



**Lessons Learned**  
**Robert Gass Daily Leadership Practices Project:**  
*Digging Deeper into our Participant Surveys*  
*February 2014*

**Introduction**

In 2012-2013, we implemented our Robert Gass Daily Leadership Practices Project with 116 of our Fellows and partner Biomimicry Professionals. This project exceeded our expectations with participants receiving 240 daily e-mails over the course of 8 months, organized into 12 sets of practices:

- |                        |                                  |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Inner Power         | 7. Inner Knowing                 |
| 2. Deep Listening      | 8. Have to / Choose to           |
| 3. Power of the Word   | 9. Triggers                      |
| 4. Enough / Not Enough | 10. Stress No More               |
| 5. Authenticity        | 11. The Power of Love            |
| 6. Purposeful Action   | 12. Our Mind is Not the Universe |

These were each introduced with a tailored message, designed to build bridges between concepts familiar to Fellows and Biomimicry Professionals. For every set of practices, we led a webinar to deepen understanding and application. We created an online Moodle platform to facilitate communication, and 38 participants paired off for peer coaching for the duration of the project. Going beyond the original scope of the project, we convened a session at our October 2012 Fellows Workshop to hear how individuals were integrating the practices into their personal and professional lives.

For example, one Fellow reported that the relentless Tea Party opposition to his proposed wind energy farm in Michigan was wearing him down, but that the daily practices served to give him a new perspective, sustain his energy and address their concerns more effectively. Many say they more skillfully select which “doings” to undertake, and do so from a place of greater “calm, focus, and power.”

**Quantitative Assessment of Leadership Capacity**

*Initial Assessment*

Before and after the project, we asked participants to rank their capacity in each practice on a scale of 1-7, with 1 being poor, 4 moderate, and 7 excellent. Figure 1, below, shows the improved average group capacity for each practice (numbers 1-12 correspond to the list of practices, above).

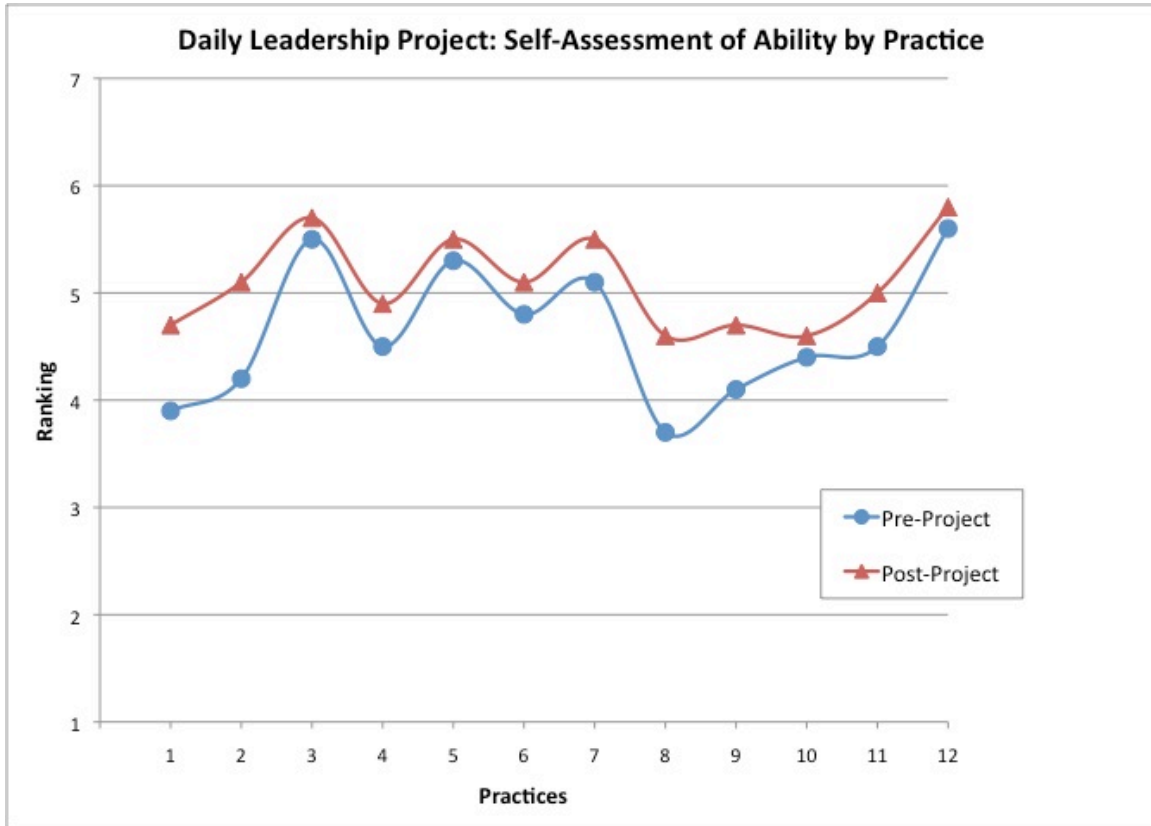


Figure 1

Figure 2 plots individual level of participation in relation to individual change in overall leadership capacity. The latter changes are measured within the 1-7 capacity scale, described above. The red trend line shows that the more deeply an individual participated in the project, the more they improved their overall leadership capacity.

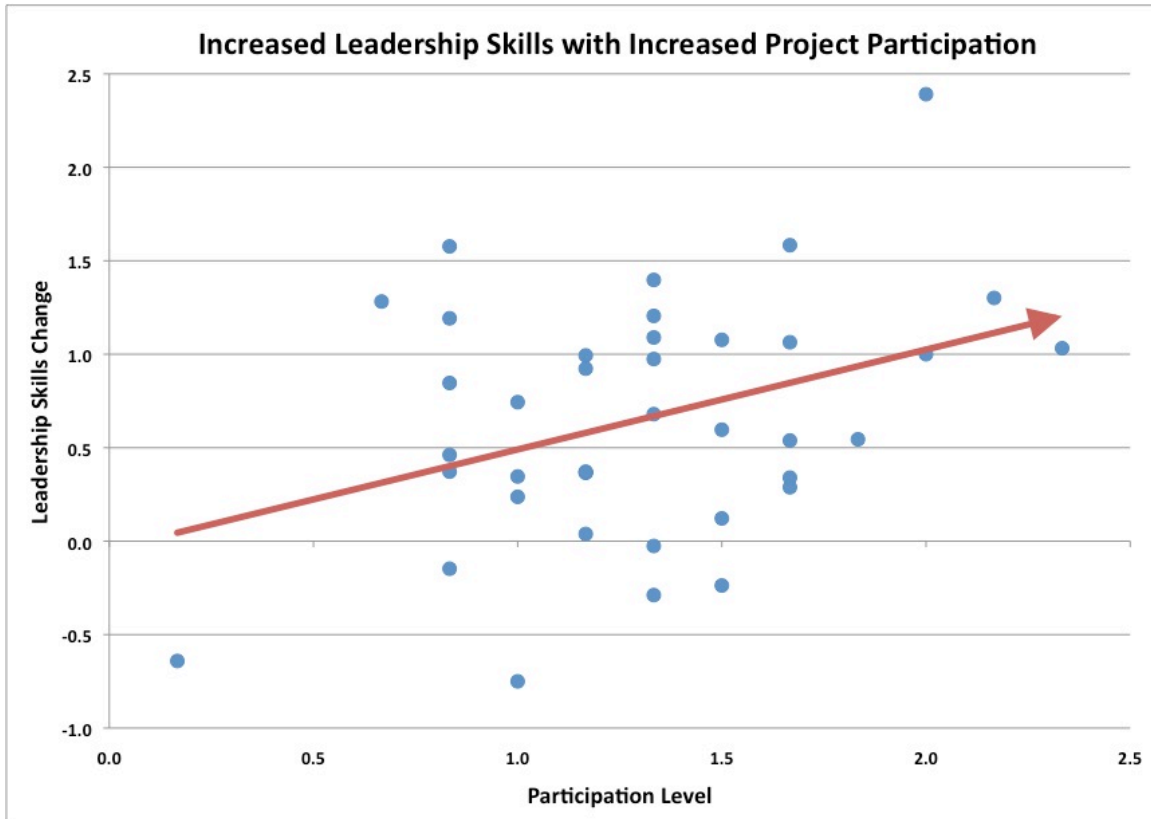


Figure 2

*Deeper Assessment*

We have taken the initiative to dig deeper into our quantitative survey data and present the results here. Thirty eight people took both pre- and post-project surveys that make these comparative results possible. We first asked:

- ***In which project components did participants choose to engage most?***

We divided the project into 6 components: reading the subject line of daily e-mails, reading the daily e-mails themselves, doing the daily practices, participating in the webinars for each practice, participating in the online discussion forum for each practice, and communicating with their peer coach. Then, we asked if participants engaged in none, some, most, or all of each project component, with the following results:

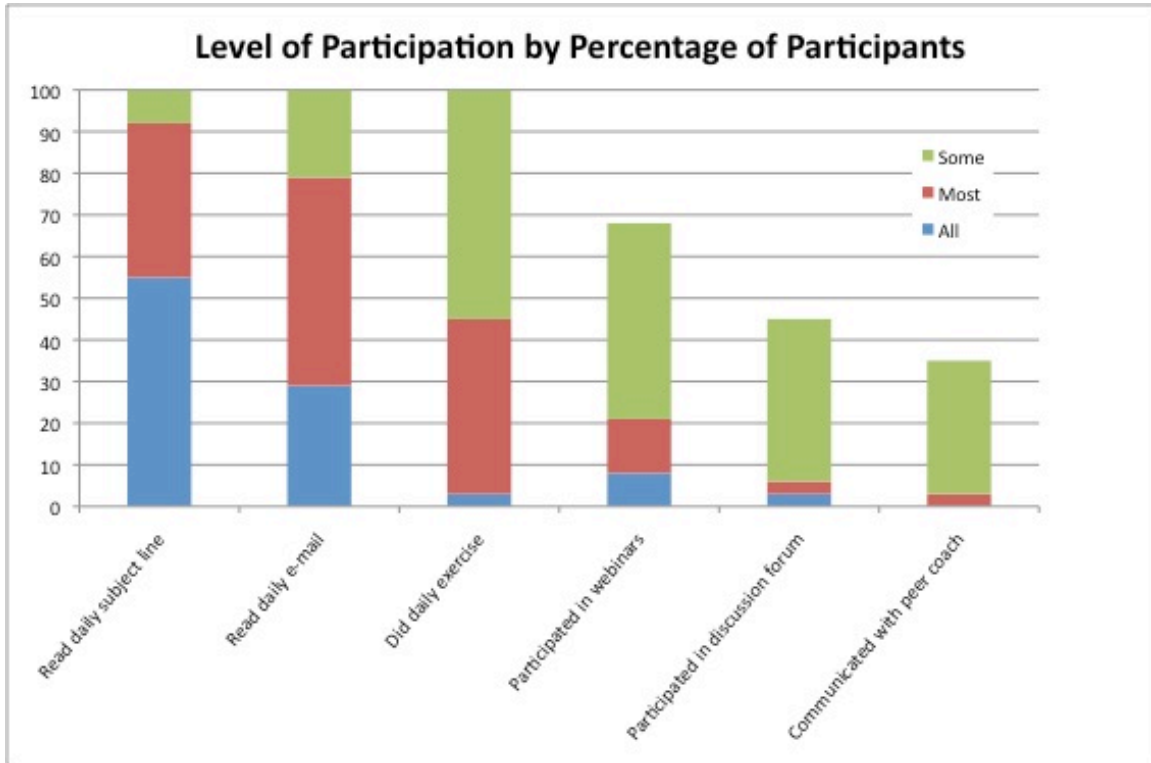


Figure 3

We can see high levels of participation in the 'core' component of the project: the daily e-mails, including 78% reading most or all e-mails and 45% doing most or all of the practices. Approximately 20% of participants attended most or all webinars, while participation in the online discussion forum and communication with peer coaches was much lower.

In a related question, we also wanted to know:

- ***How did different levels of participation in project components translate into leadership improvement?***

The colors in this Figure 3 and Figure 4 remain the same, representing the same groups. This time, however, we have plotted the extent to which each group improved their leadership practices. The numbers on the left of this chart show average improvement for all 12 practices on the scale of 1-7 used in Figure 1.

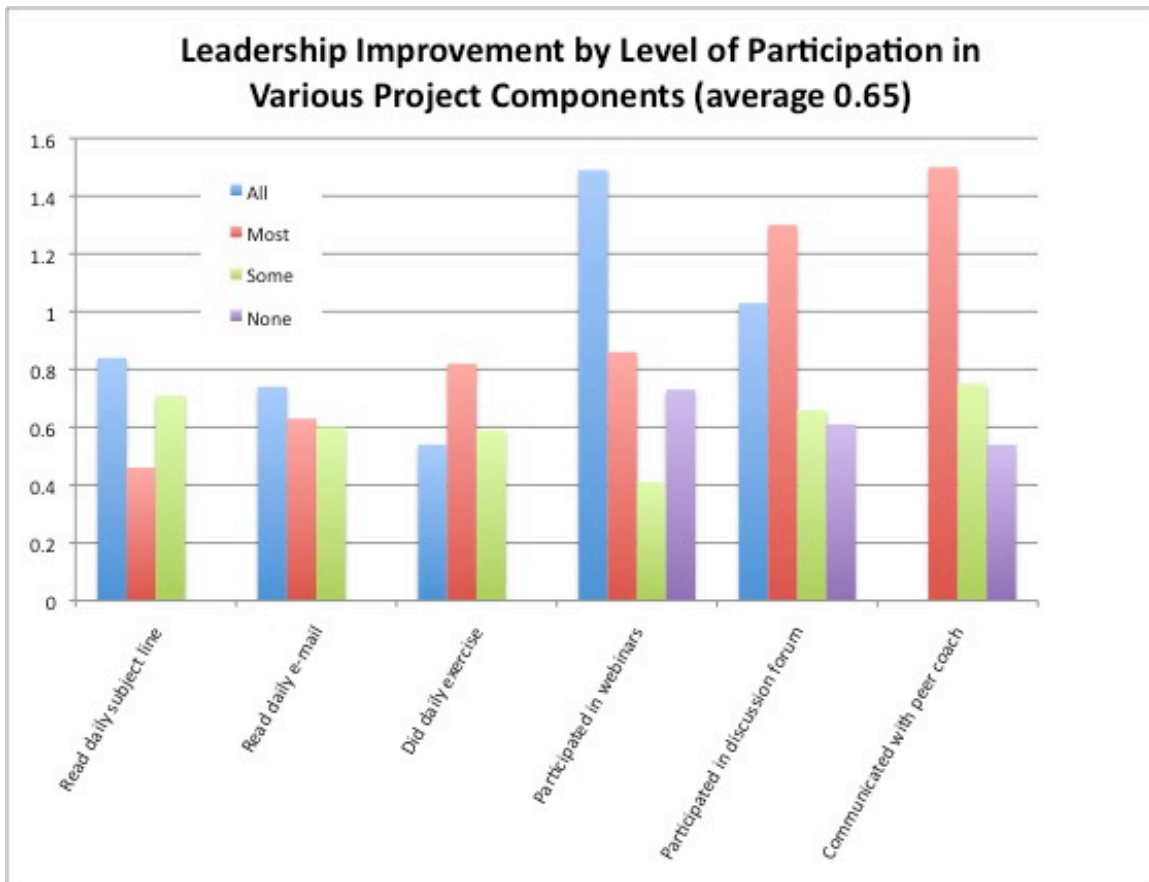


Figure 4

The resulting graph, above, shows that the greatest improvement in leadership capacity came from participating in most or all webinars; participating in most or all discussion forums; and communicating with a peer coach for most of the practices. In fact, the level of improvement for these groups was sometimes more than double the average level of improvement of 0.65.

Taking Figures 3 and 4 together, it was a minority of participants – those that made the effort to participate more fully in webinars, discussion forums, and with a peer coach – that benefited the most. Significantly, these are also the project components that involve direct engagement with other people on the practices.

Taken from a different angle, we saw in Figure 2 that, overall, greater participation resulted in greater improvement in leadership capacity. Digging deeper, we asked:

- ***Did greater participation correlate with improvement for each of the 12 practices?***

In Figures 5 and 6, below, participants were divided into three groups for each of the 12 practices: those that improved, stayed stable, and worsened. Participation across project components was quantified by numbers on the left: 0 for no participation, 1 for some, 2 for most, and 3 for all. The average level of participation on this scale of 0-3 was 1.26.

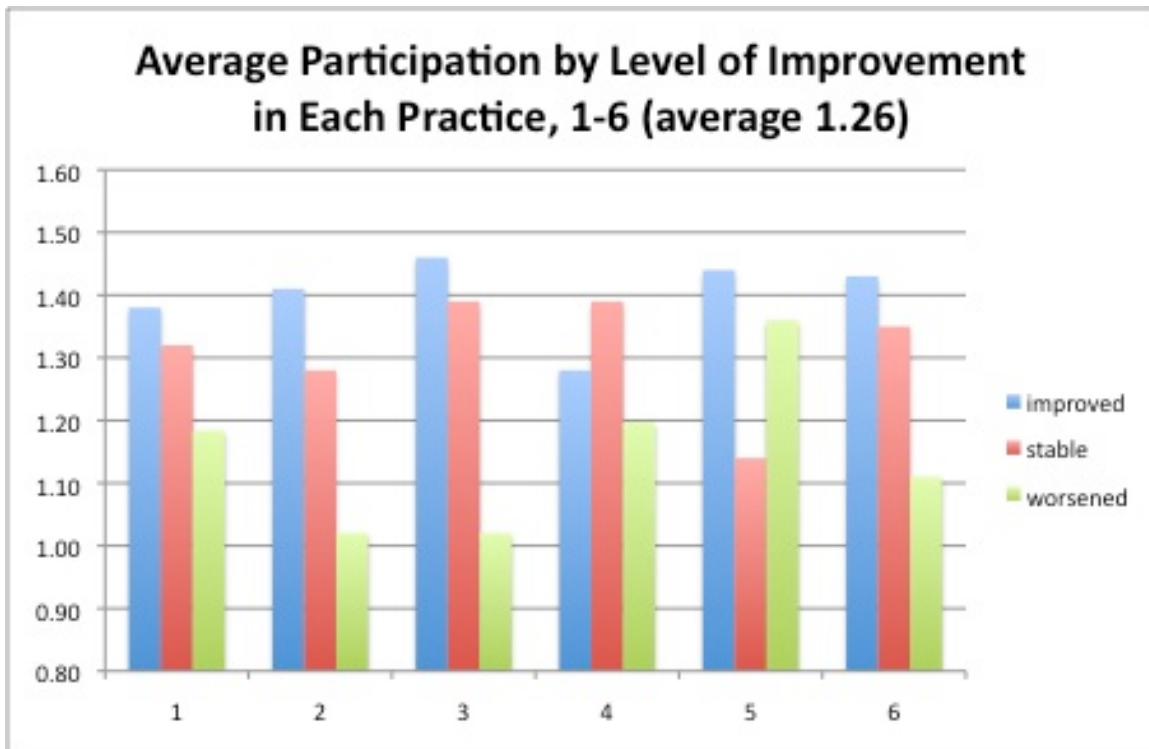


Figure 5

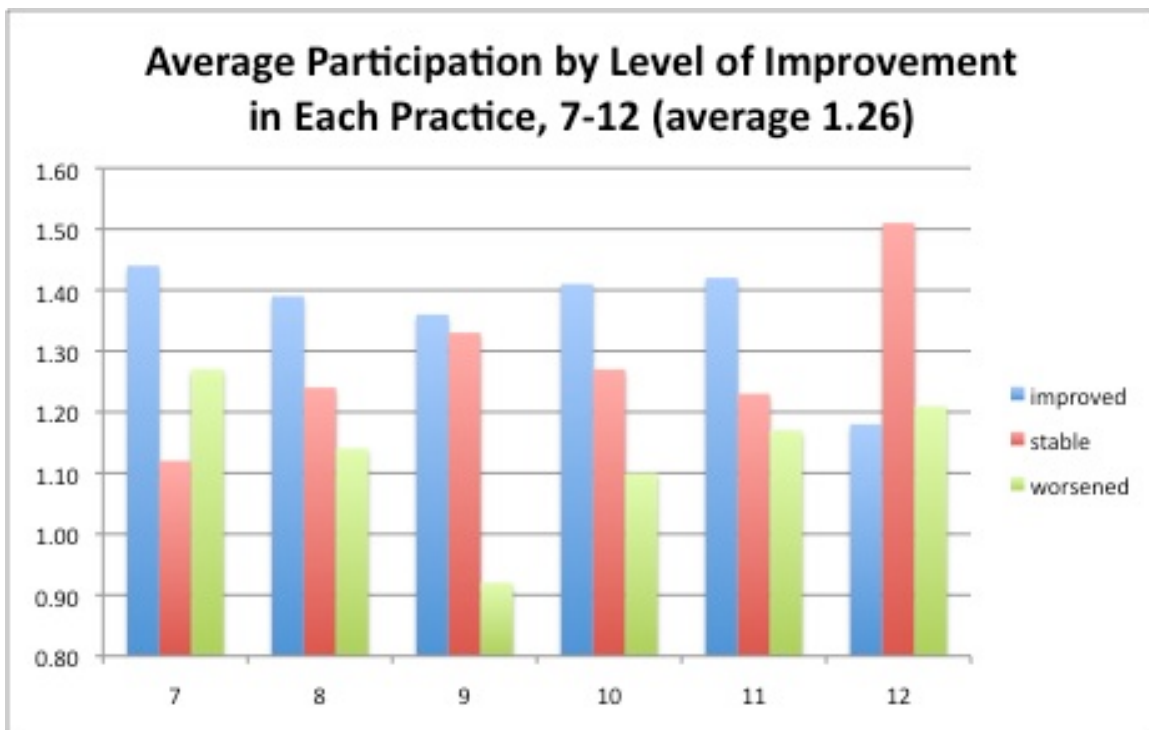


Figure 6

For the most part, we see that, yes, those groups that participated most were also those that improved in each practice. Exceptions were practice 4, Enough / Not Enough, and practice 12, Our Mind is Not the Universe. For these two practices, greater participation resulted in stabilization, not improvement. Though we have no definitive explanation for these exceptions, one thought is that the Enough / Not Enough and Our Mind is Not the Universe practices both involve a capacity to 'let go' of something. For the former, letting go of the idea of having more to succeed and, for the latter, letting go of the idea that we are at the center of our universe. Viewed from this perspective, it may make sense that moderate effort or participation would lead to the greatest success.

## Qualitative Assessment of Leadership Capacity

### *Deeper Assessment*

In addition to quantitative measures, we asked several qualitative questions at the end of the project, receiving responses from 46 participants. The first set of questions was:

- ***Which of the practices stood out most for you? Why?***
- ***What's an example of how you applied the practice?***

We clustered comments by practice, including an example response or two for each. The green bar is representative of how often each practice was referenced by respondents.

### Deep Listening 11

- This practice really planted a seed as I habitually allow my mind to race ahead during a conversation, not really fully listening but busy forming a response or a ME centered viewpoint. I continue to practice being mindful and present and quietly listen to each person I interact with. I now recognize that I often was not quiet but full of inner chatter, not listening fully. As a result, I now recognize that I was missing an opportunity to learn from that individual.
- I always thought before that I was a good listener, but during this practice I learned that I could be even better. I started quieting my mind when I was having conversations, I stopped myself from answering in my mind before people finished talking and gave more concentration to my phone conversations.

### Inner Power 10

- This helped me focus on what was important and I gave myself permission to scale back on things that didn't meet my purpose.
- Claiming a mantra has made a deep difference on a daily basis. Maybe it was because it was an early practice, or maybe because I worked with a peer coach on this one, but the impact of this lesson permeates everything now.

### Our Triggers 10

- Triggers helped me interrupt automatic patterns of response. ...now I am aware of more triggers and can catch them as they are set in motion. The next step is to use Robert's suggestions to find alternative responses.
- I continue to struggle with triggers. I discovered that one of the first tools I pick up to contend with stress is also the one that leads to PTSD. These triggers take a long time to heal, because not only is the PTSD insidious, it also takes me to that

vicious cycle of not accepting myself. Key insight is that I need more tools to deal with stress.

Power of Love 7

- For me, being able to really access LOVE means being able to really access vulnerability and that is a growth edge for me in regard to accessing and sharing that type of vulnerability in a professional setting.
- Power of Love was lovely and transforming – the meditations were very moving and took me to a deep place and made me miserable (thinking of my mother as the person who had inspired and taught me – she passed away many years ago) – but then I resurfaced and found a better place.

Stress No More 7

- Stress No More was the most important to me. It helped with reframing stress and how to respond mostly to my inner self about the reality of the situation. I also was able to connect with another person working on daily practices and we shared some insights about this particular practice.
- Stress No More is probably the one that came to me most easily and I'm reminded of most often. I've had a number of stressful work situations of late and by asking myself the question 'Is there anything I can do to change the situation?' and remembering to breathe, normally the stress dissipates.

Not Enough 6

- I find that it is almost always relevant to remember in the execution of my projects and as a means for motivating and supporting a confident team.
- There is never 'enough' of anything and things get done anyways. It's irrelevant – just admit it and move on.

Purposeful Action 6

- My purpose as articulated through the exercise is 'creating a cultural shift, awaking perception.' I tend not to be a linear thinker, and am slow to warm up to outcomes, but measuring approaches to my work with this purpose in mind was very helpful and validating.
- Learned to take myself more seriously.

Have To / Choose To 5

- It is the choice of have to / choose to from where I perceive life as a victim or from a place of empowerment.
- I realized that I was doing so many things I hated, just because my head (and at a deeper level, society) wanted me to. I started to listen more to my heart and deep purpose inside.

Our Mind is Not the Universe 5

- I learned to relativize things, as we are all mini, tiny parts of the system, and a mass of energy and cells. I loved to realize that. It helped me to Stress No More (still working on it though).
- Brilliant topic. How often we think things we have learned are "true" and we shut our minds to other ways of looking at things?

Authenticity 4



- I'm working on some large carbon reduction projects that are in various stages of development. Working on my authenticity as a project developer has helped me to align the aspiration I have for the projects and the reality of what it's like to actually get them done. A daily reminder of the importance of being authentic is very helpful in this line of work.

#### Inner Voice

4

- I am trying hard to really listen when I have my inner voice speak and to act on that, rather than let my mind override it.
- Before, I tended to believe that one person who was saying his/her thoughts very loudly must be right. I also tended to believe that if I wasn't sure of something, I must not be right. I learned to accept to be not sure of something, and that it was fine, even great. I learned to trust me and my gut more. And listen less to people who appear loud and confident. In the same practice, I also had a big revelation that helped me a lot in this world: I realized that everyone had the right to have his/her own opinion. Even if it is in contradiction with other ways of thinking. That I don't have to agree on something with someone, we don't have to make a consensus. It is ok to think differently and believe in different things. All that matters, is how to interact, from a Place of Love, to respect each other in that.

#### Power of the Word

3

- The exercises made me move from a place where I would often say 'yes' and then would renegotiate to more deliberate commitments and thus also more 'no's.' I was afraid of doing this because I didn't want to hurt someone's feelings and found that they appreciated my clarity.

The final question that we asked was:

- ***How do the practices inform your personal life and leadership work going forward?***

We received three types of responses to this question: (1) the content was beneficial, (2) I want to continue the practices, and (3) I am applying the practices. Here are some sample responses in each category:

#### The Content was Beneficial

- It was surprising how 'attuned' the practices were to my everyday life. Sometimes, I looked at the practice for comfort or insight when I didn't know how to face a situation. Other times, it felt as if the practice was written especially for me and the situation I was going through at that moment.
- Really, all the practices were incredibly profound. Trying to identify which were most impactful is like trying to choose which color of the rainbow is most memorable.
- It's a good reminder to pay attention to energetics and to take care ourselves well as we do this challenging work. It's good to know there are others that include this in their definitions of leadership as well.
- They were wonderful. The end caught me completely by surprise. I wish it had gone on forever! Suddenly I read, this is our last practice, and I just sat there almost mourning. It was one of the most important commitments I made that truly brought treasures to my daily life. I was always curious what the next day would

bring. It made me grow as a person by considering such sensible perspectives on life, living and leading. Thank you sooooo much for providing this opportunity to us.

- It deepens each time I review the words.
- I think the entire project far surpassed my expectations. Great content, webinars, pace and duration! Fabulous! Please start another one soon or repeat this series for the hardheaded!! Thanks for the great practices! Peace!
- This was HUGELY valuable and I feel changed. Thank you so very much for giving us this opportunity!

#### I Want to Continue the Practices

- I would love to have the practices continue in perpetuity. Since that is not yet an option I have started practicing them over again. Each category I have yet to master.
- The practices are very important and I plan to do a re-cap and then a re-wind to start over to re-enforce these in my life.
- I plan to read through and practice the two I missed, because the other daily practices come into my head constantly.
- I plan to re-visit the emails again and again, finding new depths of richness within them.
- I will continue to integrate them into my being – they have given me strength, happiness and serenity at work and in my life.
- I'm planning to do them again and see them as a very useful source that I can tap into over and over again.
- They've definitely made me a more caring and appreciative person. There is still a lot of things to work on, but I definitely enjoyed the reminders. Would be fun to get the odd email in the future as a sort of refresher, an 'oh yes, let me focus on this again today.'

#### I am Applying the Practices

- They give me grounding, pause for reflection, and inspiration to tap into my purpose.
- Once I identified the areas, I was able to use the tools provided to develop a new habit. I hope to be a better leader, and friend, due to these changes.
- The practices have given me a mindfulness of leadership and the elements it entails.
- These practices have informed both my personal life and my leadership work by grounding me in what's important and providing structure for remembering how I wish to be in this world. They are an incredibly valuable compass. Providing the kind of perspective that before I would barely recall.
- It all applies to the personal and professional. Gives me a greater perspective on mindful leadership and some great new tools to employ for my own development and for group collaborations.
- Certain practices come to the forefront of my mind every day in a positive way.
- The practices have informed my life by laying the groundwork for what's okay, what's reasonable, what's in the best interest for myself and those in my life. It has offered a sense of perspective that I feel confident in advocating for as a way of being in this world.

- Help make me more grounded and more thoughtful and to approach tasks, big and small, from a much more positive and effective place (also led to some great conversations with my husband!).
- Because many of my colleagues were also receiving the practices, it helped us create a shared vocabulary to discuss and shift how we interact with each other and our work.
- Loved some of the quotes. And honestly some came at bad times for me, and so they pissed me off or annoyed me. But that just held the mirror up more sharply.
- The practices deepened my convictions and resolve. Leadership is a challenge and it's easy for me to feel uncomfortable. Particularly if I am leading in something I feel uncertainty about. The practices helped me through and reminded me to stay calm; to embrace equanimity.
- They have helped make me reflect and recognize my strengths and weaknesses. I am able to realize where I am going wrong in dealing with others on a daily basis, which might not have happened otherwise.
- I'm in a very formative time with my particular program that I'm growing and the leadership practices were very helpful in keeping things 'in perspective.' I also serve as a mentor to many and was able to use parts of the leadership principles to support that work.
- Benefitted from the daily e-mail. The little reminder of how to proceed each day, mindfully, alone was a great daily asset, a gentle reminder to be kind, patient, mindful, compassionate...
- My actions, in my life as a whole, are now more directed to something I profoundly feel is right. It feels SO good. I have more energy and (almost) always feel that I am at the right place, at the right moment. I understand myself better.

We are glad for the feedback and inspiring stories we received from participants. In sharing this report with all of them, we hope that we can hold a mirror up to their personal achievements and desire to continue practicing.

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