Meanwhile the rise in reality TV has capitalised on defensive, dysfunctional personality traits for the purposes of mass entertainment.

You will often hear defensive people telling stories about other defensive people to create a toxic atmosphere of negativity and pessimism. When you get beyond the charmless exterior of such people, you discover that they are highly vulnerable and unsure of themselves. They react badly to being

challenged because they are nervous of how they will respond to the unexpected, and believe they may humiliate themselves. So they seek to avoid unpredictable situations by exerting paralysing levels of control, or, when a difficult situation arises, they will deal with their fear and vulnerability by criticising and blaming others.

What effect does a defensive person have on the workplace?

We have all encountered someone who is always ten minutes late for every meeting, yet the fault is never theirs. Or a person who takes it upon themselves to play 'devil's advocate', even when such a role is not required. Some constantly make judgements on how things should be done without any real knowledge. Or criticise and dismiss new and threatening members of the team, before taking the time to get to know them. When a leader tries to implement changes or improvements, they will be the first to undermine the new system, even deliberately sabotaging it.

When it is the leader who is defensive, they may become bullying, using anger and fear to dominate those around them. They will often gather like-minded people around themselves, reinforcing their own superiority, whilst treating others with contempt. Unfortunately many organisations are full of such people, and they are at every level. This makes it very difficult to achieve real change, and of course, places interpersonal relationships under strain.

Not all bullying motivated by defensive behaviour is overt. So-called passive aggression and manipulation can be as destructive as shouting. Some defensive people will seek to undermine others by talking behind their backs, using innuendo and gossip. They may create situations where rivals can only under-perform, or even fail, and then point this out to the rest of the group. The victim of this manipulation will become isolated and the perpetrator can step in as an advisor, giving them a further sense of control, however unhealthy this 'support' may be. The consequences can be highly damaging. Defensive behaviour by leaders either creates an atmosphere of fear and resentment (where anger is used), or helplessness (where manipulation is used).

The problem for organisations is that on the surface, defensive behaviour often seems to achieve results. Leaders who are aggressive and demanding can boast of a material return, however demoralised their team may be. Those who use a more slippery form of control through manipulation and forming 'cliques' may appear to run a harmonious shop-floor, but often their team is demotivated and helpless. Because these leaders fill their spreadsheets and annual reports with healthy figures, very few organisations consider the cost of such behaviour, which is so often a physically and

psychologically unhealthy workforce. Scratch the surface and you are likely to find a group of people suffering from sickness and stress, conflict and lack of engagement.

What can be done about defensiveness?

In our programmes we often deal directly with defensive leaders and members of teams and create bespoke action plans for each individual case. The problem is complex, and a generalised approach is inadvisable. However, here are a few tips to get you started in dealing with a defensive colleague:

- Don't allow yourself to be bullied. Always be polite and do not raise your voice, even in the face of anger, but do repeat a reasonable request until you achieve the result you need.
- If a team member is being consistently negative in meetings, give them an opportunity to say their piece. Try not to become defensive yourself, rather let them feel heard for an appropriate period of time, but no more.
- If someone is offering unsolicited advice, try not to appear annoyed or threatened. Thank them for their help, and proceed with your work as you see fit. If it continues, tell them firmly and politely that if you need advice, you know where to find them.
- Don't become isolated. If you suspect someone is undermining you behind your back, make sure you have plenty of quality time with your manager where you are able to put your position clearly and concisely. Don't be tempted to retaliate in kind, but rather do your work efficiently and thoroughly and trust that others are able to see what is really going on.

Why do people do it?

The personal benefit of such behaviour is straightforward. It stops people feeling vulnerable. They are in control of their own little world and, so long as they keep it like that, they will be safe. The impact on themselves is limited and poor relationships may evolve. The impact on the people around them can lead to either helpless or defensive states. Such is the power of fear and the fragility of self-esteem.

The benefits of becoming less defensive

The effort to leave behind old defensive thinking and behaviour is well worth it because many defensive people, once they recognise the negative impact

their attitude and behaviour can have on themselves and others, go on to develop much more satisfying personal and business relationships.

Defensive people are often highly skilled and experienced. When they become less defensive they can become a dynamic part of the team and their level of performance is usually high. Organisational benefits may include:

- Greater productivity
- Less collective stress
- Less distractions
- Reduction in conflict
- A more cohesive team
- Engaging leadership

For these reasons, it is well worth persevering with your attempts to wean a colleague off their destructive defensive habits.

From awkward to reasonable - The story of George

George was a store man in a manufacturing company. He was qualified and experienced and managed the logistics for a large manufacturing company over several sites. In keeping with the principle of 'just in time' for goods on shelves, having stock for a long period was not acceptable. His main store was kept clean and tidy and he knew where all the stock was and the company computer system enabled him to manage it properly. He was also a large man with a large voice and had a very aggressive manner and a cynical view of everything, particularly the company and the government.

Most people who visited the store for stock did so with some trepidation. They knew that they would be verbally abused by George and made to 'jump through hoops' to get the items they needed. George demanded perfection in the paperwork and even when completed would not always release the items immediately. People would have to wait until George was good and ready. Larger items once released were often left in places which were not convenient for the production team.

George attended a programme on personal effectiveness and leadership. He immediately stated that he was there under duress. George's opinion was that all 'training' was a waste of time and he did not have time to spare. Others in the group said nothing. During the early parts of the workshops George was loud, cynical and tried to be funny. However, as the programme progressed George went quiet. Then at the end of the second day George spoke. His voice was much quieter. He asked the group to listen to him. His first words

were, "I'm sorry". He then explained that he had no idea how negative and disruptive his behaviour was and the impact it had been having on people. He then asked for help and virtually everyone in the group said they would. George asked people what they wanted from him and said that he wanted to change for the better.

An action plan was agreed in which George would receive regular feedback from two members of the production team. George became customer-focused and provided the parts when they were wanted and where they were wanted, which reduced both time wastage and other people's frustration. His positive changes became part of several initiatives which collectively enabled production to be measurably increased.

Hot tip

Remember, defensive people behave as they do because they feel vulnerable and threatened. More than anyone, they need support and reassurance to help them change. Befriend them, but don't get drawn into their negative games.

Summing up

Defensive people are difficult to deal with because they can seem so unapproachable, autocratic, even bloody-minded and awkward. Most of the time other members of the team deal with them by avoiding personal contact altogether.

It is important to remember that the root of defensive behaviour is often a sense of vulnerability. Defensive people often mask this by seeming full of confidence to the point of arrogance. They protect themselves from threat by imposing their, usually negative, world view on those around them and seem to have little flexibility in their thinking or behaviour, which is best described as rigid. This makes any potential change a particularly big challenge for them, and they often strenuously resist efforts to update or modernise.

Unfortunately, they respond very badly to being challenged or confronted, resorting to anger or humiliation tactics to control others or snuff out what they see as unfair criticism. This is because even constructive criticism is interpreted as a threat to their self-esteem, which in reality is already damaged.

Defensive people *can* produce results, but with some very negative consequences for individuals or organisations. The cost implications of this kind of mind unfitness are high. And the perpetuation of defensiveness

Chapter 8 Learned Defensiveness®

throughout an organisation at every level is a vicious cycle which has a poisonous impact on culture and climate.

The good news is that many defensive people can be persuaded to see the error of their ways, become more self-aware and adopt more effective ways of thinking and behaving with others. They then become a valuable part of the team.

Section three:

Mind Fitness

in action

Disengagement, stress and absenteeism

“If you don't like your job you don't strike. You just go in every day and do it really half-assed. That's the American way.” (Homer Simpson)

In this chapter we put forward some radical ideas that underlie disengagement, stress and absenteeism. These all impact extensively on performance and productivity, and the outcome is low levels of mind fitness.

The context in which people work must also be taken into account as it may encourage them to be more mind fit – or make the problem even worse.

What's the basic idea?

Something is very wrong with organisations around the world. The three scourges of disengagement, absenteeism and stress are eating away at performance, productivity and profitability. Homer, unfortunately, is typical of workers in the United States of America and elsewhere around the globe. In no way is he, or they, fully participating in the businesses in which they work. This has major consequences on the bottom line performance of organisations.

There is a lot of truth in an old story about a Chief Executive Officer who, when asked how many people worked for him, replied "about 30%". Amongst other studies, Gallup estimates the costs of employee disengagement alone in the UK at an unbelievable £37.2 billion to £38.9 billion per year. This does not include the additional costs associated with stress and absenteeism.

For years, at the highest levels of business, academia and government, considerable amounts of time, money and effort have been invested in tackling this problem. Some of the best thinkers in the world are struggling to define and understand the phenomena of workplace disengagement, absenteeism and stress. Right now, there isn't a consensus about the way forward. Dealing with these issues demands a very different approach and mindset from that which has been dominant in the past.

The root cause of disengagement, stress and absenteeism is a lack of mind fitness. Unless this is addressed, no real change is possible. Any attempts to tackle these problems by other means can only scratch the surface – literally.

Let's first look at engagement

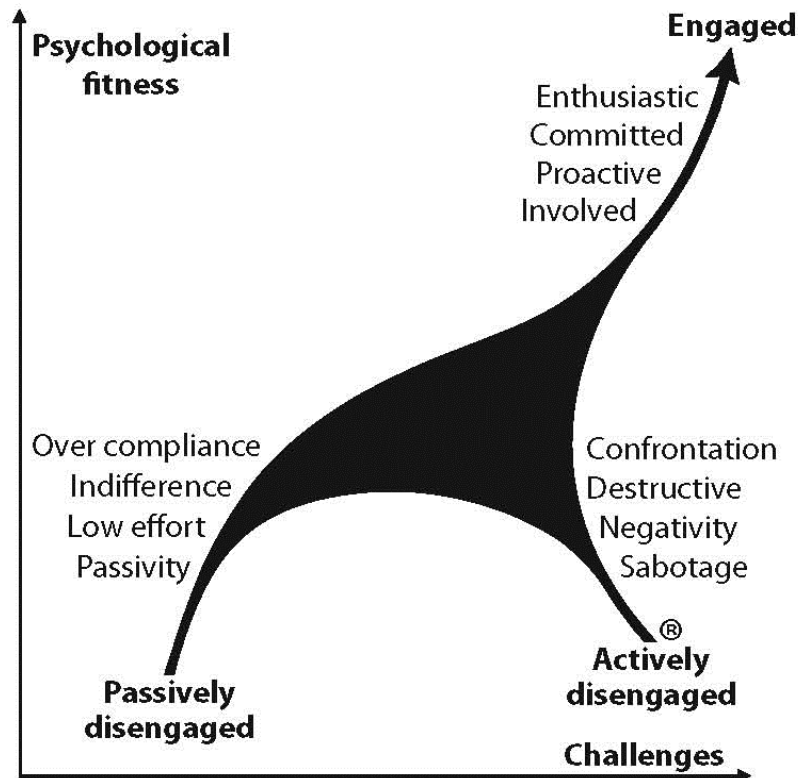
A fierce academic debate is currently raging about the definition of engagement. It is fascinating to see how opinion is edging ever closer to the idea that it is something that lies inside people, and it is not just their observable behaviours.

Gallup kicked off the debate by identifying the differing behaviours of three kinds of workers as shown in the map below. One group are fully engaged at work. They are proactive and keen to know what is expected from them so they can meet and exceed those expectations. They are motivated, passionate about their work and have a real commitment to their company. They perform at consistently high levels. Gallup estimate that, at most, 29% of employees fall into this category.

In contrast, the remaining 71% of employees are divided into two groups. 54% are passively disengaged people. They have low energy levels and tend to function rather than perform. They concentrate on tasks rather than achieving goals and want to be told what to do. Their output is low and they are likely to have no real aspirations of their own.

The second group are actively disengaged people and can be very destructive. They comprise about 17% of employees. This group have high levels of negative energy. They act out their discontent and sow seeds of negativity at every opportunity. They are indifferent to company goals and mission. Actively disengaged workers often sabotage the genuine efforts of their engaged co-workers.

The engaged group are mind fit and accept challenges as opportunities from which they can learn and be successful. The passively, disengaged majority are mind unfit and challenges often leave them feeling physically drained. They survive by complying. On the other hand, the actively disengaged are fighting to survive and adopt a more aggressive stance by working in a way which gives them control over their environment or other people.



It is not difficult to see how Gallup's behavioural categories maps onto the Personal Profile Map TM. When organisations make demands, as they are entitled to do, some people respond positively, others negatively. The result is either engagement, or passive and active disengagement. Internally, these people vary greatly in their level of mind fitness, which is the real reason why they respond in these very different ways.

Gallup has described a phenomenon – we have drilled down to its roots.

The explanation above flies in the face of Gallup's findings. They suggest that disengagement is caused by external factors such as management, the work culture, poor communication, lack of resources and support. Undoubtedly, these do have a part to play in the problem.

However, when you ask helpless people why they are disengaged, their lack of awareness is often so low that they struggle to provide an answer. They have learnt to be one of life's victims. They internalise the cause of disengagement as themselves. For example, they state that they have lost their confidence, are unable to relate to new technology or new procedures. Change is terrifying and they do everything to avoid it. They just want to be left alone to function. Disengagement happens to them naturally, effortlessly and unknowingly.

Conversely, actively disengaged employees tell you very clearly that the reason they are disengaged is nothing to do with them. It is the management and culture. They externalise the reason for being disengaged and will take no responsibility themselves. Comments such as "It's not me", "They did it to me", or "It's all their fault" are typical. These people seek every opportunity to avoid taking ownership and, inevitably, not deliver what they are required to do. Excuses run amok.

Powerful people simply don't think or talk like this. They are highly aware, take responsibility and ownership for their actions and the tasks they have to complete. They go the extra mile to finish what is necessary; will look for improved ways of doing things; and show loyalty and pride in the organisation.

However, we do not suggest that all disengagement is caused by the level of mind fitness of the employee. There is a relationship between the way people are treated and their responses to it. This will be explored in depth in the following chapters.

What about stress and absenteeism?

The current deluge of stress and absenteeism is another major thorn in the side of organisations. Current interventions aimed at addressing these two problems, such as monitoring sickness levels, return to work interviews and occupational health support, are simply not working well enough. This is not surprising – they fail to address the underlying issue. Stress and absenteeism are examples of the impact of low levels of mind fitness. Ask yourself this, do mind fit, powerful people suffer from stress or are absent without a real cause?

The kind of intervention which works best for stress is to help people improve their levels of mind fitness. It works because it tackles the cause, not the symptoms. Individuals who have attended our programmes suffering from stress, on returning to work have successfully tackled what once seemed impossible tasks. And crucially, they report that their stress levels have fallen quickly and dramatically. The reason is that they initially worked with what is in their control - themselves. Then they tackled the challenge.

Absenteeism is a dysfunctional way to deal with a situation which an individual finds intolerable. Psychologists call it 'avoidance coping'. Getting out of a situation that you don't like is a simple way to make you feel better, but at a cost. It is all too easy to blame absenteeism on 'poor' leadership, a 'toxic' culture, lack of time or lack of resources. Mind fit people do not avoid situations. They take control of the controllable and do something about the issues they face.

So what is really going on?

Each individual has a unique range of mind fitness or unfitness tools at their disposal. The habitual use of some of these tools leads to a sense of powerfulness, helplessness or defensiveness and the behaviours associated with them. Although tools are used habitually, everybody has the choice to use whatever tools seem appropriate for the context in which they find themselves. Unfortunately, many negative habits which people have learnt naturally have become so ingrained that they have no awareness of the impact that they are having on themselves or others. For example, helpless people may consistently avoid saying anything during a meeting because they believe that they are shy and are not worth listening to. No one is born shy. A defensive person when offered feedback may always lose their temper which prevents people giving feedback. We are all capable of controlling our tempers.

There is evidence to show that people come to work in a new job ready to be engaged. They applied for the job, accepted the job and arrive fully motivated. What happens next depends entirely on the working context. As Gallup and others have shown, the news is not good. During their first six months in a new job, between 70 and 80% of people become disillusioned, resulting in disengagement. When we explore this to find out what is actually going on, we find something very interesting.

We live in a society obsessed by goals, targets, measurement and monitoring. An over-emphasis is placed on organisational structures, policies and procedures. Many are essential to ensure that organisations comply with legislations; others are often applied in a very hierarchical and authoritarian way. This over-controlling work environment has the effect of taking unnecessary control away from people. As we have learned in earlier chapters, this can result in people behaving in an unfit mind way.

This unrelenting need for organisational control and compliance from workers heightens the level of mind unfitness and its behavioural consequences of disengagement, absenteeism and stress.

Tradition and legacy lie behind the dominant management and leadership style found in many organisations in the USA, UK and elsewhere in the world. It has been, and remains, authoritarian. This misguided view still held by these leaders, that they need to 'be in control' of an organisation, lies at the heart of disengagement, stress and absenteeism. As mentioned earlier, the language used still contains metaphors linked to giant machines. 'Captains of industry'; 'levers of power'; 'cogs in a machine'. These origins come from the

19th century when organisations were viewed as mechanical and linear in nature.

As we now understand and talked about in Chapter 4, organisations are not machines, and neither are people. They are best described as 'complex adaptive systems'. The natural world has always been full of these – machines are a very recent invention. Back in Victorian times, we were seduced by our achievements in making wonderful machines which changed all our lives. Our forefathers thought they knew everything about the world, including the nature of organisations. How wrong they were – and we are still suffering from their misguided ideas.

What can be done about all this?

The most potent solution to disengagement, stress and absenteeism in the workplace is leadership that inspires and engages. These are individuals who themselves are mind fit and have the skills to help people let go of their helpless and defensive tools and restore a sense of powerfulness.

Everyone has powerfulness tools. But if they have habitually learnt to use helplessness and defensiveness ones they can easily slip into the old routine as soon as they meet the familiar over-bearing approach which echoes something they encountered in their past.

Not only will people *feel* helpless or defensive – they will *behave* like that, too. The two are inextricably linked. If these behaviours are not the ones which an organisation wants, the only real way to eliminate them is to tackle the root cause. At the moment, organisations are simply punishing the behaviours they don't want without putting in place strategies to prevent them reappearing.

An inspiring leader can help them stop the overuse of negative tools and encourage greater use of powerful ones. Individuals benefit, teams benefit and organisations benefit.

Top tip

Don't forget – everyone has the choice to use powerfulness tools, as well as helplessness and defensiveness tools.

Getting my life back - Rosie's story

Rosie attended a three-day intensive course on personal development based entirely around building self-awareness and mind fitness. What follows are

virtually verbatim comments from her learning log. Just notice how she changed inside, and how her behaviours also changed in line with her new sense of powerfulness.

"I had understood previously that we are the authors of our lives, but this system (process of developing mind fitness) gives a route map and clear guidelines about how to do that. No other learning has given me this framework to work within.

"The outcomes (below) may appear small in themselves but they have produced a shift in both how I feel and how I approach situations, and I am still learning and embedding.

"In the past, I have definitely been plagued by unhelpful drivers such as 'be perfect', 'hurry up' and 'please people'. I have also become aware over time of my own 'shoulds' and 'musts' and now question them in terms of what I really want to do and what is most appropriate in the circumstances. I have also been very good at 'awfulising'! Now that I am aware of them, I check out my self-talk and challenge them.

"I have developed a much more positive outlook on life. With a clearer understanding of the impact of feelings on behaviour, I have worked well through the year to stay focused, be positive, be accepting, be creative and deal with the unknown.

"I am also more proactive. I am definitely better at getting things that need doing, done – and this produces a good feeling of achievement as well as being less stressful for the people around me that are impacted.

"My ability to handle stress has improved. The timing of the recession, clashing with our intended house extension plans, made the last year very stressful for me and I have felt anxious about the potential drop in our income. It has been a useful learning opportunity to check my attitudes, stress relieving tools, how I confront my anxiety and how I try and make sure it doesn't transmit to clients.

"I have become much more aware of a very deep and 'reptilian' defence type feeling that I carry which is fear based, and how that feeling has in the past led to unhelpful behaviour. I am much more aware of it now and beginning to get more control of its effect on my behaviour.

"I have also found I can be unrealistic in my beliefs and expectations about what I can achieve and be inclined not to put enough effort in to my

preparation which sometimes leads me into stressful situations where I feel under-prepared.

"The impact of greater (mind) fitness on my life, both at home and at work has been considerable. These are just some of the areas where I have benefited.

- Loss of 6lb weight
- Gained running friends
- A more organised desk and calmer approach to life
- A more relaxed family breakfast time
- Making better contributions at home and work and feeling more authentic and "substantial" in those contributions
- More authentic business relationships
- Better capacity to handle pressure
- I can't report an increase in earnings yet, but suspect it will come. I can, however, report a positive approach to the recession, and pride in how I have handled it.
- A better sense of optimism and more solution-focused approach to things, and a greater confidence that my dreams are possible!
- And the interesting thing is that this improvement in my own mind fitness has rubbed off! I am delighted to see a very exciting maturity in my ten-year-old daughter that I never had at that age."

In summary

Organisations urgently need to tackle disengagement, stress and absenteeism in the right way. If they are to do this, they need to understand what these behaviours really are, and what drives them. The key which unlocks this puzzle is mind fitness, and its role in creating a sense of personal power.

The true stories throughout this book provide real examples of how sustained personal change can create people who become engaged, involved and productive. Much of this is down to personal awareness and increased mind fitness. And of course, the context in which they operate is crucially important.

Unless people have a degree of control over their lives, many may slip back into well-rehearsed patterns of helplessness and defensiveness without realising it. The presence of an inspiring leader can prevent, or at least reduce, this tendency. It is likely this will happen in two ways. First, he or she will act as a role model who can be admired and emulated and, second, they can return control to where it should be – at the coalface.

Strengths and personal power

“If you think you can, you’re right. If you think you can’t, you’re right.”
(Henry Ford)

Simply put, personal strengths are those things that you are good at. Sometimes they are referred to as your characteristics or talents. The current fascination with personal strengths has created a plethora of assessment tools and training solutions in the business world. The desire to measure strengths, strengthen organisations or select people for strengths has never been more apparent. And yet, ironically, many of the concepts and theories surrounding strengths are fundamentally flawed, resulting in missed opportunities. The reason is that strengths are believed by some influential psychologists to be innate. That belief has been taken up by those who recruit and develop people in organisations. The loss in potential growth in organisations is huge, as people are not selected for the strengths they could develop but only those that they are currently using.

In this chapter, I explore the concept of strengths in a new and understandable way. Showing how this introduces a wealth of opportunity to develop new strengths, leaving many personal weaknesses behind. The result is a boost to your sense of mind fitness and personal power.

What’s the basic idea?

The idea of developing strengths has been around for over sixty years. The concept of Dependable Strengths was introduced in 1945 by Dr Bernard Haldane to help US military veterans make the transition to civilian life. After the war, Haldane went on to develop the concept of marketing one’s strengths and potential in everyday life, with a focus on helping children and the poor build their self-esteem. This idea was the seed that blossomed into a personal development approach that has since spread worldwide.

Haldane’s process would today be immediately recognised by sport psychologists as a technique which focuses on maintaining positive self-beliefs in front-of-mind memory instead of negative, self-limiting beliefs. *What Haldane called strengths are simply positive self-beliefs, and like any other belief, it is possible to forget, change or adapt them.*

So where do strengths come from?

Haldane’s focus was on helping people become clearer about their own buried strengths. He certainly believed that strengths could be developed, or

increased. His thinking was that once acquired, strengths based on positive self-beliefs become part of the individual, similar to a personality trait.

The idea that strengths are innate and part of personality has coloured subsequent thinking. A good example can be found with Gallup who developed Haldane's ideas from which they identified 34 main 'themes of talent' – or strengths. A questionnaire was designed to help people to identify their five most dominant strengths. Gallup called these 'Signature Strengths'; examples include being an achiever, being consistent, being self-assured, being a developer, and being empathic.

Crucially, Gallup introduced the notion that 'playing to strengths' rather than 'fixing weaknesses' is a more effective route to increased performance. Their questionnaire identifies strengths, not weaknesses. It is used to identify people with those identifiable strengths from the Gallup list to perform a particular job role. This is all about finding a good job fit for people with a particular profile, a familiar theme in 20th century thinking.

At the same time that Gallup started to develop its own approach to strengths, academic research created a classification of human strengths, called Values in Action (VIA). This identifies the core 'virtues' that are apparently consistently valued across cultures and across time. The main virtues identified are wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence. The VIA questionnaire is based on this core classification, and identifies twenty-four strengths linked to the virtues such as creativity, persistence, social intelligence, integrity and hope.

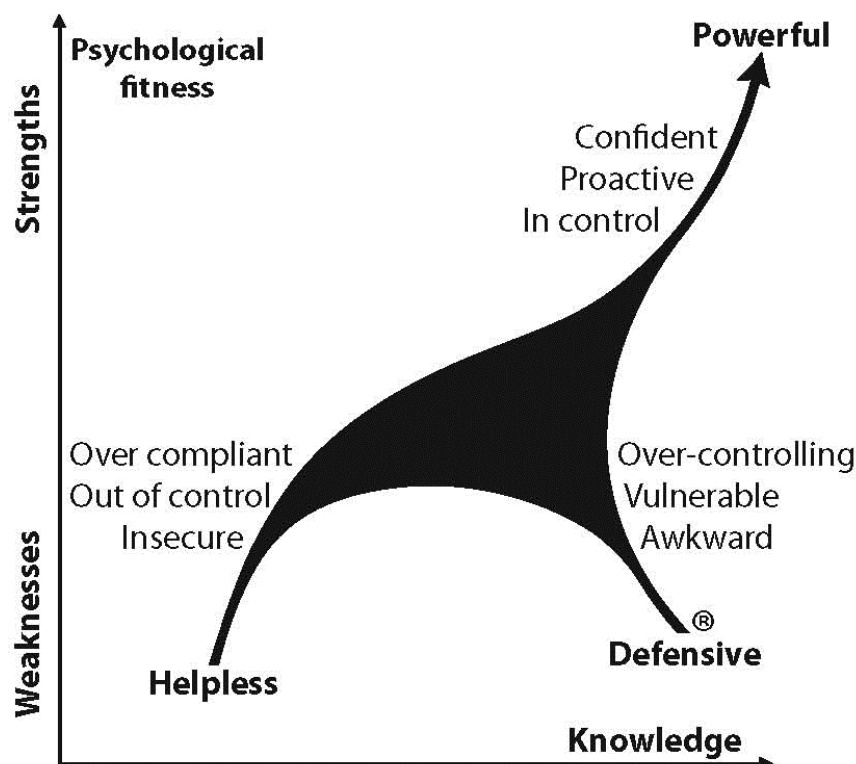
This all sounds sensible and plausible. The notion of strengths at work is now beginning to assume centre-stage as the 'strengths revolution' begins to roll. A huge market is being created on the back of the 'strengths revolution' and yet, the problem is that the basic idea about strengths being innate is, quite simply, wrong. People have forgotten the pioneering work of Bernard Haldane. Strengths, based on positive self beliefs, can be developed or enhanced.

A new way forward?

Since the 1970's, it has become clear that positive self-beliefs are very important for performance. Overwhelming evidence has shown that positive self-beliefs about one's capabilities to perform well in a given situation largely determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. As one eminent researcher put it - performance is not simply a matter of how capable one is, *'but of how capable one believes oneself to be'*.

There is a simple and elegant way forward. Our work in this field shows that self-beliefs are related both to a perceived *capability* to act, which are the skills and knowledge that a person has, and to one's perceived *capacity* to act, which is the level of mind fitness. In other words – you can have positive beliefs both about your skills and knowledge, and about your mind fitness. The second of these is what are currently called strengths.

The Personal Profile Map™ below shows the core model with its two dimensions. The horizontal relates to skills and knowledge, whilst the vertical relates to our level of mind fitness which manifests itself in our strengths and weakness.



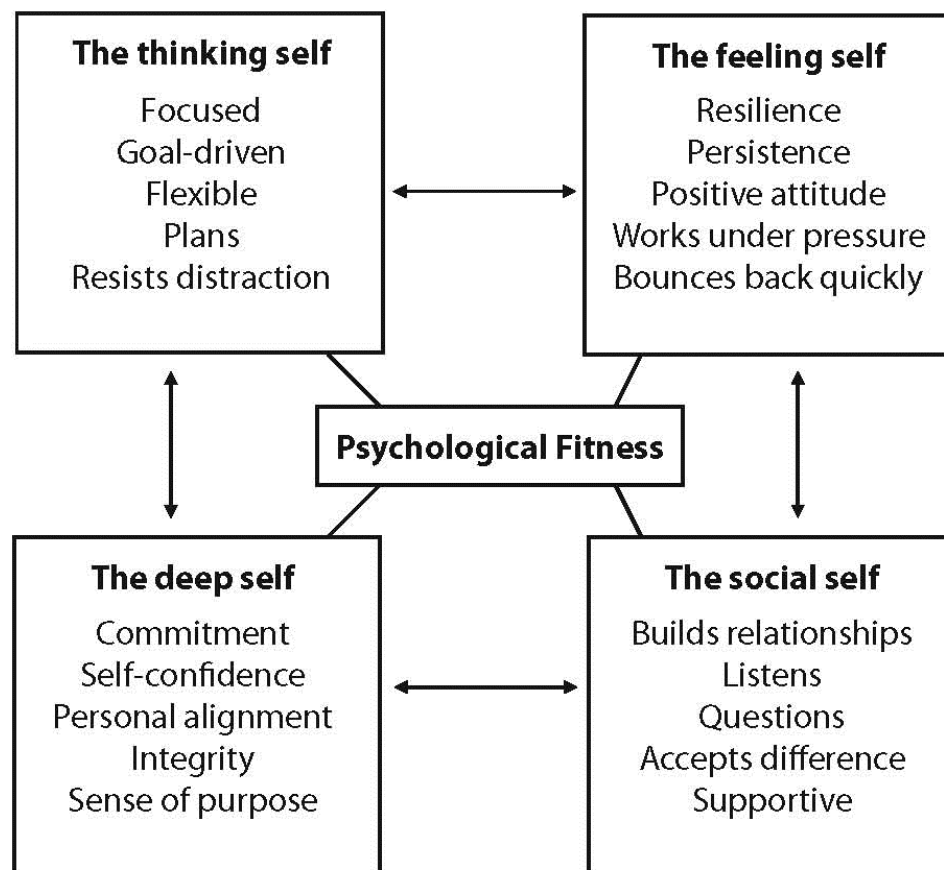
The map shows that when you put these two positive self-beliefs together, namely skills and knowledge, and mind fitness and strengths, you get a real and meaningful sense of your own personal power. That is why developing mind fitness is vital. Even if you are highly skilled, and believe yourself to be so, without beliefs about mind fitness you will simply remain confident in your abilities, but not in yourself.

Seeing strengths as the outcomes of mind fitness is a very different and far-sighted way of thinking. Follow this argument and strengths become simply self-beliefs about your ability to use a learned range of personal skills and strategies which are picked up during a lifetime. The very idea has

revolutionary implications. It means that none of us is fixed at birth. We can change by increasing awareness, practice and perseverance.

Few people come equipped with all the strengths they need to do their job. But by learning to become mind fitter, they can acquire new strengths. Strengths are learnable exactly in the same way as powerfulness, helplessness and defensiveness.

This is not such a staggering insight – we are talking here about wisdom and maturity, and the life-long development of individuals. The concept of learnable strengths is an idea which is both cathartic and liberating, and accords with our own experience. People can learn to be focused, resilient, committed and supportive.



Strengths and the four selves

This diagram provides examples of how particular strengths are the product of high levels of mind fitness, in each part of the complex self. There are many more strengths that can be developed in each quadrant to meet personal and organisational needs.

What about weaknesses?

The truth is that few of us are wholly mind fit. Most of us come with at least some aspects of ourselves which could be tuned up or improved. The question arises – if strengths and mind fitness are linked – is the opposite true for weaknesses?

The answer must be yes. People who appear to have real weaknesses seem to be mind unfit, and their weaknesses can also be fitted into our model of four selves. You may want to check this out for yourself by writing your perceived weaknesses in four boxes under thinking, feeling, deep and social.

For example, if you believe you are too anxious to do presentations or not bright enough to come up with new ideas, then these beliefs about your intellectual and emotional functioning are two of your perceived weaknesses. Unfortunately, many people build up quite a collection of perceived weaknesses which has a significantly negative impact on their work life and personal relationships.

The good news is that virtually everyone can learn to improve their mind fitness and strengths simply by practising. How long in real time did it take you to become good at tying a shoelace, learning to text with your thumb or driving a car? The answer, with focused effort, is not long when you consider how those tasks are quite complex. Sometimes a little support speeds the process up. In other words, you can overcome weaknesses and build new strengths through focused practice.

Research on how to develop strengths

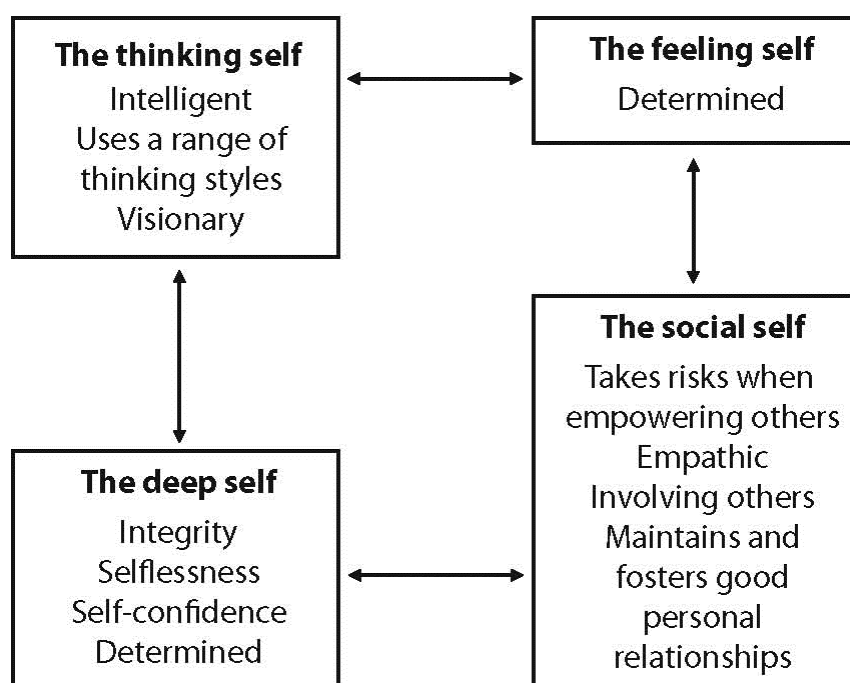
Some eminent scientists have acknowledged that, to date, they cannot find the genetic components of peak performance or peak performers. What they have found is that people who practice and persevere, ensuring that what they focus on is deliberate, their performance improves dramatically. The longer you practice, the better you become.

We tested our insights in a number of ways. We looked at the application of strengths needed in a specific field, namely leadership. Then, working with organisations and individuals, we explored alternative methods to identify how mind fitness is improved.

In both the USA and the UK, research into leadership has identified some of the characteristics of what are called Transformational Leaders. These are leaders who can help organisations move through big changes, and tackle big

challenges. They seem to have what we might term „character“, and people willingly follow them because of it. But that is not the whole story.

We wondered if the published research describing the qualities (or strengths) of Transformational Leaders mapped onto our model of the four selves. And it does. You will see that we have included determination in both the feeling and deep self as you can 'feel' determined and 'be' determined at the same time.



The strengths of Transformational Leaders

This is encouraging, because it shows that quite specific strengths, which are appropriate for a particular job role, can be accounted for by our model. In fact, our applied work seeks to create these strengths through the development of greater mind fitness in leaders.

Developing strengths in practice

A powerful test of our ideas was to examine if strengths could be developed or enhanced through increased mind fitness. Participants were asked what personal impact they had noticed as a result of attending one of our programmes. To demonstrate the personal impact we have listed a selection of those strengths and the descriptions identified by Gallup and VIA and bullet pointed the participants' response underneath them.

Chapter 10 Strengths and personal power

Perspective (VIA) – having ways of looking at the world that makes sense to self and others.

- It made me aware of difficulties, real or perceived and what was distracting me.
- I have increased awareness of what I am doing.
- I have better awareness of where I spend my time and what I do.

Vitality (VIA) – enthusiasm, excitement and energetic approach to things.

- I feel more involved.
- I am now more relaxed and have more energy to do the job.
- I get so enthusiastic. It's positive and helps with new ideas.

Self assurance (Gallup) – feel confident in their ability to manage their own lives. They possess an inner compass that gives them confidence that their decisions are right.

- I feel more confident.
- I've changed my beliefs from "What's the point" to "What I am doing is OK".
- Recognising blockers has helped me be more realistic.

Leadership (VIA) – maintaining good relationships whilst getting the tasks completed: goal-directed organising of people.

- I am less directive.
- I now adapt my style according to others.
- I involve and engage people and get amazing results.

The results show that strengths can be acquired. Each person had stopped doing something which had a negative impact and practiced a small action to improve their mind fitness. When linked to organisational challenges the improvement in performance and productivity is huge. Examples of the impact include:

- Completion of a task which routinely took 2 hours 45 minutes was reduced to 45 minutes through increased focus.
- Meetings were reduced by 60% and became more effective.
- Production increased from 55 units a week to 85.
- £300,000 was recovered by a local authority in seven weeks.

What difference would a small change make to you or your organisation?

My approach to develop mind fitness opens the way to a completely new understanding of how to build strengths, and benefit from the change,

individually and organisationally. And incidentally, the findings pose a very big challenge to those people who think strengths are a fixed aspect of our genetic make-up and personality.

What kind of strengths do you need?

The focus is, and has always been, performance. There is a reason for this. These ideas grew from science, sport and operating in the world of work. I have always had performance as its *raison d'être*, and many of the interventions from sport can and are increasingly used to increase the 'mind fitness' of an already very skilled and fit athlete. So why not other people in every walk of life? My current focus now is organisational and, of course what a business wants more than anything else these days is high levels of performance and productivity from its employees.

Not all mind fit people need performance-related strengths. For example, the strengths of the Dalai Lama or a social worker are almost certainly very different from that of, say, a Sir Steve Redgrave or a Sir Richard Branson. It would certainly be interesting to compare the cluster of strengths needed to be a priest with that of a salesperson.

Our initial work has been that the critical – or 'signature' – strengths needed in the world of work are focus, resilience, commitment and the ability to make meaningful connections with others. Each one of these strengths is connected to one part of the human dimension – the thinking, feeling, deep and social selves. There will be other 'strengths' involved; however, these will be very personal and context-dependent.

Overcoming cultural beliefs – The story of Suhkvinder

Suhkvinder was an administrator for a Local Authority. She was a very pleasant woman in her forties, good at her job, and a proud mother of two children, both doing very well at school. Her brother was a medical doctor, and she was clearly capable of much more than her relatively unchallenging role.

Unfortunately, she considered she lacked confidence, and seemed to constantly worry about things, particularly the way she believed she was perceived by her parents and brother. Both her mother and her brother 'put her down' as a matter of routine, and this was beginning to have a very negative effect on her. It is hardly surprising that she felt like a child again in their presence.

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She had her eyes opened by attending one of our programmes and, unusually, requested two one-on-one coaching sessions to address her concerns about herself. It turned out that the culture in which she was brought up greatly undervalues females. She was even expected to leave a room if a man came in! Her brother denigrated her at every opportunity, and his remarks really hurt.

After these sessions, Suhkvinder recognised that some changes to the way she thought – or didn't think – could be helpful. In addition, she surfaced some of her positive beliefs about herself, all of which were deeply buried. Becoming more positive about her strengths, Suhkvinder developed a strategy to cope with the undermining behaviour of her family.

Suhkvinder positively blossomed, to such an extent that people commented about her more confident demeanour. She plucked up the courage to apply for a more challenging and better-paid job. She got it. Not only that – she realised that now she could go on developing and growing, and become the woman she knew she could be, and signed up for some more personal development work.

The benefits of developing and focusing on your strengths

Your strengths are a key source of your personal power. Like Haldane before us, we have found that many people spend time focusing on their weaknesses, and their strengths sink from view. This has a huge effect on the individual's quality of life as they become more and more helpless or defensive.

Doing the opposite, deliberately finding your own strengths and improving your mind fitness to develop new strengths, is of immense personal value, and can generate benefits for both yourself and the organisation in which you work. You can expect

- Increased confidence
- Higher commitment
- More resilience
- Less stress
- More energy
- More productivity
- More fun

This is what it feels like to be powerful. Mind fitness, Strengths and Personal Power are intimately linked.

Hot tip

Once you have identified your own strengths, write them down and put the list somewhere where you can read them every day. Do not learn them – just read them. One day, you will find doing this boring and obvious; then you will know you have fixed your strengths in your awareness. Now live them.

Summing up

A number of ways of measuring strengths have been developed and, right now, the tendency is to see them as fixed, almost a part of personality. Science is changing its view as research shows that neither strengths nor personality are fixed.

Strengths and weaknesses are learned as we go through life. Every one of us picks up a range of useful personal strategies which make us more or less mind fit. When we have got the hang of these strategies, and they are well rehearsed, we develop beliefs about our abilities to use them. These positive and negative self-beliefs are our strengths and weaknesses.

Ask someone to think of the personal qualities and strengths of people who do their job well, and a detailed list of the strengths is produced. And yet, if you ask the same individuals what are their own strengths, they struggle. However, when you take them on a journey of self discovery to identify their own strengths, their list inevitably contains many of the strengths they see in others. We seem to struggle at focusing on our positive qualities. Yet focusing on our weaknesses is a toxic and self-destructive habit which erodes our sense of personal power.

Strengths at work and in our personal lives are going to be increasingly important in the future. Knowing that strengths are not set in concrete will be very important in helping people begin to develop the ones they need. And there can be no definitive list of strengths. It depends on what you need to achieve, whether that is being an inspiring leader, or an effective parent.

The good news is that, just as wisdom and maturity can come with age, better personal strategies and greater mind fitness can grow. Furthermore, by deliberately aiming to improve mind fitness, weaknesses fade, new strengths develop and personal power increases.

Inspiring leadership

“Leadership is not a position. It is a combination of something you are (character and strengths) and some things you do (competence).”

(Ken Melrose, Chairman and CEO of The Toro Company)

This is the first of three chapters where we explore why mind fitness is so important for organisations seeking higher performance, productivity or profit. It focuses on leadership, and in it we demonstrate that there really is no „right way“ for leaders to behave, but that leaders must continuously build on new understandings about themselves, other people and organisations.

One of the hallmarks of successful organisations in the future will be an ability to evolve the leadership style that is right for its time and its people.

What’s the big idea?

Pick up any book about leadership and you will find literally scores of theories. Over the years, the top thinkers have all had their own point of view to promote and, as ever, there are gems to be found amongst their writing. Sadly, however, many of these ideas and theories are now sounding decidedly creaky.

The world has changed immeasurably in just a few short decades. In some cases, beyond recognition, which is why leadership theory has not got the currency it once had. Our fathers and their fathers before them created the kind of leadership they needed. Those people and those days spawned explanations and models of leadership which were very much of their time.

Our old, common-sense ideas about leadership are fatally outmoded. 'Carrot and stick' approaches, 'strong' leadership, the old, dated vision of 'gung-ho' machismo, where the role of the leader was to 'lead', all need to be consigned to the history books.

One thing, however, has not changed. The expectations and needs of people will define leadership in the coming years, just as it did in the past. Over the years, these expectations and needs have changed. This is why leadership needs to change, and keep changing as the impact of the global recession continues to be felt and as successive generations enter the world of work.

The Baby Boomers, born after the Second World War, virtually had guaranteed jobs. They are now close to retirement. What has come to be known as Generation X, those people born in the 1960's and 1970's, entered a world of work that was chaotic, with no guarantee of a job and they became

comfortable with job hunting. More emphasis was placed on getting their own work-life balance in order. Their children and grandchildren are very different, and the impact is nothing short of mind-boggling.

Generation Y, born in the late 1970's to late 1990's are self-confident, optimistic, independent and often goal orientated. They are contradictory, highly demanding and think in terms of self-fulfilment. Jobs need to be interesting and challenging where they can be creative and have freedom and flexibility. They do not function well with over-controlling leaders and micro-managers.

The kind of leadership they will demand is still emerging but we can confidently predict it will not be like the leadership which went before.

Modern leaders absolutely have to engage with people, and that demands that they work at a human level. They must motivate and enthuse, inspire and energise their staff, by treating them as people, not cogs in a machine. And no matter how much you may yearn for the 'good old days', leadership is not going to go back to the past – Generation Y will see to that.

However, we must remember that the global recession and its aftermath may produce a very different and demanding generation with a focus on environmental issues or just having a job. It is too early to tell.

So what does all this mean?

It is a truism to say that change is always going to be with us but, in today's world, the pace is relentless. Organisations and their leaders need to be able to read and foresee changes, adapt and react quickly. The lumbering organisational dinosaurs of the past are doomed, and we have seen the demise of several of them already. Survival will depend on leading and working together in very different ways. We will explore this in more detail in the final chapters.

Changes in the way people work together are already beginning to emerge within organisations. These changes will accelerate in the near future. Employees will be more active and proactive. Greater mind fitness will need to be the norm. Employees will need to be flexible in how they work. They will work on the tasks, be leaders and temporary leaders. Effective team work will be needed, many of them self-directed. Working in isolation, at home, across the world and with different cultures with fast communication will increase.

Leadership theory and practice will need to keep up with these changes. The biggest challenges for leaders are to understand what their people expect of

them, and to let go of the past. They will need to lead in a way which allows choices with responsibility. The coaching revolution began the change process to future-proof inspirational leadership. There are other methods which compliment coaching to ensure engagement, commitment and loyalty.

Our framework helps leaders make sense of the journey which lies ahead. Its emphasis for 21st century leadership is about 'being' and not just 'doing' leadership.

What leaders do

In essence, a leader's job appears to be simple. They need to understand the organisation, know what the big picture is, what is required to deliver the product or service, decide what tasks will deliver the desired results and find a way to achieve it – through people.

This is the hard-nosed, commercial focus and drive which achieves results. There have been many very successful leaders who do this very well. They are popular with senior management. They hit their numbers and, by one measure at least, the bottom line, they make an enormous contribution to organisational success.

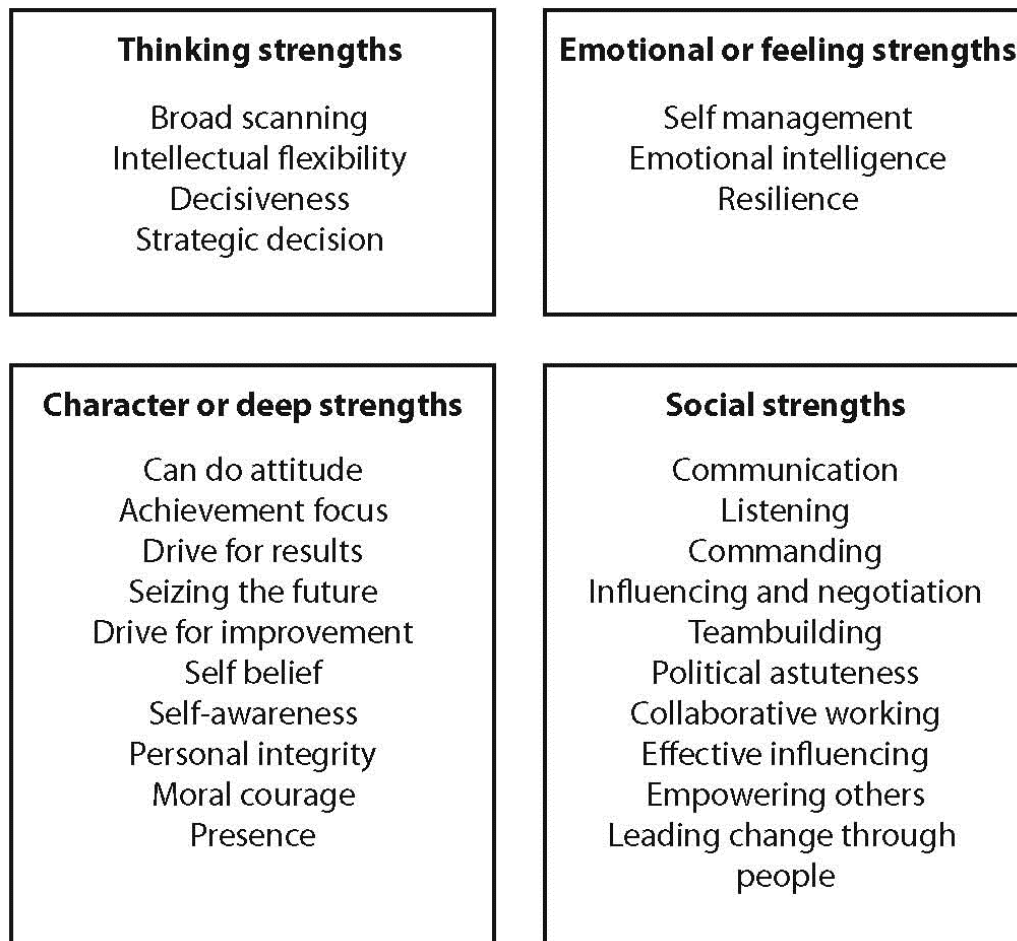
Remember Generation Y? The looming danger is that these younger people will not be prepared to work with this kind of leader. They are looking for a very different world of work where the 'feel' of an organisation is much more important than the size of their compensation package. In short, leaders are going to have to change their tune.

What leaders will need to be

We are beginning to see some of the qualities of these future leaders emerging in organisations where bottom line profits are not completely a way of life. Small examples of the future leader are emerging in organisations in both the private and public sector. In London, one local authority and one small part of the National Health Service (NHS) have introduced leadership which epitomises engagement. They are leading the change by living the qualities of effective modern leaders who help their people deliver sometimes quite extraordinary levels of service.

This may change with the economic pressures that local authorities and the NHS are under following the recession. However, it should not, as engaged staff are more productive and can give a better service with the same resources. They stop wasted human effort and know how to focus on what is important.

The strengths of these inspirational leaders can be transposed into our four selves as shown on the next page.



Strengths of an inspiring leader

This is precisely what current and future leaders will require.

We might want to add a few more strengths to this list. For example, focus and innovative thinking, positivity and an ability to manage work/life balance, empathy and being supportive, self-confidence and authenticity. Strengths can be developed and added as needed.

In both the USA and the UK, this new breed of leader has already been labelled. They are known as Transformational Leaders and, of course there are nuanced differences between organisations and continents – and indeed, researchers.

What is important is that research shows that people model themselves on leaders like this, and put in lots of discretionary effort to emulate them. Transformational leaders tend to give their staff many opportunities to work largely unsupervised, generating enthusiasm and confidence to perform well.

Compare this with the kind of toxic relationship which many traditional 'subordinates' have with their 'boss'. The reluctant compliance which such 'bosses' demand from their staff generates a disengaged workforce which is engulfing organisations worldwide.

The kind of personal qualities and strengths that are beginning to emerge as the key parameters of new-style leadership are related to mind fitness. These people have high levels of personal power.

Power and leadership

A majority of organisations today remain hierarchical as their internal structures show. Leaders are placed higher up the structure emphasising positional power. Some leaders may also have expert power, which is probably why they got the leader's job in the first place.

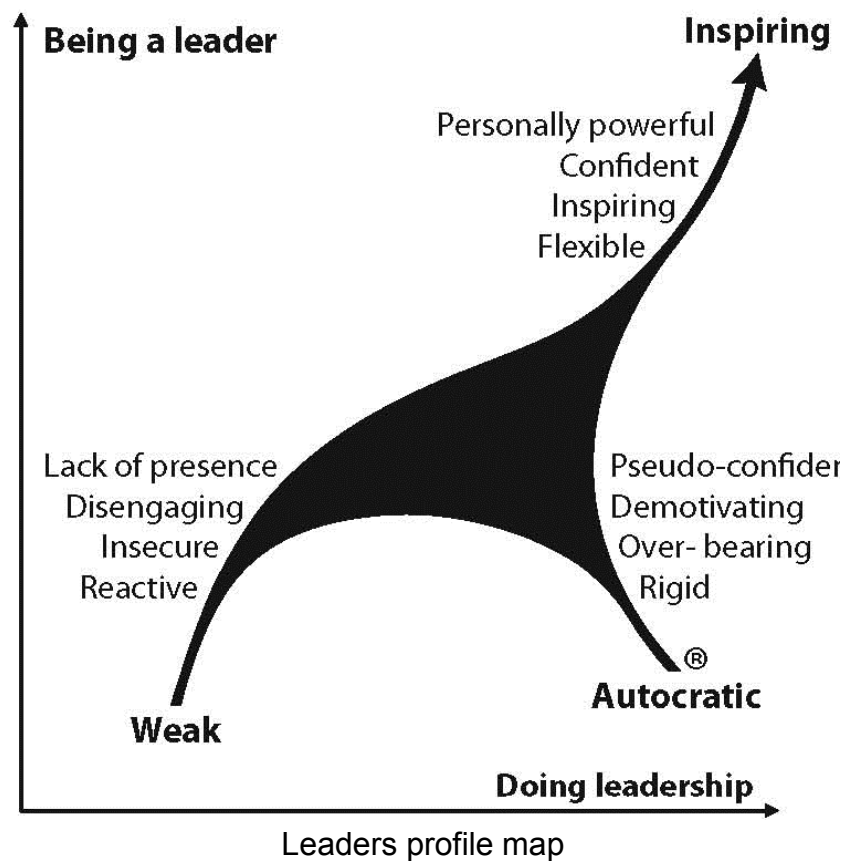
These two kinds of power conferred on leaders have led to many of them abusing it. Some use the power to get people to do what they want by over-controlling them. They demand a compliant workforce who just do the job and don't 'rock the boat'. However, the cost of this is a workforce which becomes disengaged, under-motivated or even bloody-minded. Taking power and control away from people has this effect. It also has a detrimental impact on the business and its bottom line, as time and effort is wasted getting people to perform.

Leaders in the future will not find too many willing subordinates in Generation Y. Instead of abusing positional or expert power, they will have to use their own personal power to engage their people.

A map of leadership characteristics and strengths

Mind fitness is a key ingredient in the new breed of leaders and is needed now, especially after the global recession. Mind fit people, with lots of personal power, know that it cannot be taken or used by anyone else. They have the confidence and skills to work with and for their colleagues in a very different way, meeting their needs rather than telling them what to do in no uncertain terms.

The map below shows how the two dimensions on our model of 'mind fitness' and 'knowledge fit' manifest themselves in a new type of leader as 'being a leader' and 'doing leadership'. Leaders need to live personal power to prevent 'can't do' and 'won't do' attitudes and enabling an increase in a 'can do' mindset. The results of the different states can clearly be seen.



Today, we need to think of organisational relationships in terms of interdependency. People working together in organisations of the future will almost certainly think this way. Leadership will be seen as a role, not a position, with everyone supporting each other to achieve the desired results.

Leading in complexity

In Chapter 13, we explore some revolutionary ideas about the nature of modern organisations. Organisations are actually made up of an interdependent group of human beings with hearts, minds and souls – with all that that implies. Leaders need to be able to deal with this level of human complexity, and the old ideas and practices which failed to understand this now need to be left behind in the 19th century where they belong.

Today's leaders – and leaders in the future - need the understanding, behaviours, beliefs, attitudes and value systems that will enable them to create the climate and culture that organisations need if they are to succeed in the 21st century. And the key to that will be improved mind fitness, linked to a new kind of inspiring and engaging leadership.

The benefits of inspiring and engaging leadership

As an individual's mind fitness, leadership strengths and competencies grow, they will:

- Be able to carry out the crucial tasks all leaders need to do well
- Develop the positive and flexible mindset that is crucial in today's world of work
- Become much more self-aware and understanding of how others operate
- Understand the impact they have upon other people
- Turn into a much more effective leader, able to create willing enthusiasts who themselves can take over the leadership as and when required

As you can see, greater mind fitness benefits people both at work and in their personal life.

Autocratic to engaging - The story of Vijay

Vijay was the Managing Director of a medium-size company with a small team of Operational Directors around him. A clever and very driven man, he was aggressively growing the business, expanding into overseas markets. His commercial acumen was not in doubt – but his ability to take his team and the rest of his people with him was. He was in the habit of emailing terse instructions at 2am, and even when on holiday. His BlackBerry was never idle. In fact, he conducted his leadership almost entirely by email from his office, and few of his immediate team, or more importantly his other staff, caught sight of him during the day. He held the growth strategy close to his chest.

Vijay came from a very high caste Indian culture. When we met him it was crystal clear that the concept of hierarchy was virtually ingrained in his DNA. He clearly thought of his team and staff as beneath him, hardly worth talking to face-to-face. Curiously, he was deferential to us, the 'consultants'. Vijay was blissfully unaware of the impact his attitude and behaviour were having on those around him. He was doing nothing out of the ordinary. And yet members of his team were seething with anger and, at lower levels, disengagement and conflict were rife.

This situation had become business critical as new products were not being developed. In desperation, Vijay had taken on additional staff to bridge the gap. This did not work but merely increased the internal conflict.

Chapter 11 Inspiring leadership

We worked with his team, which was not performing well – as you would imagine. At the beginning of the programme, Vijay told us all that he admired Ghandi. This was an opportunity to remind him that Ghandi had said "You must be the change you want to see in the world".

The impact on Vijay was profound. He suddenly saw the gap between what he was doing and what Ghandi espoused. With scales fallen from his eyes, he started to ask his team what they needed from him. And boy did they tell him! To give him his due, he acted upon the feedback. He came out of his office and visited the various departments in his organisation, followed by a Friday debrief for his team in his office, complete with refreshments.

From an organisation riven by strife, with morale and commitment at rock bottom, it slowly changed to one with a much more positive and dynamic culture. Vijay got his expansion and, more importantly, he took his people with him.

We have to pay tribute to this man with a very strong belief system who, through new-found self-awareness, was able to challenge and change some of his beliefs and move from a Genghis Khan style of leadership to a very much more effective one. He proved the point made by Warren Bennis, American scholar, organisational consultant and author, who said "The most dangerous leadership myth is that leaders are born -- that there is a genetic factor to leadership. This myth asserts that people simply either have certain charismatic qualities or not. That's nonsense; in fact, the opposite is true. Leaders are made rather than born."

Hot tip

Ask for feedback from the people you work with or who work for you. Remember, one of your jobs as a leader is to meet their needs and, unless you ask, you may never know what they need from you to perform at their best.

Summing up

In the future, two irresistible forces will demand that leadership changes. The first of these is that generations of people are very different. Our grandparents are very different from our children and that gap is not about to narrow any time soon. This is why leadership theories and practice need to change – and keep changing. Employees will insist on it.

The second force concerns the fact that organisations need to change and adapt ever more rapidly, as the old rigid structures and hierarchies quickly

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become outmoded. The rapid swings from growth to recession which we encounter today on a global scale require dynamic, inspiring and engaging leaders. The kind of leadership to meet these challenges is very different from 'old school' approaches.

Sitting at the heart of this new kind of leadership is mind fitness. This gives leaders the sense of personal power they need to get things done and enables them to create enthusiastic people, rather than compliant or disgruntled subordinates. By no longer abusing positional or expert power, these new leaders will be less likely to force their staff into the blind alleys of helplessness, defensiveness, and immediate disengagement.

By allowing people to develop their own personal power, they will benefit as well as performance at work and the organisation as a whole improving.

The dynamic team

“I love to hear a choir. I love the humanity... to see the faces of real people devoting themselves to a piece of music. I like the teamwork. It makes me feel optimistic about the human race when I see them cooperating like that.”

(Paul McCartney)

Paul McCartney is right. When we think about teams and their performance we so often forget that we are actually dealing with a group of individual human beings, with all the complexity that implies.

Sometimes, people can come together as a team and achieve their goals quickly and efficiently whilst other groups of people seem doomed from the start, with never-ending conflict and negativity getting in the way of what they have to do. One team we worked with described the team atmosphere as "functional anarchy", and their performance was rather predictably mediocre. Maybe this sounds familiar to you?

A simple definition of a team is that it is a collection of people who work towards a common goal. The surprising truth is that all these people are not just in the team to address business imperatives. They are also there to meet their own deep psychological needs. This is what Paul McCartney meant about the humanity of choristers.

In this chapter, we describe our brand-new model which acknowledges the importance of individuals' mind fitness for team atmosphere and performance. We also re-examine well-known theories to create a much clearer understanding of what teams are actually about. Finally, we make some suggestions about what you can do to help your own team excel.

What's the basic idea?

Work teams in this new century are much more diverse, complex and dynamic than ever before. These days, people work in networks, in virtual teams and in distributed teams. This has not yet fully sunk in, and most people still have a very fixed idea of what a team looks like. The old image of a work team is wrong. In today's world of work, teams really do vary a lot.

Some may exist over a long duration, such as a project teams, or for a short time period, for example whilst attending meetings. Work for the majority of people is team work and you will probably be part of several teams each day. Organisations really do need to have teams which quickly work well together and deliver business results.

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An enduring problem is that researchers do not yet have a theory of teams that works in the real world which could guide us towards better teamwork and better performance. Let's look at the two best known.

One of the most enduring notions that people have about teams is that they go through 'stages' as described in Bruce Tuckman's team model. His research identified four stages that teams go through from 'forming' into 'storming' then through 'norming' before 'performing'. In reality his model has not worked in the real world. This should not be much of a surprise. Tuckman's groundbreaking work actually focused on pulling together lots of research on groups of graduate and postgraduate students, patients in mental institutions and people in therapy. Not the normal mix in the workplace. It just somehow became part of management speak in spite of the obvious mismatch between the kinds of people Tuckman studied and people in the workplace.

In the world of work, very few teams actually 'form'. Most teams already exist and are joined by new members whilst existing team members sometimes leave. Project teams formed for a specific need are generally made up of people from within an organisation who already know each other. Teams of strangers that do form occasionally, such as hospital theatre teams or film production teams, use a fairly rigid etiquette to help them come together and deliver what is required without going through stages.

It is important to recognise that most teams do not go through all four stages in a linear way. Some simply form and perform almost at once. A few do get stuck in conflict and negativity. We have met a few 'teams from hell' along the way!

The second approach to team working can be found in Meredith Belbin's elegant team roles model. The descriptive roles include the 'shaper' who moves things forward, the 'plant' that has the ideas and the 'co-ordinator' who helps others focus on the task. The basic idea is that you can 'build' a team from the elements which he identified. In the same way as you might write a 'person spec' for a job role, you could write a 'team spec'. The problem is that this is too simplistic. People are much more than a 'plant' – they have strengths and weaknesses, hopes and dreams, good days and bad days. Not only that they change over time and in response to the people around them. Because of the people who work in them, teams are dynamic entities, not Lego models.

So what's really going on?

When we talked to participants on our courses about their experiences in teams, we realised that there had to be a missing element, something that until now had been ignored by previous thinkers and practitioners.

We zeroed in on team climate, which can have such a profound impact on the performance of the team.

We concluded that team climate is affected by three quite separate influences – the Personal, Interpersonal and Transpersonal factors which permeate all team-working.

Personal Factors – the 'I' in teams

- Mind fitness – individual level
- Psychological needs – individual drivers and needs

Interpersonal Factors – the 'We' in teams

- Communication skills – how we do this to ensure effective team working
- Mindset towards others – how we accept uniqueness and difference

Transpersonal Factors – the 'Us' in teams

- Vision – shared and understood within the team
- Values – turned into a set of working ground rules
- Leadership style – that inspires and engages

This means that creating mind fit team members is the first step towards creating a high performing team, but this is not the whole story. We also need to understand how psychological needs fit into the picture and, indeed, what they are.

We must not forget the importance of the team process skills and the organisational context in which the team operates. These 'interpersonal' and 'transpersonal' factors lie 'outside' individuals and remain even when individuals move on. They are also crucial. However, let's look at the personal factors – mind fitness and psychological needs and how they impact on a team.

Mind fitness and teams

People who are not mind fit will not make good team members. Teams may well malfunction because they are made up of too many 'helpless' people

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whilst some become dysfunctional because of the number of 'defensive' members. Great team work certainly seems to depend crucially on having mind fit team members.

Malfunctioning teams

If you recall from Chapter 7, people who are stuck in the helpless part of the Personal Profile Map™ have a sense of being overwhelmed, a lack of self-worth and, when things go wrong, they tend to believe that they are at fault.

People like this suck the energy out of a team. If a team shows no initiative, no involvement and appears to just function, the chances are that some of its members are 'helpless'. They create a low energy negative team mood which is likely to drag other team members down together with them. Expectations will be low from colleagues at work and leaders will need to constantly make decisions for them.

Can you imagine working in such an environment?

Have you worked in a team like this?

Dysfunctional teams

Chapter 8 describes Defensive attitudes and behaviours where suspicion, cynicism, bullying and blaming are common. In such a team, people like this try to assert their will on others either openly or covertly. In extreme cases, such teams become vicious places to be, with mere survival on a day-to-day basis becoming a major focus for people's energies. Team members become aggressive and operate in small cliques of similarly minded individuals. In some cases such teams do perform to a certain level but it is certainly hard work to be involved with them. Individuals or other teams outside a 'defensive' team will find it extremely difficult to work with them.

Does that sound familiar?

Dynamic teams

Imagine a team of mind fit individuals who come together to provide a service or product for the business. They each have a real sense of their own personal power and are able to relate to others very well. And they will be very people and task focused so that they deliver against the business need.

Such teams are positively energetic, they have a common purpose and they share and support each other. They are also more tolerant and demonstrate

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respect for others. Sadly, most people we meet say they have worked in such a team – but only once or twice in a career.

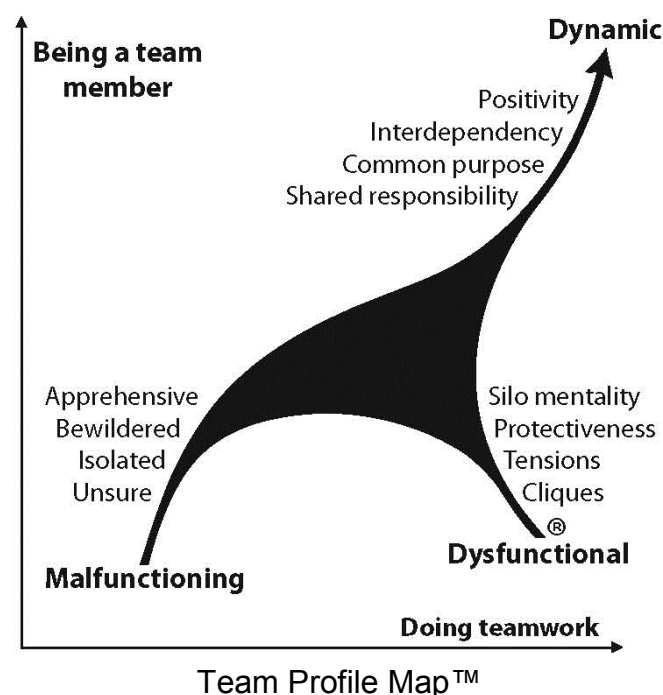
Is that true for you, too?

What all this means is that unless we make some effort to improve the mind fitness of team members, the team itself may never reach its full potential. Working on 'the team' just isn't going to work.

A moment's reflection will enable you to appreciate that the similarity between our team model shown below and our map of individuals in Chapter 10 is almost inevitable.

The model is built up from the Personal Profile Map™ in Chapter 1. In this case the two dimensions consist of 'being' a team member and 'doing' teamwork. A team mainly consisting of helpless people where, for instance, control is firmly held by the leader will be ineffective and collectively malfunction. Individuals will operate in isolation and team dynamics will not exist. Conversely, a team of defensive people may achieve a reasonable level of performance; however, this can be at a high personal cost as the environment created is often toxic.

People who have high levels of personal power will not only deliver the performance desired or more, but they will also do so in a way that builds a cohesive team of positivity and growth.



Psychological needs in teams

“The needs of the team are best met when we meet the needs of individuals.” (Max Dupree)

In Chapter 6 we referred to the personal drivers that exist in our deep self. These include drivers for such things as belonging, for growth, self-esteem and personal fulfilment. We experience these drivers in action as a psychological need which feels uncomfortable and demands that we satisfy it. A team is a great vehicle to help us do just that.

When a choir meets its members' needs, the music it creates can be truly uplifting. When a work team does this well, it can function superbly and over-deliver on the business task. If it fails to do so, the team's ability to perform its primary task will be compromised, sometimes fatally.

Helping a team to reach its potential

Although these two factors – mind fitness and satisfying personal needs – are both important for team work, unfortunately they can multiply together to make team-working a nightmare to manage. However, armed with an understanding of what is really going on in your team, you can certainly gain some leverage over the situation.

Remember, your primary tasks, whether as leader or team member, is to help individuals become more mind fit and help the team find ways to meet the needs of its members. The brutal truth is that their needs are not going to go away just because you insist that they focus on the task and neglect their own psychological reality. Human beings just aren't built like that! What will happen is that the team may get stuck and the outputs you need may never be achieved.

If you can achieve both of these tasks, you will ensure that their energies become progressively more and more focused on the business task that you want them to achieve.

Your first and most powerful tool is to live and breathe your own mind fitness. Everyone is a boss-watcher. Your mind fitness will rub off.

Second, the only way you will be able to help your team move forward, and achieve what it is capable of, is by utilising a coaching philosophy by 'raising awareness' to 'generate responsibility'. Your interactions with team members will be critical. Unless you connect meaningfully and engage with them, you will unwittingly be undermining their own efforts to satisfy their needs through

the team. One very powerful way of achieving this is to use a coaching style of interaction, either as a leader or as a team member.

Another powerful tool is praise. Praise not only what is achieved but, in particular, praise effort. It costs nothing and it has a wonderful effect. Use it lavishly and appropriately!

In addition, make sure that the team has a common purpose to which everyone can aspire, a flag to salute. This helps form a link between them which will add to their cohesion.

Finally, you must challenge negative thinking when you hear it. Mind unfit people unconsciously hold themselves and their team back by the power of negative talk, both individually and collectively. This needs to be addressed by you. Or better – get the team members to work with you.

The benefits of improved team working

Teams which work well are a valuable asset to any business, with greater productivity and/or service delivery a visible benefit. However, a high-performing team has other, more subtle advantages, both individually and collectively.

For its members, it offers a working context where they can feel enthusiastic and engaged, part of a team which understands them, supports them and endorses them as a human being. This flows from a heightened awareness of each other, the impact they have on each other and the mutual benefits they derive from interdependency.

The team which has great clarity about its goals and direction, and with workable ground-rules in place, will more easily remain focused and on track. With mutual understanding and good communication, potential conflicts will be resolved early. And, most importantly, the team will have the confidence and sense of responsibility and ownership to take advantage of initiatives as they present themselves. This is the essence of adaptability and innovation, the 'Holy Grail' for any organisation in today's turbulent times.

From dysfunctional to unstoppable – The story of Jenny's team

A National Health Service (NHS) team was very much under pressure. The business imperative was that the team needed to 'up their game', be more proactive and fire-fight less, and ensure they meet stringent NHS standards. However, like many such teams, it had been thrown together in a hurry and had no real sense of identity, little clarity about its purpose and lacked the

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self-confidence, resilience and the can-do attitude it needed to help it face a tsunami of change. Not surprisingly, some cliques had developed and these were hampering the overall performance of the team. Equally unsurprisingly, this all-woman team in a caring profession were actually quite supportive of each other in the daily hurly-burly of life in the fast lane. They really were a nice bunch!

We worked with the team and its leader to help each member become more mind fit and to help develop more effective ways of working together.

The impact of this was felt initially at an individual level, with team members saying they had gained in self-awareness, confidence and resilience. As a consequence the team benefited hugely, with a can-do attitude permeating all they did. The atmosphere became more positive, with openness and trust building quickly. Mutual understanding was much greater, people felt closer. There was a lot more constructive thinking and proactivity. And as one person put it – there was less 'flap'.

Jenny, the team leader, was fully involved in supporting her staff as they developed into a much more effective team. She was having personal coaching which helped her to become more mind fit. She became a beacon they could follow.

Under the influence of her new-found coaching skills, they became more focused on performance, more critical about waste and inefficiencies and appeared much more resilient. Jenny was delighted about the outcomes which included more effective and cost-effective working and raised productivity. When we met the team for the last time, they had changed dramatically.

They were now formidable, as well as caring.

Hot tip

Sometimes, a team member may be so mind unfit that they are unable to act as an effective team member. Typically, this will be because they are overly defensive. On these rare occasions, it may well be best to remove them from the team.

Summing up

In general, teams are poorly understood. In contrast to most people's idea of a team, there are actually many kinds of teams, and efforts to get them performing well often owe their success as much to luck as good judgement.

We have recognised that much of the complexity of teams is down to the individual characteristics of team members. People with high levels of mind fitness make great team members. The team can be a vehicle to help them satisfy their deep human needs – for belonging, for feeling good about themselves and for achieving something special.

In contrast, helpless and defensive people find teams very challenging places and they can become dead weights or, worse, a destructive force which can wreck a team. Our practical work has shown that helping individual team members to become more mind fit has a profound impact on both team atmosphere and performance.

There really is an 'I' in team!

Creating a high performing organisation

“The thing I have learned at IBM is that culture is everything.” (Louis V. Gerstner, Jr., former CEO IBM)

We have already explored how the unfit mind results in disengagement, stress and absenteeism which eats away at performance, productivity and profitability. Here, we examine the impact of organisational culture on people and the impact it has, negatively or positively.

The hard facts

The sad truth is that up to 80% of workers are ambivalent, dislike or even hate their workplace. They are only prepared to do the minimum they can get away with. The reason is that many workplace cultures are at best places of apathy or oppressiveness, at worst toxic.

The only effective antidote for such an organisation is to build a culture where people come to work because they want to, and give of their best whilst they are there. Quite simply, a culture that is engaging and authentic. In fairness, there are some organisations that do fit this but, unfortunately, not enough. Describing such a culture is easy, but changing organisational culture is neither simple nor swift. However, it can be done and, with the right support, achieved relatively quickly.

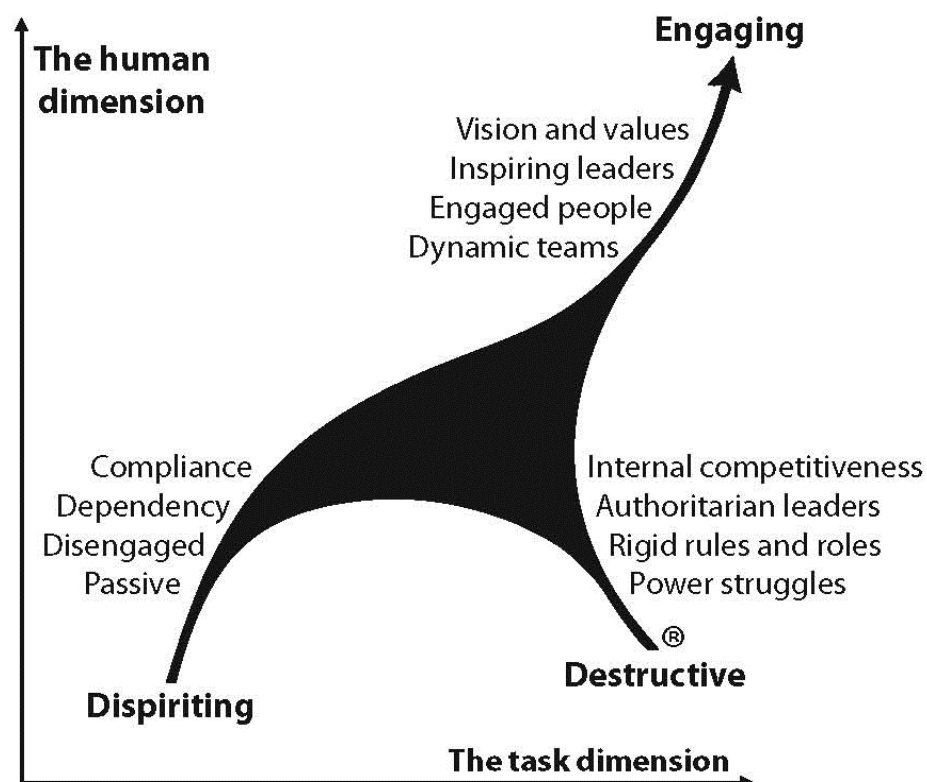
This chapter outlines a simple model which pulls together all the factors which create an engaging and authentic culture, showing how it builds on everything in the previous chapters. Why is this important? Because as Louis Gerstner understood, an engaging culture is the engine which powers a high performing organisation.

So what exactly is organisational culture?

Unfortunately, there are as many models of organisational culture as there are consultants! We know that the usual glib definition “the way we do things around here” is completely inadequate, and describing an organisation as having a ‘blame culture’ tells us nothing about the causes of that behaviour. We need to drill down much deeper to find the truth.

In the following model, we have drawn on some important research which identifies three very different organisational cultures. We have used our own labels for the three different kinds of culture, but these are the verbatim descriptions of the three kinds of culture that were identified.

- Organisations with **engaging** cultures 'encourage members to work to their full potential, resulting in high levels of motivation, satisfaction, teamwork, service quality and sales growth. Quality is valued alongside quantity, creativity is valued as equally as appropriate conformity and cooperation leads to better results than competition'. That sounds like the kind of place where you might want to work!
- In organisations with **dispiriting** cultures 'members feel pressured to think and behave in ways that are inconsistent with the way they believe they should in order to be effective. People are expected to please others (particularly superiors) and avoid interpersonal conflict. Rules, procedures and orders are more important than personal beliefs, ideas, and judgement'. Is it any surprise that people get turned off?
- Organisations with **destructive** cultures 'encourage or require members to appear competent, controlled and superior. Members who seek assistance, admit shortcomings or concede their position are viewed as incompetent or weak. These organisations emphasise finding errors, weeding out 'mistakes' and encouraging members to compete against each other rather than external competitors'. You may feel that you, too, would begin to kick against this kind of working environment.



Any organisation that cultivates a dispiriting or destructive culture is creating disengagement, albeit unintentionally, and rendering itself ineffective and unproductive. Where effort is only put into the end result and the measuring and monitoring only support this through performance indications, monthly reports on business activities, safety reports and financial status against the strategic plan, the organisation is missing the point. These are important in many cases. However, in a climate of economic uncertainty, this over-focus on the end results is suicide. Yet the answer to change is simple - people.

How many leaders in organisations are so task focused that they fail to recognise the damage they are doing to those around them? People make it happen, or not. To build an engaging culture, effort has to be put into involving and inspiring people. Making sure that they know what is expected of them, that they have the resources to do their job and that they are allowed to do it. It is also crucial that employees are recognised for what they do, that their leaders show they care about them and help them develop and time is spent on relationships. People also need to know that what they do counts.

This is not a soft option. The human dimension is where an organisation succeeds or fails, whether they are profitable or struggles to survive. Engaging people will result in the task being completed in a much more cost effective way, rather than the constant and debilitating struggle of having to demand compliance or deal with conflict.

The evidence speaks for itself.

When mind fitness is added to this picture, suddenly it all begins to make sense.

Mind fitness and culture

The link between mind fitness and the three cultures we have described is pretty obvious. Mind fitness sits right at the core of an engaging culture. With mind fit leaders, individuals and team members all play their parts in creating the positive, constructive culture in which they work. They are „can do“, proactive, confident, committed and passionate, and are engaged with their work. Unfortunately they are the minority as Gallup found in their research.

In contrast, many peoples' working context seems to encourage the use of dysfunctional tools, as people adapt to it as best they can. Using too many helplessness tools leads to over-compliance, fatalism, a 'can't do' attitude and passive disengagement. The largest number of employees falls into this category, although this will depend on the type of organisation and their level within it. You might expect them to create a dispirited culture.

Finally, the realms of defensiveness yields a very destructive group of cynical, negative, 'won't do' people. They will be rigid and awkward, bully, blame and often sabotage the genuine efforts of their engaged co-workers. This group are actively disengaged workers. Put a few of these people together and they soon develop a toxic, destructive culture.

Why does this happen?

As we now know, each individual has a unique range of mind fitness and unfitness tools, and their habitual over-use can lead to a sense of powerfulness, helplessness or defensiveness. But although tools are used habitually, everybody has the choice to use whatever tools seem appropriate for the context in which they find themselves. When you start a new job, will that context be one where powerfulness tools win out, or will helplessness or defensiveness tools kick in?

All of us copy each other, often without realising it. We fit in. And that is what happens at work. An existing culture is almost impossible to resist. We will unwittingly choose to use the tools we see others using around us. This is entirely natural – that is the way we learned our tools in the first place. And so we get sucked in, we adapt and the status quo rumbles on as before.

Not surprisingly, it is the leadership of the organisation which sets the tone. Great leaders can create great places to work. However, many people who reach positions of leadership have got there by the over-use of bullying, authoritarianism and the abuse of positional power. The cultures these leaders create can be unbearable to work in. And so the cycle continues, as people who survive these toxic cultures rise through the hierarchy.

It doesn't have to be like this. Now that we understand it, we can make a deliberate decision to do something about it.

So what can be done?

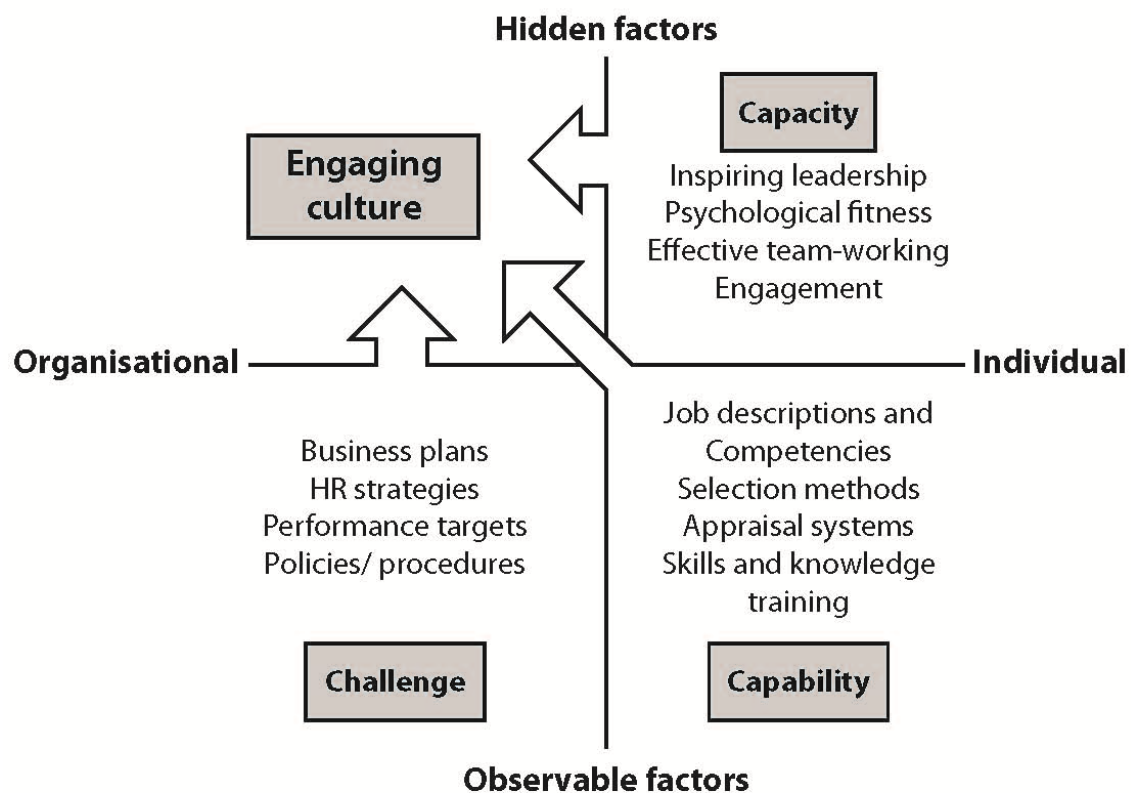
An engaging culture does not appear by magic. Just three vital ingredients are required. Traditionally, most organisations only focus on two – the business challenges and the individual capabilities with its support structures that people need to meet those challenges. Both are factors which you can observe within organisations.

For example, organisational challenges are often recorded in business plans, HR strategies, performance targets and various policies and procedures. At the delivery end, individual capabilities can be found in job descriptions, selection procedures, appraisal systems and skills and knowledge training.

The intention is to link the organisational requirements through its plan to the individual employee who has to deliver that plan. All very obvious and appears to make sense. However, as we have already stressed, something is missing.

The missing and often hidden ingredients are those intangible factors; the level of a persons' mind fitness, the style of leadership and how people work together in teams. All lead to the level of employee engagement or disengagement. Collectively, these give organisations the all-important capacity to meet their business imperatives when added to the observable factors of the business challenge and individual capabilities.

When built on mind fitness these hidden factors provide the drive behind an engaging culture which will deliver the performance and ultimate success of the organisation. Ignoring those factors leads to a mediocre organisation. The following diagram puts both the observable and the hidden factors together and shows, when combined, how they create that vital and engaging culture.



Creating an engaging culture

Each chapter of this book has shown the ingredients, the tools and given examples of what it takes to develop mind fitness and how that can be used by leaders to inspire and engage. Remove these crucial elements from the equations and we know the results.

Far and away the most potent way to encourage the emergence of an engaging culture is by inspiring leadership – leadership by mind fit individuals with the skills needed to restore a sense of powerfulness in their people. However, the stories throughout this book provide real examples of how sustained personal change creates people who become engaged and productive. Individuals and team members at work can also learn to understand themselves better, and make some personal changes which will make them more mind fit enabling them to contribute positively to the culture in which they work.

Once these are in place, engagement is the almost inevitable outcome. People become willing enthusiasts, rather than compliant or difficult subordinates.

Creating an engaging culture - The story of Jackman and Co

A manufacturing company which produced equipment for garages was in trouble. The units coming off the production line were insufficient in numbers, were never completely assembled and often late being delivered. The final assembly often took place in the customers' premises, causing real difficulties and customer dissatisfaction.

The situation was dire and the working climate was appalling. The symptoms of a sick organisation were there for all to see – rigid silo working, high levels of conflict, unsupportable levels of sickness and absenteeism and a crippling volume of staff turnover. Something had to be done because the company was rapidly heading for insolvency.

With the support of the operational and HR directors, we set about enhancing the mind fitness of team leaders and their immediate managers. Against a backdrop of considerable cynicism and negativity – symptoms of the very malaise we were hoping to cure - this proved challenging. The change happened very quickly. By the second day everyone was fully involved as they began to see the benefits, not only for the company, but also personally.

Once individuals realised that by making small personal changes they could improve their mind fitness, then they were ready to apply this new-found confidence to the production issues that they faced. Over a three-month period, productivity was hugely improved by taking some very simple and practical actions to streamline and integrate outdated workshop practices.

Crucially, at a personal level, people began to relate to each other in a more positive way. Conflict between individuals and teams reduced dramatically.

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Communications improved in terms of quantity and quality. Better relationships were forged at every level.

As these changes began to take effect, team performance improved, absenteeism was reduced and everyone felt an immense feeling of pride in their efforts to turn the company around.

In fact, productivity improved by a staggering 250% and the company did more than simply survive, they expanded into Europe. Their experience demonstrated that over a relatively short period, people who are disengaged and obstructive *can* become personally powerful, and when this personal change creates an engaging culture, an organisation can go on to achieve remarkable results.

Hot tip

Ensure people are fully engaged with your organisation – when they are, they are worth their weight in gold.

Summing up

Organisations that are determined to improve their performance need to think seriously about finding ways to generate an engaging culture based on high levels of mind fitness throughout their business.

If this means taking a long hard look at existing practices, and in placing greater focus on ways to truly empower people, then this is a small cost to pay. It is time to dump outmoded thinking and counterproductive practices from the past. Unfortunately, conventional ideas, established practices and institutionalised organisational structures, developed over many years, can appear too difficult to shake off. Such a move would seem to demand a seismic shift for many individuals and organisations and yet the starting point can be relatively low key.

To kick-start the process, there needs to be firm agreement by senior figures that an alternative approach really is needed. That is exactly what the Jackman board did. As a natural consequence, a number of questions should be asked at the highest level.

- What is the difference between our current culture and an engaging culture?
- What should both the senior management team and individual leaders be doing differently?

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- How will my leadership style encourage a greater sense of empowerment, accountability and engagement with my team?
- How do I respond to setbacks?
- When the chips are down, it is all too easy to step back to command and control managerial techniques, such as how will I keep on track.
- What systems and procedures do we need to change to support a different approach?

Considering these questions, and committing to developing the answers that work within each business, is key to building a successful organisation with an engaging culture. Far-sighted leaders can decide that the issues that they have dragged with them from the 19th century must become history, too. Underperformance, increasing levels of disengagement, stress and absenteeism must no longer stunt growth, hamper productivity and, perhaps, eventually overwhelm their organisation. By deciding proactively to create an engaging culture, their organisation and the people who work in it will benefit at many levels.

Section four:

Summary

Pulling it together

“Faced with the choice between changing one's mind and proving that there is no need to do so, almost everyone gets busy on the proof.”

(John Kenneth Galbraith)

In this book we had two aims; we wanted to be as inclusive of the best possible science, and to make it as accessible as possible in a form that was interesting, intriguing and usable. We think we have achieved the former – only you can judge if we have achieved the latter. That requires you to take some small actions and practice them.

Our starting point was the individual, although our ultimate focus was on organisations and their performance. Drawing on the wealth of the gems from the last hundred years of thinking and practice, we found a way to boil down all this complexity into a simple and understandable concept which we call mind fitness.

Mind fitness is holistic and wide-ranging. It takes into account virtually every part of the mind; both conscious and unconscious. It encompasses both outstanding people and those who are really not coping with life very well. It applies to each and every one of us, with our unique mix of qualities and foibles.

In the first part of the book we have described our basic concepts. These chapters, one to five, are about the ways in which we are all very similar to each other. In the next section, chapters six to eight, we explored the differences between people. From this, you should recognise yourself and others in a new way and understand more clearly why you are the way you are.

In the final part of this book, chapters nine to thirteen, we showed how mind fitness can help us understand organisational issues better, including employee engagement, stress and absenteeism. We unravelled what makes a good employee, a good leader and a good team. And we described how organisations could improve their performance, productivity and profitability and develop an engaging culture.

Finally, in this chapter, we pull it all together so that you can see why people really are the greatest asset that any business has and why mind fitness and personal power sits right at the core of a successful 21st century organisation.

Mind fitness and personal power

Decades of management knowledge training has failed to achieve what it intended to do; namely build a committed workforce, inspiring leaders and productive teams. We set out to understand why, after attending traditional training courses, the majority of people provided with the 'know-what' of organisations, motivation, teams and leadership, on returning to work also returned to their old habits. Our research led us to the inescapable conclusion that what we call mind fitness was the missing ingredient to build a highly engaged workforce.

The core strengths of mind fit people are focus, resilience, commitment and connectedness. First and foremost, however, they have a 'can do' attitude and have a keen sense of their own internal personal power.

But, as we discovered, not everyone is like this. You know people in your organisation who dither or are disorganised and have a 'can't do' attitude. Others who are awkward, rigid and confrontational, resulting in a 'won't do' attitude. Both these groups of people are mind unfit and disengaged at work. Unfortunately they are in the majority.

We created a simple and accessible road map that puts these three different states together. We call this The Personal Profile Map™. In this book, we introduced a set of maps which build on that first map. We call them Leadership Profile™, Team Profile™ and Organisational Culture Profile™ maps. These are remarkably similar. The reason is quite straightforward. These profiles are about people in their different roles, individually and collectively, and in the context of an organisation.

Reminder of the journey

None of us start out mind fit or unfit. We learn it through our experiences with parents and other significant people in our lives. This process of learning is so familiar to us that we call it 'natural learning'. It lies deep within us, is completely personal and notoriously hard to talk about. This learnt condition results in most people living inside their heads. They rely on a wide range of naturally learnt habits and thought processes that enable them to survive, maybe even feel OK, but losing out on the opportunity to reach their potential.

The twin keys to unlock greater mind fitness are the development of personal awareness and greater personal control. Mind fit people *feel* in control even when the outside environment is trying to take control away from them. They focus on the things they can control, retaining a positive attitude. In contrast, less mind fit people are badly affected by experiences which seem to conspire

to remove many opportunities to take control of their life. At work, the removal of control may simply be by an authoritarian leader and the consequences are disengagement, stress and ultimately poor performance.

Our four selves

Like virtually all things in nature, human beings are best understood as a complex adaptive system which means that a small change in one part can have a big impact on the whole. The complex human being has four interconnected and interacting 'selves' which we all share; the thinking, feeling, deep and social selves. But at the same time we are all different. We have each adapted to our unique life experiences and, as a result, we all function differently within these four selves.

To become mind fit simply means tuning up our own very personal complex psychological system. In everyday language, what the model tells us is that people who operate effectively in each quadrant are able to:

- Think flexibly and focus appropriately (The thinking self)
- Be emotionally competent and resilient (The feeling self)
- Connect meaningfully with other people (The social self)
- Be confident, committed with integrity and a real sense of purpose (The deep self)

The good news is that awareness and control enables us to make small changes in the way we operate in each 'self'. Both theory and our experience confirm that a small change in one part can have a disproportionate impact on the other parts. The result is a positive change in the way people feel about themselves.

Personal power

Some people feel naturally powerful. Powerful people are successful at work, at play, in life. They bring not only a real capability to perform in their skills and knowledge; but also a unique capacity to carry out that performance against all odds. They are "can do" people. They are proactive, perform well and the benefit to their organisation and people around them can be enormous.

They make great leaders who, rather than creating compliant subordinates, create willing enthusiasts. They are also great team members. Personal power ensures that people achieve their potential, not only at work, but in literally every sphere of their life.

In contrast, people who start off lacking a sense of competence in their abilities, and who focus on their weaknesses, tend to have a helpless outlook. They become some of life's victims. In this state, they lose contact with the reality around them and eventually a sense of 'things being out of control' dominates their very existence.

The way these individuals are treated at work can have a big influence on whether this sense of helplessness improves or becomes more firmly ingrained. Organisations and leaders can drive people into this victimhood state by over-controlling their environment and a rigid authoritarian style of management.

The result is low morale and low productivity which can lead to stress and other health problems. These people become disengaged from work.

Finally, defensive peoples' attitude and behaviour makes them unapproachable, autocratic, even bloody-minded and awkward. They do this, unconsciously, to fend off the threats they perceive all around them, because the root of this defensive behaviour is actually a sense of vulnerability. They protect themselves from threat by imposing their, usually negative, world-view on those around them. They have little flexibility in their thinking or behaviour, which is best described as rigid. This makes any potential change a particularly big challenge for them and they often strenuously resist efforts to update or modernise.

Defensive people *can* produce results, but with some very negative consequences for the individuals around them and the organisations in which they work. The perpetuation of defensiveness throughout an organisation at every level is a vicious cycle which has a poisonous impact on culture and climate.

Mind fitness in action

Disengagement, stress and absenteeism

When we look at disengagement at work, it is self-evident that the cause lies within individuals. Though they may complain that it is caused by external factors such as leadership style or the culture of the organisation, this kind of blaming is a characteristic of people with low mind fitness, so this is no surprise.

When management make demands, as they are entitled to do, some people will respond positively, others negatively. What we see on the outside is

engagement, or passive and active disengagement. On the inside, these people vary greatly in their level of mind fitness, which is the real reason why they respond in these very different ways.

Stress and absenteeism are other examples of the impact of low levels of mind fitness. Mind fit, powerful people do not suffer from stress or take unaccountable time off.

Of course, not everyone comes to work with a high degree of mind fitness. Unless people are given a degree of control over their working lives, many will be vulnerable to slipping back into well-rehearsed life patterns of helplessness and defensiveness. The presence of an inspiring leader can prevent or at least reduce this tendency.

Strengths

The notion of strengths at work and in our personal lives is becoming increasingly more important. Strengths and weaknesses are not fixed, but are learned as we go through life. They are the outcome of mind fitness. Similarly, weaknesses are the outcome of mind unfitness.

Knowing that strengths are not set in concrete is important because it means there is no definitive list of strengths. Strengths can be developed through practice and perseverance.

With a positive approach to life, wisdom and maturity can develop as we age. Greater mind fitness and strengths can also grow. By deliberately focusing on actions to improve mind fitness, weaknesses fade, new strengths develop and personal power will increase.

The key to this is focus. Unfortunately, the majority of people focus on weaknesses and end up with a 'can't do' or 'won't do' attitude. This toxic and self-destructive habit erodes our sense of strengths and personal power. Unfocused habits in the workplace result in a lot of wasted human effort and significantly impacts on the bottom line. Many people are not very adept at focusing on their positive qualities. And yet learning to focus on what is important for us as an individual and for the organisation, greatly improves the quality of our personal lives and makes us more productive at work.

Leadership

In the future, two irresistible forces will demand that leadership changes. The first of these is that the generations are very different. The second is that organisations need to change and adapt more rapidly, particularly in light of

the aftermath of the global recession. Old rigid structures and hierarchies are quickly becoming outmoded and unresponsive. The new leadership needs to be more flexible, nimble and responsive to organisation and environmental needs. They will work in a very different way from the 'old school' approaches to leadership we have seen in the past.

Mind Fitness gives leaders the sense of personal power. They need to get things done and it enables them to create willing enthusiasts, rather than compliant or disgruntled subordinates. By no longer abusing positional or expert power, these new leaders will be less likely to force their people into the blind alleys of helplessness, defensiveness and disengagement. Instead, by allowing them to feel some of their own personal power, their colleagues' performance at work can only benefit.

Teams

In general, teams are poorly understood. Most people's idea of a team comes from the sports arena or from outdated theories. There are actually many kinds of teams, and efforts to get them performing well often owe their success as much to luck than good judgement.

We have recognised that much of the complexity of teams is down to the individual characteristics of team members. People with high levels of mind fitness make great team members. In contrast, helpless and defensive people find teams very challenging places, and they can become dead weights, or worse, a destructive force which can wreck a team.

Our practical work has shown that helping individual team members to become more mind fit has a profound impact on team atmosphere, performance and productivity.

Culture and high performance

Organisations that are serious about improving their performance need to generate a culture based on high levels of mind fitness at every level in their business.

If this means taking a long hard look at existing practices, and placing greater focus on ways to truly empower people, then this is a small cost to pay. Unfortunately, conventional ideas, established practices and institutionalised organisational structures, developed over many years, seem too difficult to shake off. A move to an enlightened culture would seem to demand a seismic shift which prevents senior people taking the first step, particularly in the current climate where we are coming out of a recession.

Yet the starting point to an empowering and engaging organisational culture, based on the development of mind fit staff, can be relatively low key. It must, however, start with commitment from the top.

Why change

Committing to developing a business focused and practical way forward that builds a stronger, leaner and fitter organisation starts with developing or increasing the mind fitness of key individuals. The cost to organisations where 70% to 80% of the workforce is disengaged is enormous.

What would a shift of 10% to 20% of people from disengaged to engaged mean to your bottom line? What would it mean if 50% changed? What impact would it have on service delivery, productivity and profit?

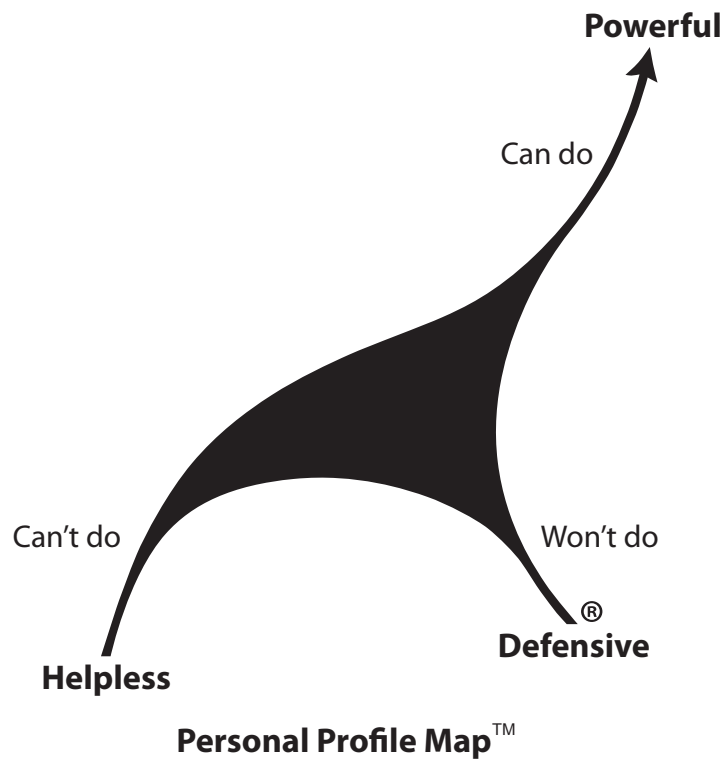
In today's very challenging, demanding and uncertain future, organisations will not survive unless they utilise the full capacity of their people. They need people who are personally powerful and engaged. Such people are inspiring leaders form dynamic teams and create a culture that leads to high performing organisations.

Moving forward

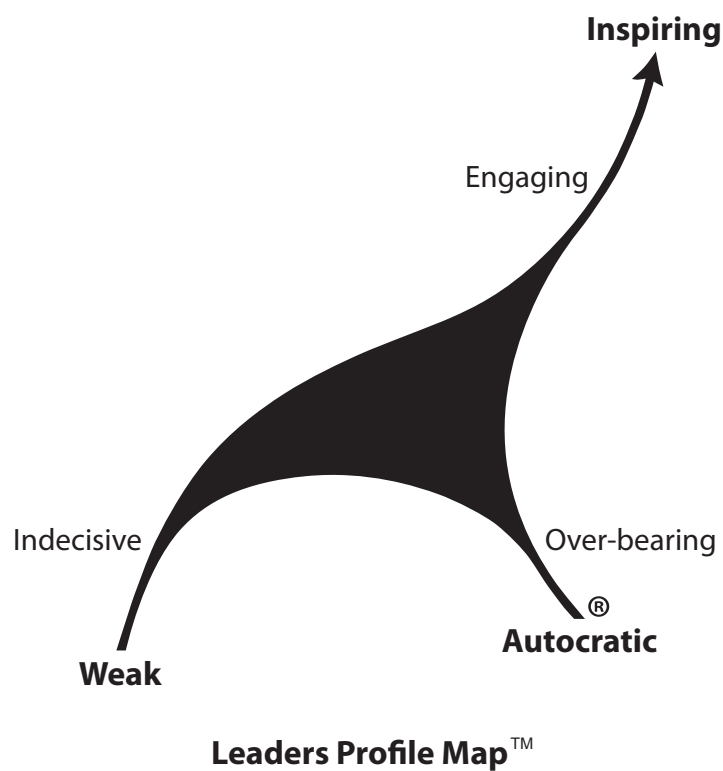
Developing an engaged workforce starts with the individual and builds at each step so that ultimately the culture achieved is engaging. What impact would that have on you as an individual and for your business?

The series of maps we have introduced you to show how they all build from the individual. Getting it right at the individual level results in all the benefits we have outlined throughout this book.

Personal Profile Map

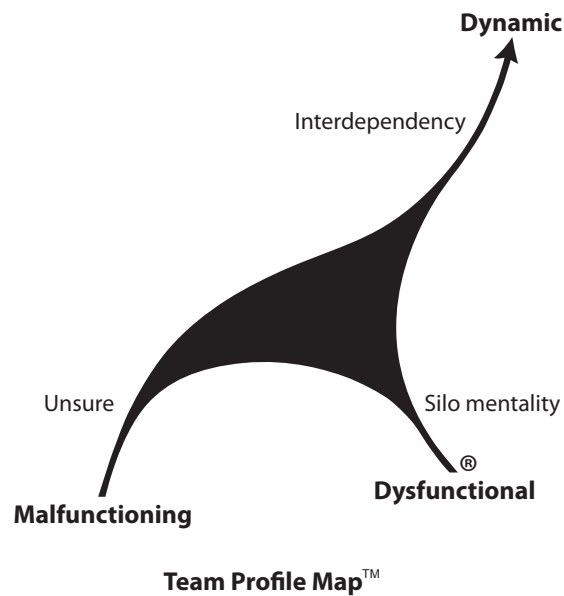


The core of the first map, the Personal Profile Map™, shows why starting with the individual's development is paramount.



Second, developing mind fit inspirational leaders that create willing enthusiasts is the next building block to success. They become the driving force for a stronger, leaner and fitter organisation.

The Team Profile Map

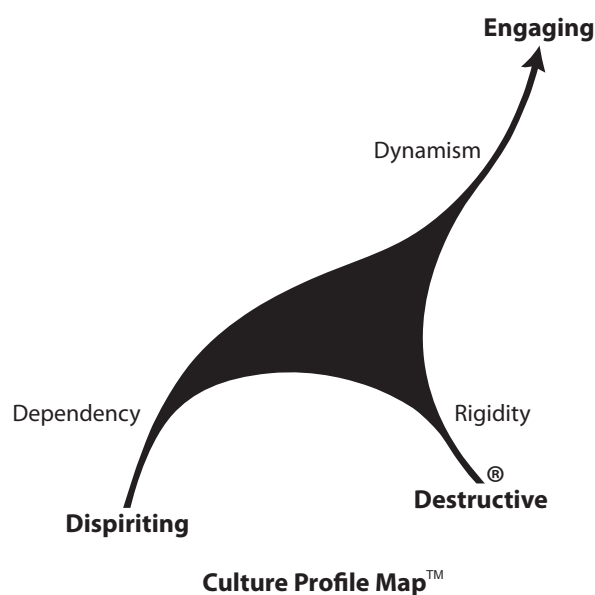


Leaders work mainly with teams, albeit many and varied. Their challenge is to generate in the individual team member, and collectively as a group, a dynamic cohesive team that operates interdependently, with a common purpose and with the drive and energy to deliver the organisational imperatives.

Linking personally powerful individuals, inspiring leaders and dynamic teams together enables organisations to tackle the challenges that they face in a positive and structured manner. It leads to less wasted human effort and improved focus on what is important, resulting in increased service, productivity and profitability.

The Culture Profile Map

The next map covers organisational culture. Quite simply, it links together the human dimension, whatever the role, with the task dimension. Combined in a positive way they create a culture that is both people and job focused.

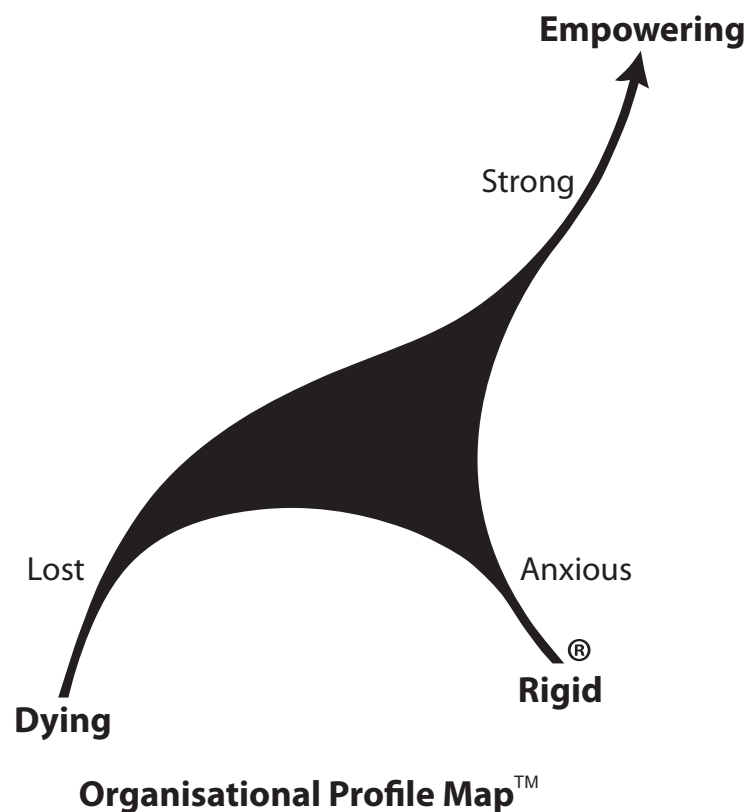


At the top of the map you will find the type of culture at work which brings out the best in people and leads to an organisation that is apt for the 21st century. Conversely, negative cultures will lead to the demise of many organisations who fail to get up to speed in the highly challenging post-recession environment.

The Organisational Profile Map

This final map introduces the organisational profile. When all the maps are superimposed on each other they produce this map of the organisation. It simply shows the way an organisation will consistently operate, depending on where its people, leaders and teams are on the map. For some, those operating on a 19th or 20th century organisational model will simply go out of business and die, whilst the rigid ones will struggle to survive.

Those that adapt and build an organisation for the 21st century, where many of the challenges have never been faced before, will not only have an increased likelihood of surviving, but will also positively thrive in the new world. They will become stronger, leaner and fitter. They will also satisfy the needs of shareholders and customers and handle economic and environmental challenges which are now taking centre stage.



An organisation needs to be robust as well as empowering. This can only happen if the workforce is mind fit and the staff are actively involved in the company.

And finally

Take that first step by raising your awareness of your beliefs, your attitude and behaviours. Where do you fit on the Personal Profile Map™? Identify the small changes that you can make which are in your control, and then take action. You will be amazed that, with a small amount of practice, you soon become proficient at the task, whether it is a physical or a cognitive one. This is how strengths are developed.

And, business owners and leaders should do the same. Raise your awareness. Where does your organisation fit on the different profiles? Once again, small changes in the way leaders treat their staff, and how teams operate, will make a huge impact on the bottom line.

Mind fitness which leads to personal power is the driving force behind a better quality of life, an engaged workforce and a stronger, leaner and fitter organisation.

The choice is yours.

To discover more you can contact the author by email power@performancespecialist.co.uk or via LinkedIn.

Route to exploring the science

From the outset we never intended this book to be a scientific reference although the content comes from the world of science. However, we know that many people are fascinated by science so, to appease them, we have provided below ten eminent names and some of their core subjects which will enable a personal search to be made. They are in no particular order.

1. Martin Seligman	Learned Helplessness
2. Katherine Benziger	Thinking preferences
3. Mihaly Csikzentmihalyi	Flow
4. K. Anders Ericsson	Deliberate practice
5. Albert Bandura	Self efficacy
6. David R Shanks	Implicit learning
7. Carol S. Dweck	Psychology of success
8. Bernard Haldane	Dependable strengths
9. Karl Albrecht	Social intelligence
10. Joseph LeDoux	The emotional brain

Whilst the above relates mainly to psychology, other fascinating and interlinking sciences are also well worth exploring. They include; biology, neuroscience, neuroplasticity and, for the really adventurous, quantum psychology.

This book provides you with the know-how to revolutionise your performance - individually and organisationally.

In today's highly demanding environment, being able to perform to your best, inspire and engage each other in increasingly complex relationships, whether in teams or networks, is crucial. This book helps people to develop their capacity to be personally powerful, dynamic team members and exceptional leaders. It will also meet many other requirements faced by individuals and organisations today. As professionals in your field this book is designed to help you and build your business. It is also a life skill.

I was overwhelmed when I read the book. It all made sense and gave me a model of how to operate.

Jill Tipping - Motivational speaker

It has a simple yet powerful concept that can be applied from the first moment you read it which, through practice, will enable you to grow - positively. I would recommend this book to organisations as an investment for its most valuable resource - people.

Ann Daniels - Polar explorer

Examples include:

- A task which took 2 hours 45 minutes was reduced by 2 hours
- £300,000 was recovered for a local authority in 7 weeks
- Meetings are now 60% shorter and more effective
- Production increased from 55 units a week to 85 units
- People became more confident and in control

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