Mindfulness and Organizational Change

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Introduction

Can the introduction and addition of mindfulness practices to organizational change initiatives accelerate individual and institutional transformation? In principle, this is a testable hypothesis. Before anyone sets out to do so, however, it is important to first explore the reasoning that might underlie this idea. This chapter will address why and how mindfulness practices could have a positive, measurable impact on individual and organizational change within a school, or for that matter, any work setting.

To move from the abstractions of "mindfulness practices" and "individual and organizational transformation," I explore this question in the context of one particular set of mindfulness meditation practices and of two specific change processes that were developed apart from each other but which bear striking and important resemblances. The mindfulness meditation practices that are considered here are rooted in the Shambhala lineage but can be found across a wide range of mindfulness traditions, including those which are strictly secular (e.g., Kabat-Zinn, 2013; Kornfield, 1993). The organizational change strategies I consider are the

Immunity to Change model developed by Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey of Harvard University (Kegan & Lahey, 2001, 2009) and the Constructivist Listening school change strategy developed by Julian Weissglass of the University of California, Santa Barbara (Weissglass, 1998) and adopted by the now disbanded National Coalition of Equity in Education, which Weissglass founded.

"Section I: A Set of Mindfulness Practices" summarizes the mindfulness practices I will be referencing as well as the cognitive and emotional competencies that they support, many of which are well established in the research literature. "Section II: The Immunity to Change Model" presents the Immunity to Change model and highlights the specific ways the competencies described in "Section I: A Set of Mindfulness Practices" can support, augment, and accelerate the change mechanisms of the model. "Section III: Constructivist Listening" follows the same strategy for the Constructivist Listening school change model albeit in a more concise fashion. "Section IV: Bringing Mindfulness and Organizational Change Together" considers the common features of these models that lend themselves to complementarity with mindfulness practices, and looks at how mindfulness practices might be introduced into these or similar models. The final section discusses some qualitative pilots that could explore the opening hypothesis as well as deepen the causal connection I am proposing.

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It is important to emphasize that nothing in this paper is meant to suggest that mindfulness practices be used on their own or instead of these change models to achieve the same outcomes. Rather the assumption is that these two models are successful and robust on their own terms. The premise of this chapter is that the effectiveness of both (or of similar models) could be *enhanced* through the incorporation of mindfulness practices into their implementation.

Section I: A Set of Mindfulness Practices

The meditation practice being considered in this discussion goes by a variety of names—*shamatha, shinay, calm abiding, one pointedness, concentration,* and *mindfulness-awareness.* The core process involves the experience of placing and returning attention to a particular object of meditation in order to stabilize the mind. The foundational practice is placing attention on the breath as the object of mindfulness, becoming aware of when the attention has wandered from the breath, and returning the attention to the breath. Over time and during intense practice sessions such as those found in retreat settings, practitioners often find greater and greater stability of the attention on the breath; in other words, infrequent, or at times nonexistent, wandering of the attention. Newer practitioners, such as might be encountered in a school or organizational change process, are more likely to repeatedly experience wandering of the mind along with continual opportunities to return it *gently* to focusing on the breath. The benefits proposed here for including mindfulness practices in change initiatives are not dependent on participants achieving the absence of mind wandering that advanced practitioners obtain. Rather it is rooted primarily in the capacities strengthened by becoming aware of mental and physical distractions and responding to their vagaries with gentleness.

The three crucial elements of this practice and its benefits are described below, along with two additional practices—contemplation and compassionate abiding. Some, but by no means all, of

the outcomes listed here have been verified by Western experimental science. The list as a whole is primarily based on the first person experiences of generations of meditators, documented in both classical texts and the writings of contemporary Western practitioners. It also reflects my experience over 11 years of regular practice during which I have personally experienced all of these outcomes. I would add that this list is not exhaustive; it is tailored to those benefits and outcomes that have a bearing on the issue of the relationship between mindfulness practices and personal and organizational change.

The first element of mindfulness-awareness meditation is sitting in an upright but relaxed posture (either on a chair or on a cushion) paying attention to the sensations of breathing in the body. This aspect of the technique

- Enhances the ability to focus and pay attention (Seppala, 2014). This increased attentional capacity can be applied elsewhere in life (e.g., listening, looking, or working attentively)
- Is relaxing and stress reducing in and of itself, as the mind synchronizes with the body and the parasympathetic nervous system is activated (Mindfulnet.org, 2014)
- Is training in noticing physical sensations associated with the breath and posture, which enhances the capacity to take advantage of the information processing done by the entire nervous system, not just the prefrontal cortex. As a result of this practice, over time practitioners are more apt to notice "what their gut" is telling them, or when their body is engaging in habitual somatic responses to stress (Kabat-Zinn, 2013)
- Provides an experience of simply being, not doing. This allows practitioners to become familiar with what "being" is and their reaction to it. It also provides an opportunity for the arising of emotions that have been kept at bay through busyness, e.g., sadness/grief, anger/rage, anxiety/fear (Chodron, 2007)

The second element of mindfulness meditation is based on the phenomenon that eventually, without conscious intention, the practitioner

becomes aware that the attention has wandered from the breath. The minds of ordinary practitioners will always wander and awareness will always notice. The instruction at this point is to note what point of focus the mind has wandered to and then gently return the focus to the breath, to notice the distraction and let it go, to neither repress the distraction nor indulge in it. This aspect of the technique

- Is part of enhancing the capacity of the mind to pay attention by repeatedly bringing attention back to its object
- Enhances the already present but often underdeveloped capacity to be aware of what the mind is doing and to see the workings of the mind—thoughts and emotions—as "objects" of this awareness. This contrasts to being inside of thoughts and emotions. With the cultivation of greater self-awareness, practitioners "have" thoughts and emotions instead of thoughts and emotions "having" them (Kegan & Lahey, 2009)
- Allows practitioners to become familiar with ongoing internal narratives that often "have" them. When habitual thoughts are identified "on the cushion" as repetitive story lines, they are more easily recognized as such when "off the cushion"
- Familiarizes practitioners with this nonconceptual awareness capacity which everyone innately has. According to meditation masters, this awareness faculty, which Gaylon Ferguson (Ferguson, 2010) calls "natural wakefulness," is capable of perceiving internal and external reality with greater clarity than everyday mind because it functions apart from the filters of habitual self-talk
- Allows practitioners to experience themselves as neither fixed nor solid. They see and experience thoughts and emotions as *just* thoughts and emotions that arise and, so long as these are not continually stoked by perseverating, subside. This reduces attachment to these "objects" and makes it easier for minds to change. In this experience, practitioners also experience a "self" that is not the same as habitual thoughts and emotions, suggesting

that it is safe to change one's mind and even change one's perceived identity

The third element of mindfulness meditation is a combination of *not judging* the contents of the thoughts or emotions that arise and returning the mind *gently* to the breath. This aspect of the technique

- Allows for the development of kindness, acceptance, and humor toward habitual thoughts and emotions—toward the habitual self. "There it is, again. And again. And again"
- Sets a pattern that can be transferred to any change process by replacing aggression toward what has been (and continues to show up) with gentleness and even amusement
- Provides practice in being nonjudgmental that can be extended toward others. "If this is going on in me, what is everyone else going through?"

The Shambhala tradition talks about the importance of cultivating both "fearlessness" and "gentleness" in mindfulness meditation—having the courage to see what is really going on inside (and outside) of the practitioner and being gentle toward ourselves and others both for what is and for the process of becoming something else (Chodron, 1997). These qualities are cultivated through the meditation practice described above and through the additional technique of a *contemplation practice* (Mipham, 2004). Contemplation practice allows individuals to intentionally cultivate qualities such as openheartedness, kindness, compassion, curiosity, forgiveness, and gratitude toward self and others through the intentional contemplation of these ideas. In this practice, phrases describing these ideas become the object of meditation. Contemplation practice is usually undertaken subsequent to the (at least partial) stabilization of the mind through the foundational breath awareness practice.

Finally, a *compassionate abiding practice* (Chodron, 2007) encourages individuals to fully feel the bodily sensations of their emotions while dropping the thoughts that usually go with them.

Rather than simply acknowledging emotional experience and returning to the breath, in this modality practitioners stay with the arising, duration, and subsiding of the physical sensations of strong emotions. Such a practice should not be done by those with a history of trauma or serious emotional/mental disorders without therapeutic support, and even then it is contraindicated for some disorders. For everyone else, this practice allows individuals to

- Experience the transitory nature of emotion (the feeling will subside by itself when not re-stoked by thoughts or self-talk)
- Discover that these feelings, even if painful, are not lethal
- Learn that these emotions can be tolerated without having to relieve them by acting in response to them

In short, compassionate abiding practice teaches practitioners to learn to stay with their feelings and to develop compassion for both the self who is experiencing them and the history that generated them. Traditional teachings (Chodron, 2007; Mipham, 2004) say that learning to abide with these feelings in all their intensity will not only lessen their power, but will ultimately lead to less frequent occurrence and possible cessation. From the point of view of Western science, this is still an open question.

Section II: The Immunity to Change Model

In their work on what they call Immunity to Change, Kegan and Lahey (2001, 2009) take up the question of why people in organizations do not change their behavior when they have compelling reasons as well as a genuine commitment to do so. The model can apply to all forms of behavior, including personal wellness habits and family-based interactions, but the primary focus of Kegan and Lahey's research and consulting work is on changing behavior in the workplace, including schools (Wagner, Kegan, Lahey, & Lemons, 2005). In particular, the model is con-

cerned with the resistance of well-meaning people to making changes that they, their coworkers, and/or their bosses have identified as beneficial to the individual and to the organization.

The core insight that underlies the Immunity to Change theory and the interventions that accompany it is that individuals who don't make changes that seem to be in their best interest usually have competing, but unconscious, commitments to their current (dysfunctional) behaviors based on unexamined but deeply held ideas about what is in their best interest. In other words, there are good reasons for their failure to change, but these reasons are usually hidden from the view of everyone, including the individual in question.

In turn, these hidden/competing commitments rest on what Kegan and Lahey (2001, 2009) call "big assumptions" about the world, about the individual, and most importantly about what is necessary for the individual to be safe in the world. These big assumptions are rooted in past experiences, some stemming from as far back as childhood and others from earlier periods in adulthood. Whatever their origin, the big assumptions lead to unconscious commitments to behaviors that are no longer in the individual's best interest and are associated with painful, at times traumatic, experiences which negatively affected the individual's sense of psychological and/or physical safety. The commitments and behaviors that stem from these big assumptions manage the intense anxiety associated with those earlier experiences by making sure the individual is never in a similar situation again. With an origin in deeply personal, highly vulnerable, and usually painful situations, it is not surprising that individuals keep these commitments and assumptions from the view not only of others, but also of themselves; high levels of anxiety and vulnerability are not consistent with how adults are expected to behave, especially in the workplace.

These hidden big assumptions and competing commitments, nevertheless, have a powerful influence on day-to-day public (and private) life. In the first place, they constitute a mind-set through which the individual sees the surrounding world. Moreover, because "big assumptions are held as fact, they actually inform what people

see, leading them to systematically (but unconsciously) attend to certain data and to avoid or ignore other data" (Kegan & Lahey, 2001). In other words, big assumptions create blind spots—about ourselves, about others, and about the world.

In the second place, these forces internally tug at individuals, pulling them in directions that are often directly contrary to where they say they want to go. This leads to a sense of personal frustration and failure on the part of those wanting to make changes in their behavior, to disappointment from others who would also like to see these changes, and to the general perception that adults are not capable of change. This latter notion, when widely accepted, leads easily to the popular idea in education reform that if you really want to change the system, you need to replace those currently employed and start all over again.

Although every individual's big assumptions are rooted in their own particular history and manifest in personally distinctive ways, the longitudinal research of Kegan and Lahey (2009) has identified three successive stages in adult development that account for many of the experiences of normative adults—the socialized mind, the self-authoring mind, and the self-transforming mind. According to Kegan and Lahey, "these three adult meaning systems make sense of the world, and operate within it, in profoundly different ways" (2009). In addition, "each successive level … is formally higher than the preceding one because it can perform the mental functions of the prior level as well as additional functions… [with] the implication … that a higher level of mental complexity outperforms a lower level" (2009). Significantly, from the point of view of the relationship between this model and mindfulness meditation, movement from one stage to the next is accompanied by an increased capacity to look "at" one's mental functioning rather than to be captive to looking "through" one's current mind-set. I return to this point below.

The interventions designed by Kegan and Lahey (2001, 2009) to bring to light the competing commitments and big assumptions that thwart change also support individuals in shifting from a lower level of mental complexity to the next

higher one. This process not only allows the particular desired changes to take place, but also simultaneously enhances the overall effectiveness and capacity of the individual as he/she moves to a higher level of mental functioning. For a complete description of these levels of mental functioning and detailed guidance on why and how to do this work, readers should consult *Immunity to Change* (2009) as well as Kegan's earlier work, *In Over Our Heads* (1998). Here I provide a distillation of their change process in order to identify those elements that could be enhanced by the mindfulness practices described in "Section I: A Set of Mindfulness Practices".

The heart of the Immunity to Change work is the creation of a personal "immunity map" that surfaces competing commitments and their underlying big assumptions in four columns. A sample map, reproduced from their book, is provided in Table 15.1 (Kegan & Lahey, 2009).

The first column, entitled Commitment, identifies the important new behavior that the individual would like to undertake. Ideally this new behavior represents the "one big thing" that if the person did differently would make a significant difference in their individual performance and their interactions with others. In identifying this one big thing, individuals are strongly encouraged to formally seek the feedback of their colleagues (and even of their family members) to make sure they are working on something that will actually make a difference in their lives.

The second column, entitled Doing/Not Doing Instead, takes honest stock of the habitual behaviors that are contrary to the Commitment. For example, with a Commitment in column one to "better focus on a few critical things" then examples in the Doing/Not Doing Instead column include such current behaviors as "letting new opportunities distract me; accepting more tasks and sacrificing non-work related things; not balancing time commitments between the urgent and the important; and not asking people to help."

The third column entitled "Hidden Competing Commitments" begins the process of surfacing the thoughts and feelings that account for the

Table 15.1 A sample four column map

Commitment"	Doing/not doing instead	Hidden competing commitments	Big assumptions
To better focus on a few critical things	I let new opportunities distract me, adding to my list of things to do	(I fear missing a good opportunity) I'm committed to being independent and capable of anything	If I'm dependent on others and unable to do many things well, I lose my self-respect
	I accept more tasks and sacrifice non-work-related things	(I fear letting my team down; if I put myself first, I feel guilty and selfish) I'm committed to being selfless	If I put myself first, I'll become what I dislike in others—superficial and trivial
	I don't consistently balance time commitment to urgent and important rankings	(I dislike leaving boxes unchecked—it's harder to drop something than just do it) I'm committed to always finding a way to get it done	If I don't find a way to get things done, I'll stop being valuable
	I don't ask people to help me"	(I fear that I can't count on people) I'm committed to not needing anyone	If I need anyone, I will be hurt by them

habitual behaviors in column 2 that undermine accomplishing the goal in column 1. Kegan and Lahey recommend getting at these hidden/competing commitments by first posing the question "if you imagine doing the opposite of the undermining behavior (of column 2) do you detect in yourself any discomfort, worry, or vague fear?" (2001) and second by "transforming that passive fear into a statement that reflects an active commitment to preventing certain outcomes" (2001). See column 3 in Table 15.1 for details on how these statements get formulated. From these hidden/competing commitments, the final step is the identification of the big assumptions that underlie them. The instruction is to "create the beginning of a sentence by inverting the competing commitment and then fill in the blank" (2001).

Just as this hypothetical individual immunity map shows the powerful reasons why he/she didn't focus on a few critical things, so too do all immunity maps reveal the ways in which important new behaviors threaten the current foundations of an individual's very identity. The critical question in the Immunity to Change process is whether the big assumptions at the root of the map are true. Testing those assumptions is the centerpiece of the next phase of the change process.

Once the immunity map has been constructed and honed so that its assumptions are testable, the map's author is encouraged to take the following steps (Kegan & Lahey, 2009):

- Pay attention to when and where the big assumptions are activated in life and when they are inaccurate.
- Create a biography of the big assumptions to learn when they got started, what their history is, and whether they are still valid.
- Test the big assumptions by intentionally behaving counter to how they would have you act, see what happens, and reflect on the results.

Finally, the author of the map is instructed to resurvey the people consulted on the chosen Commitment of column 1 to find out what, if any, progress they have seen, and what effect any changes in behavior have had on them.

This work can be done by individuals pursuing their own professional goals, but in order to provide the greatest support for the process (and for progress) Kegan and Lahey (2009) strongly recommend that individual change work be done within a team context and that individual goals be aligned with change goals associated with the collective work of that group. This requires that people share their immunity maps with each other and give each other permission to name the reappearance of old behaviors and competing commitments. This external scaffolding provides tremendous support as people tackle what has been unconscious and habitual.

Given this brief overview of a complex undertaking, how might the introduction of mindful-

ness practices enhance success and help overcome obstacles? Answering this question requires the identification of points of vulnerability within the model as well as ways that mindfulness connects to overall psychological functioning.

The practices described in "Section I: A Set of Mindfulness Practices" enhance the Immunity to Change model in two primary ways: first, by strengthening the capacity of the mind to be aware of itself and of behavior, and second, by enhancing the capacity of individuals to tolerate emotional discomfort and, in particular, anxiety.

The development of the immunity map is usually done with the assistance of someone trained to facilitate the inner exploration that generates the information in the map. Immediately following the "aha" that the map provides, the individual is asked to begin the work of (1) noticing how the hidden commitments and big assumptions operate in day-to-day life, and (2) replacing old behaviors with new behaviors. Both of these steps require awareness—first, the capacity of the mind to see itself acting in accordance with hidden commitments or big assumptions, and second, the capacity of the mind to see itself being, as it were, "off task"—engaging in habitual behaviors rather than the new ones. The awareness capacity required in this change work is the identical capacity that is strengthened by breath awareness practice—noticing and not being attached to the content of thoughts, and noticing when the mind is thinking rather than paying attention to the breath.

A few quotes from *Immunity to Change* (Kegan & Lahey, 2009) highlight the importance of this increased self-awareness:

> If I'm (engaging in the old behavior) it's because I don't realize it. (p. 193)

> When things get busy, I go on auto pilot and fall back into my old patterns. (p. 196)

> I'm trying to change, but …keeping it at the top of my mind is always difficult to do. (p. 196)

Despite the tremendous insight that immunity maps provide into the origins of resistance to change and in spite of the incredible support that is provided by having teammates aware of each

others' immunity maps and having permission to call each other out on lapses, the challenge of making change also involves the challenge of increased self-awareness. Ultimately, each individual is the only one who is with his/her personal thoughts, emotions, and behaviors all the time. Without a robust capacity for self-awareness and self-reflection, it will be difficult for individuals to catch themselves enacting old habits and to engage in enough repetitions of replacement behaviors to truly uproot those habits. Teachers in particular, whose day-to-day work is more isolated than many professionals, have an especially high need for practices which strengthen their capacity to be aware of what they are thinking, feeling, and doing in the moment. Mindfulness meditation provides just such a mental fitness regime to continually raise the baseline level of self-awareness.

The second challenge of the Immunity to Change work is that it tampers with the psychological system that each individual has unconsciously designed to manage the sources of their greatest anxieties. In dismantling their old anxiety management systems, participants in the Immunity to Change process are opening themselves to the challenging feelings they have been avoiding, to the fact that it is "gut wrenching (to) look at (one)self in a self-reflective way" (Kegan & Lahey, 2009), and to the truism that in the early stages of change, new behaviors are distinctly uncomfortable. Without alternative anxiety management systems, without a tolerance for emotional discomfort, without a sense of kindness toward oneself, and without the experience that not all emotions reflect the truth of a current situation but often harken back to the past, many individuals are likely to abandon change efforts instead of experiencing these discomforts.

The mindfulness and compassionate abiding practices described in "Section I: A Set of Mindfulness Practices" offer individuals antidotes to these obstacles. In the first place, mindfulness practice activates the parasympathetic nervous system (Mindfulnet.org, 2014) and provides an alternative anxiety management system to engaging in the habitual behaviors flowing from hidden commitments and big assumptions.

Mindfulness practice also cultivates kindness toward oneself and one's perceived failings by reinforcing the importance of gentleness when bringing the ever-errant mind back to the breath. Each sitting session provides countless opportunities to notice oneself fail at holding attention to the breath, to bring oneself back to the task with compassion, and to take advantage of the fact that each new breath is a fresh opportunity to try again. In turn, compassionate abiding practice provides experience with both the impermanence and harmlessness of the physical sensations of intense emotions. Both practices give the individual opportunities to reflect on whether the events and thoughts that trigger the uncomfortable feelings of anxiety, fear, or stress are genuine threats or simply relics of the past.

A regular mindfulness practice also builds in a daily period of self-reflection. Although the purpose of a daily practice is not to revisit what has happened elsewhere but rather to experience what is happening in the present moment, inevitably recent thoughts, emotions, and actions resurface in the quiet of that time. The practitioner may not have caught him or herself in the midst of habitual behaviors with enough time to change direction, but even noticing them later strengthens self-awareness and is a reminder of one's commitments. The most important "move" at such moments is not to berate oneself for having failed to make the changes one is committed to, but to have compassion for the strength of the hidden commitments that lead one astray, to summon the courage to continue on the path toward change, and to celebrate the awareness of the misstep. This is identical to the process of trying to place the mind on the breath, noticing that it has wandered and gently returning it—over and over again. Realizing exactly how difficult mindfulness is, let alone one's own change process, can generate greater kindness toward others who are also grappling with the power of habitual behaviors.

Finally, it is important to remember that, in addition to facilitating change in particular behaviors, Kegan and Lahey (2009) are facilitating movement upward in the stages of adult development they have identified. Sitting practice can be of use in this more abstract task as well. It can assist individuals who are plateaued at the stage of "socialized mind" where "(they) are shaped by the definitions and expectations of (their) personal environment" (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Practitioners in this stage of development have the opportunity in their sitting practice to experience a sense of self that exists apart from their connection to their affiliative groups. This can support letting go of an identity defined by being a member of a group and moving on to the next stage of self-authoring where "(the) self coheres by its alignment with its own belief system/ideology/personal code: by its ability to self direct, take stands, set limits and create and regulate its boundaries on behalf of its own voice" (2009). Sitting practice for individuals at this second plateau of adult development provides the opportunity to experience a sense of self that is distinct from the substance of their self-authoring—the wants, needs, goals, and desires which in a meditative process are identified as thoughts rather than the totality of identity. This in turn facilitates the transition to the self-transforming mind which can "step back from and reflect on the limits of (its) own ideology or personal authority; see that any one system of self-organization is in some way partial or incomplete; be friendlier toward contradiction and opposites (and) seek to hold on to multiple systems rather than projecting all but one onto the others" (2009). This self-transforming mind may in fact be the "don't know mind" that is cultivated in all mindfulness traditions (Suzuki, 1999).

In these particular ways, mindfulness practice has the potential to support growth in the mental complexity of adult minds. As Kegan and Lahey note, such development and neuro-plasticity was not even assumed possible as recently as 30 or so years ago (2009).

Section III: Constructivist Listening

Julian Weissglass' model of change (Weissglass, 1998) was developed to explicitly deal with supporting changes in the behaviors of educators in the face of overwhelming evidence that in school-

ing, the more things change the more they remain the same. Weissglass argues that the reason for the well-documented failure of most educational change efforts is that they have attended more to curricular, economic, and political policies than to the psychological and social needs of the people who needed to do the actual changing. His starting premise is that any effort at institutional change in schooling (or elsewhere) must give equal priority to addressing and supporting changes in individual thinking and behavior.

Reading the works of Kegan and Lahey (2009) on one hand and Weissglass (1998) on the other, it is possible to discern a common view that the absence and/or failure of individual change efforts is rooted in the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral consequences of past trauma. Where Kegan and Lahey (2009) highlight competing commitments and big assumptions that stem from these painful experiences, Weissglass (1998) gives primacy to the historical and ongoing suppression of emotional release[1] from those same experiences, especially ones associated with early childhood. In his view, the suppression of emotional release, which he identifies as a manifestation of cultural disapprobation toward the expression of emotions, blocks healthy growth and change through the generation of dysfunctional behaviors and an inability to think clearly. For Weissglass, change in individual attitudes, behaviors, and thinking only becomes possible when individuals are provided with safe opportunities for the release of these previously suppressed emotions (1998).

While this theory and intervention could support change in any area, Weissglass is an educational reformer, and his interest is in the way teachers teach and behave with their students—in particular how they teach and behave with students who are culturally or educationally different from themselves. He has, therefore, focused his work on supporting teachers' emotional release from those particular distressful experiences of childhood that relate to learning, school-

ing, and to all forms of individual and social difference. In Weissglass' model (1998), the lack of release from these particular wounds is what keeps teachers unconsciously attached to their habitual behaviors and attitudes toward teaching methods, toward ideas about how students learn and what constitutes intelligence, as well as in their attitudes toward colleagues, leaders, and the diversity of students that they encounter. The ongoing distress is seen as "a primary source of unintelligent and uncaring behavior" (1998). In turn, its emotional release contributes not only to recovery from these effects, but also to the increased capacity to evaluate experience, think more clearly, and be more effectively professionally (1998).

The core intervention of Weissglass' model (1998) is to provide individuals with structured opportunities to be listened to attentively as they recall early memories of learning, schooling, and social difference. As these stories emerge, they are often accompanied by emotional release in the form of crying, trembling, or other physical expression. It is this release that heals the speaker. Weissglass calls this particular form of attentive listening "Constructivist Listening" and distinguishes it from other such forms through its focus on being of benefit primarily to the speaker (1998).

Constructivist Listening requires only the communication of interest, caring, and acceptance. The listener does not need to always understand the speaker's stream of thought. The listener's job is simply to hold the space to "enable the talker to express his or her feelings, to construct personal understandings, and to use his or her intelligence to respond creatively to situations rather than rely on habits or old coping strategies" (Weissglass, 1998). The outcome for the speaker is the "construct(ion) of new meanings, (the) reevaluation of why they are who they are, why they teach the way the teach, and why they relate to children and colleagues the way they do" (1998). The cathartic release allows the speaker to "exercise freedom to choose new ways to respond to the world" (1998). Strikingly, this outcome mirrors that desired by Kegan and Lahey (2009).

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[1] The forms of emotional release that Weissglass names include: crying, tantruming, trembling, laughing, yawning, excessive talking, and perspiration (1998).

The primary structure of intervention in Weissglass' model (1998) is found in the dyad in which the two participants alternate in the speaking and listening roles, taking equal amounts of time. A further intervention is found in support groups in which each person has an equal amount of time to be a speaker while the other members act as listeners. In each setting, confidentiality is maintained, with the additional proviso that the listener(s) may not bring up what they have heard even to the speaker, although the speaker can choose to reengage the topic with any listener.

The structures that support emotional release and cognitive reframing are complemented in National Coalition of Equity in Education trainings with multiple opportunities to learn new information and new perspectives on teaching, learning, and valuing difference. The processes that support healing from the past are what allow individuals to be available to these new learnings and to truly hear the perspectives of students and colleagues who are different from themselves. Together the healing and learning lay the groundwork for teachers to act differently in the classroom and in their lives, to work with each other to create new policies and practices to support the learning of all students, and to become allies to individuals from socially marginalized groups.

Constructivist Listening is not only used to excavate and release the past, it is also a form of ongoing support as individuals move forward in their lives with commitments to new behaviors in their teaching practice and within their school communities. Ongoing dyadic or support group relationships can be used to assist individuals in constructing cognitive meaning from new experiences, processing feelings that arise in the course of the school day, or thinking aloud about what actions to take in complex situations (Weissglass, 1998). Here, then, is another similarity to the Immunity to Change model (Kegan & Lahey, 2009) insofar as both acknowledge the long-recognized limitations of increased self-understanding in transforming behavior. In response, each model has devised a distinctive social structure to provide ongoing support. In the Immunity to Change model, this takes the

form of allowing colleagues to remind one of the contents of the immunity map; in the Constructivist Listening model, ongoing social support takes the form of accessing dyadic interchanges with a trusted ally.[2] But in this commonality of social support also resides a common point of potential breakdown. Accessing support requires accessing individuals who may not be available when needed. This lack of availability can be temporary—the support person is not present at the moment of need or is too distracted to provide it—or it can result from bigger challenges—career changes, relocations, illnesses, or even death.

A regular mindfulness practice, which includes both breath awareness practices as well as practices for dealing with emotional distress, offers the Constructivist Listening model the same immediate benefit that it offers the Immunity to Change model—its supports are always available because they are internal to the practitioner.[3] Beyond that significant structural benefit, mindfulness practice potentially offers substantive assistance to the processes of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral transformation in three ways. First, a regular practice offers the possibility of altering practitioners' attachment to their historical identities and opinions by acquainting them with a more open capacity for awareness independent of those identities and opinions. If this is so, meditation would facilitate greater openness to new ways of being and doing in the world. Second, it is known that meditation increases practitioners' ongoing self-awareness (Seppala, 2014). This capacity could allow individuals engaged in change processes to more

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[2] A variation of this ongoing dyadic support is found in the Focusing model of Eugene Gendlin (Gendlin, 1988). Developed to support personal change, its distinguishing characteristic is its encouragement of attention to somatic clues as an indication of the need for curiosity about and processing of experience and feelings. David Rome (2014) explores this potential in his book, *Your Body Knows the Answer: Using Your Felt Sense to Solve Problems, Effect Change and Liberate Creativity*.

[3] The internal supports provided by mindfulness are also beneficial to individuals who are engaged in therapeutic processes, whose "aha" moments are not enough to translate into daily behavior change.

quickly catch themselves in thoughts, emotions, or behaviors that are the habitual residue of the past. Third, and of particular importance to the Constructivist Listening model in which emotional release from painful experiences is the central strategy, mindfulness practices provide practitioners with immediately accessible tools for self-care, self-compassion, and self-management which could be accessed when intense emotions are triggered (Seppala, 2014).

Mindfulness could also increase the skillfulness of listening within dyads and support groups when these are available by increasing the attention paid to the speaker (Seppala, 2014). By increasing the mental focus of practitioners, mindfulness could enhance the work of being the attentive listener in the Constructivist Listening process. Comfortable with the silence of meditation and the process of "learning to stay," practitioners could more easily refrain from interrupting the monologue of the speaker. Engaging in contemplative practices that focus on developing compassion, kindness, and openheartedness could further enhance the listener's capacity to hold an inviting container for the speaker's processing. Finally, the stress reduction outcomes of mindfulness practices (Seppala, 2014) could be a crucial balm to the overload that school staff faces when they are trying to change themselves and their organizations even as they must keep schools running smoothly for students.

Section IV: Bringing Mindfulness and Organizational Change Together

Mindfulness practices offer the potential to complement these two models of change because of the particular characteristics these models have in common, and it follows that such practices could equally support other change processes that share some or all of these features. I identify four commonalities and then consider why these particular characteristics invite mindfulness practices as additional scaffolding.

The first common characteristic of these two models is that each sees change in individual behavior as essential to change in organizations. They share a common understanding that change requires more than transformations in structures and policies, or in organizational systems and rules. Although these organizational transformations are critically important supports to allow people to work in new ways, they alone will not lead to new outcomes, such as increased student learning (broadly defined) in the case of schools, or increased productivity in the case of businesses. Kegan, Lahey, and Weissglass share a common belief that institutional changes must be matched by changes in the ways that individuals within organizations function on their own and interact with colleagues and clients.

Importantly, these theorist/practitioners go beyond the conviction that individuals and their behaviors must be engaged and committed to the proposed changes in order to accomplish hoped-for outcomes. More significantly, they share the view that people must actually change *who* they are as well as *what* they do. In the Immunity to Change model, participants are supported in moving to a new stage of adult development. In the Constructivist Listening model, participants are encouraged to heal from past wounds and cast off dysfunctional identities that developed out of emotional suppression.

The second commonality is that these change processes are designed to take place *within* an organizational community. Individual employees do not go off to workshops and then return to their work settings to implement what they have learned. Nor do they listen to a presentation, take it in, and do with it as they will. Instead, individuals within the same organization are asked to work together on the simultaneous transformation of themselves and their organization. Not only are these collaborative processes, but they are also ones that drop deeply beneath the familiar conventions of group problem solving. They ask people to uncover and share their vulnerabilities. Gone is the conventional pose that everyone has their act together.

The third commonality is that each process not only begins collaboratively, but is also sustained collaboratively through intentional external support systems comprised of colleagues who

are given roles in assisting each other in sticking with their best intentions. Both models recognize the power of relationships to sustain individual initiative and effort.

The fourth and final commonality of these two change processes is that they focus on the transformation of both thoughts *and* feelings. In each process, individuals are engaged in interventions that demand the reexamination of their ideas about themselves and about the world. They are also asked to look at, experience, and transform how they feel about themselves and the world. Significantly, participants are asked to integrate the cognitive and the emotional—to see and respond to themselves and to the world with their minds and their hearts. In short, they are asked to become more whole.

Mindfulness complements these approaches for many reasons that I have already touched on and will summarize here. This list represents my extrapolation from the research and the classical traditions of what mindfulness has to offer the processes of personal and organizational change. Most are possibilities that are not only not validated in the research, but are not yet even being explored:

- Mindfulness could support individual transformation through the development of a new relationship to personal experience and by looking at, instead of through, thoughts and emotions.
- Mindfulness practices could loosen attachment to habitual thoughts and feelings.
- Mindfulness could develop the capacity to stay with and work through emotional discomfort.
- Mindfulness could cultivate the courage to look at personal demons and own them with kindness as an integral aspect of self.
- Mindfulness could cultivate the capacity to move beyond shame and embarrassment, making it more possible to share one's inner life with others.
- Mindfulness cultivates kindness and compassion (Seppala, 2014), qualities that could make it safe to work with others in deep and personal ways.

- Mindfulness reduces stress and anxiety (Seppala, 2014) which are intrinsic to transformational change. The potential of mindfulness to mitigate these obstacles to deep change is significant.
- Mindfulness could cultivate the self-awareness that allows those involved in holistic change processes to monitor their own progress when they are not engaged in the powerful social support structures that each of the change processes discussed here includes to enhance the likelihood of success.

The alignment in goals, content, and processes between mindfulness practices and these two change models are the basis for this chapter's central hypothesis: adding instruction in mindfulness to the repertoire of interventions and structures used in these or similar models of transformational change and supporting the adoption of a regular personal mindfulness practice by participants would enhance the simultaneous transformation of individuals and organizations. Conversely, participating in these kinds of change processes might simultaneously enhance the power of a mindfulness practice for personal transformation through the excavation and awareness of the specific history and content of habitual patterns. This would echo the powerful synergy often experienced by individuals who participate in both mindfulness practices and psychotherapy Didonna (2009).

How then to introduce mindfulness practices into these models? The short answer is: in the same way that all the other elements of the models are introduced and reinforced. The first step is to explain what mindfulness is and why it matters to the work at hand. This would then be followed by instruction and modeling conducted by trained individuals. Next, comes the inclusion of mindfulness practices within the retreats, workshops, meetings, and coaching sessions that support the other key elements of the model. There should also be reminders about why regular outside practice is beneficial, just as there might be reminders about the practice of other elements of the model. Individual mindfulness instruction

can also be made available to address questions that inevitably arise in the early stages of practice. This would be similar to offering individual coaching sessions for other model elements. Finally, it is important that those who facilitate the core change process have themselves incorporated mindfulness into their lives, in the same way that they have lived and benefited from the other model elements.

The viability of such experiments would in part depend on whether there are (or should be) quantitative outcome measures of the impact of these models on their participants. For my purposes, it is sufficient to suggest some preliminary action research that would yield suggestive results. First, I would encourage senior trainers in these or similar organizational change processes to learn and practice mindfulness for themselves as a self-experiment. First person subjective experience of mindfulness by those with the highest levels of expertise in these models would inevitably yield direct and powerful insight into the complementarity I propose. If the outcome of such a first person "experiment" suggested promising possibilities, these individuals might choose to add simple, short, breath, and body awareness practices into some of their trainings—using videos or voice recordings of mindfulness teachers if necessary—and notice whether such practices impact the dynamics of the training sessions themselves. If the effects of this second "experiment" were promising, the next step would be to expand this component and specifically encourage ongoing mindfulness practice to participants. Comparing feedback and outcomes from the sessions that include mindfulness to others that did not, as well as to their past experience of feedback and outcomes from the core program, would influence what, if any, next steps should be taken.

We have a long history of failed efforts to change organizations and the individuals within them, and each of us has our own long history of failed efforts to change our own daily behaviors and states of mind. Clearly, this is hard work. The models of Kegan and Lahey and of Weissglass are notable for their emphasis on the simultaneity of organizational and individual change and for their holistic approach to engaging the cognitive and affective realms of individual members of organizations. What these models of change, and others like them, do is powerful, important, and when it works, truly transformational. The goal of adding the suite of mindfulness practices described in this chapter is to support this work with the hope that mindfulness practices would increase efficacy as well as the proportion of participants who are able to thoroughly apply these strategies to the enhancement of their own lives and that of their organizations.

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