



WELLBEING STRATEGIES FOR OPTIMAL BRAIN & BODY PERFORMANCE

INSPIRED BY THE DOCUMENTARY

MAKE ME A LEADER

WRITTEN BY SILVIA DAMIANO



INSPIRED BY THE DOCUMENTARY

MAKE ME A LEADER

PRODUCED BY THE
ABOUT MY BRAIN INSTITUTE

IN LOVING MEMORY OF MY FATHER
A LEADER AT HEART

WRITTEN BY SILVIA DAMIANO

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WE LIVE IN A WORLD OF CONTINUOUS CHANGE, WHICH BRINGS US NEW TECHNOLOGIES, INCREDIBLE ART AND LITERATURE AND SCIENTIFIC ADVANCES.

However, this constant change also means that we are required to adapt faster than ever. The demands on both our personal and professional lives can be stressful and overwhelming at times, impacting how we conduct ourselves with others and even the choices we make.

This kind of stress affects the leadership we display, which in turn has an impact on those we work with. 6 in 10 workers in major global economies report rising levels of workplace stress, which costs the UK economy approximately £28 billion and Australia around \$14 billion annually. 80% of Americans report stress at work, and nearly half admit needing help to manage it.¹

Chronic stress can cause cognitive impairment by suppressing the normal function in the thinking parts of our brain, limiting our ability to make rational decisions and solve complex problems. We lead most effectively when our brain is healthy.

Elevated levels of the stress hormone cortisol and decreased levels of serotonin and other neurotransmitters in the brain are associated with depression. Chronic stress affects virtually every system in the body, from chronic painful muscle disorders to inflammation of the circulatory system to gastrointestinal issues.

No matter our role at work or at home, we all feel the pressure to succeed, to do better, or to spend more time here or there. Eventually, even the best may succumb to these stressors if they do not make changes.

Stress can affect our brain, heart and gut impacting our mental, emotional and physical wellbeing. Synchronising these systems is possible and if we are able to adjust our outlook on life, we can become the most authentic and joyous version of ourselves.

I invite you to take a peek at the inner workings of the mind and discover what practices such as meditation and good sleep can do for performance.

We must learn to link all the intricate parts of our bodies for a happier and more fulfilling life.

**THE FUTURE
OF LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT
INVOLVES A
SHIFT FROM
'HAVING OR DOING'
TO 'BEING'.
FIRST OF ALL,
LEADERS
NEED TO DEVELOP
WHO THEY ARE,
AS PEOPLE.**

”

DR. HARALD HARUNG
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
COLLEGE OF APPLIED SCIENCE
OSLO & AKERHUS UNIVERSITY
NORWAY



Would you like to join me in this exciting journey? I encourage you to open your mind and take a leap into a better life and style of leadership. It doesn't matter if you are a powerful executive, a new parent, or someone looking for joy and contentment.

Leadership should be fluid, and it also needs to evolve to meet the demands of this new era. Leadership development that focuses on the brain and body of leaders as they are, 24-hours a day and 365 days a year isn't a fantasy or dream of the future – it is available now.

THE LIFE YOU WANT
IS WAITING – ARE YOU
READY TO MAKE IT HAPPEN?

Silvia Damiano

Silvia Damiano
Founder & CEO
About my Brain Institute





LEADERSHIP STRATEGY NO.1

THE SCIENCE OF MEDITATION



UNDERSTANDING THE MANY BENEFITS OF MEDITATION

The practice of meditation has its roots in India during the Vedic period, around 1500-500 BC. There are many types of meditation, including Mindfulness, Vipassana, Compassion and Transcendental. Each can offer an opportunity to clear the mind and create inner harmony.

Leaders are expected to do more as organisations cut costs and seek to increase the bottom line. As a result, burnout, disengagement, anxiety and a general sense of unhappiness are prevalent in leadership positions. Moreover, leaders are not the only ones being affected – a workplace that is stressful for one is usually stressful for all.



WHAT CAN MEDITATION DO FOR LEADERS?

**LEADERS
WHO PRACTISE
TRANSCENDENTAL
MEDITATION
HAVE HIGHER
LEVELS OF BRAIN
FUNCTIONING
AND PHYSICAL
FUNCTIONING.
THEY LIVE LONGER
AND DO BETTER
OVERALL.**

”

DR. ROBERT SCHNEIDER

DEAN

COLLEGE OF INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE

MAHARISHI UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT • USA

Dr. Rob Schneider, who has taught prevention-oriented natural medicine for over thirty years, is the Dean of the College of Integrative Medicine at the Maharishi University of Management. Dr. Schneider points out that cardiovascular conditions are a leading cost of disease and the resulting health care costs are enormous.

Meditation is one technique that can decrease stress levels and also the risk of heart attacks, strokes, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Effective leadership requires a healthy body and mind, and meditation can help leaders not only achieve their goals, but also improve overall health.





WHY SHOULD ANYONE TRY MEDITATION?

Neuroscience is showing the link between meditation techniques and better leadership skills. Dr. Fred Travis, Director of the Centre for Brain, Consciousness, and Cognition at the Maharishi University of Management, has years of research experience in brain function and Transcendental Meditation.

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi founded the modern Transcendental Meditation (TM), movement in the 1950s, and there are now millions of practitioners. Research studies on this technique have been published since the early 1970s.

The research of Dr. Harald Harung, Associate Professor at Akershus University College in Norway, in collaboration with Dr. Fred Travis has led to profound and groundbreaking realisations. Dr. Harung believes too much focus is put on work. Instead people should relax more and work joyfully with less insistence. This would allow individuals to accomplish more with less effort.

There are hundreds of published studies on Transcendental Meditation, by scientists such as Drs. Travis, Schneider and Harung.

48%
REDUCTION

A 5-year randomised control study by the American Heart Association reported a 48% reduction in strokes, heart attacks and deaths for patients with coronary heart disease who practiced TM.²

A recent article examined the effects of meditation on hypertensive patients in eight medical trials. Compared to the controls, patients who practised meditation had a lower systolic blood pressure of 4.7 mmHg and a reduced diastolic blood pressure of 3.2 mmHg.³



STROKES



HEART ATTACKS



DEATHS

**ARE LEADERS BORN
OR ARE THEY MADE?
I THINK THE ANSWER
IS THAT BOTH ARE TRUE.**

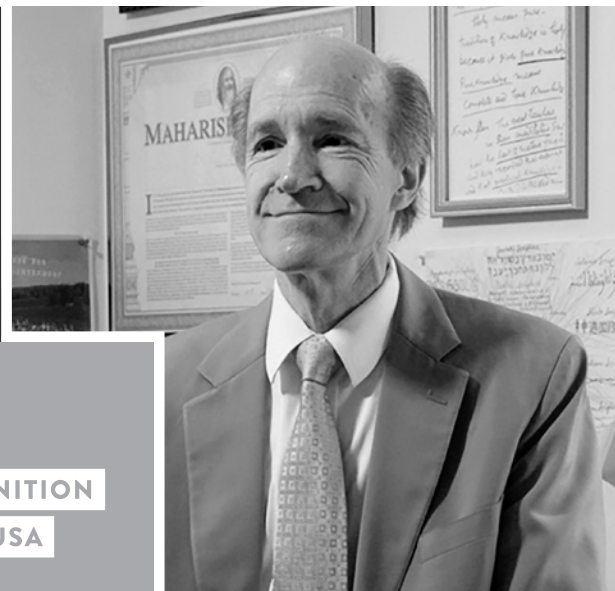
”

DR. FRED TRAVIS

DIRECTOR

CENTRE FOR BRAIN, CONSCIOUSNESS & COGNITION

MAHARISHI UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT • USA







3 WAYS TO

INCORPORATE MEDITATION

TIP 1.

Meditation does not take up much time, requiring only 20 minutes, twice a day. A comfortable, safe location to sit will be needed.

TIP 2.

Find a local teacher and learn how to meditate or join a meditation group.

TIP 3.

Make the decision that personal health and wellbeing are worth the time and effort. Changes will occur almost immediately, but it needs the right mindset for success. A study by the American Psychological Association reported that only 12% of those surveyed practised meditation or yoga.⁴

According to Jay Vidyarthi, former Head of User Experience Design at Interaxon, meditation encompasses a broad range of practices, and different things work for different people. Finding what works for you and then sticking with it is the key.

To understand how mindful someone is while meditating, Interaxon has developed a tool called 'Muse.' Muse is a wireless EEG headset linked to a smartphone that provides users with real-time data about the effectiveness of their meditation. Tools like Muse can be incorporated to increase mindfulness when developing leaders.

MEDITATION
DOES NOT
REQUIRE A LARGE
INVESTMENT OF
TIME OR RESOURCES.

YOU CAN GET STARTED AT ANY TIME. MAXIMISE PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVE WELLBEING BY EXPERIENCING TRUE AWARENESS OF MIND. TO HEAR MORE FROM JAY VIDYARTHI AND DRS. FRED TRAVIS, ROBERT SCHNEIDER AND HARALD HARUNG WATCH THE **MAKE ME A LEADER** DOCUMENTARY & EXPANDED CHAPTERS TO LEARN ABOUT THE BRAIN AND THE POSITIVE EFFECTS OF MEDITATION.



READ RELATED ARTICLES HERE:

[BLOG.ABOUTMYBRAIN.COM/TOPIC/MAKE-ME-A-LEADER](https://blog.aboutmybrain.com/topic/make-me-a-leader)







LEADERSHIP STRATEGY NO.2

TECHNOLOGY & BRAIN HEALTH

USING THE TOOLS OF TOMORROW, TODAY!

Yearly physical examinations will soon incorporate another part of the human body – the brain. As technology progresses, regular brain check-ups will become the norm. Doctors will be able to assess brain health to ensure that proper treatment is prescribed before problems occur.



The history of neuroimaging goes back to Angelo Mosso in 1882, who attempted to measure how much blood a person's brain used with an elaborate scale, based on the idea that a brain in action would need more blood.⁵ Fast forward nearly a hundred years, and MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) and CT (computed tomography) were invented.

BRAIN HEALTH IS GOING TO BECOME A CRITICAL PART OF YOUR HEALTH PROFILE. WE HAVE MORE TOOLS NOW TO IMPROVE YOUR BRAIN HEALTH AT DIFFERENT STAGES IN YOUR LIFE.

”

CHRIS BERKA

CEO & CO-FOUNDER

ADVANCED BRAIN MONITORING

CARLSBAD • USA

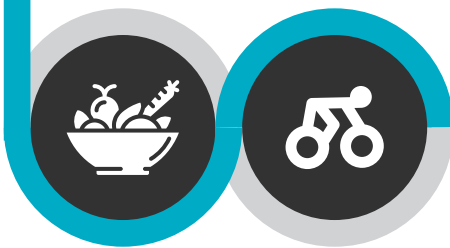


WHAT TECHNOLOGY IS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE?

Mobile EEG (electroencephalography) devices collect real-time information during resting and stimulating scenarios. Brain-computer interfaces are used as therapies for spinal cord injuries to restore damaged pathways. Technology will continue to advance to provide an accurate, simple way to diagnose brain health and to treat various brain and spinal disorders.⁶ In addition to medical uses, technology can also be used in the leadership space to demonstrate how the brain functions when leaders make decisions.

WHAT CAN BRAIN IMAGING TECHNOLOGY DO FOR LEADERSHIP?

Chris Berka, co-founder of Advanced Brain Monitoring in California, is seeking to unravel how human minds function and interact in real-time. Several brains can be linked using the Team NeuroDynamics platform to provide live, quantitative data to help decode social interactions and metacognitive states of subjects. Studies have shown that engagement increases when a strong leader emerges. A positive leader can also enhance the performance of other team members more than someone who displays a negative outlook.





IMPROVE YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

A close-up view of the brain can be sobering for many. Scans can show how emotional trauma and stress affect circuitry in the brain. Effective leaders cannot be constantly anxious, tired or sluggish. Just as a scale shows if someone is not eating properly or exercising enough, a brain scan will show how healthy or unhealthy, a person's brain might be.

According to Dr. Robert Johnson, Medical Director for the Amen Clinics, chronic stress levels can cause an increase in cortisol, which can impair brain function and negatively impact a person's performance and emotional intelligence (EQ). Emotional intelligence is as important, or even more so, than IQ for effective leadership.

5 TIPS TO

IMPROVE BRAIN HEALTH

TIP 1.

Get enough quality sleep. Very few people can function on low quality sleep. Many adults do not get enough sleep, either. Assessments and treatments are available for those suffering from sleep issues.

TIP 2.

Go outside and get moving. Simply walking around in the open air is beneficial. Human bodies are not meant to sit motionless at a desk for hours on end.



TIP 3.

Pay attention to food and beverages.

Sugary, caffeinated drinks are often a quick fix for the afternoon slump, but they are incredibly unhealthy. A piece of fruit is a better choice than a morning doughnut. Brains need nutritious foods to promote proper function.

TIP 4.

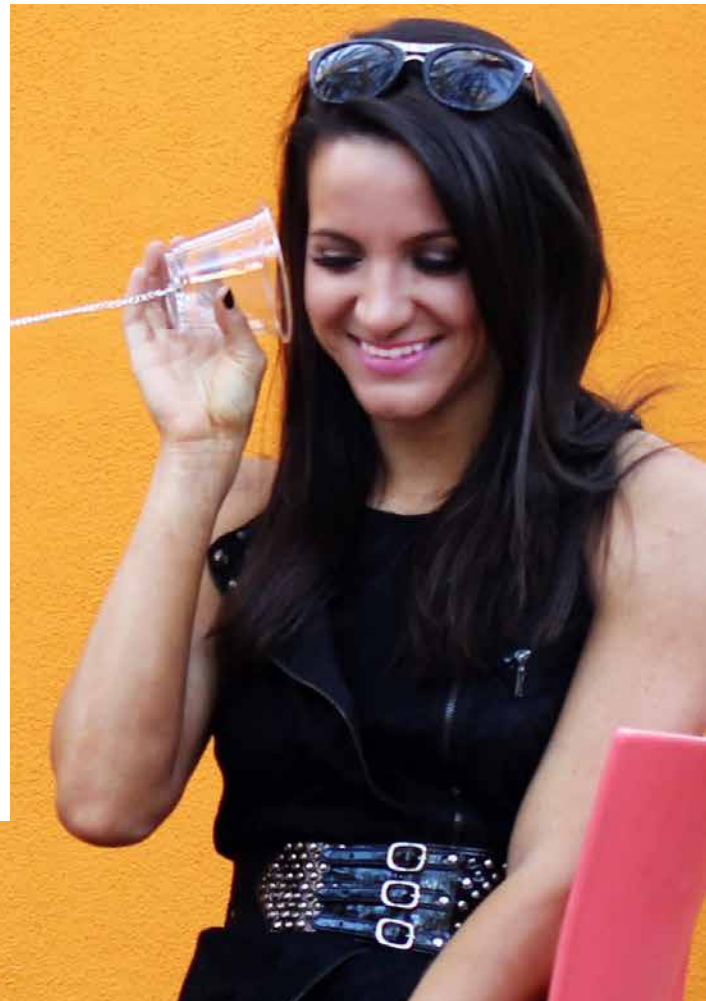
Bring your passion along for the ride.

Dr. Maurizio Floris, Program Director of the John Grill Centre for Project Leadership in Sydney, points out that if someone is passionate about what they are doing and they encourage others to feel and share that passion, a team can achieve more than anyone working in isolation, no matter how smart or qualified the person is.

TIP 5.

There is more to life than work.

Cultivating relationships with friends and family members stimulates brain activity. Avoid electronic devices and instead, spend time with your loved ones in person.





OUR BRAIN IS OUR
BIGGEST SUPPORTER
AND A HEALTHY BRAIN
IS NECESSARY
FOR A HAPPY AND
SUCCESSFUL LIFE.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT BRAIN IMAGING TECHNOLOGY, WATCH DR. ROBERT JOHNSON AND CHRIS BERKA IN THE **MAKE ME A LEADER** DOCUMENTARY & EXPANDED CHAPTERS. THE FUTURE IS NOW, WE MUST EMBRACE THIS TYPE OF TECHNOLOGY TO BETTER UNDERSTAND LEADERSHIP DYNAMICS AND HOW OUR BRAINS AND THE BRAINS OF OTHERS FUNCTION.



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LEADERSHIP STRATEGY NO.3

THE SLEEPING LEADER

BETTER SLEEP FOR IMPROVED COGNITIVE FUNCTION

Sleep is as necessary as oxygen, water or food. In the short-term, lack of sleep increases the risk of infections such as cold or flu, and in the long-term, it can lead to cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and even early death.

During periods of high stress, many people skip sleep to accomplish more tasks or resolve issues. However, any productive gains achieved from skipping sleep will not offset the negative effects that go hand-in-hand with sleep deprivation. A tired person may feel effective, but in reality, tiredness leads to increased mistakes and a decreased work pace.



**YOU NEED TO
HAVE ENOUGH
SLEEP SO THAT
WHEN YOU
WAKE UP,
YOU CAN MEET
NOT ONLY THE
CHALLENGES
BUT THE JOYS
OF THE DAY.**

”

DR. CARMEL HARRINGTON
SLEEP EXPERT & AUTHOR
‘THE SLEEP DIET’
SYDNEY • AUSTRALIA

WHY IS SLEEP SO IMPORTANT?

Dr. Carmel Harrington has nearly twenty years of research experience in the world of sleep, and she is an internationally recognised sleep expert. While sleeping, humans experience various states, which include REM (Rapid Eye Movement) and non-REM.⁷



NON-REM SLEEP

(NREM):

There are three stages of NREM sleep. Brains get a respite during this stage and experience a slow-down. This offers the prefrontal cortex time to rest.

STAGE 1:

A transitional stage that occurs when someone first goes to sleep. It lasts for around 1 to 7 minutes and the sleeping person is easily disturbed by noises.

STAGE 2:

Depending on how tired a person is, this stage lasts between 10 to 25 minutes. People are more difficult to awaken.

STAGE 3:

Slow wave sleep or deep sleep. This usually lasts 20 to 40 minutes and is followed by REM sleep.



RAPID EYE MOVEMENT

(REM) SLEEP:

Brains are very active during this stage. Brains engage in housekeeping activities that cannot be completed while awake. This is the stage where dreams occur. The first cycle of REM sleep may be less than 10 minutes long.





The normal sleep cycle, going from stage 1 NREM, stage 2, stage 3, and then REM sleep, will repeat during the night, with each cycle taking around 100 minutes to complete. Sleep gives the mind and body a chance to reset, organise and prepare for a new day. Different people need different amounts of sleep, but adults typically require 7 to 9 hours each day for optimal function.

Dr. Fred Travis explains why sleep is so important: sleep essentially “flushes” out the brain, as astrocytes (where neurons are located) constrict, allowing cerebral spinal fluid to flow over brain cells. A tired brain cannot effectively learn or work.

**THE TIRED BRAIN CANNOT
DEAL WITH STRESS AND IS NOT
GOOD AT PROBLEM SOLVING.
SO, THE WHOLE IDEA OF REWARDING
‘WORKING ALL-NIGHTERS’
SHOULD BE TURNED
THE OTHER WAY AROUND.**

”

DR. FRED TRAVIS

DIRECTOR

CENTRE FOR BRAIN, CONSCIOUSNESS & COGNITION

MAHARISHI UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT • USA

WHAT ABOUT SLEEP QUALITY?

For sleep, quantity is not the only important factor. According to the Sleep Health Index™ by the National Sleep Foundation, ‘general sleep quality’ was also linked to low life satisfaction.⁸

12%
REPORTED “EXCELLENT”
SLEEP QUALITY



53%
REPORTED “VERY GOOD”
OR “GOOD” SLEEP QUALITY



35%
REPORTED “ONLY FAIR”
OR “POOR” SLEEP QUALITY



Respondents who indicated a low life satisfaction or high stress levels also reported poor or fair sleep quality. People who reported lower quality sleep rated lower in overall health, as well.







3 WAYS TO

IMPROVE SLEEP QUALITY

FOR A HEALTHIER AND

MORE PRODUCTIVE LIFE

Over one-third of respondents reported fair and poor qualities of sleep in the 2014 study. This means one out of three people are tired, and that tiredness impacts how they live and work.

TIP 1.

Stop worrying about the day. It is tempting to lay in bed and rehash the day. Was everything completed? Was the email sent? Try to ease your mind instead of wasting precious sleep time on the past. A hot cup of tea, a few chapters of a printed book or maybe a warm bath can help your mind get ready for bed.

TIP 2.

Create a place to sleep. The bed should be reserved for sleep and love making. Save browsing on the Internet for a comfortable chair or couch. Lower the temperature and snuggle with a blanket on a great pillow for a restful repose.

TIP 3.

Seek help for sleep disorders. There are over 70 sleep disorders that can impair sleep, resulting in a tired brain and potential long-term health effects. Reach out to your medical practitioner to ensure proper rest is achieved.

RECLAIMING OUR
TIME TO SLEEP
IS CRITICAL TO
REMAIN PRODUCTIVE,
YOUNG AND HEALTHY

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP, WATCH DRS. CARMEL HARRINGTON AND FRED TRAVIS IN THE **MAKE ME A LEADER** DOCUMENTARY & EXPANDED CHAPTERS. DON'T BE THE ONE WHO LIVES IN A HAZE OF LONG NIGHTS, ONE AFTER ANOTHER. INSTEAD, BE THE ONE WHO IS RESTED AND EXCITED ABOUT EACH NEW DAY.



READ RELATED ARTICLES HERE:

[BLOG.ABOUTMYBRAIN.COM/TOPIC/MAKE-ME-A-LEADER](https://blog.aboutmybrain.com/topic/make-me-a-leader)





A young woman with long dark hair is smiling broadly, showing her teeth. She is wearing a long-sleeved shirt with thin black and white horizontal stripes and blue denim overalls. She is holding several red and pinkish-red apples in her hands. The background is a soft-focus field of purple flowers, possibly lavender. The image has a warm, slightly grainy aesthetic with some light flare effects.

LEADERSHIP STRATEGY NO.4

THE MIND-GUT CONNECTION

THE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN A HEALTHY GUT AND A HEALTHY BRAIN

Science has long neglected the link between the gastrointestinal tract and the brain, but many digestive symptoms are a warning that something is amiss. Instead of dismissing the role of the gut, scientists are now focusing on research to examine microbes living in the digestive system and the link between healthy bacteria and a healthy brain.

Minor digestive symptoms, such as bloating, heartburn, and abdominal distension are not found in healthy guts. Avoiding greasy or fatty foods can help curb these symptoms, and many of these ailments may also be due to overindulging.

According to international leadership consultant and author of the book 'mBraining', Grant Soosalu, neuroscience can unravel the link between the brain, heart and gut. It is possible to align these three brains for increased success and happiness.⁹

Decisions are often driven by more than logic alone, and nearly everyone has experienced a “gut feeling” before. However, it is impossible to make good choices when the gut and the head brain are not in sync.



IT SEEMS STRANGE
THAT GIVEN
THE CRUCIAL
IMPORTANCE
OF GUT-BASED
DECISION MAKING,
THERE IS NO
FORMAL MECHANISM
TO TRAIN THIS
REMARKABLE ABILITY.

”



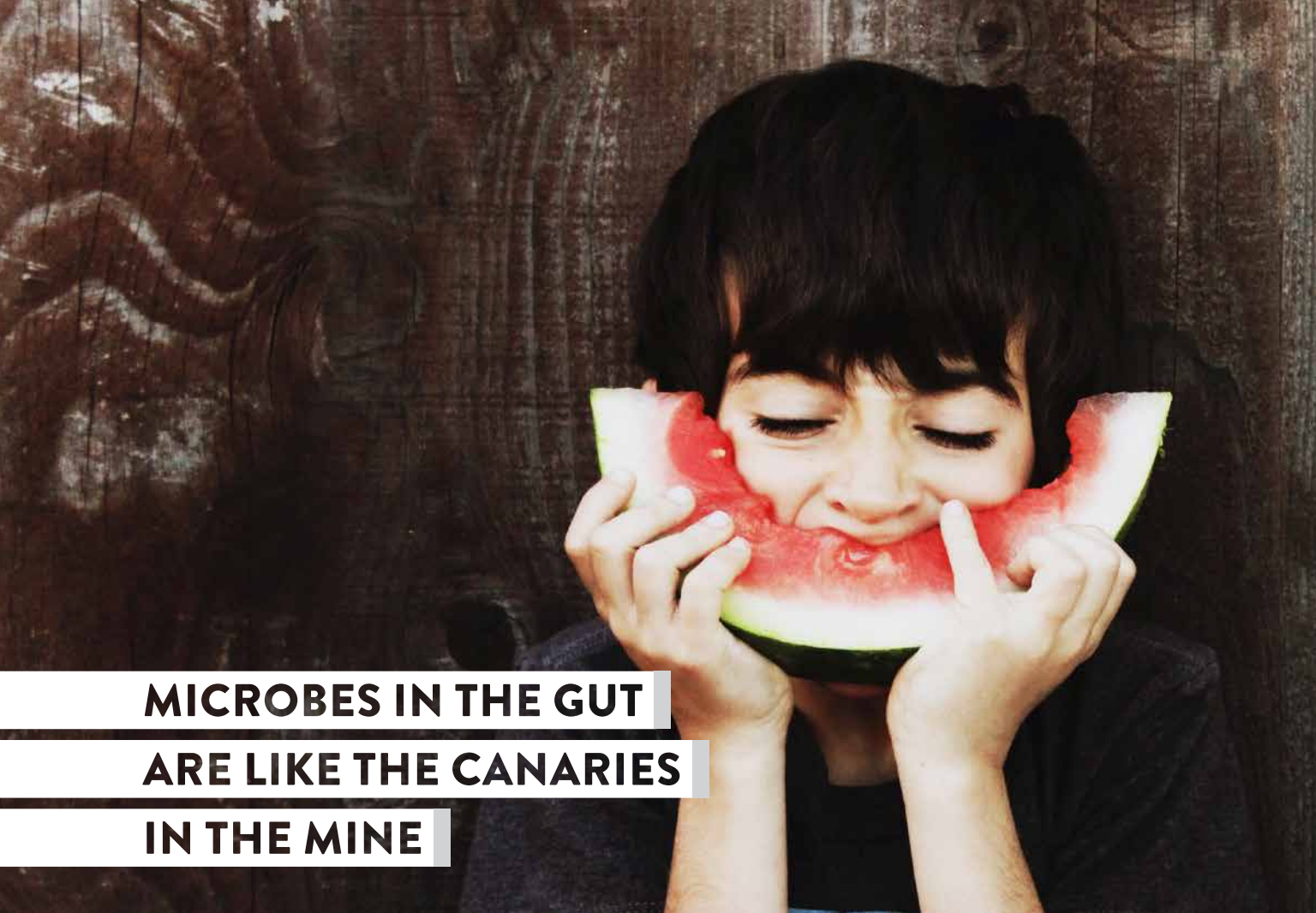
DR. EMERAN MAYER

DIRECTOR

G OPPENHEIMER CENTER FOR NEUROBIOLOGY OF STRESS & RESILIENCE

UCLA • USA





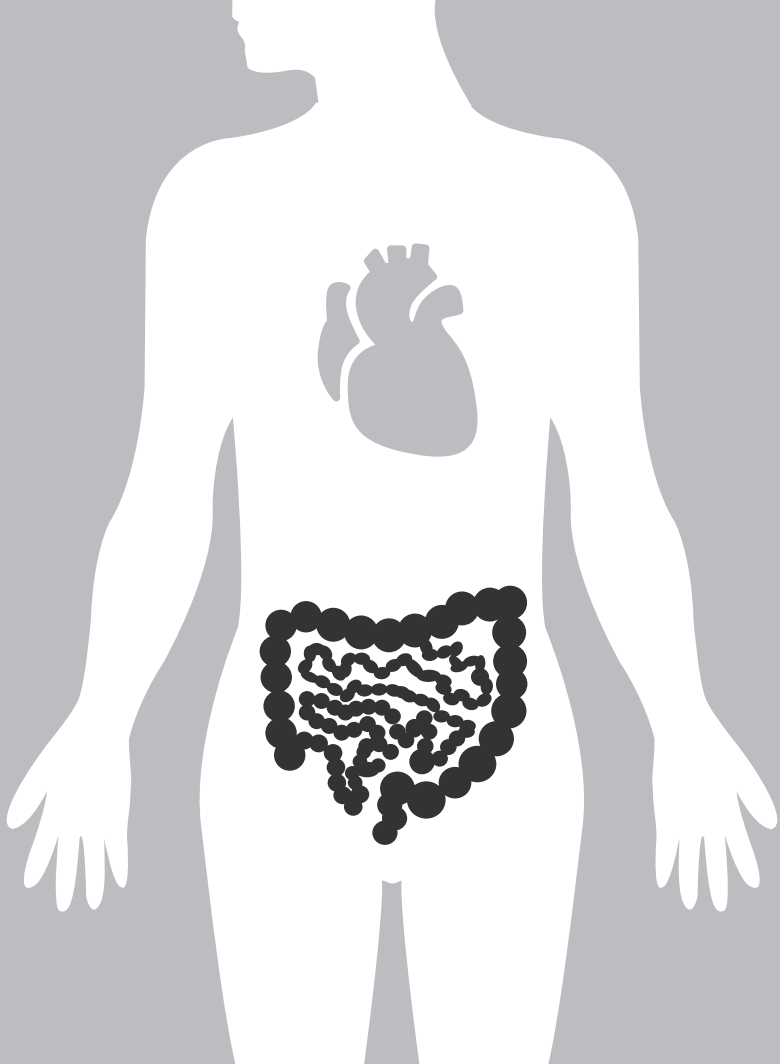
MICROBES IN THE GUT ARE LIKE THE CANARIES IN THE MINE

World-renowned neurogastroenterologist Dr. Emeran Mayer has studied the interactions between the gut and the brain for thirty years. He has found that guts with more diverse microbe populations tend to be healthier. High levels of stress or an unhealthy emotional state can influence the composition of gut microbes.

Just like miners used canaries to indicate an air problem, microbes in the digestive tract can indicate digestive issues. Stress has a major impact on these bacteria, and even mild stress levels interfere with the metabolism of a precursor of serotonin.

**SEROTONIN IS A MOOD
STABILISER THAT IS
ESSENTIAL FOR OPTIMAL
PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL
AND MENTAL HEALTH.**

A link has been suggested between irritable bowel syndrome and various disorders.¹⁰ Their study examined scientific literature from 1966 to 2002 and found that:



94%

OF PATIENTS WITH IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME (IBS) WERE ALSO AFFECTED BY PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS, ESPECIALLY ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION.

51%

OF PATIENTS WITH IBS HAD CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME.

49%

OF PATIENTS WITH IBS HAD FIBROMYALGIA.







3 WAYS TO IMPROVE THE MIND-GUT CONNECTION

Dr. Robert Schneider has taught prevention-oriented natural medicine for over thirty years, and he points out that stress is a common factor for cardiovascular diseases, some mental problems and gut disorders. Fortunately, people can make changes to improve their mind-gut connection and overall health.

TIP 1.

Get the right things on the dinner plate.

Think “healthy food, healthy mind” when consuming food and drinks. Everything that goes into the body can affect the body, either positively or negatively.

TIP 2.

Regular exercise is important.

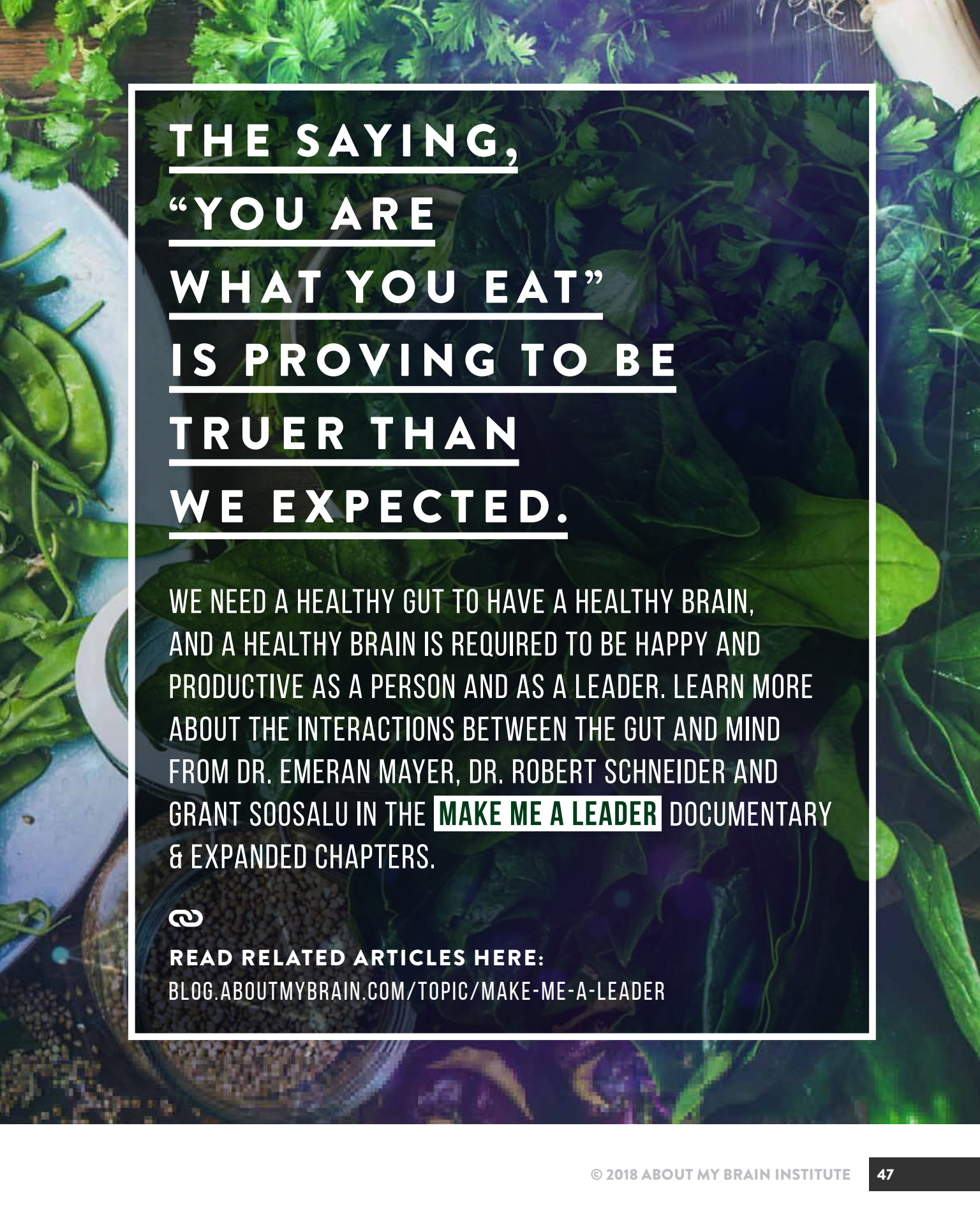
Exercise can help reduce stress, which has a positive impact on both the brain and gut. People who exercise more have a different microbe composition in the gut than people who do not.

TIP 3.

Reduce anxiety and stress.

Meditation, along with regular exercise, can help lower anxiety and stress. Stress often leads to unhealthy food and drink choices. Spending time to reduce anxiety is time well spent.





THE SAYING,
“YOU ARE
WHAT YOU EAT”
IS PROVING TO BE
TRUER THAN
WE EXPECTED.

WE NEED A HEALTHY GUT TO HAVE A HEALTHY BRAIN, AND A HEALTHY BRAIN IS REQUIRED TO BE HAPPY AND PRODUCTIVE AS A PERSON AND AS A LEADER. LEARN MORE ABOUT THE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE GUT AND MIND FROM DR. EMERAN MAYER, DR. ROBERT SCHNEIDER AND GRANT SOOSALU IN THE **MAKE ME A LEADER** DOCUMENTARY & EXPANDED CHAPTERS.



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LEADERSHIP STRATEGY NO.5

KEEP IT MOVING

A BODY IN MOTION STAYS IN MOTION

Most business leaders are familiar with the term VUCA, which stands for volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. A VUCA work environment is not conducive to innovation and creativity. One way to avoid falling into the VUCA mindset is to connect with nature and integrate the sensory-motor system.



While Sir Isaac Newton may not have intended his first law to be interpreted in such a manner, a body at rest tends to stay at rest, and a body in motion tends to stay in motion. Today's modern world means that many people, children included, do not spend enough time playing outdoors. However, even those trapped in a concrete jungle can seek out green spaces and parks to move their bodies and enjoy nature.

The World Health Organisation estimates that physical inactivity is the 4th leading cause of death globally, affecting around 3.3 million people each year. 56% of adults do not engage in enough physical activity according to the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines.

150 minutes of moderate physical activity a week can help achieve huge health benefits and reduce the risk of dying by 40%.¹¹

According to Dr. Kaushik Ram, lack of locomotion is linked to lower back pain and weak joints. Simply taking the time to play freely or practicing movement patterns can be what the body needs to break up a long sitting day.¹²

Sylvie Minot, co-founder of the Syzygy Dance Project in California, teaches people how to move their bodies. She herself did not begin to dance until age 29. Dancing made her discover parts of her body she didn't even know existed before. Learning how to move releases stress and invites the brain to acquire new patterns and develops healthier habits.



**PLAY IS INTERESTING
BECAUSE IT DOES
NOT PROVIDE AN
ENDPOINT. WE PLAY
FOR THE PLEASURE
OF PLAYING, AND
THAT IS THE BENEFIT.**

”

DR. KAUSHIK RAM
NEUROSCIENTIST

MOVEMENT EXPERT & AUTHOR 'HIDDEN WORLD'

SYDNEY • AUSTRALIA

THE LINK BETWEEN VAGAL TONE, INACTIVITY AND STRESS

The autonomic nervous system keeps the body regulated when at rest without conscious control. The vagus nerve, also known as the pneumogastric nerve, regulates heart rate, sweating, swallowing, and muscle movements in the mouth.

Vagal tone can vary from one person to another, and there are several factors, such as genetics, stress levels and physical activity, that can positively or negatively affect vagal tone. Low vagal tones are linked to mental, physical, and physiological diseases. Vagal tone is also impaired if someone is affected by chronic stress or does not do regular exercise.¹³



AUTONOMIC
NERVOUS SYSTEM



EMOTIONAL
PROCESSING



SOCIAL
BONDING





**MOVEMENT CAN HELP
LEADERS BECOME
BETTER LEADERS
BECAUSE THEY AREN'T
LEADING ONLY WITH
THEIR MIND.**

”

SYLVIE MINOT

CO-FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SYZYGY DANCE PROJECT

SAN FRANCISCO • USA

3 WAYS TO

INCREASE VAGAL TONE

Individuals with high vagal tone have strong communication between the brain and body and have a decreased risk of illnesses associated with low vagal tone. High vagal tone is also linked to improved autonomic nervous system function, emotional processing and social bonding. Vagal tone can be measured in two ways, by respiratory sinus arrhythmia or heart rate variability.¹⁴

Improving vagal tone has a positive impact on the body and mind. The sympathetic state is associated with the high-stress fight or flight mode. Conversely, the parasympathetic state is when the body is calm and relaxed, and prepared for rest and restoration. Increased vagal tone is associated with the parasympathetic state. To improve this state, you can:

TIP 1.

Stop and take a break. Our working day can often happen at a furious pace.

Taking a moment to breathe has a beneficial effect on vagal tone. Breathing techniques can actually “work out” the parasympathetic network, increasing the capacity to handle physical, emotional and physiological stress.¹¹

TIP 2.

Get moving and play. Statistics paint a stark reality of the impact of physical inactivity.

Making an effort to go outside each day to walk, exercise and play will improve health outcomes and longevity. Only 46% of respondents for a 2017 survey by the American Psychological Association reported using exercise to help manage stress.⁴

TIP 3.

Make small changes. Even minor adjustments to your routine can help you develop a more positive, creative and innovative outlook. You could take a moment to write down the things you are grateful for, or make an effort to notice something new on the way to work. Sue Langley, CEO of the Langley Group in Sydney, strongly believes that when people embrace positivity, they can increase their levels of wellbeing.





An underwater photograph showing a person's hand resting on a pink inflatable ring. The water is clear blue, and sunlight filters through from above, creating a shimmering effect. The scene is framed by a white border.

NAVIGATING A VUCA WORLD IS EASIER IF YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TOOLS.

ADDING MOVEMENT AND EXERCISE TO THE DAILY ROUTINE WILL IMPROVE VAGAL TONE AND CONSEQUENTLY, OVERALL HEALTH. TO FIND OUT MORE FROM DR. KAUSHIK RAM, SUE LANGLEY AND SYLVIE MINOT, JUMP INTO MOTION AND WATCH THE **MAKE ME A LEADER** DOCUMENTARY & EXPANDED CHAPTERS.



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LEADERSHIP STRATEGY NO.6

THE POWER OF THE HEART

CONNECTING THE HEART TO THE BRAIN

The notion of the heart as a ticking time bomb is all too real for many leaders and individuals in highly stressful positions. The heart itself was merely thought of as a pump, faithfully pushing blood around the body. Research has now shown emotional states do impact the heart and that the brain and the heart are linked, similar to the brain and gut axis.



WHAT IS THE HEART-BRAIN LINK?

The role of the heart is much more complex than was initially believed. While it does pump blood around the body, it also responds to stress and emotions. Negative emotions cause a chaotic heartbeat, with jagged ups and downs to the rhythm. Peaceful, positive emotions show a smoother and more even heartbeat.

Developing mindful leadership means that we need to learn to cultivate more positive than negative emotions if we want to achieve a calm and compassionate state of mind, as well as a more productive and innovative work environment for everyone.



**MANY OF OUR
CURRENT PROBLEMS
COME FROM
DECISIONS THAT
ARE MADE WITHOUT
COMPASSION.**

”

JAY VIDYARTHI
HEAD OF USER EXPERIENCE
INTERAXON
TORONTO • CANADA





HOW TO FOSTER DEEP CONNECTIONS WITH OTHERS?

Judith Glaser, the author of 'Conversational Intelligence', focuses on studying what happens on a cellular and neurochemical level during conversations. Connecting with others heart-to-heart helps achieve a deeper level of connection. Leaders must learn how to give others the space and the time for true connection to develop appropriately.

When we communicate with others effectively we can activate oxytocin in the body, which fosters connection even during stressful situations. Creating habits and routines that encourage oxytocin production, such as complimenting others, compassion, meditation, listening to someone who needs to vent, hugging or even breathing increases this chemical and improves the feeling of an environment.



**LEADERS WHO KNOW
HOW TO ENCOURAGE
A TEAM MEMBER CAN
ACTIVATE THE PERSON'S
ABILITY TO GO WELL
BEYOND WHAT HE OR
SHE EVER ENVISIONED.
THAT'S WHAT GOOD
LEADERSHIP IS
ALL ABOUT.**

”

JUDITH GLASER

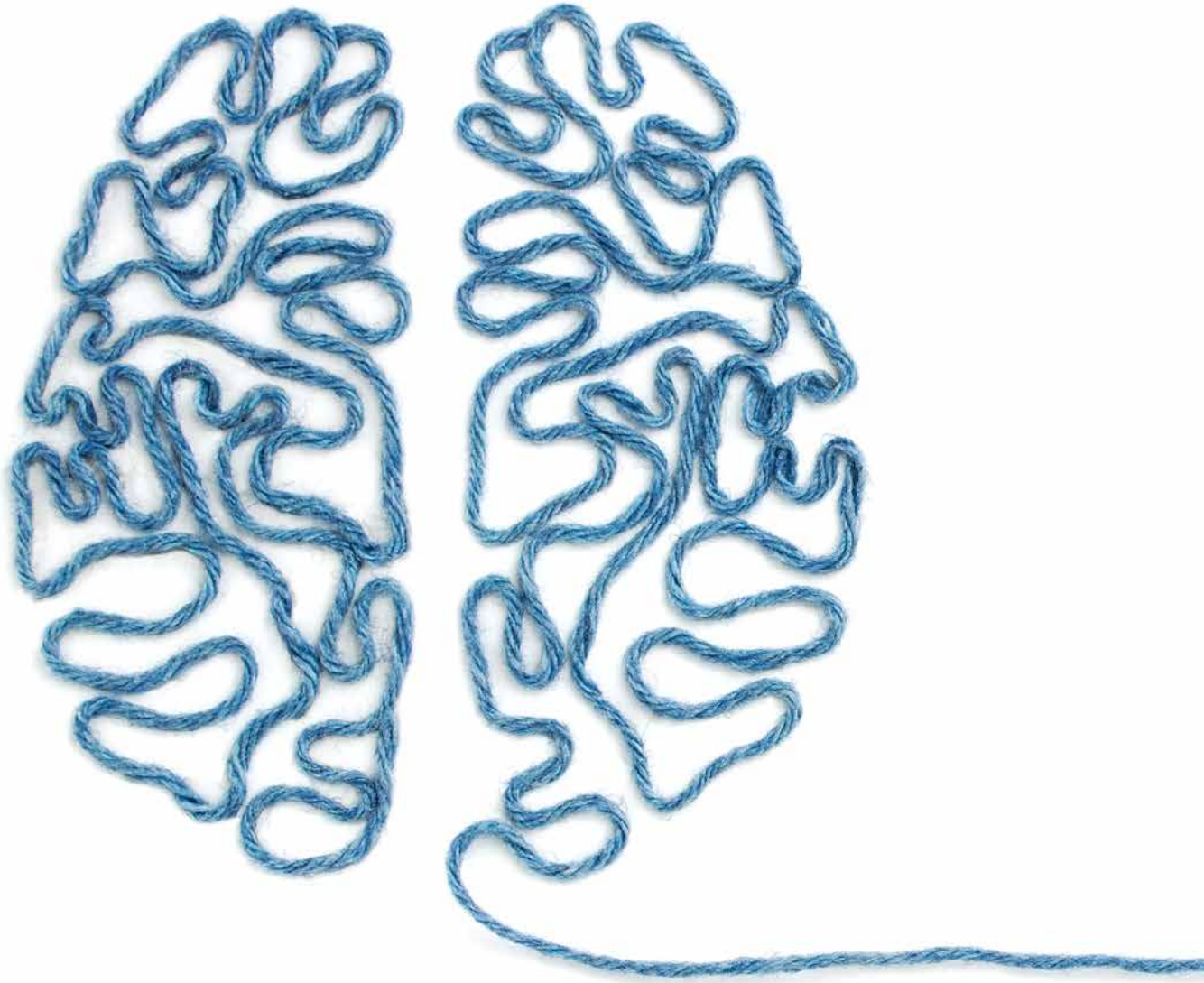
AUTHOR

'CONVERSATIONAL INTELLIGENCE'

NEW YORK • USA



3 WAYS TO STRENGTHEN THE HEART-BRAIN CONNECTION



The brain and the heart should pair up like a prima ballerina and her partner. When we align our emotions and cognition, we are able to make decisions that are more balanced and compassionate. To facilitate this alignment refer to the following tips:

TIP 1.

Breathe.

A study by Bruce Cryer found that taking slow, deep breaths allows physiological coherence between the heart and brain, which helps regulate heart rhythms and stress.¹⁵ When something becomes overwhelming, stop and breathe. Imagine a calm heart and a calm mind.

TIP 2.

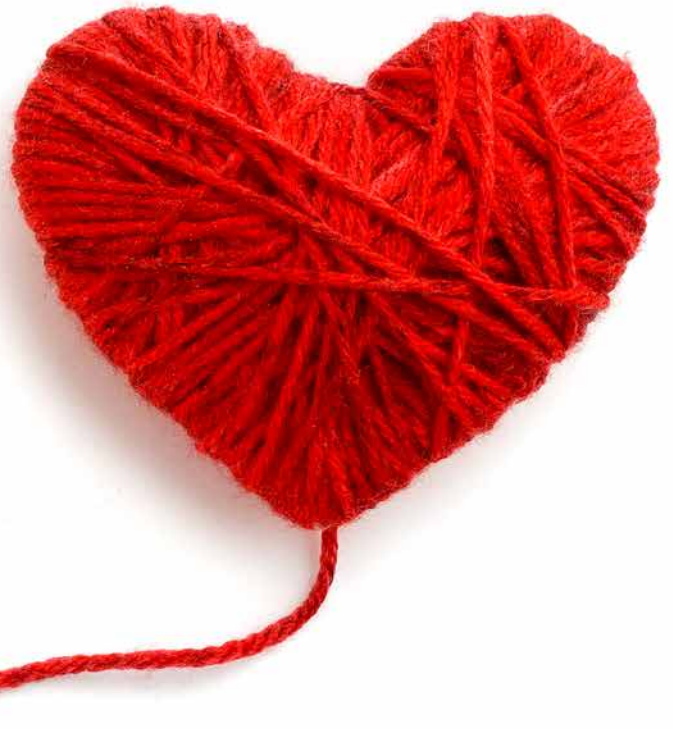
Seek professional help.

Psychological afflictions cannot simply be ignored. A professional can provide resources, support, medications or supplements as required. Constant worrying, depression and tension put the heart and mind out of balance, affecting many aspects of our lives.

TIP 3.

Improve other areas that might be out of balance.

Sleep. Nutrition. Movement. Meditation. Each of these plays a role in overall health. A healthy heart needs proper fuel, rest and exercise to function well.





OUR HEART IS THE PLACE OF EVERYTHING BEAUTIFUL.

REDUCING STRESS TO IMPROVE THE HEART-BRAIN LINK
WILL ALSO IMPROVE OUR POTENTIAL AS A LEADER.
TO FIND OUT MORE, WATCH BRUCE CRYER,
JUDITH GLASER AND JAY VIDYARTHI IN THE
MAKE ME A LEADER DOCUMENTARY
& EXPANDED CHAPTERS.



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LEADERSHIP STRATEGY NO.7

ADAPTING OUR BRAIN IN A CHANGING WORLD

FOREVER LEARNING

FOR BETTER ADAPTATION

A changing world requires leaders to be lifelong learners. Technological advances move at an astonishing pace, leaving many individuals floundering behind and attempting to catch up. It is imperative that we continue developing our abilities and learn to create a vision for the future. Finding the courage to achieve this vision can keep us motivated to perform.



**LEADERSHIP,
TO ME,
IS THE INTERPLAY
BETWEEN VISION
AND COURAGE.**

”

ANNA BLIGH
FIRST FEMALE PREMIER OF
QUEENSLAND • AUSTRALIA

WHY MUST LEADERS BE LEARNERS?

Companies cannot expect long-term success without a serious investment in developing the minds and the brains of their employees. Innovation is critical for any business and to awaken the creativity in their teams, leaders need to foster true collaboration and encourage an agile mindset. Agility is highly valued in the turmoil of today's world economies and the ability to respond swiftly to ever-changing conditions is the mark of a leader who can learn new ways of doing things and adapt successfully.

We are born into this world with certain talents and strengths. Our brains are wired in such a way that we see the world through our own subjective lens. Now we know, however, that every opportunity we encounter rewires the brain and creates new connections that can help us grow and transform.

Dr. Travis affirms that 70% of the connections of our brains change every day, thus the value of taking additional courses or having new experiences in order to remain flexible and current.



CREATIVITY

INNOVATION

COLLABORATION



**I THINK LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT IS
CRUCIAL FOR ANY
AMBITIOUS COMPANY.**

”

SKANDER MALCOLM

MANAGING DIRECTOR & CEO

OFX • SYDNEY • AUSTRALIA

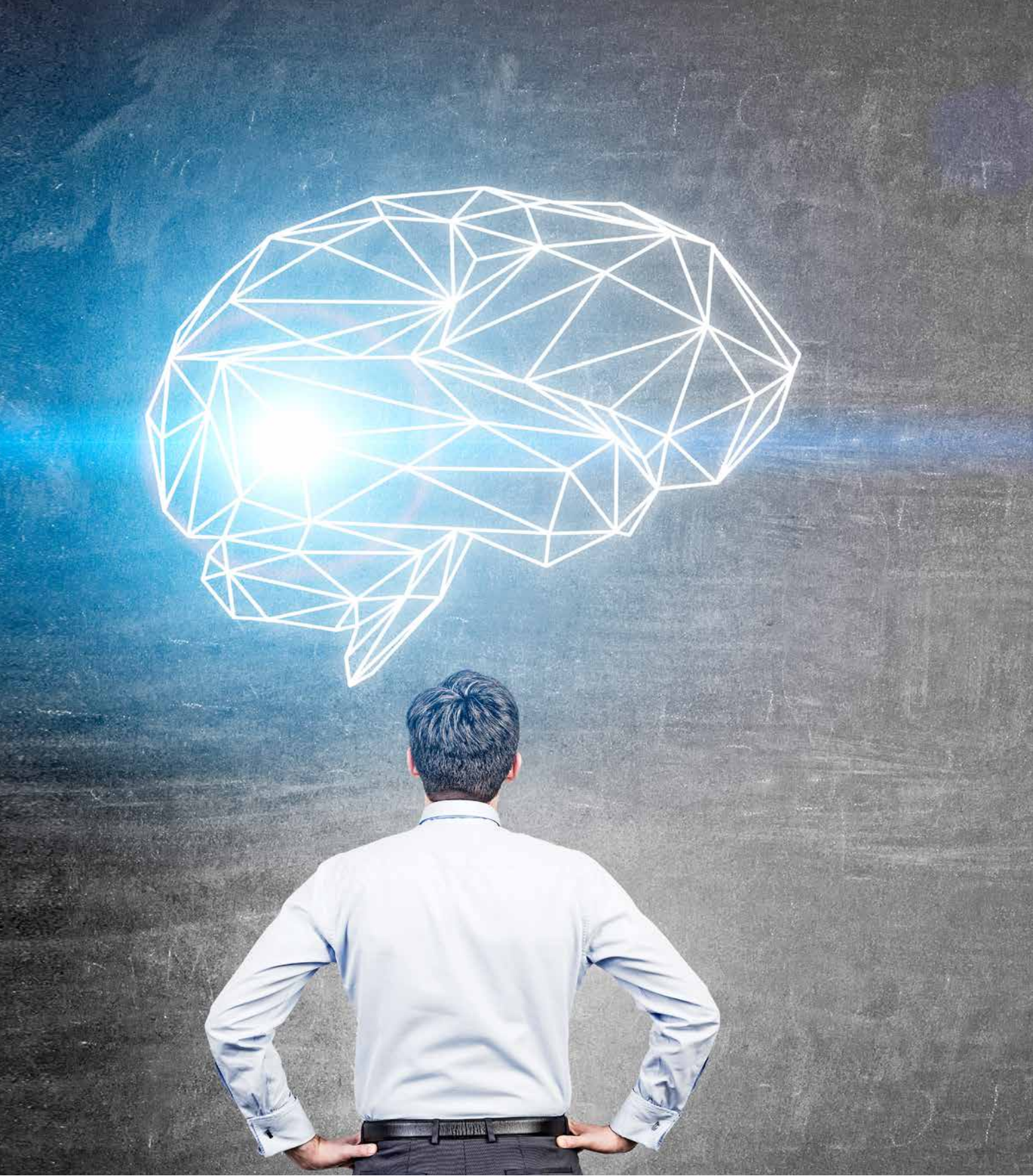
IT IS TIME WE ALSO LEARN HOW TO BE MORE THOUGHTFUL AND COMPASSIONATE

It is easy to scoff and say that “things aren’t that bad.” However, turn on any reputable news source to see suffering around the globe. Things ARE that bad, but together, we can make real changes for the betterment of all living creatures.

Corporate greed, corrupt dictatorships, and the crumbling of democracy pose a very real threat to life as we know it. Now is the time to step forward and demand a style of leadership that incorporates a more compassionate and mindful approach.

As Skander Malcolm, CEO of OFX, points out, tough conversations must take place. Leaders need to have the courage to intervene when things are not working. Silence is acceptance. Those who merely shuffle along from one task to another are not inspiring or effective, neither are they able to offer productive solutions to the wicked problems that we face today.





3 REASONS

WHY EVERYONE SHOULD

CONTINUE REFINING THEIR

LEADERSHIP ABILITIES

TIP 1.

Everyone operates in a leadership capacity at some point, even if they are not “the boss” at work.

Running a household, coaching a youth sport team or organising a book club all require leadership skills. Understanding how the brain works and identifying strengths and weaknesses can help build stronger leadership abilities.

TIP 2.

Humans are capable of greatness.

Misti Melville is the Global HR Director at BuroHappold, an organisation where engineers transform amazing ideas into kinetic architecture. She believes that collaboration can fulfil even the most impossible dream. To get to a high level of innovation, people must collaborate and create a culture where creativity is allowed to blossom and grow.

TIP 3.

Improving leadership can create a snowball effect.

While developing personal leadership abilities would definitely be helpful in the workplace, these same skills are useful in the personal and social spheres. Increased happiness and fulfilment are available to anyone, not only to the wealthy entrepreneur or the CEO of a large organisation.



BEWARE!
STRESS CAN AFFECT
YOUR CAPACITY
TO ADAPT.

Leadership abilities, cognitive function, and resilience decrease in times of stress. Our brains require precise conditions to learn, to operate at full capacity and to adapt to volatile and uncertain environments.

It is time we take off our blinders and create novel and better ways to educate our leaders; ways that can teach them how to leap into the future without feeling under-resourced and overwhelmed.



IT IS TIME
WE CREATE
BRAIN-FRIENDLY
CULTURES THAT
CAN HELP FOSTER
PRODUCTIVITY,
ENGAGEMENT AND
WELLBEING AT
ALL LEVELS.

TO FIND OUT MORE FROM ANNA Blich, SKANDER MALCOLM AND MISTI MEVILLE, JUMP INTO MOTION AND WATCH THE **MAKE ME A LEADER** DOCUMENTARY & EXPANDED CHAPTERS.



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CLOSING REMARKS

Happiness does not fall into our laps from a magical tree or cloud in the sky. It requires that each of us learn how we function as a biological system and take the necessary steps to minimise the things that affect us, both as people and as leaders.

Then, we need to make a decision to implement the strategies that best work for us and have the willingness to follow through with that decision! The pressure to always be on and do more with less ultimately results in failure for many people.

Adopting a lifestyle that incorporates healthy habits, enjoying our relationships and life in general, can bring about feelings of fulfilment. We all deserve these things.

The world desperately needs compassionate leaders with a healthy mind, gut and heart. Leaders who are empathetic and can recognise that humans are worth more than numbers on a spreadsheet.

WATCHING THE MAKE ME A LEADER
DOCUMENTARY CAN BRING A NEW
UNDERSTANDING OF HOW TO DEVELOP
THE HUMAN BEHIND THE LEADER.



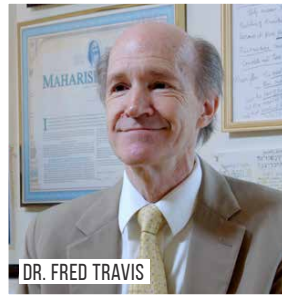


THE FEATURED EXPERTS

MAKE ME A LEADER FOLLOWS ON FROM SILVIA DAMIANO'S 2014 TEDX TALK AND HER BOOK LEADERSHIP IS UPSIDE DOWN.

Visiting Norway, Spain, USA, Canada, UK, Cambodia, Germany, Argentina and Australia, Silvia investigates the new approaches and strategies that are needed to develop the human behind the leader. This movie features interviews with business leaders, academics, leadership specialists and world-renowned scientists.

Steeped in neuroscience and the latest research in wellbeing, mind-brain development, neurogastroenterology, neurofeedback, sleep, meditation and movement, **Make Me A Leader** unravels the secrets of how to refine your minds and brains to become more self-aware, balanced and inspirational.



DR. FRED TRAVIS



DR. HARALD HARUNG



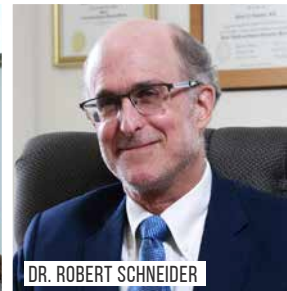
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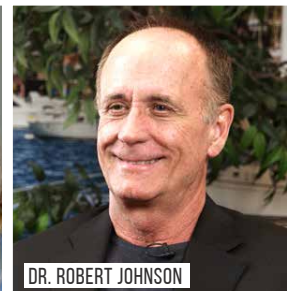
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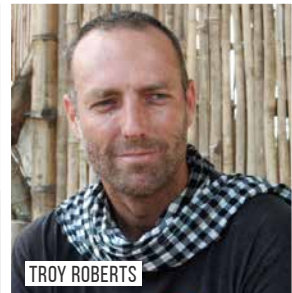
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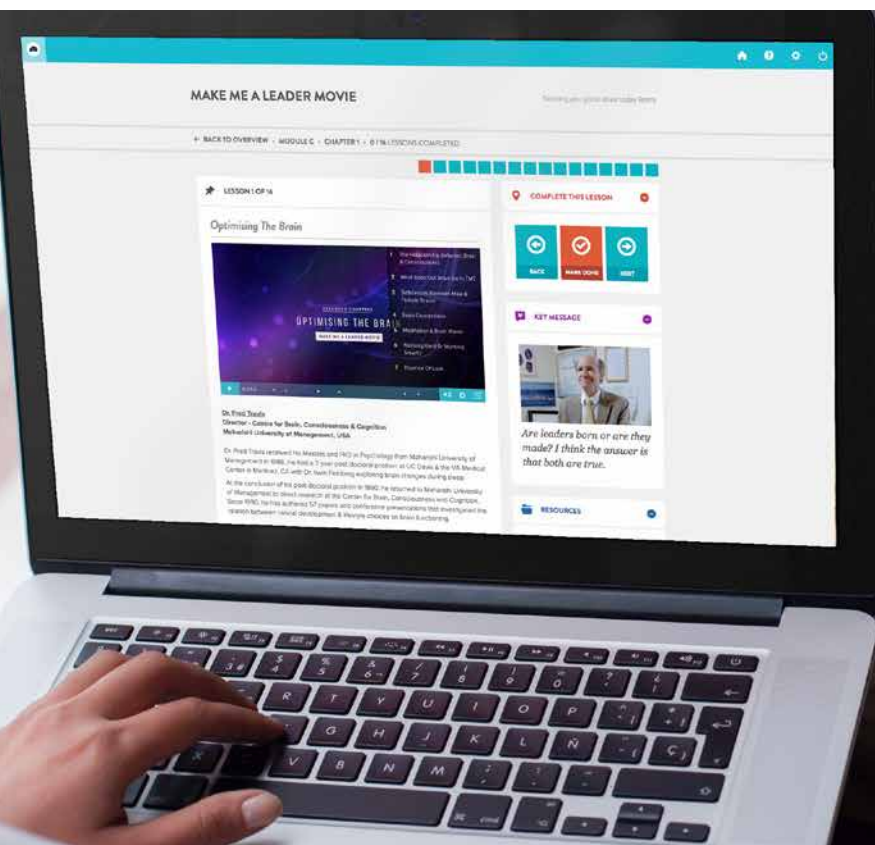
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