Mindful Leaders Leading *Self*

A Heideggerian Phenomenological study of four leaders

in a professional environment

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the requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly in the acknowledgement), nor material which to substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Acknowledgement

This has been the most amazing journey, it has had such impact on my personal life and how I perceive life. In discovering the strength of doing phenomenological research has opened up a different way of approaching reflection and allowing my passion for understanding life to unfold. The richness of letting things happen as they come in my writing, in my interpretation and in my conversation with the participants is indescribable.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore mindfulness and how it affects the way leaders engage with *Self* and others in order to discover how leaders understand their own practices of leading. Compared with *leadership*, leaders themselves are under-researched, and obtaining more understanding of their experience is useful both to the academy in particular and to society in general, because it is to leaders that the world looks, in times of stress, for exemplary behavior and guidance. Knowing the experience of some leaders mindfully leading *self* could assist others to achieve the same level of clarity and creativity that my participants have shown. With this purpose in mind, therefore, the research question I formulated to guide this study, was, "W*hat is the experience of a mindful leader leading self*?"

In terms of a doctoral study, this field of enquiry, the mindful leader leading *self*, is not a straightforward choice, at least in a Western university, because it is not a topic that can be deduced or proven, and understanding of it does not emerge from applying common sense or acquiring knowledge. Rather, insights into the phenomenon may be obtained by entering and understanding the experience of the individual leaders who engage with the *self* mindfully, and these insights must be gathered with the realisation that one individual's experience will necessarily be different from that of every other individual. Krishnamurti (1983) asserts that people often live in what he refers to as a dream state, and suggests that many people never become aware of what it means to participate in the world as a true human being.

In general, the literature on self-leadership focuses on the cognitive experience of *self* (Weisberg, 2006), but this research focuses on driving beyond the cognitive notions of self into the *lived experience* of being a mindful leader leading *self*, placing mindfulness at the core of the study. Mindfulness, a practice deriving from Buddhism, promotes meditation in order to develop the ability of being in the present. Being in the present is important, according to Krishnamurti (1983), who teaches that freedom comes from letting the past go and allowing the future to be what it will, maintaining that being present in the moment allows the brain to become naturally quiet so that practitioners find the truth of what is and develop awareness of life around them. Walpola Rahula (1978), an earlier Buddhist scholar,

similarly explains mindfulness as awareness, and argues that awareness is everything. By encouraging mindfulness (and other forms of spirituality) the organisation shifted responsibility to the workers, making it seem that 'failure to thrive' in the work environment was caused by workers' inadequate spirituality. Mindfulness as a buzz word, then, presents potential pitfalls. It is an important aspect of this study to avoid the pitfalls and articulate the benefits of authentic mindfulness for leaders so that it comes from a place of realness, to the individual, and that it contributes meaningfully to existence.

This study adopts a Heideggerian (1927/62) philosophy about authenticity and Dasein, *being in this world*. In my view research on Heidegger shows some subtle differences between the way scholars see authenticity and the way Heidegger himself sees it, but as I have adopted Heidegger's hermeneutical phenomenological approach, the *fore-having* of my idea of being a leader should be shared. An ontological questioning of the meaning of life is pivotal to this study, and the vehicle of this questioning is the experience of being a mindful leader leading *Self*. The participants' stories show how important mindfulness is to leading *Self* in their engagement with their professional roles and with their lives.

My aim with this research is to gain an insight into the world of f o u r leaders leading *Self*. I want to observe the ways in which mindful leaders lead *Self,* and as I have already said, I want to learn not only what the leaders do in terms of leadership action, but also by engaging deeply with my participants, to discover the *nature* of being a mindful leader. This research, then, will use a series of conversations to gather stories from individual leaders who are consciously engaged with leading *Self*, with a view to finding commonalities of understanding and behavior. The data accumulated from the conversations were analysed thematically to establish themes based on common experience and understanding. I am interested in what led the leaders to incorporate mindfulness into their everyday lives and the effect that mindfulness has on their professional conduct and if there are any divide between private and professional life.

All of the findings show how deeply the leaders have embraced mindfulness, and how this integration permits clarity of thought, openness to possibilities and creative flow (Rahula, 1978), but the key concept to emerge from this research is that mindful leaders play in their existence. In other words, they allow themselves to be open to possibilities and they hold life lightly so that they can move to the action or outcome that gives the best result for their situation. In this regard, mindfulness seems to diminish the drive for recognition and status,

building instead a sense that the leaders live true to themselves and to others, a finding that resonates with Heidegger's (1927/62) explication authenticity towards the s*elf*. The findings show that mindfulness does not remove unhappiness, problems and stress, but rather, that it shows a way towards comprehending and accepting the events that created the adverse reactions. For leaders everywhere, the implications of these findings are profound. My research shows that leading *Self* mindfully develops self-trust and allows for the action of intuition and letting things happen if they 'feel right'. This way of being diminishes the pain and anxiety of leading, increasing confidence in the *Self* and others.

Chapter 1

Introduction

"…to know the source is to be the source. When you realize that you are not the person, but the pure and calm witness, and that fearless awareness is your very being, you are the being. It is the source, the Inexhaustible Possibility." Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

Open up to the possibilities

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, a revered teacher of non-dualism, convincingly argues that it is necessary to be devoted to goals through eagerness and earnestness, and to use this combination of willingness and sincerity when undertaking any work. Earnestness and eagerness, as the guru said, is what has sustained me on this journey of exploration into the experiences of mindful leaders leading *self*. When I speak here of "leading *self*", I am referring to the phenomenon of a mindful existence that allows individuals to experience the authentic *self*.

In terms of a doctoral study, this field of enquiry, the mindful leader leading *self*, is not a straightforward choice, at least in a Western university, because it is not a topic that can be deduced or proven, and understanding of it does not emerge from applying common sense or acquiring knowledge. Rather, insights into the phenomenon may be obtained by entering and understanding the experience of the individual leaders who engage with the *self* mindfully, and these insights must be gathered with the realisation that one individual's experience will necessarily be different from that of every other individual. It is a foundation of this study that leading *self* mindfully gives purpose and meaning as it helps in moving into the fearless awareness that Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj describes. In a fearless state an individual may experience an opening to the true authentic self, which may lead to an

experience of completeness of the purpose of existence, discussion of which is an important part of this study.

One of my motivations in undertaking this study is to see if there are commonalities in the lived experiences of mindful leaders that may provide deep understandings of social life, profound insights into existence and comprehension of a peaceful life. In seeking to fulfil my aspirations for this study, I have focused on leaders, because I work closely with them every day. I think this is an important contribution to a world that I see immersed in the pain and suffering caused by stress, feeling stuck, living in fear, or the sense that existence is meaningless. Understanding the experience of individuals living mindfully as they lead *self* may open up discussion and encourage in them to seek further insight into how to improve their leadership of others. Mindfulness allows authentic leaders to attain authenticity and to recognise the real possibilities that give meaning to themselves as well as others. This in particular is what this research will reflect and explore through the conversations with the mindful leaders who participated in the study.

The words of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, quoted at the head of this chapter, have been significant in framing this study. When he reflects on 'eagerness', he was referring to a quality of belief in the essence of engagement with life, and as I approach this study on mindful leaders, I experience that eagerness to which he refers. I believe profoundly in the value of sharing the stories that emerged from a number of thoughtful and thought-provoking conversations with the mindful leaders who were my research participants in this study, and I therefore tell their stories with eagerness and I am keen to share what I have discovered. Reflection on my own research process has been fundamental to ensuring the authenticity of the stories (Heidegger, 1927/62). Authenticity was achieved by allowing the full range of possible meanings about mindful leaders to emerge during the conversations with the participants and also by re-living the conversations afterwards in sessions of 'deep listening', when I re-captured the shifting moods and nuances within the communication. The core of this work, then, is written with an open and fearless mind, letting things come as they are through meaningful possibilities on how to observe the world and be in it.

Background

The purpose of this study is to explore mindfulness and how it affects the way leaders engage with themselves and others. The academic reason for doing research in this area is primarily to study leaders and their own understandings of how they lead. Compared with *leadership*, leaders themselves are under-researched, but obtaining more understanding of their experience is useful both to the academy in particular and to society in general, because it is to leaders that the world looks, in times of stress, for exemplary behaviour. Knowing the experience of some leaders mindfully leading *self* could assist others to achieve the same level of clarity and creativity that my participants have shown.

I bring to this doctoral journey a passion for gaining a better understanding of life. This topic is one which I believe will provide me, and others, with a deep comprehension of being human. The enquiry raises a salient question, which is, "How does mindfulness help in deepening understanding of *self*?" Gaining this understanding will not only be beneficial for me personally, but will also benefit the research community and leaders alike because modern life is busy and demanding (Passmore, 2009), with a focus on getting things and getting things done (McKee, Johnston & Massimilian, 2006), and my research may light a path – a path that might otherwise be missed -- away from constant striving to achieve and acquire towards other ways of measuring accomplishments and success. In other words, success is normally defined in a materialistic sense, and is accompanied by constant assessment of others, what they have and what they have achieved, which in return develops jealousy, frustration, anger, and anxiety (Boyatzis, Smith & Blaize, 2006). In particular, this syndrome of struggle is evident in people striving to become leaders, because they are trying hard to be recognised as successful. Often the effort to arrive in a leadership position causes stress and overwork. For instance, technology enables people to work without ceasing, and a sense of pressure may grow from that to be available and to respond to emails and phone calls so as they are seen to do their jobs. The expectations that hopeful leaders put on themselves and others are at times too high for health and well-being (McKee, Johnston & Massimilian, 2006), which makes the topic of my research current and relevant to the community of leaders.

Krishnamurti (1982) asserts that people often live in what he refers to as a dream state, and suggests that many people never become aware of what it means to participate in the world

as a true human being. He maintains that living only in the dream state causes people to be either stuck in the past, so that they expend energy on events that have already occurred, or to focus on the future, so that they are concerned about what *might* happen rather than what is happening (Sinclair, 2015). Krishnamurti (1982) encourages people to understand the impact of their thought patterns on the quality of existence, and to understand that opening up to this knowledge will deepen awareness of *self*. Mindfulness may help people to gain this deeper sense of *self*, and I believe that all human beings have a responsibility to choose to be mindful of *self* and of the rest of the world. Here I am aligned to Krishnamurti's (1972) insightful questions about concerns with life after death rather than interest in and connection to the world of the present, in which *self* currently exists. In summary, I am writing here of a need for heightened awareness of *self* and of *self* relating to the world, and this need extends to the way people lead themselves in everyday situations. As an academic I am not trying to prepare a concept or idea of how mindful leaders functions and how mindfulness can be applied in certain settings/experiences. My aim is to bring a deeper awareness of the impact mindfulness has on leaders and how it helps them in being more true to themselves as a leader. In other words, I am not trying to create a new theory: instead, my focus is on capturing and sharing the actual experiences of being a mindful leader leading *self*.

As I have already mentioned, the world is full of suffering and pain caused by anger, jealousy, frustrations and fear (Dutton, Frost, Worline, Lilius & Kanov, 2002) and people in leadership positions are not immune. The suffering that leaders experience may be caused by power-stress from the responsibility of leading teams or managing innovation (Boyatzis et al, 2006), but daily negative experiences like severe stress, panic attacks, depression, and so forth, inevitably damage individuals' wellbeing, and ultimately, that of society as a whole. Dutton et al. (2002) explain the importance of being able to face the results of serious events in everyday experience, arguing that people need to assess the *context of meaning* that leads to *context of action* (p. 57) in situations that create suffering and pain. It is my own experience as a leader that mindfully leading *self* helps me deal with even the most severe everyday challenges. Therefore, I contend that a study that fully reflects and interprets the experience of mindful leader leading *self* is an important contribution to the academy and to society, because it may well provide a different perspective on being a leader, not one of

stress and anxiety, but instead, one of calm and coping from a positive and resourceful frame of mind.

Where did it all start? My personal experience with mindfulness

My general interest in mindfulness started in my mid-twenties. After living a complicated and stressful life, I reached a point of feeling that life must hold more than an intense sense of emptiness and lack of passion for living. I was introduced to yoga and meditation which became part of my daily practice. I also started to read about eastern philosophy and integrated many of the ideas into my way of living and I developed a strong interest in spirituality and mindfulness, which I discovered to be related and fluidly ever-changing. The concepts I assimilated gave me the flexibility to live a fulfilling life.

The most significant change was to realise that the way I think is what I become and the biggest relief I experienced was that I did not have to believe in all my thoughts because they are only thoughts, not necessarily my experience or behaviour. Thus, I can choose what I want to focus on when creating my experience. Many scholars of mindfulness (Dhiman, 2009; McKeen, Johnston & Massimilian, 2006; Sethi, 2009) teach that this is a common realisation for many starting to practise mindfulness and that it has a positive impact on people's lives. The revelation was such that I found myself embracing considerable internal change as I opened up to the experience of living with a different and more fluid perspective. Issues were not as intense as they had seemed previously and if I got stuck or felt trapped I knew I could find a solution.

Mooji (2010), who is one of my more admired living 'gurus', guided me through a Satsang (a space for full reflection), in which he emphasised the importance of not providing *5-star service* to thoughts, as keeping them will only cause further suffering. It was powerful to realise that troubled thoughts can be released and that their possible return is not important. If I live in the now, every thought will, eventually, move on. In other words, I have learned that suffering is caused by re-living issues over and over again, and that happens only if I am stuck in the past or the future. Being mindful offers relief and allows the emergence of joy in being involved with life in the present. The notion of release and fulfilment is supported by Didonna and Gonzales (2009), who explore ways of using mindfulness to overcome feelings

of emptiness, and I am particularly drawn to their approach of 'letting go'. Didonna and Gonzales (2009) teach that letting go occurs by connecting with a thought and observing it as though from a distance. In other words, it is possible to detach from the sense of being the thought and seeing it instead as something that is passing through.

After 16 years of working in human resources management and concentrating on human beings and their behaviour, I have developed a strong interest in the way people behave and interact with each other. The development began when I was working with managers in an advisory role, and after I became a leader myself, I have become acutely aware of the burdens leaders carry. I have observed a lot of suffering and pain in people who are stuck in their current reality and do not know how to move forward from their negative experiences, their distress and limited thinking. I have also seen people blaming everybody else for their stress and unhappiness. It hurts me to see these things, and I wish to assist people to realise that there is much more to life than the little that they allow themselves to see. I cannot, however, effect direct change on anybody, as individuals have to be willing to explore and be open to a different perspective on living. The only thing I can do, therefore, is to guide and support. In this realisation, I am conscious of Passmore (2009) who points out that reacting and responding are two very different concepts with potentially different outcomes for how people deal with life. Reacting is an impulsive response triggered by a thought and often the individual is unconscious of the trigger, whereas responding, on the other hand, is more mindful (Passmore, 2009). Individuals are aware of their responses and are therefore mindful of their own experience. For example, in my job I am criticised and often blamed for things for which people do not want to accept responsibility. For example, managers may not take responsibility for their own decisions, instead blaming my department for directing them to their decision. In these circumstances, I could easily react by becoming defensive, angry, frustrated and depressed. However, I can also choose to respond by being mindful in the moment, showing compassion and care for myself and for the person in front of me, listening and asking questions that allow for some reflection on the topic at hand.

Because of my job, I am always conscious of the stressful challenges that leaders have to cope with, including deadlines, managing staff, decision making, creativity, and driving change. I see that many people who are intellectually capable of dealing with the responsibilities of leadership, unfortunately lack the emotional capability to succeed in their

positions. Sinclair (2015) asserts that most people seek the human interaction and care which is reflected in mindfulness, and according to Browning and Boudes (2005), a mindful organisation fosters a learning culture and an action focus, rather than concentrating on planning, control, process and procedures. In my opinion, the latter approach has the potential for a negative impact on leaders, as the softer and more mindful approach is missing.

Because of my personal experience of leading *self* mindfully, I want to show others a new way of being leaders, and my observations of suffering in others, have brought me to design a study around the question *what is the experience of a mindful leader leading self*? Even though my personal experience of mindfulness is positive, I am interested in how this is manifested in other people from an ontological perspective. I am interested in their approach in what they do when practising mindfulness and what impact it has on them as individuals. In other words, I am concerned with the nature and relations of being a mindful leader leading *self*. I seek to learn what is the mindful leaders' actual and, perhaps, hidden experience, from a phenomenological perspective.

Insight about mindfulness and leading self

In general, the literature on self-leadership focuses on the cognitive experience of *self* (Weisberg, 2006), but my research drives beyond the cognitive notions of *self* into the *lived experience* of being a mindful leader leading *self*, placing mindfulness at the core of the study. Mindfulness, a practice deriving from Buddhism, promotes meditation in order to develop the ability of being in the present. Krishnamurti (1982) teaches that being in the present is important because freedom comes from letting the past go and allowing the future to be what it will, maintaining that living being present in the present moment allows the brain to become naturally quiet so that practitioners find the truth of life around them. Rahula (1978), an earlier Buddhist scholar, also links mindfulness to awareness, and argues that awareness is everything. According to Rahula meditation is to see, follow, and be aware of subjects and participate in intellectual activities. In his later teachings, Krishnamurti (2003) emphasises the importance of not depending on any authority for the truth, but rather, to discover it through a process deep reflection and inquiry. It is this thoughtful aspect of

mindfulness that is relevant to studying leaders leading *self*. As I have already mentioned, leaders are in stressful jobs, dealing with complex matters and sometimes difficult people, and just as their subordinates depend on them, so they must depend on themselves. Krishnamurti's (2003) teaching about finding truth independently shows the relevance of mindfulness to the experience of leading others through leading *self*. Leading *self* through mindfulness may allow a reflective response, making everyday life simpler and less demanding (Passmore, 2009).

I am, of course, not alone in seeing the capacity of mindfulness to enhance western life by revealing new perspectives on being. John Kabat-Zinn, one of the pioneers of mindfulness in a western setting, introduced mindfulness practice to a hospital environment in the late 70s in a programme called Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). The MBSR programme did not include Buddhist cultural, religious and ideological conventions, but instead showed patients how to employ the effects of meditation effectively to reduce their stress, pain and illness (Kabat-Zinn, 2003), and is currently in full use in many different parts of the world, New Zealand included. This introduction to mindfulness was, in my opinion, a start to a shift of focus, in the western world, in how to deal with everyday life.

Mindfulness and authenticity

Over the years, the concept of leadership has generated many explanatory theories (Hater & Bass, 1988; Higgs & Rowland, 2010; Kenney, Blascovich & Shaver, 1994; Nielsen, 2013; Terry, 1998) and 'how to lead' books (Rock, 2009), and mindfulness could easily be taken as just another 'answer' to the problem of how to be a better leader. Sauer, Walach and Kohls (2011), however, argue that mindfulness should not be seen as simply a new tool for leadership development or merely as a management technique, because it is a way of being that assists leaders to be more effective in a healthier way. They warn that mindfulness cannot be 'applied' universally and that it is not a suitable practice for everyone, so if organisations are looking for a tool to encourage managers to lead and manage better, mindfulness is not necessarily an easy option.

A concept such as mindfulness, promising increased insight and improved health, always runs the risk of becoming a new 'buzz word' and being subverted into some less-than-ethical

practices. For instance, in their study of spirituality in the workplace, Bhindi and Duignan (1997) found that some organisations suggest that members practice mindfulness in order to overcome their stress response to the challenges of the workplace, although the 'challenges' were actually systemic problems to do with unreasonable workload and were the organisation's responsibility to fix. By encouraging mindfulness (and other forms of spirituality) the organisation shifted responsibility to the workers, making it seem that 'failure to thrive' in the work environment was caused by workers' inadequate spirituality. Mindfulness as a buzz word, then, presents potential pitfalls. It is an important aspect of this study to avoid those pitfalls and to articulate the benefits of authentic mindfulness for leaders so that it comes from a place of realness to the individual and contributes meaningfully to existence. In this way, mindfulness resonates with the Heideggerian (1927/62) idea of authentic living, which will also be explored in depth as part of this study.

In fact, in recent years, research on authenticity has begun to show how leaders can benefit by being true to themselves Bhidi and Duignan (1997) explored the gains that can be made by being authentically ethical, while Terry (1998) have focused on showing how leaders' behaviour affects others. Mayfield, Mayfield and Kopf (1998) produced tools to help identify authentic leaders and Wren and Dulewicz (2005) and Coetzee and Pauw (2013) have established the competencies leaders need in relation to being authentic. Other avenues of authenticity research shift the focus toward leaders and their happiness (Rosenberg, 2010), understanding the true self (Spitzamuller & Llies, 2010), ways to enhance relationships (Crippen, 2012) and leading from the heart (Turkel, 2014). These topics show that the research is moving in the right direction, in that attempts are being made to connect with the real experience of being a leader, but there is also a sense that the studies are rather instrumentalist, seeking to conceptualise how to become authentic, then offer that knowledge in ten easy steps. I am aware that this is an overstatement, but nevertheless, I do not wish to emulate any spirit of didacticism. My research will not try to teach authenticity as a programme. Its aim is only to explore the real experience of people who have chosen to move into a truly authentic space by practicing mindfulness, and it will do this by working with the stories of mindful leaders leading *self* in an attempt to break from traditional formulas that teach an instrumental understanding of leadership.

In its examination of authenticity and Dasein – being in this world -- my study adopts a Heideggerian (1927/62) philosophy. In my view, research on Heidegger shows some subtle differences between the way scholars see authenticity and the way Heidegger himself sees it, but as I have adopted Heidegger's hermeneutical phenomenological approach, I should share the *fore-having* of my idea of being a leader. Heidegger (1927/62) discusses *fore-having* as the early understanding one might have of a phenomenon before one sets out to explore and interpret it. I have chosen to write my personal experience about my fore-having experience of being a mindful leader leading *self,* using my own experience and my observations of others to explore the real sense of connections that can develop. This sharing is captured particular in chapter 1, 2 and 3.

Research question and methodology

My aim with this research is to gain an insight into the world of leaders leading *self*. I want to observe the ways in which mindful leaders lead *self,* and as I have already said, I want to learn not only what the leaders do in terms of leadership action, but also, by engaging deeply with my participants, to discover the *nature* of being a mindful leader. This research, then, will gather leaders' individual stories of leading *self*, with a view to finding commonalities in their understanding and behaviour. I am interested in what led the leaders to incorporate mindfulness into their everyday lives and the effect that mindfulness has on their professional conduct, and further, I would like to see if I can establish whether mindful leaders perceive a divide between their private and professional lives.

Because I will be dealing with the lived experience of my participants in the stories they tell me, I am conscious that I will need to interpret them and I am therefore drawn to hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1975) as my overarching theoretical approach to this research. I researched a number of approaches to hermeneutics, and found that Heidegger's (1927/62) hermeneutical phenomenology resonated best with my thinking because of its focus on understanding the meaning of being. I perceived a useful connection in the underlying philosophies of Heideggerian hermeneutics and mindfulness: both seemed to me require a certain 'opening up' in order to seek understanding of the nature and essence of being. Mindfulness teaches that wisdom can be found by living 'in the moment', and hermeneutics,

in searching for understanding, looks for it in the specific location of the phenomenon being investigated.

Heideggerian hermeneutical phenomenology encourages researchers to establish strong, trusting relationship with participants, to work with them to gain their understanding and to interpret their experience from their point of view. To guide the study, therefore, I sought a question that would place the participants at the centre of my work, and after some false starts, I determined that the truest expression of my purpose could be expressed like this: *What is the experience of a mindful leader leading* self *in a professional environment?* The relationship I established with the participants allowed me to engage in 16 conversations with the four participants over a period of 3 months, including follow up meetings and conversations. I found that each round of conversation deepened the sharing that took place and allowed richer information to emerge. Each participant honoured me with material that disclosed their experience with mindfulness, and further, each participant approved the Heideggerian approach I adopted in my interpretation of their stories. This was evident in how the participants appreciated the idea of just having a conversation and allowing the flow of conversation to take place in an informal and relaxed atmosphere.

The organisation of this thesis

Each chapter in this thesis contributes to answering the research question. The first half of the thesis considers what has already been said in the academy about the key components of question, and the second half sets out the data I have gathered and my interpretation of that data. Together, the two halves form a holistic whole that throws light on *the experience of a mindful leader leading* self *in a professional environment.*

Chapter 1 creates a brief overview of the fields of inquiry and my personal motivation for the study. This is strongly related to the leaders and their actual experience as mindful leaders in a professional environment. This has consequently led to a description about my personal experience triggering the research question, mindfulness, leaders and Heideggerian phenomenology, which is the chosen research methodology for this study.

In the following two chapters I provide a literature review in relation to mindfulness in general terms in chapter 2 and leaders, authenticity and mindfulness in chapter 3. This has identified the gap in published research that is the focus of this study.

Chapter 4 sets out the methodology. Part 1 explains phenomenology, with particular attention to Martin Heidegger (1927/62) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975), and also includes my reasons for choosing the methodology. Part 2 of this chapter records the *'doing'* of the research, showing how the research was conducted and how the common themes were uncovered.

Chapter 5 continues with the operationalisation of the research, deepening the insight into the reflexivity that took place with the participants and how this led to the stories presented in chapter 6. These stories led to the common themes presented in following chapters. The data have provided three themes and each theme is presented in a separate chapter. Thus, chapter 7 offers an insight into how the mindful leaders are *taking hold of self,* and chapter 8 sets out *opening up to self in being a leader.* The theme in chapter nine is *moving forward authentically as a leader.*

The final chapter contains my research findings and contribution to the profession of leaders and to academia in the area of philosophy and leaders. The chapter also discusses the limitations of the study and ideas for future relevant research. The chapter ends with some last words about my overall experience with this particular study.

Chapter 2

Mindfulness

"To take the world as real and one's Self as unreal is ignorance – the cause for sorrow. To know the Self as the only reality and all else as temporal and transient is freedom, peace and joy." Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

Mindfulness: an introduction

Smythe and Spencer (2012) maintain that a literature review within a hermeneutical phenomenological framework does not follow a typical academic process because it does not depend on a systematic, deliberative search. Rather, researchers work with their intuitiveness and find what is important as they immerse themselves in the topic. As Smythe and Spencer put it:

> …the researcher must immerse themselves in the reading, searching, intuiting, thinking, talking, writing, letting-come process by which he discerns what matters, and encourages readers to engage in dwelling, pondering, thinking and questioning. (2012, p. 14)

The next two chapters are the result of exactly the process that Smythe and Spencer describe. I have allowed the decisions about including and excluding material to be made intuitively through ongoing reflection, writing, reading and dialogue, with the participants, my supervisors, colleagues and mentors. In doing so, I have, to a large degree, depended on my intuitive understanding of being a mindful leader leading *self*.

The last chapter laid out the purpose of this study and established the framework within which the research will take place. In this chapter, I intend to deepen the exploration of mindfulness, which is a crucial concept in the research. I will cover the main teachings on mindfulness, eastern and western, and examine the way it has been taken up in various

western applications, and will conclude with my own conceptualisation, derived from reading, study and practice, of what mindfulness is and how it works.

The chapter opens with discussion of the origins of mindfulness, then sets out the definition used in this study. Following this I will examine the differences in eastern and western practices of mindfulness and, finally, the chapter will show the benefits of mindfulness, ending with my personal experience of mindfulness. This chapter will build a reflective transition into chapter three, which focuses the heart of the study: leaders, authenticity and mindfulness.

Background about mindfulness

The teachings on mindfulness and its history are vast, in the sense of the wide range of topics and practices. Therefore, in this section, I can give only a summary of certain important ideas that have, following Smythe and Spencer (2012), caught my attention and remained important to my understanding of the idea of mindfulness.

Marques (2012) tracks the beginnings of mindfulness to the teachings of Buddha, who, as Gautama Siddaharta, was born into a wealthy royal family around 563 BC. Although his family tried to shield him from the outside world so that he could concentrate on becoming a warrior, he managed to escape their protection and explore the world outside his own luxurious life, and he was changed forever by being confronted with ubiquitous suffering, poverty, illness and death. His response was to renounce his life and to start a journey towards the enlightenment professed by masters and experts. After seven years, he recognised that living through the set beliefs, values and ideas of masters and gurus limited his experience of truth. In making this adjustment, he discovered that by surrendering the 'I' (ego), everything became one. Marques (2012) asserts that Gautama Siddaharta discovered that if he surrendered his limiting attachment to his identity, his thoughts, his body, his believed existence, he could approach the essence of being. He changed his name to 'Buddha', which means 'The Awakened One', and reflects his attainment of the truth of being and his belief that moving into realisation of truth means awakening from a sleep state.

The basic teachings of Buddha have had broad and lasting appeal through time and across the eastern continents, but inevitably, have produced local variations on the original ideas with the result that different forms of Buddhist practice have emerged (Purser & Milillo, 2014). Among the many schools of thought, however, there are some beliefs held in common, most important of which is that Buddhism is perceived as the basis of a way of life rather than an intellectual philosophy (Moorty, 1997). Another important tradition is to help people relieve their *dukkha,* which means suffering, stress, anxiety and a feeling of not being self-worthy (Dreyfus, 2011). Followers of Buddha are encouraged to gain insight into the circumstances that generate *dukkha*, and how to change those conditions. The necessary insight can be attained through the Noble Eightfold Path that teaches how to exist in the world:

> *(1) Right understanding, (2) right thought, (3) right speech, (4) right action, (5) right livelihood, (6) right effort, (7) right mindfulness, (8) right concentration.* (Snelling, 1991, p. 55)

The word *dharma* has many layers of meaning in Buddhism, but the sense in which I want to use it here draws on Mahayana Buddhism and refers to enlightenment about the nature of reality and the cosmic and universal laws that apply beyond the everyday world (Khong, 2009). *Dharma,* the experience of insight, connects to *sati,* which is translated as 'mindfulness' in English (Sharf, 2014), but in fact is another word with a vague and elastic meaning (Bodhi, 2011). In Indian psychology, *sati* means memory (Bodhi, 2011) but is perhaps most easily explained in English as 'awareness', particularly awareness of "things in relation to things, and hence an awareness of their relative value" Gethin (2011, p. 5). Certainly, Bodhi (2011) uses *sati* as not only memory but also hermeneutical investigation. He puts it like this:

> ...*sati* makes the apprehended object stand forth vividly and distinctively before the mind. When the object being cognized pertains the past – when it is apprehended as something that formerly done, perceived, or spoken – its vivid presentation takes the form of memory. (p. 45)

Therefore, when *sati* combines the meanings of both 'memory' and 'lucid awareness of the present', it has the meaning of being mindful. In other words, it contains in the present moment the holistic experience of past, present and future as the fullness of being.

The concept of mindfulness is both abstract and huge, and according to Cullen (2011) needs to be understood as including not only *sati,* but also *sampajanna* and *appamada*. *Sampajanna* means the clear comprehension that is the ability to perceive phenomena without the distortion of moods and emotions and also the ability to monitor the quality of attention towards yourself (Cullen, 2011). *Appamada,* on the other hand, is about observing what has been learned from past experience and what thoughts, choices and actions have brought happiness into the experience. The addition of *sati* to include *sampajanna* and *appamada* deepens and enriches the concept of mindfulness and its connection with *dharma*.

It is challenging to find a standard definition of mindfulness because it has such personal connotations and connects so intensely to individual experience, but one definition has found reasonably wide acceptance:

> …broadly conceptualized, mindfulness has been described as a kind of non-elaborative, non-judgmental, present-centered awareness in which each thought, feeling, or sensation that arises in the attentional field is acknowledged and accepted as it is. (Bishop, Lau, Shapiro, Carlson, Anderson, Segal, Abbey, Speca, Velting & Devins, 2004, p. 232)

Kabat-Zinn's (1994, p. 4) definition has also been found useful. He describes mindfulness as "…paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (1994, p. 4). A number of scholars look to the practical applications of mindfulness, promoting it as a reflective, meditative practice offering supportive leadership (Boyatzis & Mckee, 2005), or as a state of acutely awakeness, awareness and attentiveness (Dhiman, 2009). Germer (2004) equates mindfulness with full acceptance, elaborating as follows:

> …it (mindfulness) involves remembering to reorient our attention and awareness to current experience in a whole-hearted, receptive manner. This requires the intention to disentangle from our reverie and fully experience the moment. (p. 26).

All the definitions given here have significant value for the different insights they offer into the complex concept of mindfulness, but for all their differences, they all share one idea in common: they all reflect on the notion of being in the present moment through awareness and participation in the world, and they all have a similar purpose, which Hunter and Chaskalson (2013) maintain is the reduction of human suffering.

Essentially, mindfulness is a personal response to the world, and every individual will therefore define it idiosyncratically. For the purposes of this study, the definition I will adopt is similar to Dhiman's (2009) in that, for me personally, mindfulness is about being awake to, and aware of, what is happening in both the internal and external state. What I mean by this is that to be mindful is to become aware of the world by moving out of the individual dream state of being which is, as Nisargadatta (1973) puts it, dominated by personal ideas, beliefs, values, identity and the influence of others, and is driven by fears and desires. To individuals, Nisargadatta says (p. 60), "…it is your dream-world and my only reaction to it is to ask you to stop dreaming". Thus, becoming aware of living in the dream world, which is often perceived as "normal" life, is pivotal to moving out of it and into the open responsiveness to *self* and others that will permit, with the result that individuals to change their outlook on the world and the people in it.

Bodhi (2011) points out that some of the current definitions of mindfulness are contradictory in their presentation of the benefits of mindfulness. For example, Kabat-Zinn (1994) maintains that mindfulness is a non-judgmental awareness of the present moment, but there are times when it may be necessary for practitioners to form judgments, and Bhodi (2011) argues that this is appropriate. Rather, at those times, mindfulness practitioners must evaluate their own mental qualities and reflect on them in order to engage in purposeful action. The idea of mindfulness that lies at the heart of this study, then, is taken as being *awake to and aware of what is,* so that individuals are receptive to the possibilities inherent in seeing situations as they really are. Mindfulness is a state that individuals need to move

into and the state cannot be forced, or even encouraged, unless people are already open to moving into a different way of being.

This section of the chapter has sketched the origin of mindfulness in Buddhist teaching, and has elucidated some of the main terms connected with the concept. The next section of the chapter will explicate the difference between eastern wisdom and western knowledge of mindfulness.

The eastern wisdom of mindfulness

Rahula (1978) explains that mindfulness is not a particular practice but rather a particular type of interaction with daily living. Khong (2009) explains that *"…mindfulness is a way of being, rather than a way of doing"* (p. 122). Therefore, mindfulness from an eastern perspective is not something that is easily explained, as it is integrated into an individual's existence. It is a way of being, part of a person's being, and not just a tool to help in positions of stress and pain. In the eastern tradition, mindfulness offers a way for individuals to comprehend their personal realities (Rahula, 1978).

Weick and Putnam (2006, p. 278) explain the eastern model of mindfulness as one of "…keeping something loosely in mind; of maintaining a solid frame of references (in the present)" maintaining that "…both the proper object and proper approach are crucial for getting the proper results (mindfulness)" (p. 278). Thus, for Weick and Putnam (2006), mindfulness in eastern thought pays more attention to the internal *processes* of the mind rather than to the *thoughts* the processes produce. Mindfulness therefore entails the ability to resist all forms of distraction from the thought itself and the capacity to keep the mind steadily on the object under consideration (Bodhi, 2000). According to the Buddhist traditions the right effort, flexibility and willingness to persevere will stabilize the right mindfulness and sustain true concentration (Purser & Milillo, 2014). Dreyfus (2011) also sees mindfulness as focus: *"…*mindfulness is the mind's ability to keep the object in the ken of attention without losing it" (p.47), which bears out Schmidt's (2011) notion that *sati* is not memory itself, but rather, is that awareness of the moment which will facilitate memory.

In eastern thinking, mindfulness leads to the ultimate experience where life is actually being experienced and understood by being part of their world (Stanley, 2012). Therefore, when eastern philosophers teach their followers about mindfulness, they do not impose knowledge, but rather encourage people to find their personal paths to understanding. To describe mindfulness as an analogy I will use in Nisker's (1998) analogy of a movie as a way of describing the eastern wisdom. This is a well-used analogy that likens human beings to the light and flicker from a movie projector, not the story on the screen. However, humans tend to believe they are the story and that the story is the reality of our existence. If, instead of being lost in the story, they become aware of the light from the projector, our suffering will diminish because they will see the truth of existence. The eastern way of practising mindfulness teaches a strong awareness of the light and the flicker, and an openness to the full experience of life (Bodhi, 2000). For an understanding the process of meditation and mindfulness practice to develop, it is important to allow this awareness to deepen.

Mindfulness practice – eastern

Like other religions and philosophies, Buddhism teaches its adherents meditation as a way of attaining enlightenment (Khong, 2009). Meditation underpins Buddhist traditions and fits into the concept of the Noble Eightfold Path as the practice of true effort (Moorty, 1997). The core techniques have been preserved and practised since ancient times as a path to nirvana, assisted by living a mindful existence through concentration, tranquility and deep insight into being (Moorty, 1997). Buddhist meditation involves reflection on physical and psychological *dukkha* so as to achieve a systematic and rigorous understanding of the way the mind and the body function together (Khong, 2009; Rahula, 1978). According to Moorty (1997), "…the very essence of meditation consists in being passive to what you observe within yourself and without" (p. 2), which means that emotions and thoughts need to be cleared to enable unencumbered observation and detachment. This does not mean practitioners do not and cannot experience emotions and pain, but rather, that they become aware of the possibility of releasing the tension and conflict associated with their experiences. By contrast, dwelling on thoughts and emotions and remaining involved with them can increase the stress and pain already in existence.

Although mindfulness is strongly associated with the Buddhist tradition of formal meditation, there are other approaches to mindfulness which do not require anything except becoming *awake to and aware of what is*. The mindfulness practice that falls within this category originates with teachers like Mooji (2010), Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj (1970; 1972; 1982; 1991) and Jiddu Krishnamutri (1991), and although the teaching about meditation is different, the essence of the guidance is similar to that of other Buddhist ideas, focusing on the importance of being in the present moment in order to move into an awareness of being in the physical body. This is reflected in Krishnamurti's (1982) conversation with one of his followers:

> ...I am not "satisfied" in leaving this immensity to be reduced to some few words. It seems so stupid, so incredible. You see man, 'Y', is concerned with concepts like 'show me', 'prove it to me', 'what benefits has it?', 'will it affect my future?' You follow? He is concerned with all that. And he is looking at 'X' with eyes that are accustomed to the pettiness! So, he reduces that immensity to his pettiness, and puts it in a temple and has therefore lost it completely. But 'X' says, I won't even look at it. But 'Y' is always translating it by wanting demonstration, proof and reward. He is always concerned with that. 'X' brings light. That's all he can do. Isn't that enough? (p. 175).

Here, Krishnamurti's story is an insight into the tendency among human beings to seek evidence and experience on which to base their beliefs, instead of finding truth in the moment. Mooji, Krishnamurti and Nisargadatta often promote the combination of mindfulness and *satsangs* (attending) by sitting with a master and contemplating the meaning of being. In this form of teaching, the masters do not impart knowledge, but rather encourage students to find their insights through reflection (Mooji, 2010).

In summary, the eastern perspective of mindfulness shows a deep sense of integration into everyday living. The goal is to attain an understanding of thoughts processes in order to see how experience occurs and is perceived. The desired understanding is attained through deep meditative practice.

The western knowledge of mindfulness

Stanley (2012) points out that the western world has sought consensus for a definition of mindfulness as something that can be measured, which is an endeavour without end, because mindfulness is a subjective experience that is not susceptible to objective, scientific evidence or a single definition. In fact, given the nature of mindfulness, it may be better to accept a multiplicity of understandings and interpretations. Accepting the abstraction of mindfulness and not seeking to understand it cognitively may, in fact and practice, convey a better sense of the nature of existence and participation in this world.

Moorty (1997) argues that the western philosophy is built on abstract knowledge rather than by reflecting on lived experience. He quotes Chuang Tzu (339-295 BC):

> …knowledge means separation of oneself. If we renounce knowledge we may be unconscious, but we will not be separated from our roots. So, a wise man is not proud of his knowledge. He knows its limits and goes beyond into the unknown and can live in the unknown. The real knowledge is to see all in one. It's only our superficial knowledge that breaks the universe into many.

Chuang Tzu's words underline the dichotomous understandings of knowledge between eastern and western thinking, and perhaps explain why living 'in the moment' seems more readily understood and adopted in the east than in the west: westerners see knowledge as an intellectual acquisition of content rather than as awareness of being (Krishnamurti, 1982). The differences in approaches to understanding existence underpin the arguments of scholars such as Schmidt (2011) that the burgeoning interest in the western world different forms of spirituality, they are seen as ways to cope with the pressures of modern life and thus, interest often seems to spring from an instrumental view of the gains in well-being that spirituality might impart achieve. If western spirituality is indeed somewhat instrumentalist, there is some substance to Langer's (2000) assertion that the western view of mindfulness is not so much a way of life as a cognitive tool related more to the content of thoughts than to the process of the mind (Weick & Putnam, 2006).

The western approach to the mind and mindfulness, then, is fundamentally the opposite of the eastern approach, and often starts in psychology (Brown, Ryan, Creswell & Niemiec,

2008) with an overarching concern for understanding cognition, motives and emotions in order to augment the efficacy of people's lives (Brown & Ryan, 2003). In this view, mindfulness is considered a useful tool for improving the function of the brain and indeed, even the word 'mindful' suggests that there is activity and achievement involved (Stanley, 2012), and Dickman and Stanford-Blair (2002) epitomise this point when they discuss mindfulness as "…the relationship of the brain to conceptualizations of human mind and intelligence" (p. 3), aligning mindfulness to goals achieved through the use of knowledge (intelligence) to bring about certain desirable behaviour(s). Inevitably, such a conceptualisation involves the ego constantly trying to achieve something, want something, or prove something and it creates a sense of the busy-ness of being something.

In her pioneering work to bring mindfulness to western audiences, Langer (1992; 2000) describes the concept as a flexible state of being in which the mind is actively engaged in the present, noticing emotional states and new thoughts. She argues that since mindlessness is the opposite of mindfulness, being mindless opens the way to mindfulness. Langer explains that in becoming aware of the state of mindlessness, people realise the limitations and the suffering of their customary state being. This awareness leads to the recognition of the rewards of entering a mindful state, which may lessen a sense of pain and suffering by helping people achieve clarity and acceptance Kabat-Zinn (2011) has also contributed important ideas to western understandings of mindfulness, and possibly his greatest influence has been through his eight-week programme of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, which reconceptualises *dharma* within a framework of science, medicine and health care so that it is more acceptable to people who are not open to Buddhist traditions.

Despite the work carried out by practitioners and scholars of mindfulness, it remains a comparatively recent idea in the western world and there is therefore ignorance about it and some resistance to its adoption. Many westerners, in fact, believe that mindfulness cannot be separated from religion (Atkinson & Duncan, 2013), and reject it from fear of conflicts with their existing beliefs. Atkinson and Duncan (2013) assert that western people see the whole Buddhist tradition, including mindfulness, as suitable for people who are passive, quiet and who favour meditating in silence, but they argue that Buddhism is not passive. Rather, it does require activity, in the sense that it encourages internal and external engagement in the process of living a peaceful and happy life, and it is therefore adaptable to western thinking.

Marques (2012) suggests that Buddhist values can easily be incorporated into daily life as psychological and ethical practices rather than as the basis of religious convictions. Stanley (2012), on the other hand, sees dangers in the 'psychologisation' of Buddhism, because it may encourage individuals to meditate with strong expectations in mind, separate from the support of a community, and Williams and Kabat-Zinn (2011) argue that the integration of mindfulness into psychology caries the implicit risk of limiting the purpose and understanding of living a mindful life by creating the connotation that mindfulness is merely a tool to be employed to become a different person. On the other hand, Williams and Kabat-Zinn (2011) argue in favour of introducing programmes that reflect the Buddhist Dharma in a western context because they believe that individuals will thereby experience an authentic practice that they may have not done otherwise.

One idea that has real applicability for the west comes from Sethi (2009), who argues that the value of mindfulness is its presence in real life, especially the workplace, where 'chaos' abounds. The mindfulness that has been promulgated in the west, however, is a much simplified (and arguably weakened) version of the original Buddhist teaching (Schmidt, 2011). Dreyfus (2011), in fact, argues that in the western world, mindfulness teaching covers only part of its purpose by only focusing on the *present moment and without judgement* as the main content of the concept. Dreyfus sees a danger in presenting only part of mindfulness because a limited understanding will inevitably result in a limited experience of choosing to become mindful.

Mindfulness practice - western

How mindfulness it is taught and practised is often dependent on the approach and way mindfulness is adopted. My own practice reflects Langer's (2000) credo that it is necessary to become aware of the mindless state in order to become mindful and like Langer, I do not use formal meditation, but certainly, meditation has received a lot of attention in the western world since Kabat-Zinn (2011) introduced his MBSR programme. MBSR, as already mentioned, aims to achieve clinically-measurable improvements in health by integrating meditation into daily life (Kang & Whittingham, 2010) and several spin-off programmes have tried to emulate the success of MBSR's results (Hall-Renn, 2007).

Langer's (2000) perspective is different from that taught in MBSR. She does not teach meditation as the way to mindfulness, but instead encourages people to become aware of their mindless living, which she describes as a point of pain caused by (for example) bad decisions, victimhood, or refusal to see life as a gift. Once individuals are conscious of their mindless acceptance of negativity, the mindfulness that follows is the simple act of becoming more aware of the overall experience of life. In Langer's (1989) approach, the best way to become more mindful is by reducing self-regulation with the result that, as Carson and Langer (2006, p. 30) put it, "…one is actively engaged in the present and sensitive to both context and perspective". Carson and Langer (2006) maintain that sensitivity to context and perspective permits authentic and honest engagement with all aspects of an experience (this will be explored in more depth later in the study). The result of this, an ongoing reflection on themselves in different contexts and perspectives, allows individuals to change their behaviour through acceptance of what can be learned from experience.

Another reflective approach that I favour is that of "intuitive guidance" (Gawain, 2000; Thibodeau, 2005), necessary because the western world insists on external proofs and rational explanations, and thereby misses the internal guidance that gives life meaning and purpose from a perspective of awareness and deep understanding of being. This intuitive seeing is referred to by Katie (2002) as loving what is and enquiring whether current thoughts are true or not, or whether they seem true because of the belief committed to them. Williamson (1992, p. 63) encourages people to be fearlessly open to intuitive guidance because "…your holiness reverses all the laws of the world. It is beyond every restriction of time, space, distance, and limits."

In summary, mindfulness practice can be experienced through formal meditation, through reflection, or through a combination of both. The formal meditative approach is a guided process of awareness through a certain form of practice, while the more reflective approach integrates mindfulness into everyday life by teaching awareness of the moment. I personally believe that meditation is experienced in both approaches and is driven less by personal desires to gain insight into what matters and what does not.

Mindfulness and wellbeing

A key idea for this study is to understand how mindfulness may be beneficial for the leaders as they lead *self*. In this section, therefore, I will explore mindfulness from the perspective of being *awake to and aware of what is* and the way this can help on an everyday basis.

Brown, Ryan, Creswell and Niemiec (2008) point out that for millennia, mindfulness has been used to secure self against others by assisting states of calm and providing forms of guidance to enable a functional life. These scholars are not the only people to report that mindfulness has many benefits. Dhiman (2009), for instance, claims that mindfulness has been significant in changing people's lives for the better, and Germer (2004) sees benefits in the ability of mindfulness to inspire attitudes of openness, compassion and acceptance. Kabat-Zinn (2008) points out that people who undertake mindfulness programmes often gain a sense of being comfortable in their own skins and become more open to sharing and participating with others, and Brown and Ryan (2003) argue that mindfulness is a self-regulated function that assists helps reduce stress and self-sabotage. Langer (1992) sees a different form of benefit in mindfulness: she is convinced that mindful people are more likely than those who are not mindful to take advantage of opportunities because they are open to new ideas and experiences.

Wallace and Shapiro (2006) explain that mindfulness, from Buddhist perspective, promotes well-being by focusing on things that impart meaning to life, such as friendship and accomplishing work that originates in commitment and passion. Wallace and Shapiro (2006) suggest that living for what is meaningful cultivates four types of mental balance: *conative balance*, *attentional balance*, *cognitive* balance and *affective* balance. Conative balance is the desire to take purposive action for the greater good, while attentional balance is focused concentration on performing as well as possible in any meaningful activity. Cognitive balance is the sense of being fully aware of thoughts and their meanings and finally, affective balance is freedom from overly emotional responses.

The practice of mindfulness, then, can boost physical, emotional and psychological health. It can also allow individuals to gain insights into both *self* and others, but this cannot happen unless practitioners are willing to move into the mindful space, by which I mean opening up to the truth of *self* and others, seeing life for what it truly is. The specific benefit of opening

up lies in a clearer perception of *self,* increased personal strength and deep awareness of core meanings (Niemiec, Rashid & Spinella, 2012).

Langer (2000) sees that another form of wellbeing that springs from mindfulness is the ease with which learning occurs through observing and reflecting on surroundings and events and accepting possibilities and diversity. As she argues (p. 222) "...mindful learning engages people in what they are learning and the experience tends to be positive." The realisation that all behaviours make sense in their own context reduces negative evaluations of others' behaviour and even of the self (Carson & Langer, 2006) and widens the basis from which life can be experienced, evaluated and appreciated.

In summary, then, mindfulness offers a range of significant benefits for wellbeing if people are willing to participate in it and be open to its teachings. Perhaps its most important benefit is the balance and meaning that practitioners find when they connect to a wider sense of being than simply themselves. At this point, too, I am aware that because mindfulness must be sought and experienced individually, generalising about it is only partially useful. In the next section of this chapter, therefore, I will share my personal experience of mindfulness, which has been a defining part of my life for the last 15 years.

My personal experience with mindfulness

There is a sense in which my own engagement with mindfulness bears out what the research shows: I have gained an acute awareness of what is happening around me both externally and in my inner being. I feel, too, that I am awake in a deeper sense than simply not being asleep and that I am connected to something beyond the thinking mind. I have found a release of pressure and a feeling of self-acceptance by gradually relinquishing pre-conceived ideas about who I think I am and who I think I ought to be, and I am able to live in the present, fully involved with my internal being, which includes my thoughts, my emotions, my doubts and my self-critic. When I say I am 'involved', I mean that I am conscious of what is happening, that some past experiences or even future desires have triggered an emotional reaction. I am aware of my attachment to things, and I know how to be kind in, and to, the experience of surrendering the attachment. I have realised that there is a major difference between being devoted to a dream and simply having a dream, because attachments carry expectations, and

expectations create suffering. I might, for example, wish for a promotion at work and even feel I fully deserve it, but I prefer not to dwell on entitlement and expectation because I could end up feeling bitter and disappointed if I am not promoted.

Being mindful has given me a freedom to experience life as it is and as it occurs, and overall, life is easier. I find myself complaining less and enjoying more. I sense a balance in my way of being, both towards others and towards myself, and this is a gift of completeness. I have a freedom that comes from wanting and needing less.

I moved into mindfulness when I realised that I needed to rid myself of the intense suffering and pain which were distressing me and people around me. I started seeking to expand my existence through yoga practice, counselling and reading books, and also attended a number of retreats with likeminded people. I tried a number of different meditation methods but I never really felt that formal meditation was for me, and despite my sense of being on a quest, there were times when I felt extremely confused and questioned everything such as, for example, how to relate to other people and what was needed to take part in this world. However, the same internal message remained with me: to stay with what felt true to me and to believe that there is no one right way to practise mindfulness. This thought gave me peace, and I have now moved away from seeking to a state of being: I am not looking anymore, because I am what I am supposed to be. I am the experience; I am living mindfully at all times. Even at this moment, I am aware that writing these words is giving rise to some tension, but I am not 'buying into' the doubt.

My experience of mindfulness is individual and real, and in my opinion, cannot be questioned by anyone. Because of this, the ontological journey of exploring the experience of others is something I find intriguing. In as much as my experience of mindfulness is beyond questioning, so too is it outside my remit to question the mindfulness experience of other people. I can only interpret what they tell me and be true both to them and to my own mindfulness experiences. The research requires that I am mindful at all times, fully present in the research journey and awake to the aims set for this study. It is passion and willingness that allows me this experience.

The aim with this chapter was to introduce mindfulness to the study. The chapter first covered the history of mindfulness, with particular attention to its Buddhist roots, in order to deepen understanding of what mindfulness means. A key view presented in the chapter is that an eastern perspective of mindfulness is that it is a way of life, while the western world tends to see it cognitively, as a tool for stress reduction and other benefits. The chapter also presented different views of mindfulness, showing how difficult it is to find a single definition that has scholarly agreement. I chose to define mindfulness for this study as *awake / aware to what is*.

This chapter has provided the foundation of the understanding of mindfulness and how it is being perceived to ease into the next chapter on mindfulness and leaders, which is the core focus in this study.

Chapter 3

Leaders, Authenticity and Mindfulness

"…talk to yourself at least once a day…otherwise you may miss a meeting with an excellent person in this world"
– Swami Vivekananda

The previous chapter gave a general outline of different approaches to mindfulness and the benefits that its practice offers. In this chapter, it is my intention to bring the discussion of mindfulness from a general understanding to its specific application in my study. To that end, I will explore the notion of authenticity in the context of mindfulness, before considering the matter of leaders and their role in society. At this point I wish to stress that the focus of this research is not *leadership*, but rather, it is *leaders*, the people behind and within the much-theorised abstraction of leadership.

Thus, the purpose of the chapter is to establish a strong sense of what it means to be a leader and, particularly, what it means to be a mindful leader actively engaged in leading *self,* and that is the reason I have begun the chapter with the quote from Swami Vivekananda. The quote delineates the practice of mindfulness – "talk to yourself at least once a day" – but more importantly, perhaps, it recognises that every individual is valuable and "excellent", which, in my opinion, is the beginning of leading *self* mindfully.

A philosophical perspective of the understanding of leaders

A search on Google Scholar (October 2016) on leadership gave over 3.4 million results, but by contrast, the topic of *leaders* offered only 18,000 and those did not really address the process by which leaders lead the *self*. I am not suggesting that such a simple – simplistic, even – investigation provides a definitive measure of a gap in the scholarship, but it can certainly be taken as a clue that more attention has been paid to the abstract concept of

leadership than to the leaders themselves. This seems odd, because since the first human societies formed, leaders, whether good or bad, have exercised a profound influence on the ways in which people have been able to interact (Brendel, 2014).

Although the process of leading has not been widely considered in research, leaders and their meaning for society have from time to time occupied the thoughts of some of the greatest philosophers. Socrates, for instance, focused on the idea of daring to disagree with the leader, in the sense of seeing other possibilities for governance, challenging authority and being true to intuitive thinking, while Aristotle wrote of the role a leader might play in allowing people to find their personal fulfilment. Plutarch discussed the importance of leaders as model citizens, Epictetus showed leaders possessing a resilient mind-set, and Epicurus reflected that leaders need to understand the art of happiness (Evans, 2012). According to Evans, these 'leader principles' from the writings of the ancient philosophers hold contemporary relevance. Taken together, the principles delineate a model leader: someone with courage and vision, with the capacity to care about others and set high examples of behaviour, someone who interacts with life in honesty and enjoyment. This is an idealised standard for leaders, of course, and according to Brendel (2014), no individual can achieve such a degree of altruistic behaviour without considerable philosophical self- reflection on the characteristics and virtues that are important in leading others. Of these various traits, taking responsibility for personal choice and managing self-interest in the inevitable (and necessary) 'will to power' are possibly the most important.

The relationship between any two human beings is imbued with leadership: one will lead, and one will follow (Horne, 2010). If leaders do not emerge, the result will be anarchy, a relationship without rule that leads to disorder (Axelrod & Keohane, 1985; Horne, 2010), although this view of anarchy is not shared by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (Reiss, 1970), who argued anarchy as freedom from enforced law. Although the Kantian view of anarchy has instant appeal for its elevation of personal freedom coupled with personal responsibility, human societies throughout history have tended to develop with identified leaders and designated followers. In relation to this point, Horne (2010, p. 7) sees human societies as organisms, which "...consist of parts articulating together to create the integrity of the whole" and it is at this level of the whole that leaders need to be considered and situated. On this point, Weick's (2008) discussion of leaders is telling. Weick (2008) based

her thinking about the social functions of leaders in William James's pragmatism, which argues that all individuals have the responsibility of reflecting on the consequences of their actions in relation to moving into a common cause and giving back to the greater good.

Leaders: who are they in this study?

The distinction between leadership and leaders is not always clear: the two ideas are often conflated and defined in vague and ambiguous terms (Gronn, 2010). Barker (1997) sees 'leadership' and 'leaders' as two quite different aspects of leading: leaders do; leadership is what is done. Leaders show their ability in their behaviour and traits of character, and leadership is the outcome of the interplay of leaders' personality and actions. For the purposes of this study, I conceive leadership as expressions of the totality of all the actions a leader takes: it is a thing, a vehicle (or more properly, in this case, a *vessel*) by which leaders move forward and by which situations are resolved. Leaders, by contrast, direct the 'ship' in the direction that seems appropriate: they are the agents of the actions that constitute the ship. To put it another way, *leadership* is the external expression of the internal function of *leading*.

Ancona, Malone, Orlikowski and Senge (2007) argue that it is the responsibility of leaders to engage in sense-making, to build relationships, to develop the vision that will guide the development and implementation of plans, and to make things happen through invention and action, and it is to these core responsibilities that I wish to pay attention in this study. I note Ancona *et al.'s* (2007) assertion that no leader can perform to the level of perfection that society appears to expect, and that the gap between expectation and performance can result in stress and detachment from themselves as leaders.

I too am aware of the burdens that leaders carry, and I am interested in the way that their stress can be reduced. My concern is with the lived experience of mindful leaders and the way they interact with and lead *Self* and others, and in this regard, because I see *authenticity* as the key to this, I will from this point on, use the term 'authentic leader". By this I do not mean a leader who is authentic in the sense of holding legitimate power (Shamir & Eilam, 2005) and a mandate from superiors to perform certain organisational functions of command and control, although those elements might well be present in my delineation. Rather, I take the expression to mean a leader who has reached such a level of self-awareness and self-

acceptance that interactions with others can take place without pretence or dependence on the trappings of leadership, resulting, perhaps, in openness to a wide range of creative possibilities

Moving towards a better understanding of the authentic leader

The next section outlines some of the main ideas that have dominated research on leaders, moving towards the concept of authenticity in leading. There has been a steady development in understanding authentic leaders and their effect on followers and organisations, and the concepts are important to, and will ground, my examination of mindful leaders leading *self*. In reaching towards a full understanding authentic leaders, I will explore different ideas relating to leading authentically, considering key ideas about charismatic leaders, transformational leaders, servant leaders and awakened leaders. I then turn my attention to other ideas that connect to authentic leading, with particular focus on self-leadership and emotional intelligence. The last section of the chapter deals more directly with authenticity and leaders.

The literature reflects on a number of styles of being a leader and the different styles have on both the leader and people around them. I have concentrated my review on those styles of leading that bear, in my mind, the closest resemblance to being an authentic leader that have been included: *the charismatic leader, the transformational leader, the servant leader and the meaningful and awakened leader*. This section will provide a brief overview of the different styles.

Authenticity is central to mindfulness and by extension, obviously, to mindful leading. It is a word, furthermore, that has almost as many nuances of meaning as it has people who employ it, so for the purposes of this study, I wish to establish a definition that is suitable for my field of enquiry, which is mindful leaders leading *Self*. To this end, I take authenticity to be behaviour that aligns truthfully with its stated motivation and thus is trustworthy and dependable. As I begin my review of scholarship about leaders (even those who may earn a popular and flattering label like 'charismatic') I want to emphasise that authenticity and success are not necessarily synonymous, especially given the way that success is often measured.

The word 'charismatic' drives from the Greek word for 'gift', and its early use (Avolio & Gardner, 2005) did imply that some leaders were especially gifted. Conger and Kanungo (1987), for instance, presented a view of charismatic leaders as outstanding individuals whose abilities are nothing but beneficial. They argued that charismatic leaders are focused, energetic, willing to question the *status quo* and to take risks to effect change. Further, their view is that charismatic leaders exhibit such appealing characteristics, including self-leadership and passion, that they can carry people with them through change processes. This is an unassailably positive view of the nature and effects of a charismatic leader, but Bass (1985) saw a darker aspect to the behaviour of charismatic leaders, pointing out that the ability to lead by personal influence may eventually extend into manipulation, to the point that followers may jeopardise their personal beliefs and values.

Charismatic leaders seem to have a particular gift for understanding and appealing to people's emotions which enables them to share their vision for new ideas and change (Bass, 1985), and thus, lead by communicating a vision. In relation to such communication, Westley and Mintzberg (1989) liken visionary leadership to the unfolding of a drama. Their analogy goes like this: in the enactment of both leadership and drama action and shared meaning happen simultaneously, and fiction and truth are blended to present a vision that is moved forward by emotion and the performance. Holladay and Coombs (1993) did not see drama. In their examination of the nexus of leader charisma and the communication of vision, they found followers' discernment of leader charisma is related to the leader's "…friendly and attentive communication style sub constructs" (p. 422), and that a charismatic style of leading can be learned by understanding how to communicate and relate to people.

In all cases, the relationships that leaders form is important to their effectiveness. In a highly significant study, Anderson, Tolson and Thacker (1990) showed that the way leaders perceive and experience their relationships with senior people defines the way they themselves lead, while Kenney, Blascovich and Shaver's (1994) prototype of the 'new' leader has awareness of followers' general expectations as one of its key characteristics. When leaders and followers share certain ideals and standards of behaviour, opportunities exist for leaders to influence their staff and win respect. For instance, followers may develop trust if leaders conform to the norms of the group, if leaders have to some extent risen up from more junior ranks, and if they do not try to change things too much or too quickly. On a similar theme, Kenney et al.

(1994) show how important it is for leaders to connect with their followers through sharing and group focus.

The essence of leading, arguably, is having followers. Ross and Offerman (1997) contend that transformational leaders do not set out to deliberately attract followers, but rather, that they create appealing environments in which followers are able to develop a high level of autonomy in order to become professional in their interaction with an organisation. The attractiveness of the environment is probably the result of the way that transformational leaders interact, because the ability to empower followers and enhance job satisfaction seems to be a crucial element in all discussions of transformational leaders (Bono & Judge, 2003; Conger & Kanungo, 1987). For instance, Bono and Judge's (2003) study of motivation found that transformational leaders believe their work is important and self-congruent, and that this attitude exercises a positive effect by encouraging followers to find meaning in their own work. This may occur in part because transformational leaders are inclined to consider themselves as inseparable from the group and are therefore likely to put relationships first and value their social obligations towards others (Kanungo, 2001).

The character traits of transformational leaders occupy researchers to a considerable degree. Avolio, Waldman and Yammarino (1993), for instance, identified four 'I' factors possessed by transformational leaders: influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, while Bass and Avolio (1994, p. 46) maintain that it is typical of transformational leader behaviour to "…integrate creative insight, persistence and energy, intuition and sensitivity to the needs of others to 'forge the strategy-culture alloy' for their organization". Anderson and Martin (1995) propose that it is a characteristic of transformational leaders to connect with others as individuals, instead of operating on auto pilot, and to be humble and humane. In other words, the attention of transformational leaders is given to individuals and their needs. Luechauer and Shulman (1996, p. 843) concluded that:

> …current thinking in organizational studies points to the effectiveness, importance, and need for transformational leadership and empowerment in all type of organizations. Modern managers can no longer act as dictators, cops, tasks-masters, or bosses. Rather, they must act as educational facilitators who promote development processes

such as autonomy, quality, personal growth, and the ability to initiate and cope with change.

One negative aspect of transformational leaders is that they may incline towards the need to be idolised by followers. Barbuto and Burbach (2006) tested the emotional intelligence of transformational leaders and found that transformational leaders do not necessarily exercise strong control of their emotional displays, and -- perhaps contrary to expectations emotional behaviour may have positive outcomes for leading:

> ...leaders' mood regulation was negatively related to leaders' self-reported intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence, indicating that leaders who are less prone to regulating their mood display a greater degree of transformational leadership (self-reported). (p. 58)

Given that most people have been taught and usually accept that one of the measures of emotional intelligence is the capacity to anticipate the effect of public displays of emotion, Barbuto and Barbuch's (2006) finding may show transformational leaders as needing to be accepted 'warts and all', and certainly, leaders with high emotional intelligence are more likely to reflect on the effect of their behaviour as part of being authentic in their practice of leading (Scott-Halsell, Shumate & Blum, 2007) and being true to their personal self (Ross & Offerman, 1997). Cooper, Scandura and Schriesheim (2005) argued leaders need to display this deep authenticity, especially when they lead change processes, which often engender fear and uncertainty in followers. Argyris (1994), too, saw that leaders need to take responsibility for their behaviour, which is possible only if they attain a high level of realisation of the potential impact their actions and emotion might have on followers. This authentic self-awareness is, as Ahn, Adamson and Dornbusch (2004) point out, especially important in times of change, when leaders need to foster involvement and trust. In having the trust, the leader will most likely experience a stronger following in involvement with the change required.

Stone, Russell & Patterson (2004) define the difference between transformational leaders and servant leaders in terms of the greater concern of transformational leaders to engage followers with organisational objectives compared with the overall objective of servant

leaders to support and nurture their followers. Servant leaders, then, are more likely to care about people and the process of service than about the achievement of organisational outcomes. Lubin (2001) thinks servant leaders perceive their chief responsibility as developing the relationships and people, which, as Stone, Russell and Patterson (2004) argue, will then ultimately allow the achievement of the organisation's long-term goals, because staff will be developed, enriched and therefore fully present in their work. To be a servant leader requires a particular mind-set comprising honesty, self-awareness and understanding of themselves and others.

Servant leaders, then, are primarily altruistic. They concentrate on meeting the needs of others (Patterson, 2003) and according to Greenleaf (1977), choose service first. Van Dierendonck and Patterson (2015) explain the rationale of servant leaders as serving their followers in order to develop their full potential. In bringing out the best in followers, servant leaders offer vision and support (Farling, Store & Winston, 1999) and see caring for staff, the organisation and society as the greatest good (Greenleaf, 1977). Van Dierendonck and Patterson (2015) discuss the compassionate love shown by servant leaders, arguing that leaders who serve their followers make work meaningful for individuals by leading the people first, the talent second (who shows strong potential), and the organisation third.

Yukl (1989) surveyed a decade of research into leadership and leaders, and proposed that one of the more significant insights from the 1980s was based on Schein's (1985) theory of the way that leaders shape organisational culture through the symbolic processes of managing meaning. Leaders who manage meaning do not concentrate exclusively on activities that lead to concrete outcomes, but rather on imbuing those activities with meaning, so that work becomes purposeful. Leaders who strive to make work meaningful for themselves and others are "awakened" (Marques, 2009), drawing on values and concepts that are positive for all. Marques (2009) argues that to be awakened leader is both difficult and easy at the same time:

> …awakened leadership can be considered difficult … because society, with ongoing codes of conduct, and in particular its ingrained sense of individuality, may not yet be as widely prepared to embrace the awakened leader and his or her sense of unity and mutuality in moving ahead; and easy, because the awakened leader, once accepted,

does not have to remember different behavioural patterns in different environments. (p. 320)

This is a powerful comment on the notion of awakened leaders, suggesting they lead from a place of self-contentment and are not driven by power or a need for recognition. Instead, awakened leaders allow followers to use their intuition and build ownership of their work and commitment to it. Like servant leaders, awakened leaders are not afraid to show their authentic leadership and to operate in love, forgiveness and trust (Caldwell & Dixon, 2010).

In this section, I have sketched out four styles of leading, and each one has some bearing on being an 'authentic leader', particularly with regard to the care leaders show towards others and to the high level of awareness the leaders have about the impact of their behaviour on others. Another strong commonality among the four styles of leaders is a lack of egoism. Instead, all four types of leader are strongly focused outward, paying attention to serving the greater good of all. Such leaders need a strong sense of themselves, and this awareness may be triggered by a number of internal factors. This will be the focus of the next section of this chapter.

What guides authentic leaders?

This section sifts through some theories and ideas that attempt to explain the reasons someone might seek to be an authentic leader (in the sense that I favour the expression) over one who prefers the rewards of position and the exercise of power. To this end, I will cover self-leadership, emotional intelligence and some pertinent ideas drawn from neuroscience.

Manz (1986) advocated a new theory of leadership centered on leaders leading themselves, proposing that:

> …self-leadership is conceptualized as a comprehensive self-influence perspective that concerns leading oneself toward performance of naturally motivating tasks as well as managing oneself to do work that must be done but is not naturally motivating. (p. 589)

If Manz's (1986) definition of self-leadership is accepted, it can be seen as a 'regulation device' that turns internal motivation and self-influence on and off, and therefore as a key element in leading and influencing others by example. In fact, Pearce (2007, p. 357) sees self-leadership as so essential to leading that he states unequivocally "...if leaders are not competent self-leaders, their capacity, is, at best, diminished".

Self-leadership is pivotal in running successful and flexible teams because it diminishes instances of social loafing (Manz & Sims, 1987). Further, self-leadership is positively connected to active styles of leading such as transformational and transactional leadership, but is negatively connected to passive leadership styles such as laissez-fair leadership (Furtner, Baldegger & Rauthmann, 2013), suggesting that self-reflection and self-understanding are important if leaders want to influence and develop their followers positively. Self-leaders may connect with their genuine emotions and use their emotionality expressively to influence their followers (Llies, Curseu, Dimotakis & Spitzmuller, 2012), but they need internal stillness and quiet to reach that place of self-knowledge (Pearce, 2007). Mindfulness practice can offer this necessary stillness.

Psychologists have long been concerned with trying to determine what type of personality is most resilient and adaptable to a demanding life, and perhaps surprisingly, have found that general mental ability accounts for only 10% of life success. Intelligence quotient allows people to perform well in cognitive tasks, of course, but emotional intelligence is what permits the development of strong interpersonal relationships, both in private life and in the workplace (Cherniss & Caplan, 2001).

Research on emotional intelligence is anchored in Thorndike's (1920) explication of social intelligence, which is divided into three separate parts: abstract, mechanical and social. Social intelligence encompasses both cognitive and behavioural elements, explained by Landy (2005) as "... first, the ability to understand and manage people is an intellectual capacity. Second, the capacity is different from the abstract-verbal and concrete-mechanical aspects of intelligence" (p. 414). Social intelligence, then, is a combination of emotional and cognitive awareness and relates quite strongly to Mayer and Salovey's (1993) conceptualisation of emotional intelligence as both emotionality itself and also the facilitation and inhibition of emotional information flow. Individuals who are emotionally intelligent are likely to be aware

of their emotional swings and to use their array of rich feelings to escape from negative emotions and use others to prepare for the future (Mayer & Salovey, 1993).

Emotional intelligence appears to assist in verbally sharing feelings and emotions with others (Mayer & Salovey, 1993), and a positive correlation between motivational language, staff retention and performance was noted by Mayfield and Mayfield (2007). According to Groves (2006), leaders with high emotional intelligence are more likely to be visionary leaders and to be impressive at both organisational and personal levels, enabling them to be effective change agents.

In the light of this discussion, the following is a useful definition of emotional intelligence:

> …the capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions to enhance thinking. It includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth. (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2008, p. 5)

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in neurosciences and the functions of the brain (Baime, 2011) especially in relation to how people interact with themselves and with others (Rock, 2009). In relation to leaders and authenticity, McDonald (2009) argues that research in the field of neuroscience has contributed to understanding many aspects of the internal *self,* including self-awareness, relational transparency and balanced mental processing, but of these areas of investigation, the most significant topic for this study is self-awareness. McDonald (2009) includes self-knowledge in his conceptualisation of self-awareness, suggesting that leaders use introspection to understand their individual everyday experiences and the place of *self* in those experiences. Specifically, this understanding has recognised how understanding the function of the brain in relation to interactions with *self and others* can help people to become more productive leaders (Rock, 2009).

McDonald (2009) maintains that studies in neuroscience have proven the positive impact of mindfulness has on leaders in general, and it is reasonable to speculate that the same effect will be present in developing authentic leaders. Mindfulness might, for instance, help create a positive attitude, and the peace it allows might develop useful insights for someone leading

major projects or large staff (McDonald. 2009). Neuroscience has proven that individuals who meditate regularly are more likely to continue their personal development because they to absorb new learning (Baime, 2011), a significant factor in leading *self*. Neuroscience is uncovering the complex relationships of the neural networks in the brain, the heart and the gut, and this knowledge will reveal how humans interact with their environments (Sousa, 2012). Perhaps more than other people, leaders need to be integrated neurologically across their head, heart and gut so that they can align their deliberative actions with their intuitive perceptions. This integration will more likely lead to sustainable and wise decisions (Sousa, 2012).

This section covered some of the ideas that could shape leaders into authentic leaders, namely, self-awareness developed through self-leadership, emotional intelligence and understanding the functionality of the brain. Each of these shaping ideas is connected to the others by a common thread: the willingness and ability to understand experience and to relate understanding to a sense of the greater purpose of life. The curiosity that is engendered by seeking understanding allows leaders to learn and develop their authenticity: this idea introduces the next section, which will dwell on being an authentic leader.

The authentic leader

As I begin to consider the concept of the 'authentic leader', I am aware that words such as 'authenticity' and 'authentic' are so over-used as to be rendered, not meaningless, but perhaps, too full of meaning. That is, too many people use the terms loosely and idiosyncratically for the words to have retained any lexical precision. For the purposes of this research, therefore, I will set up my own definition, drawn in part from Heidegger (1927/62) and in part also from my own practice of mindful leading. Authenticity, for this study, then, is holding true to the understanding that life is full of possibilities, all of which hold their own truths (Krishnamurti, 1990), and that there is no single, 'right' way to act or live.

Yukl (1997) argues that a major paradigm shift has occurred in relation to the importance of connecting not only with other people, but also to themselves, especially themselves as leaders, and other scholars have argued that changes, in the form of opening up to different ways of interacting in this world, have taken place in attitudes to the world, work, relationships and leadership (Gunn, 1995; Senge & Kofman, 1993). Authentic leadership and behaviour became a focus of research in the late 1990s (Goleman, 1998; Mayfield, Mayfield

& Kopf, 1998; Terry, 1998). Bhindi and Duignan (1997) account for the growing interest in authentic leadership by suggesting that it is not possible for organisations to sustain a self-centred attitude of "What's in it for me?", narcissistic behaviours, or followers feeling used and cheated to feed managers' hunger for power and privilege. Authenticity in leading is the opposite self-centredness: it is leading by showing the true self and building meaningful relationships (Gunn, 1995). Bhindi and Duignan (1997) claim that the world is seeking authentic leaders because they adopt a focus on the people they work with, practise ethical behaviour and are sensitive and caring. In other words, organisations are no longer impelled forward by leaders' charisma, status and hierarchy.

In the period between 2000 and 2010, research interest was often directed towards transformational leaders and authentic leadership. In this decade, attention was paid to the way that leaders' internal worlds affected their external worlds, and power that being caring to others has for leaders' ability to influence followers. This realisation is evident in Page, Pietrzak and Lewis' (2001) development of an instrument to measure leaders' self-efficacy in relation to actual performance and perceived expectations. If leaders cannot execute their responsibilities or meet expectations, they will suffer negative consequences in both their external and their internal relationships, particularly in motivating and communicating with followers (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002). A study conducted by Mueller and Lee (2002) shows strong evidence that a high level of communication satisfaction creates more and better formal and informal open communication, and Yrle, Hartman and Galle (2002) found that full participation in communication builds and strengthens relationships between leaders and followers. These studies indicate how important it is that leaders relinquish any need to be seen as a source of authority and power, and rather, trust staff enough to allow honest communication.

Open communication creates collaboration between leaders and followers, encouraging inclusiveness and self-responsibility and a perception that leaders are "more effective in their jobs" (Czech & Forward, 2010, p, 447). Interestingly, the female participants in Czech and Forward's study were more positive in their evaluations of their leaders' effectiveness than the male participants, perhaps because women tend to be less hostile towards their leaders, seeing positive traits along with negative ones and looking beyond the 'strategic needs' presented by dominant male leaders (Dennis & Kunkel, 2004).

Scholars of authentic leadership tend to sum up all the positive aspects of the concept in the simple words "to thine own self be true" (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Cooper, Scandura & Schriesheim, 2005). Drawing on the work of Carl Rogers (1959) and Abraham Maslow (1954), Avolio and Gardner (2005, p. 319) describe fully functional, self-actualized people as "…individuals who are "in tune" with their basic nature and clearly and accurately see themselves and their lives". Shamir and Eilam (2005) offer a refreshing and compelling definition of authentic leadership involving four characteristics: (1) "… authentic leaders do not fake their leadership" (p. 396) (they do not pretend to be leaders); (2) "… authentic leaders do not take on a leadership role or engage in leadership activities for status, honour or other personal rewards" (p. 397); (3) "…authentic leaders are originals, not copies" (p. 397) and (4) "…authentic leaders are leaders whose actions are based on their values and convictions "(p. 397). These four characteristics vary from the doctrines of mindfulness, in that mindfulness teaches the value of honesty, giving and being true to *self* and experiences. Authentic leaders, then, are already likely to live in accordance with the principles of mindfulness, but they may not adopt the advanced teachings of mindfulness, which explore the true purpose of being and becoming (Santorelli, 2011). My understanding of mindfulness and authenticity is that they are not necessarily the same, but have a strong link in that mindfulness may help a leader to become authentic authentically in their leading of themselves and others.

In the mid-2000s, many scholars became interested in authentic leading, trying to discover what makes a true leader (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May & Walumbwa, 2005; Novicevic, Harvey, Buckley & Brown, 2006; Sparrow, 2005) and authenticity was linked with a number of other topics such as, for instance, leaders' competencies (Wren & Dulewicz, 2005), professional identities in schools (Busher, 2006), leaders' hope (Helland & Winston, 2005), and resonate leaders (McKee & Massimilian, 2006). McKeen and Massimilian's (2006) research is interesting to this study because in distinguishing between resonant and dissonant leaders, it touches on mindfulness and authenticity, arguing for leaders to live in hope and compassion rather than perpetuating the egotistical and destructive behaviour of dissonant leaders.

Over recent years, research on authentic leaders has been carried out in conjunction with topics such as understanding *self* (Spitzmuller & Ilies, 2010); transformational leaders and happiness (Rosenberg, 2010); the nature of weakness (Diddams & Chang, 2012); and

enhancing relationships (Crippen, 2012). Further, there has been a burgeoning of research dealing with authentic leadership and opening to the true *self* (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010), which has covered ideas like leading from the heart (Turkel, 2014), the connection between gender and leader formation (Skinner, 2014) and examining authentic leading in relation to the truth of being. Gardner, Cogliser, Davis and Dickens (2011) reviewed the empirical studies in the field, showing that concern has been with the psychology of leading, and the outcomes of authentic leading for leaders, followers and organisations. Although authentic and transformational behaviours seem to be critical for leaders seeking to understand the effects of their behaviour on themselves and others, it does also seem that the understanding develops mainly in a linear, deductive fashion in the conscious mind, which may imply that being authentic adds to the stress of leaders lives, and does not necessarily result in a peaceful existence (Santorelli, 2005).

There is strong evidence that being a self-leader and being authentic are important in building successful relationships and winning trust and engagement (Wang & Hsieh, 2013) and in this regard, that mindfulness is a powerful way of being that develops connection, communication and empowerment. By contrast, laissez-fair leaders, hands off leaders, are more likely to exhibit bullying behaviours that will have a negative impact on followers and others (Nielsen, 2013). Laissez-fair leaders tend towards avoidance and absence, and are often inactive and ineffective (Bass & Avolio, 1994), and it is possible that their leadership style is born from a fear of showing the authentic *self.*

Self-managing and self-leading, transformational leadership styles, charisma and emotional intelligence: all these build towards the idea of authenticity in leading, and in saying this, it should be stressed that it might be possible to cynically adopt the language and even some of the putative actions of authenticity, but if the words and actions do not come from inner conviction, then the enactment of leadership is inauthentic. Authentic leading, then, is a toggle switch: a leader is either authentic or inauthentic. However, being inauthentic is not necessarily a negative but it is more likely struggle based. Research suggests that inauthentic leaders damage themselves and others through their narcissism, power struggles, laziness or other destructive behaviour. Although authentic leading is clearly more desirable than inauthentic, a leader will most likely find it difficult to stay in an authentic state at all times. It is therefore rather difficult to establish a straightforward, universally acceptable definition of authenticity, but nevertheless, the focus of this thesis is to explore the nexus of authenticity

and mindful leaders leading *self*. In the previous chapter, mindfulness was defined as being *awake to and aware of what is* and   discussed as a way to fully relate to *self*. In the next sections, mindfulness will be explored in relation to leaders.

Leaders and Mindfulness

It is only in recent years that mindfulness has been researched in conjunction with leadership, and the connection has not always been seen as positive. Ellen Langer, one of the pioneers of a western perspective on mindfulness, has challenged the purpose of such research (Kawakami, White & Langer, 2000), arguing that it might be used in a 'management by numbers' approach to establish a list of find leadership traits preferred by followers, and thus to support the ceaseless focus on productivity. Despite disapproval from seminal writers, however, mindfulness has been studied from a number of different angles, including psychology (Carson & Langer, 2006), education (van Manen, 1990), therapy (Kabat-Zinn, 1990) and leadership (Dhiman, 2009; Sethi, 2009). In my opinion, the most likely reason for growing interest in mindfulness is its positive effect on people's increased awareness of their situation, their interactions with the world and their capacity to engage with everyday life with calmness and clarity (Carson & Langer, 2006).

Dhiman (2009) argues that the recognition of the positive effect of mindfulness has created curiosity about what mindfulness practice might achieve for leaders and, certainly in the last few years, the focus of research on mindfulness has shifted towards leadership and its effect on both leaders and organisations (Dhiman, 2009; McKee, Johnston & Massimilian, 2006; Carson & Langer, 2006; Passmore, 2009; Reb, Narayanan & Chaturvedi, 2012; Tuleja, 2014). As Carson and Langer (2006) argue, in a mindful state leaders are able to recognise their true interaction with their leading and with others, and this is likely to have a positive pay-off for the organisation and its members.

Tuleja (2014) contends that more is expected of leaders than of other organisational members: they are required to adjust to change quickly and to deal competently and sensitively with the complexities of interpersonal relationships and cultural differences. It is in the face of such expectations that mindfulness may help leaders cope with the burdens of their role, and in fact Tuleja's (2014) research supports earlier findings that show mindful

managers as focused and 'in the moment' during in stressful situations. Given its new popularity, it would be easy to think of mindfulness as simply another weapon in leaders' arsenals, or another tool for survival, but it should not be adopted on instruction as a means of improving poor performance (Sinclair, 2015), because it is a way of being and cannot be forced onto an unwilling participant.

Research has shown that leaders who showed mindful behaviour at least some of the time (even if they also exhibited negative attributes sometimes) were preferred to leaders who did not exhibit any mindfulness at all (Kawakami, White & Langer, 2000). In this context, the mindful leader was perceived as being a genuine and, in some instances, a warm leader, which was more attractive to the followers than leaders who appeared cold. This finding could, potentially, be exploited by an ill-meaning leader who might quite cynically pretend to be mindful to gain some advantage in manipulating staff, but I think this would be unsustainable and discovered quickly in the leaders' interactions with both themselves and others.

McKee, Johnston and Massimilian (2006, p. 24) linked mindfulness to "renewal", which help leaders to overcome the internal conflicts that inevitably accompany leadership roles. Renewal comes about if mindfulness, meditation and self-reflection are used to develop awareness of responsibilities, crises and the problems posed by certain tasks or threats. McKee, Johnston and Massimilian (2006) maintain that renewal leads to hope and compassion through which leaders can reinvent themselves and inspire others in strong, trusting and meaningful relationships. The positive impact of renewal is clarity, seeing more possibilities, being less reactive and becoming more responsive and constructive in how to deal with challenges in leading themselves (Manz, 1986).

Hunter and McComick (2008) undertook an exploratory study of eight mindful managers finding that the managers experienced external awareness and acceptance of work situations, set modest and realistic work goals, practised selflessness, found internal focus at work, were less concerned with materialism matters, possessed the ability to derive meaning from different sources, stayed calm in difficult situations and enjoyed work, were adaptable and had positive interpersonal work relations. When the benefits of mindfulness are as convincing as Hunter and McCormick (2008) show them to be, it seems churlish to critique

the findings, but nevertheless, I feel constrained to point out that although the research reiterate the valuable effects of mindfulness, they are very focused on the outputs of mindfulness practice, and do not give any sense of how to experience mindfulness.

Boyatzis and Mckee (2005) view mindfulness as an essential element that enables leaders to be aware of what is happening both internally and externally. This requires leaders to have the capacity and willingness to reflect on who they are as people and as leaders, and to gain this insight, Boyatzis and Mckee recommend reflection, meditation and supportive relationships. Carroll (2010), a human resource executive and Buddhist, explores the development of leadership talents through mindfulness and argues that simplicity, poise, respect, courage, confidence, enthusiasm, patience, awareness, skilfulness and humility will result in wisdom and gentleness. All these scholars see awareness as an essential quality in the mindful leader, and as one of the gains that mindfulness brings. As Dhiman (2009) puts it:

> ...since awareness is considered a universal human capacity and the most fundamental quality of our being, mindfulness accords great application potential in myriad fields involving personal and collective well-being. (p. 77)

Overall, the scholarship on mindful leaders yields much research extolling the benefits of mindfulness, usually with an underlying element of the relationship between mindfulness and productivity, but none actually focuses on the lived experience of mindfulness in action. This is the focus of my study.

The discussion shows that mindfulness is often seen, quite correctly, as a way of bringing wellness to the organisation and to individuals by reducing stress, improving communication and increasing a sense of community (Duerr, 2004; Passmore, 2009), and these ends, desirable in themselves, will often be encouraged by true and honest leaders. Leaders who create and manage meaning understand the importance of allowing people to participate and be involved, enabling them to find their internal focus and the true meaning of the experience (Gehrke, 2008). 'True meaning' here refers to what individuals find meaning to their existence and leads them into an authentic experience of being. Mindfulness plays a part in finding true meaning by encouraging full presence in the experience of being and an

ease and flow towards understanding existence (Passmore, 2009). Sethi (2009) argues the importance of injecting mindfulness into learning how to encourage behavioural change, because it allows creativity and the willingness to see the world from different perspectives, which invite new possibilities for personal growth and development.

In change management situations, mindfulness can guide leaders to interact and behave in ways that encourage commitment and acceptance, and can help leaders who are suffering from 'stuckness' to achieve sufficient detachment to recognise behavioural patterns and actions that are unhelpful in developing themselves and others (Higgs & Rowland, 2010). According to Higgs and Rowland

> … our research has indicated that leaders' self-awareness provides significant basis of equipping them to develop a capability to understand systemic challenges and avoid the traps that lead to 'stuckness', or even the creation of more significant problems. (p. 383)

The connections and interplay of creativity, mindfulness and leadership is beginning to occupy scholars (Dhiman, 2009; Passmore, 2009; Sethi, 2009; Tuleja, 2014). According to Gehani (2011) and Hunter and Chaskalson (2012), for everyone, including leaders, mindful consciousness develops significantly greater creativity because the clear mind that ensures from mindful practice allows new ideas and possibilities to emerge. If it is a given in organisational life that most followers are working to achieve autonomy, it is logical that an important aspect of a leader's position is to influence others so that followers' decisions are wise and useful. Gehani (2011) claims that mindful leaders are well placed to develop a foundation of trust that will allow creativity to flourish, and even goes so far as to argue that the demand for mindful leaders is so great that developing them should be incorporated into the curricula of schools and universities. Santorelli (2011, p. 216) confirms the importance of practising mindfulness to allow for creativity by "…learning to stop, listening closely, understanding situations and making wise choices and decisions", and maintains that sound leading happens from the inside out when leaders explore and understand their internal terrain and in doing so, realise through mindful practice, that necessary answers, creativity and possibilities all exist. As mentioned earlier, to be authentic does not necessarily mean to be mindful, but there is a strong link. This means it is possible to be creative without being

mindful, or even authentic, but this study will focus on how mindfulness may help in becoming more authentic and potentially more creative.

Like Gehani (2011), Ashford and DeRue (2012) explain that there is a dearth of talented leaders and a great need for them in an increasingly chaotic world. Ashford and DeRue also emphasise the importance of mindful reflection as a way of discovering the leader within, because being a leader does not occur simply because a title or position is bestowed within an organisational hierarchy. Rather, leaders need to take action aware of, and confident in, their own perception and interpretation of the world. Thus, Ashford and DeRue (2012) encourage leaders in self-belief: to be great leaders, they say, individuals must believe that they are great, which will in turn be reflected in other people's perceptions of them. Ashford and DeRue (2012, p. 152) say that to be mindfully engaged with their leading, leaders must "…commit to a learning mind-set, create and capitalize on learning opportunities and capture the lessons of experience". In other words, mindful leaders focus on their internal experience to respond positively to the external happenings.

In summary, the published research on mindfulness and leaders suggests that it is useful and timely to set aside the drive towards achievement and the constant busy-ness that typifies current society, and instead to recognise the possibility of calm and focus. Chaotic and preoccupied minds may take leaders on fascinating journeys, but unawareness may, according to Powietrzynska, Tobin and Alexkos (2014), numb leaders to the impact their actions may have on themselves and others. Mindfulness brings attention to the <u>now</u>, allowing leaders to be 'in the moment', which means that they will see how decisions and actions that may cause grief and pain can be resolved with compassion and care.

The gap

In the last two decades, connections among mindfulness, organisation and leadership have been made and explored by a number of scholars and practitioners (Dhiman, 2009; Kawakami, White & Langer, 2000; Ndubisi, 2012; Passmore, 2009; Sethi, 2009; Van Gordon, Shonin, Zangeneth & Griffiths, 2014) and I have already alluded to the instrumental approach adopted in much of the research, showing the pay-offs of mindfulness for individuals or the organisations. In other words, the argument for the importance of mindfulness in leaders has

been inextricably linked to performance and the bottom line. The research associates mindfulness with wellness and effective performance: for instance, because mindfulness can lead to awareness of individuals' suffering and psychological distress, in both themselves and others (Van Gordon et.al, 2014), it will permit interventions that alleviate the stress and relationship breakdowns that can consume time and other resources. Carson and Langer (2006) and Ndubisi (2012) both argue that if leaders are mindless rather than mindful, they may be preoccupied with failure, reluctant to simplify interpretations, less resilient, and refuse expert advice and support.

Leaders operate on the basis that part of their job is to create a sense of wellbeing that will encourage staff to participate and use their creativity. Sethi (2009) expressed it like this:

> …the greatest leadership attribute of mindfulness is the freedom it allows for us to live in the moment. We are generally addicted to the past or the future, and most people and organizations spend far too much time living in reliving the past or fantasizing about the future – in the process of losing the power of Now and the golden opportunity to the present moment. (p. 8)

The research shows excellent outcomes and positive effects of mindfulness, and I most certainly am in favour of the practice of mindfulness for individual and organisational well-being, but the research tends towards a repetition of "benefits-and-a-five-point-plan-to-achieve-mindfulness" approach. The benefits are well-researched, but what seems to be under-researched is a revelatory exploration of the everyday experience of being a mindful leader. I believe, therefore, that one of the gaps in the current research on mindfulness is a phenomenological examination of the mindful leader in action.

In summary, the current research is very limited in its coverage of the way mindful leaders function, and deals mainly with the impact of mindfulness on individuals and the organisations from a conceptual perspective only. The gap between concept and experience is significant and my research will offer insight into the daily lives and practice of leaders who are operating in a mindful space. My research may enlighten and guide other leaders to realise the power of mindfulness in their everyday experience of leading *self* in a professional environment.

My experience as a mindful leader

To end this chapter, I would like to share my personal experience as a mindful leader. I have already said that mindfulness practice has made me more acutely aware and awake and has changed the way I perceive my existence. I experience more awareness of what I am doing and how I respond to provocation. Mindfulness has given me a sense of freedom because I am now able to consider and deal with situations differently from before, with a lessened feeling of personal hurt or offence. I am able to distance myself from emotional involvement to the point that I am more an observer than a participant of situations. I still see things occurring around me, but I relinquish my reactions. I feel too, that I am open to new ways of being, which means that I am able to adjust to changing conditions. I still share my opinions, but I do not hold a grudge if I do not get what I want, because I know that grudges will not do me or anyone else any good. I am aware of my impact on others and sometimes I make adjustments, but sometimes I do not. I live thinking of the greater good and my ambition is always to meet what is needed with an open heart. My ability to focus and reflect is more powerful because I do not allow distractions when focus is needed. All of these things make a positive difference to my days, but it does not mean that I have eliminated suffering from my life by living my authentic *self* in mindfulness. I am not always in my 'happy place' and feeling great: I still feel pain and pleasure. Work is sometimes still difficult, but the 'mindfulness difference' is that I no longer seek to hide from what I experience, and I am not trying to impress others. I am true to my experience. I am true to what is real to me.

The purpose of this chapter was to explore the evolving conceptualisation of leaders in the last few decades. There has been a steady move towards the idea of being open to themselves in areas such as self-leadership and finding a charismatic or transformational leadership style. One of the ideas that has a strong bearing on this study is that of authentic leaders, and the connection of authenticity to emotional intelligence and how leaders interact positively or negatively with the world. Overall, there has been a strong move towards understanding the impact of authentic behaviour in leadership.

Mindfulness has begun to emerge as a significant topic in the leadership literature, exploring how it affects leaders' behaviour, and its effect on organisation, but there seems to be a gap in published research. I see a need in the mindfulness literature for a phenomenological exploration of the lived experience of mindful leaders leading *self*. The next chapter will explore phenomenology and how it has been adapted in this study.

Phenomenological research explores quotidian phenomena, developing and sharing insights through an intuitive interpretation of the experience of the participants and the researcher (Heidegger, 1927/62). The difference between my research and what has thus far been published in the academy on mindfulness, is that my focus is not on the benefits of the practice: benefits are well known. Instead, my intention is to investigate the phenomenon of the mindful leader leading *self*, and it is pivotal to my research that I am approaching the investigation as a mindfulness practitioner who fully embraces living in a mindful state.

Chapter 4

Methodology and Method

"Phenomenology asks, 'What is this or that kind of experience like….it does not offer us the possibility of effective theory with which we can now explain and/or control the world, but rather it offers us the possibility of plausible insights that brings us in more direct contact with the world." – Max van Manen

The overall purpose of this research is to explore the way in which mindfulness is deployed by leaders in their everyday interactions with themselves and others. The last two chapters surveyed previous literature about leaders, authenticity and mindfulness, revealing the gap in scholarship that this study aims to fill: specifically, an empirical study of four mindful leaders, and in this chapter, I will set out the theoretical framework for the research, with particular attention to the phenomenology of Martin Heidegger and Hans-George Gadamer. The chapter is divided into two parts: part 1 opens with a general discussion of phenomenology, then examines the specific philosophies of Heidegger and Gadamer. It also draws attention to the similarities I perceive between mindfulness and Heidegger's concept of phenomenological hermeneutics, and links both to the idea of *self*. The last section of part 1 locates this research within Heideggerian hermeneutics.

Part 2 gives detail of how the research was conducted. I will explain how my participants were selected, how the data were gathered and analysed, and how conclusions were drawn. The chapter then moves on to describing the participants and the conversations to gather my data. Finally, the analysis is described, with a view to also showing the trustworthiness of the study.

Part 1 Phenomenology and Heideggerian Research

Philosophical underpinning

This research evolved around a single central question: *"What is the experience of a mindful leader leading* self *in a professional environment?"* The question seeks the meaning of mindfulness for leaders in their everyday working lives, and the formulation of the question shows that the study focuses on how mindfulness affects the leaders, not on the impact that the leaders' mindfulness may have on others. The question will be answered by the interpretation of the stories leaders tell about their holistic experience of leading in the past, the present and the future. The interpretation is led by Heidegger's (1927/62) ideas of *being-in-the-world* and *being-in-the-world-with-others*.

The broadest understanding of phenomenology shows it primarily as a philosophy (Dowling, 2007) that seeks to know the nature of reality in terms of humans' lived experience (Laverty, 2003). The design of a research project that employs phenomenology is challenging first, because it is entirely polemical and therefore exceedingly abstract; and second, because relatively little has been written about how to operationalise phenomenological research. In fact, on the point of 'how to do' phenomenological research, Spiegelberg (1982) contended that the number of styles of phenomenology was exactly equal to the number of phenomenologists undertaking research. Thus, though there are certainly some elements that link all styles of phenomenological research to a common beginning, there are also distinct differences in the approaches (Dowling, 2007). All phenomenological research, for instance, explores human experience from a perspective that reduces the limitations imposed by logical positivism (Dukes, 1984), seeking to uncover the meanings of a phenomenon through rich description and interpretation (Finlay, 2009), but the precise ways in which meaning is discovered depend on the individual researcher.

The key principles of phenomenology were established by Franz Brentano (1901) and Edmund Husserl (1912/1980), but many scholars have since been interested in this approach to research. Arguably, the best known of these are Heidegger (1927/62) and his pupil Gadamer (1975). Husserl argued that the richness of experience is the fundamental source of understanding and knowledge (Racher & Robinson, 2003) and encouraged scholars to study

phenomena "…as they appear" (Dowling, 2007, p.132) without necessarily seeking their cause. In this respect, Husserl consciously rejected 'scientific' methods of investigation into human life (such as those employed in psychology, for instance), contending that often 'scientific' enquiries were conducted in situations that are artificial, separate from – or more accurately, *separated* from -- the phenomenon and therefore untrue (Laverty, 2003). Instead, Husserl favoured enquiries that account for the whole context in which a phenomenon occurs, developing understandings that are particular and explicit.

Achieving a deep understanding requires 'intentionality', the turning of the mind of investigator towards the phenomenon in such a way that its 'essence', its unique qualities, can be known (Reiners, 2012). The success of this type of study, therefore, depends on researchers' sensitivity and ability to 'bracket out' distractions (Giorgi, 2007) in order to engage with the phenomenon experientially, not seeking its cause (Dukes, 1984), but rather, interacting with it intuitively (Dowling, 2007). This type of research is, obviously, wide open to accusations of researcher bias, and certainly, researchers will have a subjective involvement. However, phenomenologists would argue that it is that very subjectivity that allows researchers to transcend 'mere' facts (Giorgi, 2007) and to apprehend the essential constituents of a phenomenon (Sanders, 1982). Husserl's aim, then, was to discover to what a person knows about a phenomenon by gathering a rich description of it (Reiners, 2012).

Husserl and Heidegger approached phenomenology from different angles, but they did agree that its purpose was to achieve understanding of living in the ordinary world (Groenewald, 2004). Heideggerian phenomenology builds on and (arguably) extends Husserl's ideas, focusing chiefly on the historicity of Being (Reiners, 2012). Heidegger (1927/62) added a hermeneutical element to understanding of phenomena (Creswell, 1994), seeking to move beyond description to a form of interpretation that reveals the meaning in everyday occurrences (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Heidegger's concern was to use hermeneutics to discover the nature of humans by studying "…the concept of being in the world rather than knowing the world" (Reiners, 2012, p. 1) because people are so embedded in their daily practices that it is not possible to separate experience from interpretation (van Manen, 1991). Giorgi (2007) finds Husserl's and Heidegger's approaches phenomenology to be similar in their requirement for researcher reflectivity, but whereas Husserl believed in the power of description, Heidegger (1954/77) focused on the need for interpretation from multiple

perspectives that could be obtained by entering into the phenomenon along with the participant (Heidegger, 1927/62).

According to van Manen (1984), phenomenological research can be a poetising activity in the sense that researchers are exercised about capturing and expressing the truth of a situation in a way that speaks to the audience. The research may therefore call on metaphorical language and imagery more than is typical of the academy: it does so because capturing the essence of experience often requires intensely layered and nuanced language, and in this respect resembles poetry.

Key components of phenomenological research

Phenomenology in action employs five key notions, each of which links with all the others (van Manen, 1984, pp. 1--2). The first key idea is that a phenomenological study deals with lived experience, individuals' sense of the moment and "being there". The second element of phenomenology is that it reaches towards "the essence", the full experience and knowledge of what is lived within the phenomenon. The third element is the "attentive practice of thoughtfulness", which refers to the researcher's capacity to achieve "… minding, a heeding, a caring attunement – a heedful, mindful wondering about the project of life, of living, of what it means to live a life" (p. 1). As an aside, I here wish to observe that van Manen's description of attentive thoughtfulness also describes the practice of mindfulness, and I submit that entering a mindfulness state is close to this third element of phenomenological research. The fourth element of phenomenology is that it searches for what it means to be human by establishing how people experience the world. These understandings are often created by a poetising activity, which is the fifth element of phenomenology. This last element is quite remote from the forms of research that are generally typical of the academy: phenomenological research will not attempt to build a concept or theory, but rather, will take readers on a journey that will allow sharing of the phenomenon and the understandings gained from it.

van Manen's (1984) five elements are useful in grasping the basic principles of hermeneutic phenomenology, but there are other core concepts that must be canvassed in order that the methodology is rendered transparent. Heidegger's book *Being and Time* was published in

1927 and has been translated from German into many languages. Heidegger's language is dense and often difficult to understand, but his thinking is profound and enlightening, beginning with the idea of Dasein.

Dasein is a German word that means, literally, "being there", but is used to connote the abstract idea of 'existence'. Heidegger (1927/62) used Dasein to denote humans and the form of *being* that is peculiar to humans, that is, that humans have some awareness of their being and of their ending[1]. Heidegger believed that it is possible to see Dasein from the outside, in terms of such things as their appearance and personality traits, but that such an assessment will not reveal the true nature of the Dasein, because they cannot be understood by 'what' they are, only by 'who' they are. Thus, to understand Dasein is to understand how they speak and act, those with whom they interact, and how they are affected by their engagement with the world as they pass through time. Most importantly, Dasein should be understood only in terms of "the performance of its own being" (Harman, 2011, p. 56). In other words, Dasein is understood as the essence of Being.

The essence of Dasein cannot be separated from their state of being-in-the-world, which requires human beings to be understood as beings existing in the midst of things and other Dasein. Inasmuch as 'Dasein' is 'to be there', the place in which they are 'there' is the world, which surrounds them and in which they are present at all times, not merely in the sense of occupying space, but in the nature of residents of a dwelling that provides both belonging and involvement. To this extent, Heidegger (1927/62) argues, there is no separation between being and world because, "...an understanding of being is always already contained in everything we apprehend in beings" (p. 3). In relation to research, the focus should therefore not be on the person or the phenomenon itself, but rather, on the experience of 'being there'. The world in which individual Dasein dwell is experienced as an obsession with *my own existence and my own world,* which Heidegger names *mineness*. Mineness operates in the everyday and the ordinary, and by interpreting the connections between and among quotidian experience, Dasein build their whole way of being. Thus, the world is part of *who I am*.

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[1] Here I note that Heidegger would not have used, as I have, use the words 'human being', because he did not believe in the terminology. However, in this study I have chosen to use 'human being' and 'human' to describe the physical manifestation of Being.

Another of Heidegger's (1927/62) profound interpretations of being lies in his conceptualisation of time and the notion of *being-toward-death.* Time, for Heidegger, was the backdrop against which Being must be understood, but it is not the passing of linear and chronological time to which he refers. Rather, as Harman (2011, p. 59) explains, Heideggerian time is "kairological", which derives from the Greek for 'season' and passed into rhetoric with the sense of being 'the perfect moment'. These meanings appear to combine in Heidegger's concept of time as it defines Being: A Dasein's personal time – the season of existence, to put it that way – will end, because time is finite for all Dasein, but simultaneously, Being is time. Every moment, then, is historical, because if Being is time, and time is always passing, it is not possible to be 'present'. Thus, Dasein cannot perceive the world directly, because there is no stable, unchanging present: the world must be interpreted in its historicity.

Dasein seek understanding of the world and *self* by casting themselves forward into the possibilities of being. Heidegger's conceptualisation of possibilities is three-fold (Nadal, 2011): first, possibility is something that has not yet come to be; second, possibility is the limitlessness of "what may come to be" (p. 3) and third sense of possibility is more bounded as "...that which can be" (p.3). For Heidegger (1927/62), Dasein is therefore never fully completed, as its being is always in the *not-yet*, in some form of possibility. Dasein, therefore, is possibility, and the ultimate possibility is death, which dominates the finitude of Dasein because the whole of their existence, one way or another, is a *being-towards-death.* The time that Dasein has is finite, and though the exact moment and the nature of death are uncertain, death itself is inevitable. Knowing that being, with its intensity of *mineness*, is also a *being-towards-death* should, perhaps, encourage in Dasein a deeper sense of needing to embrace the fullness of the experience of Being, for authenticity can be achieved only by facing the fact of impermanence and making sense of death.

Dasein are not in the world only for themselves, but are also *Dasein-for*. In other words, Dasein relate to others by enacting *Sorge* (care, concern), which Heidegger (1927/62) considered an essential element of being. Dasein are connected to and interested in what is happening in the world, which as Heidegger refers to as *having-to-be-open* (p. 58). These two concepts are pivotal in Dasein's existence: they are the drivers toward finding a purpose in being. Heidegger (1927/62) explains that "...Dasein's being reveals itself as care" (p. 227). The care that is central to Daseins' being is not merely the straightforward sort of care that a

mother might give a child who was ill, or a loving owner might bestow on a pet to keep it healthy, though at the most parochial level, it may express in such ways because it emanates from the deeper, internalised care that produces attentiveness and consideration. Heidegger (1927/62) maintains that it is through care that Dasein begin to know themselves.

Daseins' care may be inauthentic: self-oriented, dominating and reductive of others, in which case, inauthentic care takes over from the other Dasein in the relationship. Authentic care, on the other hand, reaches forward towards the object of concern and engages that being positively. Both of these extremes of care result from the *thrownness* that marks Dasein existence, the sense that Dasein are thrown into situations – relationships, events, experiences – to which they must react and respond as part of their being-in–the-world. The experiences of thrownness produce moods (Harman, 2011), which in turn influence the nature of the care that Dasein exhibit at a given time, and care therefore has a temporal dimension: thrownness is oriented to the past.

Thrownness is the historic position in which Dasein find themselves caught, and it not only influences moods, but also develops identity, spirituality, cultural engagement and all the elements of the environment which Dasein create for themselves. The possibilities in thrownness are limited, because the past is *having-been*. Dasein, however, are not simply creatures that are done unto by thrownness: they have agency and can project themselves into chosen possibilities that will determine their futures. This projection (Heidegger, 1927/62) defines authentic existence. It spells out freedom for Dasein as they reach for the future, towards the potential of *for-being*. Thrownness and projection are two elements of Daseins' care, and the third is *fallenness* (Heidegger, 1927/62). 'Fallenness' expresses the idea that Dasein have fallen so far into the everyday that they have lost their potential for authenticity, that thrownness has taken over their existence, and they are tossed around by circumstances. Fallenness has a sedative quality that numbs Dasein to the possibilities of projection and also seduces them into believing that the everyday contains the fullness of life. In Heidegger's (1927/62) view, these three dimensions operate simultaneously and characterise moment following moment that explains Daseins' varying movement through the world of possibilities.

The notion of authentic living

The discussion of Heidegger's philosophy to this point has established that Dasein are thrown into existence and surrounded by the worlds created by their individual historical experiences and their interpretations of what those experiences mean. In their being-in-the-world, Dasein must choose to live in one of two states, authentic living or inauthentic living. I have already alluded to these above, but I return to the discussion now to deepen it, because the concepts are central to Heidegger's argument and to the connection I will shortly draw to mindfulness.

In order to choose authenticity, Dasein need to free themselves from the constraints of "the One" (Heidegger, 1927/62), the being who is simultaneously everyone and no one, the entity who is expressed in German as 'das Man', in Norwegian as 'en' and in English as 'one'. This faceless but ubiquitous being consists of the amassed norms, rules and expectations that are imposed and expressed by other Dasein, to whom individual Dasein may compare themselves in their constant worry about their differences and similarities. The qualities of the One do not even need to be negative to dominate the Dasein (although they might be), they can simply be the accumulation of the "averageness" (Heidegger, 1927/62) of the everyday, and the unconsidered acceptance of the views and opinions of others. If negative qualities in the One dominate Dasein thinking, then the chosen mode of living is likely to be inauthentic, based in competition with other Dasein. Of course, the reverse is also true. The people with whom Dasein associate therefore have considerable power over their choices whether life will be lived authentically or inauthentically, and this perspective will impart a certain character to Dasein.

In summary, authentic living is a sense of *my being* that means "…I can choose and win myself, or conversely lose and never win myself" (Heidegger, 1927/62, p. 68), while on the other hand, being inauthentic means to forget that there is the possibility of making right choices and living instead in a state of *theyness* (Heidegger, 1927/62). For Heidegger *they* live an inauthentic existence in which individuals are overly swayed by the influence of others and are not true to themselves. Heidegger further emphasises that there is no prescription for a right way of living, for "…authentic Being-one's Self does not rest upon an exceptional condition of the subject, a condition that has been detached from the 'they', it is rather an existential modification of the 'they'" (1927/62, p. 168).

The decision that a Dasein may take with regard to the *my-to-be* is not to isolate the *self* from others in order to avoid the negative, but rather, to find a new way to relate to being-in-the-world. According to Heidegger (1927/62) this requires Dasein to *take hold* in moving out of *theyness*. The authentic self may be able to perceive value in something that cannot be measured or compared to other things for, as Heidegger explains, if Dasein are authentic, they have their own measures of success and failure.

For Heidegger (1927/62), the purpose of life for all human beings is to find meaning in existence, and part of finding meaning is answering the question of how to best live an authentic life that is true to *self* and not influenced by others' understandings of what life should be. To this end, Heidegger encouraged people to find ways in which to unify the fragments of their lives into a bigger whole, and part of such a process of unifying is that Dasein should be true to their heritage, because *"…being true to heritage is being true to your own, deepest self"* (Heidegger, 1927/62, p. 78). In this sense, authenticity is not something that is chosen *ex nihilo,* but rather, is a discovery that individual Dasein make as they explore the facticity of their culture and heritage, and is expressed in language so that other Dasein may perceive the individual truth that is offered.

Heidegger (1927/62) maintained that Dasein rarely use language to express their authentic Being, being more interested in the chatter of fitting in with others than in speaking of their truth or of the truths of others. On the point of Truth or truths[2] , Heidegger is clear that an individual's experience cannot be compared to that of another, and that only individual experience is valid. Language is a powerful tool for sharing an individual's truth of experience and beingness, provided that it is not reduced to ways of merely passing the time. Heidegger differentiates between *speech* and *idle talk*: speech presents ontological understandings of existence, whereas idle talk is just prattle about trivia.

In this section of the chapter, I have laid out some of the key ideas from Heidegger's (1927/62) philosophy of phenomenology that are relevant to explicating the phenomenon of

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[2] Here I seek to distinguish between the notion of a single, monolithic truth that is "out there" and the truths which every person holds as part of their authentic being.

the mindful leader leading *self*. In the next section, I will explore hermeneutics, which is a pivotal part of Heideggerian research.

Hermeneutics and Hans-Georg Gadamer

Munday (2009) defines hermeneutics as the method of interpretation: "…our investigation will show that the meaning of phenomenological description, as a method, lies in the interpretation" (p 18). Fundamentally, hermeneutics means interrogating texts and then explicating the emergent information so that new meanings can be entered upon. To practise hermeneutics is to go far beyond literal translations, and instead uncover connections and ideas that exist in texts but were not previously obvious. In terms of phenomenological research, hermeneutic practice "…makes beings openly manifest accessible for our seeing and having them in their expediency and inexpediency" (Heidegger 1923/99, p. 7). In terms of phenomenological research, hermeneutics presents and interprets Dasein to Dasein, showing the alienation that occurs through pre-occupation with the One, and thus offers Dasein the possibility of both self-understanding and change (Heidegger, 1927/62). Hermeneutics is an ongoing exploration of knowing:

> …in the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing. To be sure, we genuinely take hold of this possibility only when, in our interpretation, we have understood that our first, last and constant task is never to allow for fore-having, for-sight and for conception to be presented to by fancies and popular concepts, but rather to make scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures in terms of the thing themselves. (Heidegger, 1923/99, p. 195)

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900 - 2002), one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century, agreed with Heidegger that language and understanding are inextricably entwined. His book *Truth and Method* focuses on the idea that truth cannot be satisfactorily located or described by scientific methods. Thus, according to Gadamer (1975), the purpose of hermeneutics in the human sciences is not comparable to the role of research methods in the natural sciences. Hermeneutics investigates the nature of understanding, which transcends concepts of method, because truth cannot be defined by a particular technique or certain procedure of inquiry. Gadamer (1975) thought of hermeneutics as a methodology

that could allow researchers to find the truth that any given experience holds for any person, particularly by analysing language, which for him is the medium that holds and expresses the complexities of human experience and from which truth will emerge when the conditions for understanding of its meaning are realised.

Gadamer (1975) argues that the multi-layered intricacies of human thought cannot ever be fully captured, but that hermeneutic analysis of interactions, language, experience and art can be used to achieve understanding. For Gadamer, hermeneutic knowing derives from historical experience, which means that it is important to let the experience be itself and allow understanding to emerge through ongoing reflection in the hermeneutic circle of revision, enhancement and replacement (Heidegger, 1923/99). Gadamer (1975) argues that all understanding stems from understanding the *self* and so, in an imbricative process, Dasein draw on their understandings of *self* to interpret what is and in doing so, enhance their capacity to experience *self*. Self-understanding permits Dasein to anticipate, at least to some extent, what an experience might mean. In other words, they will have preconceptions and prejudgments that, on the one hand, may hinder a full understanding, but on the other hand, may assist. The better the understanding of *self,* the more likely it is that Dasein will determine what improves or hinders understanding.

Experience is historical, and history may assist the interpretation of experience. Equally, however, history may lead to prejudgments that mislead and confuse (Gadamer, 1975), which accounts for Gadamer's encouragement to recognise that experience is mutable and transitory. History should be questioned and re-presented in the present and projected into the future. This is particularly important in the process of interpreting experience. The interpretive hermeneutic circle is a process in which prejudgments should be abandoned play, in the form of thinking and reflecting, should be encouraged. During play of this kind, both interpreter and participants are in motion towards gaining better understanding of the phenomenon under enquiry.

Phenomenology and Mindfulness

Both phenomenology and mindfulness propose ways to understand Being. Although they approach Being differently, they do hold some ground in common. For instance, the Buddha

explored what is in order to understand suffering and how to overcome it, while phenomenology enquires into experience so as to obtain understanding of existence. Both ask about the ontology of Being. Both, at the most aspirational level, seek insight into authentic living and how to exist with a mind open to the possibilities of each individual's existence.

To further develop my argument that there are commonalities between mindfulness and phenomenology, mindfulness encourages people to live in the moment and enter the fullness of life. Heidegger (1927/62) seeks to find the meaning of being-in-the-world that is embedded in experiences and perceptions. The fundamental aims of both philosophies resonate with one another, therefore, in that both encourage people to connect with and explore existence. Mindfulness offers mechanisms for becoming aware of experience in the moment of occurrence, whereas phenomenology provides a deeply cerebral explanation of Being, but both mindfulness and phenomenology focus on experience and allowing the meaning of *being-here-now* to emerge.

The commonalities that I have sketched here have also been considered by Khong (2013), who shows that Heidegger (1927/62) conceived Dasein to be a movement in Being, temporarily but actively in-the-world. The impermanence of Dasein connects with Buddha's teaching on life as a state of constant change through evolution and transformation. The meditative practices in mindfulness encourage awareness of the changes and movements. Some of Heidegger's later work comes even closer to certain ideas within mindfulness, and Khong (2013) maintains that Heidegger began to explore meditative thinking and the release of any form of attachment to "specific ideas or a certain way of understanding things" (p. 236). Thus, as well as accepting the value of meditative action, Heidegger (1959/66) appears to have reached the point of *"letting-be"* (p. 61): that is, letting things in the world unfold naturally and allowing possibilities to emerge. Letting-be in phenomenology correlates strongly to mindfulness practice (Kabat-Zinn, 1998; Langer, 2000).

Both mindfulness and phenomenology are fields in which there is a plethora of books and a jungle of influences to navigate. Faced with this overwhelming array, I chose to limit rather than expand the sources I used to design my study of mindful leaders leading *self*. My main influences in putting this research together have, therefore, been Heidegger (1927/62),

Krishnamurti (1991) and Gadamer (1975). I selected Heidegger because I feel a deep connection to, and fascination with, his perspective on finding the meaning of life, and his writing has had an enormous influence on my awareness of existence. My other two major inspirations, Krishnamurti (1992) and Gadamer (1975), are both philosophical teachers with a deep awareness of *self* and existence. Their teachings have been pivotal in my becoming my own teacher through an awareness of being and my participation in my world.

There are similarities with all three influences in the sense that they all teach the importance of searching for the meaning of existence. I concur with Gadamer (1975, pp. 102--3) when he says that Dasein "loses himself in the play". By becoming more mindful and aware of my existence, I am not only able to lose myself in the play, I *am* the play. My personal journey in getting to know the teachings of these individuals have certainly given me a sense of meaning about my purpose for existing, by allowing me the insight that all human beings need to find a path of authentic living. My personal perceptions into the essence of existence in the simple form of being-in-the-world will, most likely, have a major influence on my interpretation of the world of the mindful leaders.

In summary, I see my own mindfulness in being *awake to and aware of what is* as a tool in phenomenological investigation. Mindfulness has taught me how to investigate experience through meditative practice, letting-be and by allowing possibilities to emerge in the ongoing contemplation of the hermeneutical circle by leading *Self*.

The Self, and leading the Self

"Knowing others is wisdom. Knowing the self is enlightenment. Mastering others requires force. Mastering the self requires strength" – Lao Tzu

According to Heidegger (1927/62), the *self* is Dasein, the essence of the experience of being in the world. According to Baumeister and Bushman (2011), the *self* is composed of multiple layers of self-awareness, self-esteem, self-knowledge and self-perception. Krishnamurti (1982) describes the *self* as

> …the idea, the memory, the conclusion, the experience, the various forms of nameable and unnameable intentions, the conscious endeavour to be or not to be, the

accumulated memory of the unconscious, the racial, the group, the individual, the clan, and the whole of it all, whether it is projected outwardly in action, or projected spiritually as virtue; the striving after all this is the self. (p. 52)

Sedikides and Spencer (2007) argue that the sense of *self* that motivates the search for belonging underpins the formation of human identity. The ideas of *self* put forward by Roy and Bushman (2011), Sedikides and Spence (2007) and Krishnamurti (1982) are not incompatible with Heidegger's (1927/62) concept of *self* as the essence and experience of being-in-the-world, and it is in that sense that *self* is used in this research.

Plato asserted that the human soul is always in motion (Escudero, 2013). According to Escudero (2013) the movement of the soul depends on how people live: whether they absorb, are victims to personal passions, are spiritually dependent on unspiritual commodities, and so forth. Being fully aware of *self* allows movement of the soul in a positive direction, which in Heideggerian (1927/62) terms, is 'projection'. Projection lets the *self* adjust the internal to external circumstances, enabling a move into a more resourceful state of being. Focusing on *self* does not imply narcissistic behaviour, but rather, being aware of the evil – and the good, of course -- in both the personal and the wider world (Escudero, 2013). Cognisance of evil permits it to be addressed in one of two ways Heidegger (1995): either by falling back into inauthentic living, or by embracing authenticity. Heidegger puts it this way:

…self-concern is precisely the most difficult, taking oneself to be less and less important by engaging oneself all the more; posting to oneself precisely an "objectivity" in the face of which that of the generality is mere playfulness, a convenient getting-done of the things themselves and the beings and their connections. (p. 241)

What Heidegger is talking about here seems on the surface to be oxymoronic: that by attending to oneself closely, one can become less important. Perhaps the better thought here, especially in connection with leading people, might be "to become less central". Leaders who attend to their own reactions from moment to moment might well be in a strong position to let go of their own (possibly base) reactions, and out of their care and concern, project into a positive state of being to help those whom they lead. This attention to

self is, paradoxically, a requirement for letting go of the *self*, because it is the beginning of self-knowledge and the foundation of being able to enter the play with others. Ultimately, letting go is also about leading *self*.

In general, the literature on self-leadership focuses on the cognitive experience of *self*, (Weisberg, 2006), but this research focuses on driving beyond the cognitive notions of *self* into the *experience* of being a mindful leader leading *self*. Heidegger (1927/62) shows that Dasein can become distant from *self*: he holds the view that most humans are more distant from themselves than connected to it. Heidegger (1927/62) talks about *being-alert* as way that Dasein can come back to knowledge of *self*, and depending on their sense of responsibility to and care for the world, will choose authenticity or inauthenticity as the basis of their leading. Neck and Houghton (2006) strengthen Heidegger's discussion of this point with their own: they suggest that leading the *self* depends on a capacity for the kind of self-observation that increases awareness of behaviour needs to be changed. Finally, Manz's (1986) description of leading *self* as the ability to find motivating meaningfulness in everyday experience is a useful one for this project.

Why Heideggerian Phenomenology as the preferred methodology?

The final section of Part 1 will outline my reasons for choosing to use the Heideggerian hermeneutical phenomenological approach. Hermeneutical phenomenology has the potential to disclose the covered up meaning of mindful leaders' lived experience. My enquiry takes me into the meaning of mindfulness for these leaders and its profoundness for their everyday experience. I expect this exploration to happen, not in thrownness, but in projection: I hope to achieve openness and the full involvement of my participants in the conversations that will be the basis of my data gathering. Furthermore, I trust that they will join me in the interpretive circle of revision, enhancement and replacement that may lead not only to my insights for this doctoral thesis, but also to their own new understandings of *self*. Certainly, their stories will need continuous reflection so that the meanings can be fully realised.

On a personal level, my discovery of a phenomenological approach to research was important because it fitted perfectly with my understanding of how to capture the

experience of being human. The methodology gives space to reflect on and be deeply involved with the phenomenon in question, and in preparing to undertake this study into mindful leaders leading *self,* I came to believe that being fully immersed in the captured experiences of another human would allow insight to emerge. In this context, 'insight' means the capturing the complexity of being from a number of different perspectives, or, as Lewis (1934) describes it, the quality that penetrates the essence of a being or happening. He explains insight as an internal experience that requires *"…seeing with the eyes of the mind, having inner vision and discernment"* (p. 333).

Another reason for employing Heideggerian phenomenology for this project is that I believe that being-in-the-world is enriched by mindfulness, which encourages reflection and active attention to everyday experience. Heidegger's approach mandates reflection on being part of this world with a holistic view of the past, present and future. Thus, Heideggerian phenomenology will allow me to 'play' with the participants in interpreting their mindful leading of *self,* by exploring and questioning, not only the words they share, but also other texts, such as photos or poems. According to Gadamer (1975), playing motivates Dasein to open up to what is possible, and it is my hope for this research that hermeneutical phenomenology will allow richly themes emerge from the stories of personal experience.

This research enquires into mindful leaders leading *self.* Its focus is therefore on an abstract phenomenon: the internal lives of the participants. The ability of the researcher to fully participate in the participants' experience is pivotal to the success of such research, and in deepening my knowledge of the work of Heidegger (1927/62) and Gadamer (1975), I have recognised strong connections with mindfulness, making hermeneutical phenomenology a strongly relevant foundation for my study. As I showed in chapters 2 and 3, although mindfulness has been thoroughly surveyed, comparatively little research has been done on the phenomenon of mindful leaders leading *self.* Heidegger (1927/62) argues that it is uncommon but not impossible for Dasein to possess a deep recognition of authentic existence. This may be a significant point for leaders who practise mindfulness, because they may have already projected themselves towards authentic existence by being *awake to and aware of what is*. Whether or not the leaders live authentically or inauthentically will be determined by the language the mindful leaders use to express the meaning that mindfulness has for them in their being-in-the-world. I cannot help but anticipate that the

mindful leaders will use authentic language to tell their stories of mindfulness, rather than seeking to engage me in mere chatter. In other words, it is my hope that the stories they tell me will be about the meaning of their existence.

Heidegger's (1927/62) concept of care is also relevant to this study into the experience of mindful leaders leading *self*. It is true that the care that typifies Dasein may be inauthentic, and for people in leadership positions, to exhibit domineering care would be damaging. The mindful leaders may be oriented towards offering authentic care to their followers, reaching forward to them in ways that repair damage and construct positive futures. Either way, the nature of leading is that it is marked by *thrownness.* Reactions to the exigencies of thrownness may be mitigated and changed for these leaders by entering their mindful space.

The purpose of Part 1 was to explore the methodological approach that underpins this study. Early in the chapter, I set out the basic principles of phenomenology, beginning with a brief history and a short discussion of van Manen's five key components. I then went on to explicate some of Heidegger's (1927/62) key concepts, and continued from there into a short discourse into Gadamer's (1975) sense of the place of hermeneutics in phenomenological research. Finally, I explored some of the ways in which I believe mindfulness and phenomenology complement one another in this research. In short, this chapter has built the philosophical framework for the research. Part 2 of this chapter will give the details of how the research was operationalised.

Part 2 *Doing* the Research

"…there is no such thing as an empty word, only one that is worn out yet remains full" – Martin Heidegger

Fitting this research into the qualitative paradigm

According to Creswell and Clark (2007), the current literature on qualitative research fails to establish a firm definition of qualitative research because of an ever-expanding number of methods and philosophical beliefs. However, in broad terms, qualitative research will have at least some of the following characteristics: it will occur within a naturalistic setting and will set out to capture the perspectives of the participants; the researcher will be the instrument

for gathering the data and will have first-hand engagement with the participants; finding meaning will be central to the purpose of the research, and data will be handled respectfully, honouring its wholeness and complexity; the design of the research will emerge as the project develops; the data analysis will be inductive, and finally, the process of the research will be interactive and reflexive.

It is not difficult to match this study to Creswell and Clark's (2007) elements: I sought to understand the participants' experience of leading mindfully by engaging them in conversations about their practice, and I let the participants' voices speak in the stories they told. I treated the data holistically, allowing its inherent complexity and richness to shine through in the thesis. Furthermore, to satisfy my aim of understanding the experience of mindful leaders leading *self,* I chose to work with a very small number of participants, collecting deep, rich data, what Geertz (1973) refers to as *thick description*, and then take all the time I needed to concentrate minutely on my conversations with each leader in order to find the meaning of mindfulness for my participants. I engaged in a series of sustained conversations with my participants to gather the data I need to answer the research question, "*What is the experience of a mindful leader leading* self *in a professional environment?"*

For further corroboration that my research fits within the qualitative paradigm, I turn to Conger (1998), who explains that qualitative research is useful in exploring new fields of enquiry. I argued earlier that leaders are important in social life, and though the academy is full of theorising about *leadership* (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Bass, 1985; Greenleaf, 1977; Kuhnert & Lewis, 1977), comparatively little research has been done into leaders' daily practices. Even less research has so far drawn a connection between leaders' practice and mindfulness.

It is never the purpose of phenomenological research to form a theory that can be generalised across a population, but rather, to gain insight into the essence of a localised phenomenon, or, as van Manen (1984, p.12) puts it, "...to establish a renewed contact with original experience". "Contact with original experience" was the whole motivation of my research efforts, but sense that a phenomenological enquiry was correct for my topic

confirmed for me when I considered three questions from Richards and Morse (2007, pp. 29 -- 30):

> (a) is little known about the topic or are previous understandings inadequate; (b) is your aim to learn from the participants in a setting or process the way they experience it, the meanings they put on it, and how they interpret what they experience; and (c) is the purpose to understand the phenomena deeply and in detail?

These three questions, possibly more than any other material that I read, convinced me that my topic lent itself to a hermeneutical investigation, which, as Grondin (1994) shows, employs interpretation artfully in order to unpack and understand human experience. Phenomenological research, then, is the description and interpretation of the lived experiences (van Manen, 1990) of people who are immersed in the phenomenon in question (Grondin, 1994; Smyth, Ironside, Sims, Swenson & Spence, 2008).

Research process (1): the participants

I feared that finding participants for this study would be difficult, because the topic is so personal that many people would not necessarily relate to it or be prepared to participate. I therefore reached out into my personal network to recruit different people I had met, from time to time, who might, I thought, be open to the sorts of conversations I wanted to have, and I was able to establish contact with four leaders who met the criteria I had established for selecting my participants. I wanted my participants to:

1. currently be leaders responsible for staff and/or working closely with other leaders; *this to show an ongoing experience either leading staff or working with leaders on larger projects;*

2. have had at least 5-10 years of experience as a senior leader; this *to show an evolution of change in personal experience as a leader;*

3. practise mindfulness regularly in the form of meditation and/or daily reflection; *this to show a commitment and interest in the area of mindfulness, because some level of practice is pivotal to being a mindful leader;*

4. be willing to participate in three or four conversations lasting up to 1 hour per conversation.

Table 1 below summaries pertinent details about the four participants.

Participants	Current role	Leadership experience	Mindfulness practice
Ruth	Leading a small consultancy firm	They have all over 20 years of leadership experience in both smaller and larger organisations	Meditation, yoga, moving meditation , ongoing self-reflection
Fraser	Leading a small consultancy firm		Meditation and ongoing self-reflection
Steve	Leading a small consultancy firm		Meditation, shaman practice, martial arts, ongoing self-reflection
Tony	Leading a small firm (in the start-up phase)		Meditation and ongoing self-reflection

Table 1: The participants

Once I had gained approval for my research from the university's ethics committee (see Appendix 1 on page 203), I approached the selected participants directly to obtain their consent, providing them with basic information about the research (see Appendix 2 on page 204). This included an agreement on how to work together, the conversations and how they would unfold, how to establish safety in the research relationship, issues of privacy, risk and whom to contact at the university, should any difficulties occur. When they agreed, I set up the first interview and a schedule for the subsequent interviews.

Research process (2): data gathering

My approach to data gathering was rather more conversational than the word 'interview' suggests, not only because it was a pleasant way to interact with the participants, but also because conversation is an established method in hermeneutic phenomenology. Conversation seemed to allow the flow of communication to be guided by both me and the participants, while an interview, by contrast, feels as though the power resides in the interviewer. I was conscious that I needed to guard against what van Manen (1990, p. 66) calls "the temptation to let method rule the question". Thus, my role as researcher was first to ignite a conversation between myself and the participants (Creswell & Clark, 2007), and then to become a participant in the conversations myself.

I met each leader three times each over a period of three months, always in a place of their choosing. The leaders all held different preferences for the meeting venue, and I was pleased to adapt to their wishes, because van Manen (1984) maintains that the environment plays a

significant part in establishing a connection with participants. Two participants asked me to visit them at home, one met me in my workplace and one varied the meeting place. The point was the participants could choose a space in which they felt comfortable.

I had some pre-prepared questions, but in fact, I let the conversation flow and maintained attentive listening. The participants shared easily once rapport was established and we felt comfortable with each other. The conversations varied in length. The shortest was 15 minutes; the longest lasted 65 minutes, but regardless of length, all were what Heidegger (1927/62) called *speech* as opposed to *idle talk.* Each of the three conversations had a different focus. For instance, the first introduced me and the research, and although it was quite general, I did not discard it as merely an ice-breaker, because a phenomenological approach should account for all the gathered material and value it equally (van Manen, 1990). The first conversation was designed to open up the leaders' thoughts, feelings and memories in response a number of open-ended questions (Creswell & Clark, 2007) such as:

1. tell me about yourself and what do you currently do;

2. tell me about a time when you realised the importance of mindfulness;

3. what mindfulness practice have you incorporated into your life?

The second conversation came closer to the participants' life-stories, and was based on the following starters:

1. tell me your story;

2. tell me about the transition you experience when you move into a mindful space;

3. tell me about what being mindful means to you;

3. tell me about the impact mindfulness has had on you as an individual;

4. tell me about the impact mindfulness has had on you as a leader.

The third conversation was more tightly focused than the first two, and honed in (as much as any of the exchanges can be said to have 'honed') on the symbols the participants use to enter the mindful state, and the meanings the symbols hold for them in their self-leading. Heidegger (1927/62) says that the metaphors Dasein use encapsulate their interpretations of existence, making it essential, in a study such as this, to find not just the surface meaning of symbols, but also the deep meanings that underlay the intuitive language of the participants. The reason for exploring symbols in the third conversation was to take the research to a deeper psychological space in which the participants began to think about their mindfulness from a different, more creative perspective. The participants' discovery of the symbol that represents

mindfulness for them introduced a visual element into their practice, and discussion of the symbols moved the conversation into a deeper space, which underlined Heidegger's (1927/62) idea of delving below surface meanings. Therefore, the third conversations were deeply reflective for the participants, and were a valuable tool (van Manen, 1990) in finding the meanings of mindfulness for participants. An unexpected outcome of the research process was that all the participants mentioned that the conversations had given them insight into their own experience of being mindful leaders leading *self*.

Finally, a fourth conversation was organised with each participant when the first draft of their stories was completed. In this conversation, the participants considered their stories and related them to specific experiences. I did not record these meetings, choosing instead only to make notes, so as to preserve an informal atmosphere. This meeting was less about gathering more data and more about showing the leaders what they had said and what they thought about it after the event. If they had indicated at the fourth meeting that they were unhappy with any part of what they have shared, I would have removed the material from the data set.

Research process (3): analysing the data

In the next section, I will show how I moved from engaging with the participants in conversations into interpreting the data. Heidegger (1927/62) refers to the idea of the gift of grace*,* or what Gadamer (1975, p. 317) calls "fusion of horizon", and indeed, *grace moments*, or moments of mutual understanding, were important to my understanding of the raw data.

When I analysed the data, I permitted myself to play. By this I mean that the process of analysis was not linear or deductive, but that it involved my own intuitive and creative responses to the cues in the recorded and transcribed conversations with the participants. In seeking grace moments, I listened again and again to recordings of every conversation, thinking about the intonations and nuances in the leaders' spoken words, remembering their facial expressions and body language and recalling their moods. The non-verbal communication was telling: the changes in their voices reminded me of such gestures as opening up arms, tapping the table, laughing, smiles and frowns. During this listening phase, I allowed myself to doodle and draw as I listened, and inspired by the sound of their voices, I used colour to note ideas or expressions that seemed significant. This process of deep listening not only built a strong familiarity with the content of the data set, but was also the

foundation of my understanding. By letting the *grace moments* happen unforced, I stayed true to the spirit of the data collection process, and did not fall into the trap of trying to articulate some "…generalised analysis of essence" that Smythe et al (2008, p. 1390) warn against.

Although the listening phase was repetitive, I did not find it remotely irksome or boring to be so immersed in the recorded data and I thoroughly enjoyed the creativity of using colours to represent each participant and making flow-charts to map the stories. When I reflected on this stage of the research, I found I had deepened my sense of connection with the participants, and had achieved, to some extent, what van Manen (1990, p. 32) calls "…the mindful wonder of life and living".

The conversations were transcribed by a professional typist. To start with, I thought of the transcriptions as merely fulfilling the university's requirements for making the data available to examiners, but I soon found that working with a typed version of the conversations added another, interesting dimension to my interpretation. For instance, reading – as opposed to listening – made it easier for me to track key words to their etymological sources, which is something that van Manen (1990) recommends to establish a deep understanding of the words that are especially purposeful in the data. The written forms of the conversations also gave me greater access to the participants' symbolic expressions, their metaphors and their use of language in talking about mindfulness.

I found that by immersing myself in the data in these two different ways, I was continuously deepening my commitment to, and understanding of, the stories that the mindful leaders had shared, and I was fortunate enough to have some real "Aha!" moments. Reading the transcripts felt simultaneously holistic and focused: I could 'map' the data in a way that allowed me to see common themes across the data set, and also hone in on specific words. Listening to the conversations took me back into the moment: the atmosphere of honesty and the sharing that seemed to take place without barriers. Together, the two methods unsealed several *grace moments* but these moments of insight derived not only from my involvement with the data, but also from the reading that I was doing at the same time. For example, I felt a deep connection Heidegger's (1927/62) notion of authenticity and his idea of *theyness (*p. 177) which made me connect deeper with the understanding on how we interact with ourselves and with others in a real and meaningful way.

In summary, the stories unfolded from these ongoing intuitive experiences on to paper by first listening to and reading the language in the transcripts, then locating key words and creatively using colors to represent my responses, feelings and the movement within the stories. This process produced a first draft of the stories, and the process was continued until a final version was completed and presented in this document.

Research process (4): writing up

As I saw the themes begin to take shape in the raw data, I wrote initial stories about the participants' experiences, and at this point, began to discuss my interpretations with my supervisor to gain her insight. Her concern was chiefly to ensure that I did not extrapolate meanings beyond what my data permitted. The writing up was iterative but never onerous: I was conscious of van Manen's (1990) assertion that presenting phenomenology is not simply 'writing up', but rather, writing, thinking and re-writing, so that the spoken language is incorporated into the explication of the phenomenon. Taking my 'first cut' of initial themes, I checked the transcripts again to extract any relevant data that had been missed, and incorporated the 'new' material.

The system I used for writing up led to the enrichment and development of the themes, and I feel that it was a genuine demonstration of the hermeneutical circle (Gadamer, 1975; Heidegger, 1927/62) of writing, reading, considering, seeking new information, and writing again. During the process, I played creatively, reading widely in biography and poetry, watching and pondering documentaries and writing my own poetry. The process took some months, but was important in honouring what the participants shared and ensuring that my interpretations were valid, for as Gadamer (1975) says, creative reading and seeing allows new meaning to enter phenomenological interpretation.

Trustworthiness: reflexivity, credibility, transferability & dependability.

Creswell and Clark (2007) argues that there is no consensus on how to ensure the trustworthiness of phenomenological research, yet, as (van Manen, 1984) maintains, the research process must be perceptibly reliable or the interpretation will not be accepted. Smyth et al (2008, p. 1396) state that "…the trustworthiness of a study is known first by engaging in everyday conversation with those who share the interest or who are living the

phenomenon". In other words, trustworthy research begins with an authentic interest in a phenomenon of significance to the researcher, but a genuine interest is not enough to guarantee that the research will be good. Koch (1999) asserts that this type of study needs to demonstrate reflexivity, credibility, transferability and dependability.

Reflexivity is a significant aspect of qualitative research because it determines the degree of researchers' intentional and unintentional presence in and influence on their studies (Jootun et al, 2009). Parahoo (2006) offers a useful discussion of reflexivity as a continuous focus on the effect of researchers' personal values, perceptions, ideas and behaviour, emphasising how important it is that researchers recognise their own place in the social context of the study and allow for their own presence in the process of interpretation (Jootun, McGhee & Marland, 2009; Malterud, 2001).

I have to declare that the interpretation I offer in this doctoral thesis began with my own experience of *being-in-the-world-of-others* (Heidegger, 1927/62). I cannot help but be awake and aware, because it is my reflection that has integrated the separate voices of my participants into the holistic view I offer of, of the phenomenon of mindful leaders leading *self*. I found it essential to share my own *fore-having* (Heidegger, 1927/62) and to draw on it to uncover the themes. In other words, though the process of the research deepened my understanding of the different facets of my investigation, I did not come to it cold: in fact, had I not been a leader and a practitioner of mindfulness myself, I might not even have been exercised by the phenomenon of the mindful leader leading *self*.

In terms of arguing the credibility of my study, I am drawn to Cutcliffe and McKenna (1999, p. 379) who state:

> ...perhaps the most useful indicator of the credibility of the findings produced is when the practitioners themselves and the readers of the theory view the study findings and regard them as meaningful and applicable in their terms of their experience.

Of course, it is challenging to evaluate at this stage how practitioners and readers will evaluate my findings, but I have been as faithful as I can be to the experience of the mindful leaders who participated in my research, and I have been clear about the steps and thinking that moved me towards my interpretation of the raw data. Furthermore, though the bulk of the interpretation recorded in this thesis is my original thought, I did send the participants regular updates on my sense-making, and offered them many opportunities to comment and

adjust my construal of their stories. Thus, I consider that my process and my findings are credible, and that I have demonstrated a transparency in relation to the project (Hammersely, 1992) that accounts for my presence as the researcher.

Transferability is the external applicability of a study (Malterud, 2001), because the purpose of research is to produce information that can be shared by others, both in the academy and in the wider population. In the case of this study, the transferability of the experience of mindful leaders leading *self* lies in the willingness of readers to connect with the stories shared in the thesis and to find truth in them. Malterud (2001, p. 485) says that "…no study, irrespective of the method used, can provide findings that are universally transferable". In relation to the transferability of this particular study, it is not possible to guarantee the receptiveness of readers to the profound effect of mindfulness. On the other hand, if the stories resonate with readers, a connection may be forged to the hermeneutical circle that encloses the experience mindful leaders leading *self*. I cannot, then, control for transferability: I can, however, ensure that the stories of experience are clear and my interpretation is valid, so that the possibility exists, as Koch and Harrington (1998) maintain should be the case, that readers will find some congruence with the research.

Dependability is a matter of showing how a research project was carried out so that others can decide that the findings are acceptable (Shenton, 2004). To assess dependability, others should be able to replicate the work, even though they would not necessarily obtain the same results (Shenton, 2004). Thus, explanations of the way the research was framed and implemented are essential to ensuring that others see the research as dependable. This chapter is especially important to establishing the dependability of my research. I have been at pains to show how I formulated and designed the research, how I shared the analysis with my participants, how I discussed my interpretation with my supervisors, and how I conscientiously accounted for my own researcher presence. The level of detail I have included makes it possible for anyone to copy my process and my topic if they wish.

Reflecting on the research experience

From the beginning, I always had a sense of the topic I wanted to examine in my research, and I started, as most doctoral students do, by reading as much as I could that related, even peripherally, to my topic. My own temperament required that I designed a research project that would unfold and come to fruition in a natural and authentic way. My intuition guided

me to Heidegger (1927/62) and I quickly became fascinated by his philosophy, finding it aligns with my own sense of being. I immediately felt a strong connection to undertaking phenomenological research.

Smyth et al. (2008) speak of being *in-the-midst* of the fluidity of the research situation, and I was comfortable with the fact that phenomenology does not operate with specified processes, but rather, "...embrace[s] Heidegger's understanding of Dasein as being-there, being-open, being-in-the-play, going with what comes, awaiting the moment of understanding" (Smyth et al, 2008, p. 1392). Being *in-the-midst* of my study has been significant for me, and has, I think, changed me. For a quite long period, my doctoral work became the main focus of my life: it was with me at all times. Relevant thoughts would strike me at odd times, and I learned to carry a notebook with me to jot down the ideas that came to me in meetings and in passing conversations, especially since, as Smyth et al (2008, p. 1394) explain, "...thinking always takes one on to the next question". (p. 1394).

I learned in the process of conducting the research that being part of the hermeneutical circle of interpretation was enriching (Gadamer, 1975) and changed me as a person, but sometimes I felt I was having a mild panic attack because something I had read or talked about made me feel that what I was trying to do was wrong. However, in my mindful being I always trusted that something would come my way that would help me through the difficulty, and I learned to think of the sense of panic as a gift that would move me on to the next question. I also learned to accept that the forward movement would not always take me in the same direction I had been travelling in before, and that this was simply part of the play, as Heidegger (1927/62) and Gadamer (1975) conceived the process.

I feel lucky to have undertaken this doctorate. For a long time, I wanted to do more research, and this study permitted me to extend and deepen my thinking about two phenomena I already cared about: leaders and mindfulness. I was fortunate that in discovering hermeneutical phenomenology (Gadamer, 1975; Heidegger, 1927/62), I found my way to a methodology that I find deeply satisfying. Smyth et al. (2008) remark that people who connect with phenomenology gain sense of ease as they carry out the research, because they like everything they do. This is exactly how I have felt: the journey brought a sense of ease. My joy in the research, therefore, kept me going through those days that were frustrating and tough. The research was a flow of trust that insights would occur and useful ideas would

appear. The research experience was intuitive, not mechanical, and as Cholle (2011, p. 1) says of intuition, it is

> a process that gives us the ability to know something directly without analytic reasoning, bridging the gap between the conscious and nonconscious parts of our mind, and also between instinct and reason.

I said before that the research changed me. I have learned to be open to what comes into my existence. For example, my thinking has been turned upside down by feedback from my supervisors or discussions with experts in phenomenology; by reading something that does not makes sense to me, or by discovering how the participants experience mindfulness. At the same time, I always had to make sure my personal prejudices did not obstruct receiving feedback from my supervisor and others. Thus, throughout the process I have been open to new ideas and thinking, but at the same time, I have been firm about holding to the philosophy of this type of study. It is as easy to be too open to suggestion as it is to be closed to advice and new ideas.

Finally, I have a hope for this research. The stories presented here are in the hermeneutical circle, which is accessible by anyone. I hope that others will reflect on and interpret the stories for themselves and make their own sense of mindfully leading *self*. What I mean by this is that each individual has their own experiences can draw on them to dig deeper into the meaning of life. I do not think that everything in this study will be cogent, but I hope that people will find one or two ideas that resonate with their individual experience, which may allow for further reflection and insight.

Part 2 of this chapter has outlined the methods by which I interpreted the conversations with the mindful leaders. Understanding the method of approach is pivotal to the interpretation that follows in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Introduction to interpretation

In the last chapter the purpose was to describe the framework of this study, the methods used and how the data were interpreted and created into stories. As mentioned in the previous chapters, doing phenomenological research from a Heideggerian perspective means that my involvement as a researcher will have a significant impact on how the data will be interpreted, and it is therefore important to address issues of reflexivity. My personal involvement and pre-understanding of the phenomenon of being a mindful leader leading *self* have been described in Chapters 1, 2 3, and 4. I am fully aware of my influence and have tried to be open minded and true in dealing with the data. In this chapter I will explain the experience of my interactions with the participants and then explain how the stories will be developed and interpreted. The chapter will start with explicating the conversations with the participants, then will lead to the explanation of the next chapter and the commonalities that developed the themes that will be described in Chapters 7, 8 and 9.

The experience in conversations

I met with each participant three times each over a period of three months. I allowed the semi-structured conversations to just happen, letting the ideas and thinking come through, as I will now explain.

Conversation 1: Introduction

First, I spoke with each participant to get to know them and their experiences with mindfulness, what it meant for them and how they practised mindfulness. I started to explore how they integrated mindfulness into their personal lives and into their roles as leaders. This

phase of the data gathering was an introduction into who these leaders are, both personally and professionally, and really took the form of a rewarding conversational exploration. Knowing that I would meet with them again meant there was no feeling of pressure to get as much information as possible in a short period of time, and in fact the lack of time pressure allowed a flowing conversation that was in every case led by the participants. I encountered a real willingness from all four mindful leaders to participate in conversations. They willingly shared their stories of what mindfulness meant to them and how they moved into the space of mindfulness.

Conversation 2: The experience

In this second session the focus was on the participants' life stories and particular experiences they had had in leading mindfully. I found their honesty and frankness humbling, and was grateful for the deep, rich reflections they shared with me, and for the opportunity to delve deeper into points of particular significance.

Conversation 3: A symbolic focus

In the third and last conversation, we focused on gaining an insight into the symbolic aspects of their practice of mindfulness. This session started with confusion but led to depths of insight both for the participants and myself, and also gave the leaders the opportunity to think about what they gained from being part of the project. Again, I was moved and humbled to find that they all felt that they had been rewarded by taking part in the conversations in which they considered and shared how mindfulness had been integrated into their lives.

I asked each participant to think about the symbol they would use to represent mindfulness, and each could articulate it by the end of our conversation. Sometimes they knew it before we talked, but some also found it during our talk.

Ruth was not sure of her symbolic representation of mindfulness. We explored and discussed and she came up with an example of the importance of movement. Movement for Ruth represents realigning self *into the space of mindfulness when stuck in a less resourceful experience. I sensed her excitement in recognising the importance of movement in whatever she does, and that this really represents a place of calm for her. She recognised that she is in a mindful space while walking in nature, by walking around on stage while presenting, moving*

important meetings to the right spot in her schedule, removing clients who do not connect with the services that she provides through her business, and so forth. Movement for Ruth means a release of energy that allows for creativity and interpretation of her intuitive activities.

Fraser was also not sure if he had a symbolic representation of mindfulness, and therefore felt confused and hesitant in responding to the question. However, he recognised that he did use the symbol of elevation of being on the "balcony". This is a borrowed symbol that is used through a coaching approach. The balcony symbol means to elevate himself to see the full picture of what is happening in the moment, to get him back to what is important right here, right now. He elevates from his current experience, sometimes of chaos, to gain an overview of what is going on around him. This includes his own involvement in the event and his involvement with others. It has been evident in the conversations that I have had with him that moving on to the balcony has been repeated over and over again as a symbol to help him being to gain a full picture of the situation.

Steve was very clear about what symbolic representation of mindfulness is for him: calmness either in the desert or on the sea. Both represent a place of complete silence, representing the sense of nothing anywhere, which is transferred into the way he interacts with others and perceives chaos around him. This helps him find a space of peace, clarity of being and calm in moments that he needs it. In the conversation that we had about the symbols that represent mindfulness, it was evident that Steve has a clear concept of mindfulness and could readily articulate how he has integrated it into his life.

Tony experiences mindfulness through light and universal coherence, something that was repeated over and over throughout our conversations. For Tony, light represents his understanding of self *and the understanding that light goes through its own personal experience and cannot be thought by anyone else. It needs to be part of an individual's personal experience; it cannot be the same. Tony can sense it in his relationship with others, his intuitive living and his engagement with the world. Light and universal coherence gives him the space to be fully present in the moment. It is his purpose in what he does through his very creative thinking and innovative practices.*

The different conversations developed an understanding of mindful leaders leading *self.* The most significant realisation during this journey was the deepening of my connection with the participants and the intensity of being in a space of their attentive present. I found that each participant was fully attentive, authentic and passionate about the conversations, resulting in conversations that were holistic and powerful and produced high volume of material. The conversations reflected the principle of the hermeneutical spiral, which encourages conversations to grasp, inspect detail and dig into a deep understanding (van Manen, 1990), and one of the outcomes was the chance to contemplate the flow of moods during the data-gathering process. Awareness of mood is crucial to understanding Dasein existence (Heidegger, 1927/62).

Moods

Each participant showed different aspects of mood during the conversations and this was reflected in their responses and how they communicated, connected and shared during the conversations. The different moods set the tone of the conversations, and there was an unbroken sense of ease, seeking, openness, newness and flow -- even humour! – in the conversations. Furthermore, it was a deep sense of a knowing and understanding of mindfulness in the conversations, although sometimes there was also a level of uncertainty about the individual stories and questions asked. The different moods were not static but rather fluid and evident throughout the different conversations.

The different levels of mood indicated the level of connectedness within the mindful space. I found that it was rich and powerful to share the energy that emerged, and that being fully present in the conversations meant I could be part of their journeys: the opportunity to be on a "mood journey" together. The moment when Ruth discovered her symbol for mindfulness stand out in particular: her excitement was contagious, I felt that something profound had been discovered. Also, because of the participants' willingness to share, some of the conversations had an immense flow of passion that gave the impression that the room disappeared and the only thing left was this intense sharing and discovery between two individuals. I felt that I was experiencing the richness of mindfulness and meaningfulness, and as a researcher I am now even keener to take part in dialogue about life.

Body language

The body language of the participants was fascinatingly similar, and supported the impressions of openness and willingness that I gleaned from the words of the conversations. We sat at a table across from each other so that we had personal space but also connection, and situated ourselves in the room without formality or awkwardness. The arrangement felt natural and unplanned, and permitted intimate discussion. The table between us was not in any way a barrier, but simply a convenient place for the recording devices and for taking notes.

There was a sense of calm and this was evident in the participants' calm gestures. I noted that the participants looked upwards when they were visualising their experiences and down when they were re-living their experiences. There was lots of laughter and welcoming smiles that made me feel that I was accepted into their personal space, and they were relaxed enough to emphasise certain points by clapping on the table. Some instances of hesitation or confusion were marked by fidgeting, but we had both the space and the time to move the confusion into a space of understanding. The energy was flowing that gave a sense of "give and take", which again created a holistic experience in all the conversations.

Being in mindfulness

Connecting with the participants in the conversations was enriching and built an important platform for the research, because two mindful individuals came together to talk with neither trying to impress nor use power to make a statement. I believe this represents mindfulness in action: the conversation matched Heidegger's (1927/62) notion of moving beyond mere chatter into a real exchange of meaningful ideas. The conversations were powerful, not only because of the content of the sharing, but also because of the active, acute listening that took place that brought both parties to the sense of being *"...be awake to and aware of what is"*.

All in all, the process of data gathering held an intensity that derived from the depth and clarity of sharing that took place, and I think the vividness of the encounters was because two people were feeling the space of mindfulness together. There was an understanding and connection that linked with the purity of existence and not with suffering and pain. Listening

to the conversations and re-reading the transcripts allowed me to revisit the conversations holistically, and during the interpretation phase of the research, permitted me to reflect on the participants' stories over and over again through writing, reflection, reading and re-writing (van Manen, 1984).

Follow up conversations

What has been set out above describes the main effort in data-gathering, but I also organised an additional meeting to offer my analysis and interpretation back to the participants for their comment and critique. Obviously, I hoped that these meetings would confirm and validate my interpretations, especially of the key insight that they all felt that the process of the research had developed a new appreciation of being mindful in leading *self*. In fact, the fourth conversation did prove useful for just that purpose: they all mentioned that the conversations had allowed an opportunity to verbalise their convictions and particularly valued the chance to think about the symbol they used to move into the mindful state.

At this point, it is fair to say that my participants felt the research had changed them. Ruth, for instance, felt that recognising movement as her key had allowed her the full acceptance that mindfulness means different things for different people. Tony reported that he felt that his story reflected someone that he was not aware of, that although he was aware that mindfulness helped him, he had not previously been able to perceive it clearly. Overall they were all appreciative of the chance to share their insights about themselves and events that brought them to the practice of mindfulness. They all mentioned in the follow up conversation that they were still caught in negative participation sometimes, but they were now more conscious of moving into mindfulness when problems occurred. It seems to be a strong commonality that mindfulness lends meaning to leading *self* as leaders and that continuing discussions with others are important to keep the learning going.

I also noticed that there was a sense of ease and fluidity in the follow-up conversations the way they flowed seemed to recognise the deep connections that were forged during the research process. In this final conversation, the participants reviewed their stories provided feedback on how authentically the story reflected their experience. I was pleased that the

feedback on the stories was positive. A couple of them recommended some adjustments to the time line and minor misunderstandings. The adjustments were made.

The emerging themes

From the individual stories and the transcripts, three themes emerged: *taking hold of self*, *opening up to self in being a leader*, *moving forward authentically as a leader*. These themes express the perspective of the participants. I have tried write the themes in such a way that they holistically represent a truth about the participants' lives as mindful leaders. The validity of the themes is based on my own thoughtful interpretation of the stories and feedback and agreement from the participants. The themes are presented in Table 2 below.

Theme 1: Taking hold of *self*
Courage of being
Knowing-awareness
Authentic journey
Theme 2: Opening up to *self* in being a leader
Clarity and focus
Flow in experience
Being-with-one-another
Falling back to *theyness*
Theme 3: Moving forward authentically as a leader
Mood awareness
Emerging world of possibilities
Opening up to a creative existence
Meaningful existence

Table 2: Emerging themes

This chapter deepened the presentation of the conversations that constituted the data gathering and has also detailed the symbols the participants use to enter the mindful state. The next chapter presents the stories that the mindful leaders told.

Chapter 6

Symbolic stories - the mindful leader leading *self*

The previous chapter introduced the move into interpretation and finished with the themes that are common to each story. In this chapter, I will record and discuss the leaders' individual stories with a view to showing the phenomenon of the mindful leader leading *self*. It is my contention that the stories are personal, authentic and real. They represent real examples of individual experiences through writing and photos[3].

Story 1:   *The discovery of movement as a mindful connection*

Ruth

I am working with a client that is causing a lot of stress and concern for me and my team. I find myself working hard building the relationship to make sure that we can meet the expectations of the client. This is hard work and it challenged me, and it also has an impact on my team. I am finding it difficult to sleep as I am not sure of how I can work differently

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with the client. I have tried to do everything that I can to connect, to understand the issues, to come up with suggestions but to no gain. This has been going on for over a long period of time. I am fully aware of the impact this has on myself and I am allowing the practice of mindfulness to allow the space to reflect to gain clarity. I have realised that the best thing for me is to let go of the relationship and the insight of removing the appointments from my calendar have had such a positive and rewarding impact on myself and the team. The recognition of the 'poison' that this relationship has caused all of us is immense. The movement of the client had such a positive impact that shortly after we gained a customer who was positive about the services, open to suggestions and fully working with us as a team.

Ruth has a caring nature towards her clients and towards her staff and you can sense this when in conversation with her. There is passion and this is reflected in the way she communicates. Ruth is open and willing to share and participate in our conversations, so it is a delight spending time with her. I felt her willingness to share her stories about her experiences moving and being in the mindful state. There was a natural flow in our conversation. Ruth is straight to the point and goes to the core in our conversations, therefore the unpacking of her story is more straight-forward than maybe the other participants. The conversations were shorter but the data are rich and self-telling. The conversations showed the clarity that Ruth has experienced moving into the mindful space.

Mindfulness is movement for me, movement in nature to create rhythm that moves me. I experience the same type of rhythm when I am doing yoga and walking, and when I am in the room facilitating, the same rhythm happens. It is a sense of hypnotic movement that moves me. The recognition of what movement is for me has a sense of oldness, like an old knowingness, but it has just come to me. By recognising the need to move into a different space to find meaning, I took on the exploration of what mindfulness is and its effect. The searching for meaning had its complexity in being afraid of losing control, but I just had to do something. I think it was one thing that I knew that I wanted. I was not sure who I was, but I wanted more clarity around that so I could value me for me, instead of molding myself based on someone else's life. This has left me to realise the positive impact of being in a state of awareness in the moment. It has become a crucial part of my experience and I find myself consciously being in the space of awareness and I am reminded when I am not. The experience of existence has expanded and I find myself in a space of purity and richness.

In our conversation about mindfulness as a symbol, Ruth showed an intense recognition of the experience of movement and how this helped her realign herself to the experience of being in a mindful space. The intensity was represented in the tone of her voice and her eyes where lighting up with a sense of eagerness for understanding more. She was not aware of this and by having the conversation and being able to reflect on the immense connection she got excited, and I shared the excitement with her. This session lasted only 15 minutes but was probably the most pivotal part of our conversations.

I am a mindfulness practitioner in the sense of activating the mindful experience through walks in nature, through practice of yoga and, when it feels right, through meditation. Being in nature is what triggers the connection of everything that is and this has been a profound discovery on my journey of finding a place of safety. Some important routines are necessary in my practice to allow me to practise and integrate them into my experience more easily. The experience of being in the moment provides me the sense of a bigger experience of what is going on by being able to engage fully in what is going on right now. I am aware when I am not mindful, which triggers me to be mindful. I realise that I am not in the flow and other times I know I am in the mindful space. When I am not in that space I notice my thinking being narrow, and I am feeling anxious about something. I am being emotionally triggered by the feeling that my thinking is not at ease. In these cases, I pull myself right out and I need to look at things differently, and that in itself is a trigger to see things differently, to be open to a wider sense of thinking and noticing. These actions lead me to experience clarity in my thinking. The feelings I experience are a sort of openness, a sense of freedom with no boundaries and limitations. The purpose becomes about the possibilities that present themselves. The experience of being in the mindful space is about trust. I do not experience the noise that I used to and I am able to let go of things. I am feeling a lot more sensitive to being here in this moment. Mindfulness allows me to be a better me interacting with people, to make better decisions and to go through by being more aware of everything that is going on.

I have known Ruth for a while through the coaching industry and have had her as my trainer when completing my coaching certificate. What I have found amazing in having the opportunity to connect with her in these conversations is the opening of beingness that has occurred. The fact that I have had some level of relationship with her previously did not affect

my ability to be fully present in what was happening in our conversations, as I was there to truly listen to what she had to share about her experience with mindfulness as a leader. I experience the close connection she has with self and the recognition of the profoundness of being. She is truly leading self in her approach to the world. She shows bravery and willingness to change, and it is a sense of a humble existence where she is able to be true to her own experience. This, in my experience, is recognised through the profound connection between two people with a strong curiosity of who we are as beings.

My upbringing was safe but protective with values that not necessarily met my own, and this led to some interruption of rebellious behaviour in my teens. I recovered when I started university where I recognised my desire to do well and be successful in business. I did exactly that; I did very well and had a very good career with ongoing competition and focus on achievements. I was seeking a sense of belonging by being respected as a successful professional. I wanted to be seen. I was not too concerned about others. I wanted to be seen as being busy and important. It was when I experienced the loss of my sister and mother in close proximity and my marriage ended I realised the importance of moving into a different direction. I had just arrived in New Zealand from South Africa and started my own business in coaching to help others to discover their purpose and journeys. I felt empty and lonely and had lost my biggest "fan club" in my sister and mother. On a deeper level I experienced a knowing that there was more to life that led me to attend psychotherapy sessions to help me in discovering who I am. I realised that I do not need to operate in an unsustainable and unhealthy state, I could move forward by being clear about what I wanted to do.

In my conversation with Ruth I could sense the challenges that Ruth experienced when she was sharing about her upbringing. Even though parts of it were positive and she was successful, there was an underpinning pain in her story. She was brave to actually do something about it through taking responsibility and accepting the internal guidance of moving into a space of letting go and to open up to something more resourceful in her experience. Again she is showing the ability of leading self through awareness of what is.

The recognition of my "stuckness" led me into the space of mindfulness by doing yoga and also attending silent retreats. This was life-changing for me and I started to experience a sense of a bigger experience and a sense of being wide open to something deep and pivotal.

For me personally, it was an experience of a significant shift in the experience of being. The changes for me through attending the silent retreat were from having a very busy mind to becoming reflective in my experience. When I arrived at the retreat I was driving myself crazy: my thoughts were busy and as I could not write anything down, as part of the programme, it was frustrating as I was trying to keep my mind busy. I was worried about what would happen if my mind was empty. On the sixth day out of ten days I just felt so incredibly at peace and I realised that the world would continue as normal, I realised: "…there is nothing I ought to do, there is nothing I need to do and nothing disastrous is going to happen, it is actually okay". After this experience I found myself go into this space knowing that "…what is going to happen is going to happen". What kept me going for the six days to get over the challenging time was pure persistence. I am continuing to go to shorter retreats as they really help me to be real. I do not believe that mindfulness is a particular way, but I do believe that I have found a way that works for me on an individual level, and it is important to me to be real about the experience.

This is a pivotal time for Ruth of letting go of strong beliefs, values and identity and I sensed the internal challenges she experienced but also the relief of letting go. She moved into a bigger space of existing with a bigger sense of self and the possibilities that are presenting themselves to her. In referring to "bigger" I mean the opening to what is beyond the limitation of thoughts and our senses. I believe Ruth is connecting with the profoundness of being and it has given her the opportunity to connect deeper with herself and the world she is living in.

In my experience as a leader I am a big picture thinker and my experience of moving into the mindful space has made me aware of the importance of connecting and reflecting on my present moment experiences. This allows me to see things from different perspectives, and I am able to connect the pieces of my business puzzle more reflectively. I have recognised the importance of seeing the world from different perspectives both from other individuals' perspectives and my own internal perspectives. I experience being more open with others in a way of no judgment. It is a sense of safety of being with others. I am able to slow down to be there with the other(s). I am able to take the time to respond to the situation. I am not reacting as I did in the past, I am aware of the bigger picture. There has been a recognition that it is a wider experience and that the experience is not set or permanent, it is fluid. This has provided me the opportunity of seeing things more clearly with a focus through trusting

my intuition. I am more open with others. It is no longer all about me and my perspective. I am open to hearing and listening to what others have to say. Even if I have another opinion I can put it aside. I know when it is time for me to listen. It has changed my perspective and how my life is unfolding, instead of jumping to conclusions I actually do pause and slow down or stop myself.

My intuition is a guiding source that has been released from the grip of my ego mind. I am still feeling the pressure of getting things done, for example I can be focusing on the wrong type of work because it is easy, for example checking emails, and it is taking less energy so it is easy to get involved with that. The difference now is that I am more aware and can switch to become more focused to get something that needs to be done through willpower and conscious thinking that goes against my habits. Trust drives me to deal with issues and concerns through the experience of movement. I experience the importance of movement to allow for other possibilities to emerge. This by physical movement in speaking to people on stage or making simple movements in my schedule to allow for other appointments to emerge (as described in the story above). I experience the importance of taking the right actions to enable things to happen. I know I am the only one that can actually make it happen. One thing that I have learned is when something starts to feel difficult it is probably not the right time to be doing it. So when a thing starts to be too pushing, I stop doing it. I experience a sense of responsibility for my own actions in moving forward and seeing things happen naturally and organically. In the process of making decisions I am now able to tap into a wider sense of expression by being open to more sensitive issues that can be challenging and difficult to deal with when stuck in a certain way of doing things. I am able to consider the bigger picture of a situation as I am more aware of my gut feeling and how to deal with the issues at hand. The difference in the experience is that I am noticing more and I align with what is going to enable the situation to move forward. I am in other words able to pick up more about the information being shared and delivered to come up with a strategy on how to deal with it or move it forward.

In our conversation I could sense the ease that mindfulness has brought to Ruth's experience of being a professional, the openness to letting things happen rather than having to control every part of her everyday life. She still experiences the challenges of running her business and the impact of others opinions and the influence that they have on her. She finds herself caught

in the suffering and the pain this can bring. I could sense this when talking about some of the stories but the change of perception lies in how she is now more aware of what this is doing to her and that it is possible to change it, through leading self. She knows that she does not have to believe in what the thoughts are telling her as she is more flexible.

I find myself in a position of enabling all senses in movements of responding to challenging experiences. I have discovered the importance of connecting with self when in a difficult situation that can easily remove all confidence and belief that take me off my path of discovery. I find myself less attached to others and this has given me space to deal with issues with a more open and clear mind. I am able to distance myself from the situation and to see a fuller picture of what is actually happening. I am more aware of my own reactions in the experience that I find myself in and adjust accordingly if necessary. This has given me a less sense of dependency on others to be a good leader and business owner. I find myself connecting in a more favourable manner with clients and staff. I am able to tap into a wider sense of the experience of being. Mindfulness grounds me and guides me in the direction of my purpose in life. I am more sensitive to what is around me and also of any internal turmoil and conflicts. Through my mindfulness practice I am given the opportunity to reflect and discover my experience as it truly is. I am trusting in the nature and I am able to learn from others. I have experienced a shift from being self-focused to be other-focused from a genuine and authentic place. It is not about me, it is about the full picture of what is happening in the moment and finding the best way to explore all possibilities.

The changes in her are evident in our conversations. I sense the truthfulness of her story and the changes that she is experiencing. There is still pain and suffering, and she has no difficulty admitting this as it has become a part of her existence – it comes and it goes. The ease of sharing, as part of these conversations, has given her the flexibility of being who she truly is. Having these conversations have allowed for deep reflection and putting the experience into the context of being a mindful leader. Ruth shared that this has given her the opportunity to open up further to be truly who she is; it has been an important step in her journey.

I am experiencing the fulfilment of moving into the space and the benefits it has on me personally and as a leader. I am surprised at how easy it was to move into the space of mindfulness and how it actually becomes my experience of being. In my world mindfulness is

not something you do: it is something you become and when you have moved into this space it is difficult to change that perspective of being as it creates a sense of meaning and purpose. The experience is now, moment to moment, focused, rather than the experience of being "stuck" in the past or worrying about the future. I know that I am not fully there yet and that I still have a lot to explore and experience. I do however find it motivating and exciting to find out who I truly am and I am embracing every moment.

Story 2:   *Elevation being here right now*

Fraser

I am a leadership consultant and I work closely with senior leaders to guide and help them into a more productive and resourceful space. I work with senior executives in New Zealand. I experience a close encounter with my clients and I am seen as a trusted partner. The conversations are often very personal and intimate at times. For example, just recently I met with one of my clients and started the conversation as a business conversation that led into a very personal and emotional confession that caused a lot of pain and tears for the client. In my reflective state of being I was able to be there with this client. I found myself having the capacity to fully engage with the client with a high level of compassion and care as I personally was operating in a mindful and resourceful place. I was not attached to the conversation. I experienced that my capacity of being fully present was enhanced through the reflection/meditation that I practise in the mornings. I was able to provide clarity and reflection with my client; I found myself fully engaged. The client was extremely thankful.

Fraser and I connected instantly with the help of his openness and wonderful sense of humour. We already had a good rapport from previous meetings and work that he has done for me on a consultancy basis. He is willing to share his story from an open and honest point of view. It is fascinating and rich to participate in his experience as so much has helped in becoming who he is today: a mindful leader with a strong awareness of self. Fraser is genuine and real in his response, and with our strong connection, the conversations flow with ease. I find myself very curious and interested in his story and his heightening sense of a mindful state of being during the conversations.

As a leader I find myself using my symbolic understanding of mindfulness of the "elevation up on the balcony" to experience the full picture. I am able to distance myself from the situation to experience the sense of the movement. I am practical with my experience of mindfulness. I find it to be useful in seeing the full picture in situations when help is needed. I personally fully embrace the importance of being fully present with people that I work with to give them what they deserve and need in the moments. I am a mindfulness practitioner through reflection and awareness of the moment experiences. I have recognised the importance of finding my own path that works for my experience. I have discovered that time in the morning through exercise and silent moments in the sauna are what provide me the full opportunity to reflect on the moment. I exercise meditation through listening and focusing on my breathing, as this gives me space to connect with self and the day. I find that reflection and meditation quiet me down from being occupied in the busyness of thoughts. I experience that meditation is not always a conscious decision but something that the unconsciousness is guiding me to do – it just happens. Meditation in a traditional sense is not for me. I generally try, after my gym workout, to go into the steam room because it is usually empty in the morning. This is a good time for me to actually just say right now "…focus on what is in this moment". I will focus on my breathing to clear my mind and to actually quieten things down and this works really well for me. It really sets me up for the day because I know even though I have a really stressful big day coming up I am confident that everything is going to be okay. I have physically and mentally set myself up for the day. I am in a good space. This practice is however, not about a conscious process. I am not preparing for the day by thinking about the steps and actions that I am going to take, so I am not preparing for the day but in a funny way I am. So what I do is I will just sit there, get comfortable and then just focus on my breathing.

My mind does slow down. Because initially there are lots of things on my mind and I always battled with that, but the calmness does happen and the more I focus on the breathing the calmer I get. I am always aware of the calmness when I walk into the day and things feel so much easier and calmer, it is almost like resetting my capacity to cope. So as a result when I get to the client or wherever it might be and I get involved in facilitating or being in conversation whatever it might be the capacity part of my mind has been emptied. I am so much more capable of being and holding stuff for people. My capacity to cope is enhanced and therefore I can help people, I feel a lot more effective.

I found Fraser to be able to describe the details of his experience of what mindfulness is for him with ease. It has become a natural state for him and even though he might think he is not as traditional in his practice, he has found a way and routine that suits him in his existence. The idea of elevation as a symbolic meaning of mindfulness to him helps him in his daily routines to connect with the mindful experience. This is something he refers to over and over in our conversations. It is strongly embedded in his being and it helps him in his existence. I can sense how this helps him in how he presents it and the non-verbal actions when he refers to the importance of being able to elevate away from situations. In having the ability to elevate himself from what is going on in his thinking and behaviour he can distract himself from the issues at hand to be more clear in his own interaction with himself and others. He is able to lead self through his sense of being elevated.

I find myself regularly stopping to take stock to fully experience my mental and physical space in the moment. I have recognised the importance of being present and engaged to actively listen to people that I engage myself with. The biggest challenge that I am constantly having is to facilitate people's reflection around the busyness and being able to actually just focus on the right stuff at the right time. I guess in finding a safe space to make the right decisions when significant pressure and demands on time. The way I help them is through reflection and getting them to reflect on what their priorities are and what they need to be focussing on. And I use the simple question: "…what is the best use of your time right now?" This really gets them to actually stop and reflect and actually step up onto the balcony and recalibrate their situation. This is also the approach that I use in my own practice as a mindful leader, as for me mindfulness is actually just stopping and intentionally taking stock and focussing on the right here, right now. The term that I use is going out onto the balcony to be elevated

from the issues and stuckness on the ground. The balcony perspective for me is about actually stopping and going out onto the balcony to get a full perspective. What this is for me is about stepping up and out away from the dance floor. I am stepping away from my emotions and the heat and the pressure and the distortion of perspective. And it gives me that bigger picture. So for me the process of consciously stopping and stepping up and out and away is a mindful practice to elevate me to see things differently. Furthermore, it is a coping mechanism to try to eliminate some of the noise and the clutter that I am experiencing in that moment.

Fraser's repeated use of this symbolic experience is significant and it has had an impact on how I see things, as mentioned earlier. I can understand the importance of the experience and how this helps him. It gives clarity to his work with others and in his own life, which is a gift in his existence.

My experience with mindfulness has helped me in relating to people on different levels. It has given me a perspective of the bigger picture of the experience. I find myself having the ability to focus more and take smaller pieces of a big piece of work. It gives me focus and flow to complete what I need to complete, instead of getting frustrated and disengaged if no progress is made. Mindfulness has allowed me to become more spontaneous in the moment through following my intuition and guidance of what to do next. This ability to make things happen has increased dramatically as being able to "step up onto the balcony" to find out what really matters in this moment. I am still feeling a sense of frustration and not able to focus, and that in some cases difficult (and important) relationships can be overwhelming and very challenging. I am finding myself waking up in the middle of the night stressing about things that need to be done. The difference now is that I recognise the experience and through mindfulness practice gain a moment of reflection and re-alignment into what matters.

I can sense in our conversation that Fraser is still feeling frustration and at times challenges to deal with everyday issues, which has an impact on him. This is evident in how he sometimes refers to issues in his life, which can come across, at some level, very negativity towards how he perceives himself. He is still feeling a sense of "stuckness" and is not necessarily sure on how he can move out of the situation. However, there is a sense of a "light in the tunnel" as

he is 100% willing and open to find out ways to connect on a deeper level. What amazed me with Fraser is his strong curiosity of finding out more about his existence. He shows a clear sense of being in a state of leading self through a deep sense of awareness.

The experience of practice through elevating up onto the balcony provides me the full picture of what is going on and what is important and through focusing on my breathing am able to reconnect with self and experience a sense of calmness and ease. I am able to stop and let go of disruptive thoughts that are destructive, to make sure, for example, that I get a good night's sleep and prepare for the following day. My mind is racing off, I am getting distracted or I am feeling a physical sense of growing tension or pressure and I am thinking "…oh no what is this all about". For me one of the big drivers is the privilege to be able to work with some amazing people. I feel they deserve my full attention and I am responsible for making this happen. I need to be in a space that I can give them the 50 minutes or whatever it might be, I am here with them. It is important that I reflect and let things go or put them aside for me to deal with later "…because right now I need to be here and now". This also relates to my planning for work for my business as through mindfulness I have realised the importance of planning and being organised. Mindfulness has almost seeded a more planful practice in the day. I need more structure in how I organise my ideas and practice. Having a plan and structure in place makes me less anxious about this open enededness. I feel I have a handle of the situation. This helps in lessening the pressure when I have deadlines for proposals and projects.

Without a plan there is a danger that I spend a vast amount of time on something that actually does not really matter. Being mindful of my plan brings this bigger picture that allows me to focus on smaller pieces of the bigger picture. I am able to trust the process and that I will get the work done before the deadline. I gain a sense of focus and clarity of what I need to do and that is what brings peace into the experience. I use intuition and my intuitive sense a lot when it comes to decision making. It is very difficult in a business sense to be able to justify these decisions to others. I will often have a sense and then end up having to scramble to find a logical reason for my decision. This is frustrating to me. I mean I have been encouraging people to say what their inner voice is saying, what is the still small voice saying and if they cannot hear it, go away and think about it and just reflect and listen to it. I believe that I know and I find for myself being present and actually just quieten things down. I

actually do get a sense and I do start to get that still small voice becoming not so still and not so small. My intuition is telling me something that is worth listening to, therefore I trust in my intuition when making plans and decisions. The mindful practice allows me to connect with this internal space.

One of the key changes that mindfulness has done for Fraser is the ability to focus and being here right now in his conversations with clients and also while planning and making things happen for him. The focus brings him back to the bigger picture and ensures he moves forward, in leading self through awareness of what is happening in his existence. This focus is a meditative place for Fraser to allow for growth and development. This was a key message in our conversations and was repeated throughout our meetings. Fraser repeats this experience in the next section, in how he has move to amore mindful space from a day to day perspective as a self-leader.

Mindfulness for me is a sense of relief from trying to be something I am not. It allows me to move into a space of being true to myself and others through the right intentions. Mindfulness is really critical to me and the more I practise it, and the more I use it, the more I sort of need it so it has become part of my experience. I am aware when I have actually been flat out and a "chicken without a head" for too long. I actually just need to get some time, need to stop and get off and actually go and find a quiet place to refuel as I just do not have the capacity to participate. I am an introvert and so my energy comes from reflection and from an internal place, so I can get peopled out if I am all day, every day, with people I just get completely, completely, completely drained. Therefore, being able to step away and go away, so that it is a physical removal as opposed to just an intellectual one or mental one, is a really important part of my existence. I suppose this is why my gym session and spending time in the steam room is really important to me. I can go in and I do not have to see anyone. I can actually not see them. I can just re-energise and refuel and my capacity increases. So how important is mindfulness to me? It is becoming more and more important.

In my conversation with Fraser his connection with his mindfulness practice had become part of his existence and he could really sense the importance of being able to move into this space. Fraser moves into mindfulness by taking small steps to find a real space that feels right to him.

I am able to help people with a different level of capacity as I'm more aware of the experience of being a human being. The importance of enjoying what is right here, right now has become pivotal for my experience of being a good leader. I am experiencing less of being a "worry wart". Rather it is as sense of acceptance of what is in this moment. My mood levels have changed and I am more productive and positive both in relation to myself and to others. In moments when I am feeling very distracted and not fully present I am aware that I am not in the moment. These are the moments where I stop and get up onto the balcony to reflect on the bigger picture. This awareness is important to me for my growth and realisation of the experience of being mindful. There are times I have not spent enough time on the balcony, if I have not actually taken the time to stop and focus on the right stuff – on what is here and now and what is the best use of my time right now as I get caught up because of busyness. That is when the second nature just kicks in and the habitualised routine also starts and I know that when that happens my capacity is low and limited. The only way I can think to describe this is if you think about a sea water cave: as the water comes in, the water rises and the sea is closer and closer. With a high sea level my capacity to cope, ability to move and to actually be effective, is reduced, the higher the level of the water. So what my meditation does is actually stops everything with a focus on what is the best use of my time, where do I need to be right now and what is really important right now? The meditation helps me actually drain the bowl and drop the water level to allow the room of capacity to resurface and that is what mindfulness is for me. I am aware that there are still times, or there are a lot of times in the day, when I am actually not completely present but I am aware of it. And when it is important, some of the time, I can pull myself out of it and move into a different space. With the use of mindfulness, I am becoming more adept at actually recognising and saying "...oh step up" when necessary.

I know that I am not close to "enlightenment"; however, I am content with the experience of being more mindful and reflective of the experience of being a leader operating in the awareness of self and others.

I appreciate the intense self-awareness, in leading self that Fraser operates with in his mindfulness practice and the ability to tell the story of what it is actually doing for him. This is rich and important, as it is very individual to him in his world of being. Mindfulness does help him and it has become very important to his daily living. I loved how he shared his stories

through honesty and humour in our conversations, his energy and enthusiasm influenced my sense of being mindful with him.

Story 3: **Self-leading through stillness and calm**

Steve

I sense that one of my staff members is not in a good space and I know that he needs to talk. I am busy. I have a lot on my plate, but I know I need to give my staff member some time. I approach my colleague and realise that he is in a distressed state and the issues are personal. I give him space and time to speak, and I allow myself to be fully present with him. I really care about my staff. I care about people and their wellbeing. I engage myself in the conversation and know that I need to be there for him. I give my colleague some valuable guidance and support by listening and sharing my own experiences. The staff member is extremely grateful and appreciates the time. This is a very important moment for me as I know that I am able to give something back and to help a fellow human being and that is the most important thing in my life.

Steve is an interesting character I warm to easily. He is open and honest and he has a deep insight into the experience of being a human being. I can sense his passion and drive for understanding. When we meet he is willing to share and explore, and the conversation flows with ease. I find myself fascinated by and interested in his experience as he has a different upbringing and different level of curiosity from an early stage from my own experience. He has been in a place of observation from an early age, questioning why we are here and who we are. He has a strong personality and he knows his purpose. It is clear in our conversation.

He deeply cares for nature and to look after ourselves and his love for his children is admirable. We meet at his house which gives me a deeper sense of who he is, creative and curious, he is willing and he is flexible. I like that and his ability to share in conversations makes the process so much easier. I find myself really enjoying his company. It is a connection. The conversations make me question my own experience from a state of deeper understanding and knowing as this is what life in my world is really about: it is about questioning the experience. It is rich and meaningful, and that is how I felt our conversations moved into a sense of deep meaning. I am immensely grateful for the time spent with Steve. It has given me a lot and I know his story will be of value for so many more.

I am mindful through stillness either through the reflection of the calm of a desert or the calm of the sea. I use this as a reminder in moments when hooked into the "bird's nest" of thoughts and worries. I still find myself in moments of when I experience frustration and even anger, but in those moments I remind myself about the calmness of the desert and the sea, and I find myself moving back into a space of awareness. I am a single parent. My wife passed away seven years ago from breast cancer when my boys were four and six, and since then I have been raising them myself. I am a martial artist. I really enjoy looking after my own health so I prefer to do that rather than visit a doctor. I am into good food eating mainly organic where I can. I try to keep as well rounded mentally and psychologically as I can. I experience mindfulness through regular meditation and shaman practice. I include my two sons and friends in my practice, as it is important to me to give back by opening up people to the possibilities. I am focused on health and alternative living. I see my body as a gift for healing. Rather than being stuck in a blinkered kind of a conditioned perspective of the world, I am able to expand out more and look at what exists beyond that and be open to those things so therefore to be mindful is to be mindful of what else does exist as one part. I am mindful of my thoughts, mindful of my emotions and my behaviours and mindful of other people that surround me and how I interact with and affect them. I am mindful of my children so it is having that conscious awareness of everything that is around me. If am going to judge, I judge the good things and not the bad things. I understand that things exist that perhaps we perceive to be bad only because of the condition that that person has had on them to make them like that.

Steve's curiosity for life and the living experience gives him strength and meaning. There is a sense of opening being with him but also there is a sense of sadness and a sense of pain. He is strong and he is willing to be the being that he is meant to be. It is admirable, mindfulness seems to give him the connection to what works for him, it helps him moving forward, being present to what is in the moment by leading self. When talking to Steve I can sense the pain of losing his wife. This has been a challenge for him, as she meant a lot to him. This is reflected in how he came across as very emotional when talking about her. Even though Steve is not directly talking about her, she is there in the conversations.

When my wife was dying of breast cancer we went over to Brazil and I observed people around me and my own interaction with the experience. We were there for a month with the children and we lived in a communal kind of place. The main purpose of being in this particular town or the existence of that town was really brought about by this guy, John of God, who had done a lot of healing for people. What helped people in their healing was how he had set up this space. It was people from all around the world, thousands and thousands of people have been there to see him. Whether you are a believer or not people go there and people do get healed. A lot of it is centered around focused meditation and guided meditation and they set up different rooms where a person who needs healing will go through the first battery of people because when you put a lot of people together, focusing on the same outcome, then you have a whole lot of individual energies that together he says is like a battery. So you power your battery. In the first room it would be the beginner type of people who needed a lot of guidance with their meditation. And there would be 40 to 50 people in that room. Then after you walk past them you go past the next lot. That first lot has someone guiding them through to keep them focused. The next lot you go through would be about another 40 or 50 but there is less guidance, so they are people who have got experience in meditation and they work more individually. In the next room there is no guided meditation as this is where you get your diagnosis or whatever it is. We were there for over three hours meditating every day, even twice a day sometimes. Being away from the city and from everything and being in that kind of peaceful area, one of the things that I got from it myself was that peacefulness is so important and to have that peace inside. If I do not have that peace inside, then I track the bird's nest or if I do not know where to find that peace inside then the bird's nest is going to be there. I think meditation is important for that

and however you do it, everyone seems to think that you have to sit down, cross-legged, but that is not the case. You can get that sort of state through something physical through Tai Chi or other activities that feels relaxing, which is a form of meditation. It is nice to sit down and relax by going into myself and calming myself down and without the need for alcohol or whatever to just be.

Steve's open-mindness has made him seek different experiences to find out what brings meaning into his experience. By allowing himself the opportunity to experience the journey in Brazil has left him with this sense of calmness and memory of calmness, referred to as either the experience of the stillness of the sea or the desert. In our conversation this was clear to Steve. I could sense how he has experienced this calmness in the experience of being with what is.

I am highly involved with martial arts which gives me the opportunity to experience movements and stillness in my body. I experience it as a meditative dance. I connect with the true nature and am drawn to people with a similar approach and find the experience of the depth of connection with others, when open to it, extremely important and valuable to my own connection with self and others. I have a deep sense of who I am and what I stand for, and am very aware of the possibilities through my entrepreneurial practices. In my daily mindfulness practice I will meditate, do a little ritual and a couple of affirmations in Maori to allow the awareness to occur. I also run groups on Shamanic journeying on self-empowerment. Shamanism goes into areas of healing practices and extraction work and all sorts of other stuff but for me it is just to help people to understand that they can find their own answers and be comfortable with that because it comes from them so it is self-empowering rather than always having to look to others for answers. This is an important part of my mindfulness practice being with others to heal and grow.

Steve and I see mindfulness from different perspectives and we have different ways of being practitioners, and this for me is rich and meaningful. This shows the importance of being flexible and willing to explore, even by only listening to other's experiences. It is rich and the exchange of stories brings this awareness of something deeper and something that allows curiosity and possibilities to emerge. This difference in practicing shows, in my view, the importance of being true to own practice of mindfulness. Listen to others, be interested, but in

the end the most important part of mindfulness is to be true and authentic to individual practice.

I grew up in a good home with lots of love from my parents and the rest of the family. I was the first born and had the privilege of being loved and cared for; in some respects, I probably was a bit spoiled. This gave me a great foundation for living a curious life finding out what it all means. My mother was active in the spiritual church and I had an uncle that was a medium, therefore I was exposed to mindfulness early in life. The family moved up north when I was in my early teens and that had an impact on me. I still experienced safety around me but I also felt unsettled with the people around me. It was a close community with friends that had very rebellious behaviours. I was drawn to creating something for myself through getting to understand myself better as a human being. Having parents that both were entrepreneurs I was drawn to do the same. I have established a number of businesses with positive outcomes and I am currently running a very successful organisation supporting other people to become more self-aware of their potential and possibilities. I find myself to be a very creative soul who sees ideas and makes them happen. I am not hesitant to try something new and creative.

I can sense how Steve's upbringing has had a massive impact on how he experiences his life and how he has brought this curiosity into his work life through a mindful leading of self and others. He is willing to take risks to try out new ideas to make things happen; there is no fear. He just does it with a level of trust of whatever is meant to be is meant to be. He shares this bravery through his stories, and it is a level of bravery that comes through trust and the ability for ideas to emerge through reflection and mindful existence.

In my daily life as a leader I am mindful of the people around me and what impact I have on them either through the language that I use or the actions that I take. I find it very important to be a role model, so what I preach to my clients, colleagues and children I will also do. I have realised that to be a mindful leader is to be the best that I can be and I do not tell anyone how to do that. If I operate as an example my staff learn that from me through observing my actions so I walk the talk. It is about being, so how we get them to that position is of course up to themselves individually, you know, you can only lead a horse to water but you cannot make it drink. However, by having them in an environment they learn from the

group environment. I have recognised the importance of providing people with resources and tools that they perhaps would have not had before to be able to deal with those situations. I am there for them and allow their development to happen and experience lessons they maybe need to learn!

Steve truly cares for the people around him, he is passionate and willing to be there. I get a sense that because of his strong presence he can at times be misunderstood and that he even at times can be perceived as self-centered. However, my impression spending time with Steve is that he truly cares for most people around him and he wants the best for everybody, and he is there, when he can, to help when they need it.

I do get people frustrated a bit sometimes because I am a deeper thinker and the reason I am a deeper thinker is because I like things to be done properly. I do not like things to be done in a rushed manner. So what tends to happen is that people want to just get the job done because there is a deadline. I am not one of those people and that may be frustrating for others. Therefore, when I want to get the job done, I want to get it done well. Yes, there may be a deadline but I will usually, if it is a big project, take longer than what it normally does and this is because I will look through it carefully. I am a big picture type person in how I see everything and I like to look at things ecologically. I will look at the information provided and then I will look at it from different perspectives all the time to get a sense of the customer's thinking and how they will respond to the way that it is written. I am being mindful of the customer and how they are going to be able to communicate that with their customers. We already have all this understanding ourselves built into us around the amount of work we have done to create what we have created. Sometimes you forget how much you know, so you have to be mindful of that. When I am dealing with training other people I need to be patient because I have all this understanding but my clients do not have that so I am mindful on how I can best accelerate the learning process for them, so the information is better retained and embedded in them to help them impart it further. So having the ability of looking at other perspectives I can actually let ideas come through but I have to be mindful of what is really important, what is actually making a difference to what I am doing and where I am going. It took us five years to create the programme that we have created. Now it is 10 years later and we are going global. So mindfulness for me on a day to day basis is about

being mindful outside of myself but it is also being mindful of the frame that I use, the words that I use and how I deal with different situations.

Steve's telling of his story about his business and what they do and what they have developed, shows a lot of thoughtful work and a high amount of patience to ensure that it is a programme that brings something to the people involved. Again the mindful present of other perspectives is a key to how Steve works. This is not just about his creating something but about how other people will experience it. This may be challenging in a world where everything is pressured and needs to be done as quickly as possible, however Steve seems to be real in leading self through internal guidance and intuition to allow things to come through to fruition by being mindful and aware of others. Overall, in his practice as a mindful leader leading self, mindfulness shows to be of great benefit for how he operates and lives in his business.

Sometimes when I am getting feedback there is an initial defensiveness which is a natural kind of response to someone who is attacking you, whether it is psychological or physical you are going to get that initial response. I will look at it and I will go okay, the first thing is that it is their opinion and I have to weigh or form a weight of their opinion. So is that a valid thing that they are suggesting or is that coming from their perspective and their world that because I am different to the way that they think, that their way is right and my way is wrong? So I have to justify that within my mind as to what weight I give that feedback that they are giving me. For me the mind is like a parachute, it works best when it is open, it allows for thinking through intuition to know where things are heading and seeing emerging patterns by having the ability to do so through a bigger picture thinking. If something does not feel right, I will more than likely know that there is something wrong with what is happening. I know intuitively that I can achieve something, so I know that if I do this in a certain way, I have to find that right way so the outcome will be right. Where does intuition come from? Ultimately I think it comes from different places. I think it comes from experience. I think it comes from being able to tune in to a super consciousness of things that are in my world. Therefore, being mindful to feedback and operating in a place of intuition will guide me to a place of the right thing to do.

Steve's honesty to himself and his ability to reflect allows him to be true to his intuition and doing what he is guided to do. He is able to make things happen even though he might frustrate other people, and in his world that is okay as his intention is to ensure that he is doing the right thing.

Mindfulness has been part of me the whole time but sometimes I am aware of it consciously and other times I am not so much. So I have always had the belief that there is stuff that happens that we cannot explain scientifically and I am sure this will continue to happen as well. Whether it is synchronicities or whatever, it is within a group of people from the Shamanic kind of perspective. I have learned the more that you are unlearning the more release of pressure you experience. I have always had a yearning towards understanding human existence to understand my world more. I constantly try to question my beliefs and what they are and if they are right for me and if the things that I believe in are true, beyond my own truth. This will always continue to challenge me because I think I need that level of curiosity. I have started to look at the indigenous kind and there is this connection to everything. They respect everything and I found this very interesting, in particular the amount of intention that they have with the things that they do. I myself live with the intention around what I am doing and that is probably why there is the deeper thinking that I experience because of the realness of my intentions. When I am in that now state, it is amazing what I can be aware of to what comes up that then can be resourceful for me later when I am doing other things.

I fully trust my intuition in how I approach a new idea, the ideas come rolling in patterns. I may be perceived as jumping from one idea to another, but in my experience it all comes together in a beautiful shape. It is important to me to teach others the experience of being creative and open to the possibilities. This is what I really live for. I have moved out of the "bird's-nest" into my heart of being true and real to myself and others. As mentioned I am a deep thinker and I allow all perspectives to emerge to enable me the opportunity offered to see things from different angles. At work I can experience the need to be self-critical, in situations that I have to be mindful about how I communicate and so my intention always is to be as clear as I can in my communication and with the communications I put out as well to be cautious about the perspectives of the people. So I am trying to be aware of that and how I know it is my style but I also need to be aware of how can I be clearer, be more succinct in

what I say. Every morning that I do meditation helps me being relaxed and it sends me to that mindful space, such an important space to be in when you are working rather than being rushed the whole time, and in reality this is only a chosen feeling that I bring with me into my day. I do not have to feel rushed inside as I do not have to be. That is the difference and mindfulness is about acknowledging that difference and then being with it throughout the day and being aware when I have shifted out of my space again. It is that constant awareness of how my body is responding to different situations.

His passion for people and care for others is evident in how he presents his idea of being a mindful leader leading self. I find myself getting very engaged in our conversations and feel the connection to his experience of being real and true to the experiences of being a mindful leader. I am intrigued by his ability to observe and be present with other people and how he interacts and take leadership in the work he performance. He is aware that there are times that others may not necessarily understand his position and how he acts, and he does not necessarily change to satisfy these views, but rather stay true to his own intention on how to move forward. This by having a positive intention for the greater good for the people and the business that he leads.

Mindfulness has had a positive effect on me. It calms me down to allow me an internal focus of being in the moment. I experience a sense of peacefulness when in discussion with clients and colleagues, I am connected with self and others. I trust my intuition and what is meant to be is meant to be, I am in a sense mindful of existence itself. This helps me in relating to other people to help them to see a fuller picture of the reality of what is going on in the moment. I mostly operate in a mindful space in my everyday experience, unless someone pisses me off, and it does not happen that often. However, in those circumstances my children have taught me how to manage that better, and I think any parent could attest to that or not. They definitely taught me a lot about emotional intelligence and I have learned probably more from having them around than any other person or any other programme or whatever. So it is how you can develop your strategies when your initial ones do not work and they only last for so long and then okay what is the next strategy. Emotions are important and anger is important just as much as happiness. It is like the bird's nest in the head and the bird's nest is stress, it is a manifestation of stress in a sense. Mindfulness helps me becoming aware of my bird's nest and what it is doing for me and what state of mind I am

in, am I happy or am I in state of stress. And it is only when I actually learned to relax in situations that are perhaps stressful situations that I can be so much more mindful. I can see a lot more about what is going on but when I am tense, it's like my blinkers go on because I have got this fear and these other things that might be happening. This is why meditation is so good for mindfulness because it helps to bring me into that peaceful relaxed kind of state more easily. I am not perfect by any means. I still have got a long way to go but I am open and willing to experience and learn.

As mentioned earlier, Steve chooses to see the good things in people and rather than judging the bad in people he judges the good in people. This allows for a flow effect in his communication with others. He is able to be open and honest, even in moments when he might find himself stressed or in a negative state of mind, he is able to get out of it to reflect on the actual experience through constructive, honest and direct communication. Even when it can come across very direct it puts a perspective to their experience. Steve is focused on the intent of behaviours and if the intent is to do something good for others, directness is important. Mindfulness helps him in helping others.

Story 4: Mindfulness = light and universal coherence

Tony

I am in a meeting with staff and I am working through a number of issues. I can sense the discomfort between two people in the room. I am fully aware that something is going on between them, just in the way they look at each other, the words that they use and the actual energy between them. I continue the meeting as per usual with my staff. I know that this is not the right time to deal with the issue. After the meeting, when the time is right, I

approach the staff involved. I talk to them individually first to find out what is going on. I allow them time and space to talk and reflect. I truly care for my staff as they are important to me, so I know that time and space are important. I respect staff and staff respect me and our relationships are strong and solid. As an outcome, to deal with the staff involved attention and focus with respect and integrity to help them work through their issues. I firmly believe that through my own self-awareness I am able to help and guide others to an outcome that is valued from all perspectives.

The above story represents Tony's daily experience with the people that he works for and with. The conversations I have shared with Tony have been rich and real, which has created a deep understanding of his experience of being a mindful leader leading self. In truth it has been a gift to spend time with him. He is generous in his sharing and his knowing is deep. He has a great sense of humour which made the conversations easier, in particular with the combination of a great rapport. Tony operates with a great level of knowledge, gained through substantial study and self-reflection, and this is revealed the language that he used. In my interpretation of his story I needed to dig deep into the data to discover Tony's experience of mindfulness. Tony's care for others is evident in the way he talks. He has a strong desire to share and guide others to a more reflective state place and this is all based on his own personal experience.

I experience mindfulness as a coherent experience and connection with the greater good. I feel extremely connected to the experience of existence and this is the representation of light. Light represents the calmness and focus of mindfulness for me. My idea of light as a mindful trigger is that the body actually transmits light. What I mean by that is the emerging philosophical questions reflecting on the experience of living, including: *"…What is it that makes us? What is it that makes us feel an emotion when we have a thought? What is it that makes us want to have an emotional response? Is it the thought itself? Is it something else? What is it that when people walk into a room they immediately pick up a vibe?"* These are the questions that I am interested in and that I reflect on as part of my mindful awareness of being. Everything that I do and experience is through the element of light. This is highly reflected in my experience as a leader. Mindfulness is pivotal to how I relate to running a business and connecting with colleagues and clients.

In my conversation with Tony the symbolic representation of mindfulness through light is true and real. He shows passion for his connection with light and the use of language is related to how he views the world, as well as the experiences that have led to a deeper understanding of self and the way he interacts with the world.

I am not a typical mindfulness practitioner in the sense of traditional practice. I operate in the moment through ongoing self-awareness and self-reflection. I am very aware of my own behavioural impact on *self* and others. I follow my intuition through a sense of knowing and complete trust. Mindfulness for me lies in the ability to be creative and find new ways of experiencing life. I see ways of creating through listening to the gifts from my vivid imagination. I see opportunities by being in the moment. I allow myself to be part of the invention of something new and exciting. My experience of existence starts from the point of mindfulness and it starts from the point of coherence and it starts from a point of being mindful about the people around me and everything else around me in my environment. Furthermore, it is about being able to within myself adjust to that environment and then, where the conditions allow, progress myself in a different environment. Mindfulness provides me the opportunity to adjust to the circumstances as part of my experience.

Tony's deep trust in his intuition is admirable because of his courage and willingness to explore areas about life and it made me question deeper into my personal experience of being a mindful leader leading self. During the conversations, I could sense his connection with self and his intuition. It was real and was from a place of deep understanding and trust. He could nearly come across as mystical because of the language he uses. However, when you are in his company and open to the language that he uses when sharing his experiences and knowing, you know it is real. It is real because of the understanding emerging through the presence of a deeper intuitive knowing in understanding life as it is.

I know when I need to slow down to open up and reflect on being in the moment to get myself into a calm and focused state to reflect on what is going on in the moment. My experience of not actually thinking is allowing my mind the time to reflect; that means not watching the time, that means not thinking about the daily activities that I have to undertake. It means actually putting myself into a zone where I am in a void. Therefore, my experience is that time becomes irrelevant to me. All the money matters and everything that I am worried

about, you know, become irrelevant to me. Everything becomes irrelevant to me and the world of the living. I undertake certain breathing exercises and once I do I start to actually feel quite relaxed and quite sleepy, I actually feel like going to sleep. My experience is like being in a different mental state, a state of opportunities and creativity. When I am in this space that is when I start to get a lot of inspirations and I start seeing things from a very objective point of view. Because there is no buy-in from an emotional point of view there has to be a certain element of buy-in to the idea in my mind. I will trade this emotion for that emotion because this priority really is more important than that one and it is all part of the whole pain and pleasure response. However, mindfulness helps me in being aware of the different responses.

One of the aspects that was important for Tony was the whole individual experience that we all in some way are related but also the importance of being real to self and the experience this particular body has in the experience. Therefore, finding a way to connect is important to Tony. My experience with Tony is that he really had this connection. He is fully aware of his actions and how he actually leads himself on a daily basis. This part of Tony's experience has been important and real since he was only a very young boy.

I experienced a high level of self-awareness from a very early age and a sense of coherence with everything that is. I never felt lonely because of this connection, even though my family was dysfunctional and complex. I kept myself going through my high level of curiosity of creating and connecting with self. I was aware of other people and could sense their state of being and this drew me to them even more. I had some unique experiences seeing and experiencing mystical episodes that made me even more curious of opening up to the fact that there is so much more to life than I can imagine. I moved into the electrical industry where I had the opportunity to work with light and energy that fascinates me deeply. I also showed unique leadership qualities early on, that were recognised, and I was given senior positions to lead major projects. I have since led organisations and I am currently in the position of building up another business where I have the opportunity to explore my creativity even further.

I really enjoyed listening to Tony's story about his upbringing and again his mystical experiences that have led to this very deep understanding of his experience of being. In my

own reflection of my own experience I was very fascinated in how he, from such an early age, took on this intense curiosity of being, compared to my rather limited thinking and awareness in my young years. This experience has been the foundation of how he sees and experiences being a leader leading himself with others. Tony has had this intuitive knowing from an early age that has given him the space to explore even further based on his courage and curiosity to know more about the meaning of life and how this interact with him on day to day basis.

Mindfulness in the capacity as a leader has had a significant impact on me through the knowing and awareness of universal coherence. I experience the connection with others on a deep level and can easily read a situation and take appropriate interventions. I am aware of synchronicity with others. I feel a certain chemical response which is very positive. I experience good feelings with the connection or with the work that I am doing. It is basically the old saying when they talk about an artist or about someone who loves what they are doing that they are performing their love work. My trust of intuitive actions has been effective in getting my team with me both on a strategic and operational level, as well as on a personal level. I am able to communicate effectively by being responsible and personal from an authentic point of view. My staff respond to me positively and are grateful for my approach and guidance. I know when to approach and when not to. I know when it is the right time. I feel what other people feel through my complete openness to what is and what is happening in this moment. In being mindful in my leadership I experience people coming together and start working cohesively together, as through my own intuition I am able to connect and facilitate this to happen.

The care for his staff is evident in the way he talks about his people. During the interviews Tony went through a challenging time with his own manager and this had its personal challenges for him. However, even with this in his experience his care for others was a lot more important to him than his personal circumstances. His focus was to be there for his staff ensuring their wellbeing. This kept him moving forward, as well as being mindful leading self by trusting that everything would be okay.

My experience is when being aware in relation to a team all of a sudden everyone is playing in the sandpit nicely together and they are trying to find a way to get it to work. As an example, I am thinking of two of my staff in particular communicating on a level that I did not

even think was possible but through my intuition and ability to get people together I have provided them the space to do so. And then I start seeing amazing knowledge coming out of both of them but then something else amazing starts happening. They actually start acknowledging each other for it too. Mindfulness, in my experience, actually brings people together and allows people to mould and develop connections. One of the cores in my leadership approach is to actively listen to others, because I truly care and want the best for people. I am personally driven by giving back to my staff and the people I work with. I do not experience a sense of wanting some personal gain. I am truly there for others and I know that having people with me by having an understanding of who and what they are about, will take the organisation a long way. I measure my life through cosmic currency, which entitles love through mindfulness. Taking time to connect and love what is in the moment and this includes all aspects of my life, including my connection with staff.

I noticed Tony's passion for an authentic leadership in our conversation. He is not trying to be anything other than what he is and he encourages this in his staff as well. In the conversation, when talking about his staff his eyes were shining and I could truly sense the care that he has for others as already mentioned. He really wants to help others to move into a better place and to develop into good people, and if he can influence this, he will.

I trust in my own ability and mind and therefore find myself to be in a good place and even at times where I find myself in a chaotic situation, I feel calm in the experience. I know that whatever is happening now will change and being in a good space will create focus and clarity in what I am doing. When I am in a mindful state it means that things start to become a lot clearer with more ideas and concise strategies that then start to resonate in a more positive way. Ideas start to flood in and that is when it is a good idea to start mind mapping, without structure, on a piece of paper or even on my IPhone by using key words. I list the key words and let the idea come into fruition, become real and then make it happen. Through observation of own experience in the moment and afterwards gives me a sense of growth. It is important that I do not lose my individuality. It is through mindfulness that I am finding out who I am and my contribution to the greater whole. That is what gives me my sense of importance as I can contribute. I am doing what I am good at and the reward comes from being real to self. The reward can be not just in monetary terms: it can be that I get a sense

of satisfaction of completing something that is unique – that is different – but it is only unique because I did it in a way that resonated with my experience.

When I start to feel unease and I just feel that something is incomplete, that is when I have to do my research and that is very important to me. I use mindfulness to actually do that research, so I can actually intuitively start looking at information and I have quite often done that. If I am planning a team meeting or if I am planning a team strategy or if I am planning a company strategy or if I am forecasting, or if I'm doing budgeting, I quite often will use mindfulness where I will work through the relevant processes. I always know when I am reaching a point where there are question marks because everything else I feel comfortable with in terms of the information and detail I have on it. Whenever I reach the component that is not making sense it is because I always realise, 100% of the time, I do not have enough information and that is what my brain is trying to tell me. I do not have enough information and that is when I sometimes feel unsure about the future. You know there is an old expression that the moment I am in my comfort zone I am at the most critical and dangerous point in my career. Because that is only an illusion, right? Something in my brain has been switched off. This is why it is always good to take myself out of my comfort zone whenever I can and always strive to go forward with something new, learn something new, take on something new and take on a new challenge. All this is really important as part of my mindful reflection of who and what I am.

The exciting thing about Tony is his bravery and courage to do something that is real to him and not to try to copy others. He is his authentic self in the way he sees things and how he intuitively interacts with ideas and behaviours. He gets new ideas through interacting with others and learning from their stories. He then creates what is real to him based on his internal knowing and the information that he has gained from others. His creative mind is really open to new things and he allows the possibilities to come to him by trusting self and by building very strong relationships with people. There is no other way than to feel a deep connection to Tony, hence the reason for his large network with other leaders in his field and others. This in my view comes from his willingness to be different and be creative in a different way; a more spiritual approach to the living experience.

One way of reflecting is through "mental-holidays" where I reflect on a place that gives me immense joy and happiness that takes me back to a mindful place. My ultimate focus is to be in a place where I experience peace and love. Conflict does not do it for me: I do not see the purpose and meaning of the behaviour. I am therefore a true champion of making myself (and others) feel that I am in a place of calm, love and bliss through my actions, humour and words that I intentionally use. In my preparation for the day, I wake up and like anyone else I have the distractions. I have the things that the "beast" within me would love to do right there and then impulsively. However, there is another side of me that says today, if I do these things, just for today, I am going to be able to do those things tomorrow which is going to lead to the bigger picture of where I am going.

I could sense that at times the beast would take over in the way he changed in his mood when talking about issues that had an impact on him, for example the experience with his current manager. Tony is still experiencing internal challenges and turmoil and sometimes they are dominating and can take over his experience. This is also the case in when being very passionate about something, it can become dominating and take over his experience. I could sense the impact this had on him in the way he talked about these things, both on-tape and off-tape. His voice became slower and darker, and his body language become more closed off. However, the difference with Tony's experience is that he seems to be able to pick himself up and in his trust in his intuition he accepts the situation and allows it to let go when needed. It is an internal strength of acceptance and trust.

Through the light of being and its experiences I regard mindfulness to be a way of being that provides the opportunity to be in the moment and embrace the beauty of the experience. The main benefit for me with mindfulness, is to experience a state of tranquillity, harmony and peace. Mindfulness also on the other hand, enables me to maintain focus. It provides me focus and direction on achieving an outcome that I have put my mind to and it enables me to do it in a way that that is not destructive to myself, to my environment and other people around me. And being in that state of harmony allows me to be more unbiased and more objective in the decisions that I make, not just for myself, but the people or things around me. So for me it is the whole package basically. To be able to achieve those things, to be able to do that with mindfulness I need to have all those things in balance. I think that once I do I see changes around me and it really sounds, the way I laid that out, that actually sounds very

simple but it is actually not. Ongoing practice is very important and the willingness to do so. For me ongoing mindfulness reflection however allows me the experience of universal coherence and close relationships with others that ought to be fully embraced through meditation and reflection.

To sum up my experience with Tony, it was a joy to be with him through his willingness to participate and share his stories. His flexibility to come to AUT when having our conversation and to reschedule the meetings when needed made me I feel I know him on a very deep level. He has let me in with open arms. His passion for mindfulness and the integration of it into his life is real and he is fluid in his existence. I am forever grateful for his willingness to participate and for allowing me to share his story through my own interpretation to make the phenomenon of the mindful leader leading self, more real.

This chapter has provided the individual stories of each of the four participants in this study. It gives a holistic overview of their experience based on the conversations, their symbolic representation of mindfulness and photos.

My role as a researcher gave me the opportunity to be part of the conversations by being a mindfulness practitioner, a leader and as well as being an objective researcher carefully reflecting on their experiences. This enriched my experience from a perspective of being fully engage with someone else's experiences. It gave me a strong foundation for exploring common themes that will be explored in the next three chapters.

Chapter 7

Theme 1: Taking hold of self

The Guest House

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing and invite them in.

Be grateful for whatever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.
— Jellaludin Rumi

The last chapter gave an insight into the mindfulness practice of the four participants in this research. Analysis of the data I gathered from them led to the realisation that there are commonalities in their experience, and I have drawn these commonalities together as themes, the first of which is presented in this chapter. This theme follows Heidegger's (1927/62) notion of *taking hold of yourself,* and I have chosen to reflect that idea in the title of the chapter. This chapter begins with an explication of *taking hold of self* through courage

of Being, moves on to explain the participants' growing sense of knowing-awareness and finishes with an exploration of the authentic journey of mindfulness practice.

Courage of Being

Heidegger's central tenet in his phenomenology is on the *courage of anxiety* that derives from the ability to see reality as it is. As Heidegger says, "...in anxiety in the face of death, Dasein is brought face to face with itself as delivered over to that possibility which is not to be outstripped" (1927/62, p. 298). What Heidegger is arguing is that Dasein sees its true being by facing death for what it is. Heidegger explains how people are often living in the *they*, which means to depend on others' opinions and ideas instead of facing actuality as an individual, with the result, as Heidegger puts it, "...the "they" does not permit us the courage of anxiety in the face of death" (1927/62, p. 298). Through their own fear, the *they* influence Dasein to see death as something to dread, instead of having the courage to face and accept it as part of life. Therefore, in the saying *courage of anxiety,* Heidegger (1927/62, p. 298) is suggesting that Dasein, facing the inevitability of death, should contemplate being open to the notion that the *they* have created a fear-based event.

Letting go of the *they* and moving into a place of acceptance of *Being* may develop a sense of courage of seeing what is and the possibilities of living a true and meaningful life. The mindful leaders show courage in their interest in understanding their existence better through opening up to something outside their regular habits. The data show that in their mindful states, the leaders have a sense of letting go of the *they* to open up to a form of truth. A truth that aligns with existence itself, as sense of knowingness. As Ruth explains when she tells how she *takes hold of self:*

> ...the recognition of my "stuckness" led me into the space of mindfulness by doing yoga and also attending silent retreats. This was life-changing for me and I started to experience a sense of a bigger experience and sense of being wide open to something deep and pivotal. For me personally, it was an experience of a significant shift in the experience of being.

Ruth recognised the need to move into a different place, somewhere away from her regular habits. She had the courage to use her awareness to observe her activities and reflect on her current way of being and the impact it has on her participation with the world. In so doing, she experienced more clarity about the influence of the *they* in her life. Her changed perception left her with a bigger sense of *self* and what life is about. This in return has changed the way she interacts with the world; it has given her meaning for why she exists:

> …this has left me to realise the positive impact of being in a state of awareness in the moment. It has become a crucial part of my experience. I find myself consciously being in the space of awareness and I am reminded when I am not.

Heidegger (1927/62) speaks of being *present-at-hand*, which means to be here and seeing what is in the *Being* of being. Seeing what is and moving into an authentic being takes Dasein out of the *they* to recognise its true position in the fullness of *Being*. This further allows for the opportunity to reflect on life from a standpoint of finitude, which requires courage, because it means facing the certainty of coming to an end. Steve's comment below shows that he is facing all aspects of life, including, perhaps, that of death. He attributes his behaviour to curiosity, but that curiosity requires courage:

> …I have always had a yearning towards understanding human existence, to understand my world more. I constantly try to question my beliefs and what they are and if they are right for me and if the things that I believe in are true, beyond my own truth. This will always continue to challenge me because I think I need that level of curiosity.

The mindful leaders are seeking an opening to the core of who they are as individuals and beyond by observing themselves and being true to their sense of the purpose of existence, which is, arguably, the greatest intellectual and spiritual challenge that Dasein grapple with. For my participants, their particular challenges lie finding the courage to reflect and meditate on their current way of being in order to understand the cause and effect of their thinking and behaviour, as Tony shows in his example:

> …I know when I need to slow down to open up and reflect on being in the moment to get myself into a calm and focused state to reflect on what is going on in the moment.

My experience of not actually thinking is allowing my mind the time to reflect. That means not watching the time, that means not thinking about the daily activities that I have to undertake, it means actually putting myself into a zone where I am in a void. Therefore, my experience is that time becomes irrelevant to me. All the money matters and everything that I am worried about, you know, becomes irrelevant to me.

"Courage" is an idea that can apply to small, everyday matters as much as to bigger concerns of life and death. I would argue that it takes courage for the mindful leaders to face the chaos that sometimes occurs in their daily lives, and to recognise that, despite being in a senior role in which others look to them for guidance, they are *stuck,* that they have become bogged down in *theyness.* The reason I say that facing mess requires courage is that so much is expected of leaders: popular wisdom constructs them as so powerful and commanding that to admit to stuckness is tantamount to admitting to weakness, or worse, inability to perform their roles. Thus, when Steve talks about the "bird's nest" that is a manifestation of his stress, he displays *courage of being* on two levels: first by facing the fact that his life has a bird's nest in it, and second, by admitting it to me. To a greater or lesser extent, all the leaders exhibited the same courage in looking at the muddle of *theyness* surrounding them, and then coping with it by seeking the clarity and calm of their mindful state. I maintain that it is easy to slip into and remain in the patterns of inauthentic living of which Heidegger (1927/62) speaks: it is much harder, and much braver, to seek authenticity and self-truth. This is also very reflected in the stories of Ruth and Fraser, both from South Africa, where strong beliefs and values about what is right and wrong influence their experiences. These have had a major impact on them both. For example, Fraser talks about his experience and the shift that occurred in *taking hold of self:*

… the shift for me was actually first of all opening up my eyes to a more alternative interpretation of the world and how reality really looked for a whole bunch of people. I was starting to be aware it was not that but it really came to a head there where up to that point as far as the military was concerned I had taken a stand, I took a non-combative role, I refused to carry any weapons.

Fraser recognised the importance of letting go of something that did not feel right for him. As an individual he was brave enough to combat something that was deeply engrained in the

culture in which he grew up. An act of courage like this occurs at the level of everyday life, in the mundane, but it is profound, because in being true to *self* and rejecting *theyness*, Fraser cut himself from the comfort offered by conforming to the norms of his society. He experienced the angst (Heidegger, 1927/62) that allowed him to seek a new truth, which in turn led to new possibilities for changing his life:

> …I suddenly realised I could not, it was no longer tenable to put on the uniform and that is when I actually took a formal stand to not continue and formally refused to do anything else which had a profound implication for my career.

Ruth also experienced resistance to the strong values that she grew up with as a young girl:

> …I think even at a young age there were things that sort of embedded into my psyche. We had a maid that used to come and work for us and when the maid's children came around my mother used to say "you need to play in the back garden where you cannot be seen". Those sorts of things clicked in my mind that something was not right but I could not articulate it.

Like Fraser, Ruth experienced as a sense of disconnect from things that did not feel right to her, and was courageous in rejecting the unfairness of the values of her upbringing. Krishnamurti (2001, p. 39) puts this beautifully by saying that:

> …most of us listen to be told what to do or to conform to a new pattern, or we listen merely to gather further information. If we are here with any such attitude, the process of listening will have very little significance in what we to do.

Courage of being drew both Fraser and Ruth into a possibility that is right for their lives, which is an example of Heidegger's (1927/62) notion of the authenticity that comes with a realisation of *being-towards-death:* a moment of clarity and insight that life is finite and an authentic perspective of being to emerge, and this authenticity leads to the decisions and actions that permit change. According to Heidegger (1927/62) an inauthentic individual would consistently be drawn into the crowd, and would not have the courage to take action contrary to those of majority opinion. *Courage of being* is important in leading the *self*: in these two cases, it appears to be a matter of confronting inauthenticity and mindfully accepting the potential for discomfort inherent in initiating significant change.

Instances of courage of being are also evident in the conversations with Steve and Tony, when they disclosed their experiences of moving from stuckness to trueness. Steve and Tony come from different cultural backgrounds from Fraser and Ruth, and these difference must be taken into account in interpreting their stories, following Heidegger's (1927/62) conceptualisation of the importance of historical influences on Dasein. Steve grew up in a good family but was bullied at school, so his *courage of being* related to finding strength:

> …when I came to Auckland I made a decision based on I suppose what had happened, being bullied at school and things like that, I thought I might do martial arts. So I started to do martial arts and, with my sister and a cousin, went to a medium and we trained with a medium for 18 months.

Although Steve's reasons were different, he exhibited the same sort of courage as Ruth and Fraser, in that they all made an effort to change their perceptions of how life might be lived. Steve gave himself permission to move into a form of spirituality that is quite removed from the 'main stream' of western belief systems that nevertheless helped him become more mindful in leading *self* and in "…understanding a separate part of who I was". Steve's spiritual walk is unusual, and of the sort that can attract mockery, so it takes (arguably) more courage to adhere to it than mainstream faiths require, but it is so important to Steve that it has helped him reconcile the different parts of his being:

> …what kept me on the mindful path, all the way through, is really the spiritual combined with the martial arts side of things…more so than the business. The business was more of a distraction that anything during the early days you know, yes you have to earn money, but the martial arts provided a focus and a discipline where the spiritual learnings I had were helping me to understand better about who I was and about myself.

Tony as well felt an intense yearning for connection to something inside himself, to make sense to why he is in this world. He grew up in a dysfunctional family and confessed that at times he felt lost. He did not experience the closeness with his family that led to the courage of questioning his life and he explains this by saying "…we all need that, that connectiveness, that coherence in order to be able to function as human beings." The recognition of the need for a place to belong is important in the early stages of opening up to mindfulness. In fact, if

people expect to enter mindfulness only in solitude, their experience may be diluted, for the connection with others may enhance self-awareness through the relationships that are built. Therefore, in Tony's case the supposed lack of this attention in his young age triggered him to start questioning his existence, that in return allowed him more freedom in his interaction with others. This strongly relates to Gadamer's (1975) idea that human beings cannot function without interaction with others. The learning in life lies in the relationships Dasein has with others (Heidegger, 1927/62).

Human relationships are important in being a "…thinker that comes" (Heidegger, 2006, p. 32), which means to be a person who can surrender the knowledge that comes from personal history and heritage and instead open up to the knowing-awareness that is occasioned by being in the world with others. Relationships with others create awareness of both the potential and limitations of certain cultural norms and standards. All of my participants have, one way or another, found the *courage of being* to encompass the knowledge deriving from being *thinkers that come* and have made the changes necessary for having the ability to lead *self* through awareness.

According to Gadamer (1975) it is openness to dialog with *self* and others that provides solidity to human existence. The mindful leaders have found the courage to release the effects of the past by questioning their current existence and embracing authenticity. This allows them to move into *knowing-awareness* (Heidegger, 1927/62).

Knowing-awareness

Heidegger (2006) calls the connection between the *self* and a sense of the ineffable *knowing-awareness.* He further explains that the "…knowing-awareness is inhering the clearing that resonates through and through with the sheltering-concealing of be-ing" (p. 100). Knowing-awareness is the factor in being that allows Dasein to become the authentic *self* by becoming attuned to and grounded in the reality of existence and the fact that, for individual Dasein, it will certainly end at some unknown point in time. Therefore, knowing-awareness, according to Heidegger (2006), has nothing to do with consciousness, which maintain itself in the fore-front of the subject-object-relationship. Knowing-awareness affirms the question of the ground of "…the truth of being" (Heidegger, 2006, p. 101).

Because the mindful leaders experienced knowing-awareness, they also recognised that change is necessary and possible. Their sense that their current paths will be destructive to attaining the authentic existence they seek requires them to relinquish historic thinking and move forward into new patterns of living that are true to them as individuals, rather than true to the conventions of wider social norms. Of my four participants, Tony in particular exhibited strong *knowing-awareness* in his thinking, and he had recognised them early in his life. He told me that "...it becomes a thought and then it becomes a belief and then once that happens you start creating your limitations". Here he was explaining that thoughts are the experience of life*, what we think we become*. Ruth also remarked on how thoughts affect perceptions:

> ...on a deeper level I experienced a knowing that there was more to life that led me to attend psychotherapy sessions to help me in discovering who I am. I realised that I do not need to operate in an unsustainable and unhealthy state – I could move forward by being clear about what I wanted to do.

What Tony and Ruth are expressing here relates to Heidegger's (1927/62) explication of the tension between authentic and inauthentic living. Both these participants had clearly experienced and ultimately rejected the inauthentic mode, in which Dasein are constantly absorbed in the demands of others to the point that individuals cease to reflect and instead are overcome by the influence of what others think and feel. In the inauthentic mode, individuals are not themselves, nor are they finding their own truth, and it is true that there may be a certain security in acceptance and conformity: some people are more comfortable being told what to do and think rather than puzzling life out for themselves. For Heidegger (1927/62) and Krishnamurti (2003), however, questioning the meaning of life and moving towards knowing-awareness, is an expression of courage.

The mindful leaders I worked with in this study showed courage in their willingness to question their realities as they began to experience knowing-awareness. Ruth did not consciously seek what she discovered in mindfulness, but she had a feeling about its rightness for her:

> ...it was about allowing me time to start to become aware. Aware of how I was feeling in the moment. When I went on the silent retreat there was nothing I could do but to

be with myself. I started to be okay with it. If I felt sad, it was okay. I could feel sad but nothing really awful was going to happen to me. It was a feeling and it was not great at all but that is what it was. I think that those things have helped me to understand myself so much better and also to understand other people.

What Ruth expresses here is the start of relinquishing the inauthenticity that has been built up for many years and has created a certain idea of how to live. Fraser also talks about his growing sense of knowing that something in his life needed to change and that he could not continue as he was:

> … there have been many times I have known that I have to actually strip everything away and just be complete, right here right now, in order to actually cope. I needed to strip away all the other stuff, I needed to let go of stuff, the history and right now what is needed is that decision that is needed to be made.

Knowing-awareness seems to develop a focus on what is right and important now and that focus is an important part of allowing creativity to emerge and reveal paths to new ways of being (Heidegger, 1927/62). Knowing-awareness, then, is powerful, but many people are reluctant to let go of their familiar habits because of their constant fear of non-existence (Heidegger, 1927/62). The participants in this study have embraced knowing-awareness and have realised that mindfulness is an avenue that allows them to trust in the experience and experiences of the present.

Heidegger (1927/62) argues that accepting the inevitability of death is the beginning of significant transformation which will trigger Dasein to reject the ongoing influence of others in everyday life and instead see and wisely select the possibilities that are *thrown* into life. Steve, for instance, is showing his acceptance of the possibilities through the sense of knowing-awareness:

> …I have always had a yearning towards mindfulness. I suppose I have seen it as helping me understand the world more. I always questioned my beliefs and what they are. Are they right for me and in the things that I believe in? Are they true beyond my own truth? It will always continue to challenge me because I think you need to have

that…because sometimes we get caught in that situation of holding on to these things that can hold us back from what our potential may be.

Here he reveals a profound understanding that many possibilities exist, one of which is both the ability and the permission to *self* to move into a different space and consider, accept or reject the opportunities *thrown* into experience. The mindful leaders have realised the limitations of living a life full of intense suffering and pain caused by being stuck in something that is not real.

An authentic journey

The discussion of my participants' move into knowing-awareness also showed Heidegger's (1927/62) emphasis on seeking and finding an authentic mode of being which will entail the removal of being absorbed in *they* and instead seeking an existence by being the authentic *self.* In other words, when the *self* perceives true existence, it will also see how it fits into the whole picture of Being. According to Heidegger (1927/62) to study the totality of Dasein, as an authentic being, it needs to be brought "…before itself" (p. 229) to see the truth

> …Dasein's absorption in the "they" and its absorption in the 'world' of its concern, make manifest something like a fleeing of Dasein in the face of itself – of itself as an authentic potentiality-for-Being-its-Self."

This 'turning', then, away from and towards, is a journey towards the real *self*, a discovery *through* authenticity *of* authenticity.

The mindful leaders in my study have begun their authentic journeys on a number of levels, not least of which in relation to the topic of this study, mindful leaders leading *self.* On the subject of mindfulness*,* my participants have recognised the importance of following their own path to what mindfulness means to them and intuitively adapting their own mindful practice to their personal needs. For instance, Tony says:

> …I am not a typical mindfulness practitioner in the sense of traditional practice. I operate in the moment through ongoing self-awareness and self-reflection, I am very aware of my own behavioural impact on self and others. I follow my intuition through

a sense of knowing and complete trust. Mindfulness for me lies in the ability to be creative and finding new ways of experiencing life.

Tony's words resonate with a teaching by Krishnamurti's (2003, p. 43), which encourages individuals to find necessary guidance within themselves:

...most people, when they are confused, disturbed, want to return to the past; they seek to revive the older religion, to re-establish the ancient customs, to bring back the form of worship practised by their ancestors, and all the rest of it. But what is necessary, surely, is to find out whether the mind that is the result of the past, the mind that is confused, disturbed, groping, seeking – whether such mind can learn without turning to a guru, whether it can undertake the journey on which there is no guide. Because it is possible to go on this journey only when there is light which comes through the understanding of yourself, and that light cannot be given to you by another.

Finding the right path to walk is one journey; following the path is another. In dealing with the stress of their positions, the mindful leaders have slowly journeyed towards their mindfulness paths towards a destination of deep understanding. The destination is important, but for Fraser, at least, the journey is itself essential. Fraser has explored certain styles of mindfulness, and has concluded that he needs to find his own way:

...I see the value in meditation but I do battle with it. Because my mind is always racing I am trying and exploring all those things, like for example do not name things and I do that to some extent but I am never effective in it. But one of the things that I do is I generally, after my gym workout, I will go into the steam room because it is usually empty. It is a good time for me to actually just say right now focus on your breathing so I focus on my breathing to clear my mind. Just try to actually quieten things down and so it does work really well for me.

Here, Fraser shows that he allows himself the space and time to be in his own company on his own terms, avoiding any 'rules' of mindfulness that others might impose. He is aware that this time, which is not 'classic' mindfulness, is essential to him and to his professional effectiveness:

…mindfulness is really critical to me and the more I practise it, and the more I use it, the more I sort of need it. So it has become part of my experience. I am aware when I have actually been flat out and a "chicken without a head" for too long. I actually just need to get some time, need to stop and get off and actually go and find a quiet place to refuel as I just do not have the capacity to participate.

Others among my participants also talked about how their personal expressions of mindfulness provide many options to help them clear their minds and shoulder the burdens of their day. Ruth started her journey towards authenticity, through psychotherapy, which helped her to deal with some of the hard issues, and later she approached mindfulness through guided meditation and by attending silent retreats. She explains the way she practises mindfulness:

> …I have to really think about that because it has become a way of a life for me that ironically enough is more unconscious than conscious. I have some routine practices which I do, which I think ground me and allow me to be more mindful in a large proportion of my life. So things like walking in nature, doing my yoga practice, moving meditation and learning about mindfulness have made me aware… I do not believe that mindfulness is a particular way, but I do believe that I have found a way that works for me on an individual level and it is important to me to be real about the experience.

Like Fraser, Ruth has found her own path, and is walking an authentic journey in her practice of mindfulness. It seems that it is important to the mindful leaders to know that they have the freedom to find forms of practice that will not take them on a 'second-hand journey'. Steve too has been directed to take traditional view of mindfulness to practise his daily meditation and teaching Sharman tradition to himself and others. This seems to be an important part of his day to day living. However, there is a sense that he is not devoted to the practice, but rather, is deeply interested in developing a form of practice that aligns with his beliefs: He explains this by sharing his experience about the effect from a visit to Brazil:

> …being away from the city and from everything and being in that kind of peaceful area, one of the things that I got from it myself was that peacefulness is so important and to have that peace inside. If I do not have that peace inside, then I track the bird's

nest or if I do not know where to find that peace inside then the bird's nest is going to be there. I think meditation is important for that and however you do it, everyone seems to think that you have to sit down, cross-legged, and that is not the case. You can get that sort of state through something physical through Tai Chi or other activities that feels relaxing, which is a form of meditation. It is nice to sit down and relax by going into myself and calming myself down and without the need for alcohol or whatever to just be.

The same sense of finding an individual path is reflected in Tony's perception of his mindfulness practice:

...with all the best intentions as I said before, you find something in your life, you find some experience that helps you to go back into the coherent vibration if you like. Where you can be connected in a good way to all things you will always find that the coherence will tune and those thoughts will come back to you. In a positive way. That is why I believe that in order to also attain the highest level of mindfulness I always look for something that gives me a sense of peace and something that helps me to love that or bring that feeling of love into myself. I feel completely and totally at peace in that moment.

What the mindful leaders have all demonstrated here is the importance for each individual to find their own authentic journey. The commentaries offered by the mindful leaders in my study seemed to chime with Heidegger's (1927/62) insistence on recognising conformity, inauthenticity and lostness, emerging from a cocoon state, and taking responsibility for living a life of through a personal ownership. The mindful leaders have discovered the importance of recognising their own journeys by having a better understanding of their existence through mindfulness practice. This practice has been carefully calibrated to their personal values and what feels right to them, giving them a buffer between the stress and pressure of their jobs so that they can become whole beings. This is brave and powerful as the majority of people tend to accept what they are taught and never find their authentic journeys.

Chapter 8

Theme 2: Opening up to self in being a leader

In the last chapter the idea of *taking hold of self* was explored. Obviously, the material on which the idea was based came from the leaders who are the participants in this study, but the discussion was quite general, and could apply to the whole of the human race, not to that part of the population whose occupations involve leadership roles. In this chapter *taking hold of self* is applied specifically to being a leader, in *opening up to self in being a leader.*

Clarity and focus

The core of the experience of the mindful leaders leading *self* is the clarity of thinking and perspective they have achieved in their everyday lives. Heidegger (1927/62) says that each Dasein has been given a space, a familiar environment which is the reflection of a social space. Being in the space means *being-in-the-world* and having material things *ready-at-hand, but* for many Dasein, the familiar space becomes the whole world, and meaning contracts to what is *present-at-hand.* Dasein take up space in a distinctive way, which Heidegger (1927/62, p. 346) calls Situation: "…in the term 'Situation' there is an overtone of a signification that is spatial. We shall not try to eliminate from the existential conception, for such overtone is also implied in the 'there' of Dasein". *Situation*, then, is about doing and how action takes place in engagement with the world, and some sense, it harks back to the notion of *theyness* and how easy it is to get so caught up in someone else's view of their world that any vision of authenticity is lost. Thus, "…for the 'they' however, the situation is

essentially something that has been closed off. The 'they' knows only the general situation, loses itself in those opportunities which are close to it" (Heidegger, 1927/62, p. 346).

Being bound into Situation, or (in a more Heideggerian expression), being lost in the immediate, is likely to always limit focus and clarity. The mindful leaders seem to adapt to their different situations by using mindfulness to apprehend clearly and to focus on the issues that need to be dealt with. Ruth, for instance, says:

> …I am aware when I am not mindful which triggers me to be mindful. I realise that I am not in the flow and other times I know I am in the mindful space. When I am not in that space I notice my thinking being narrow, and I am feeling anxious about something. I am being emotionally triggered by the feeling of my thinking is not at ease. In these cases, I pull myself right out and I need to look at things differently, and that in itself is a trigger to see things differently, be open to a wider sense of thinking and noticing.

Ruth seeks clarity in the space of social interaction so that she can adjust her reactions to and attend to the important elements of the situation. The leaders all require clarity and focus as required to be fully productive. Fraser explains his clarity as the benefit he reaps from calmness:

> …the calmness, I am always aware of it when I walk into the day, things feel so much easier and calmer and it is almost like resetting my capacity to cope. So as a result when I get to the client or wherever it might be and I get involved in facilitating or being in conversation whatever it might be, the capacity, part of my mind has been emptied. I am so much more capable of being and holding stuff for people. My capacity to cope is enhanced and therefore I can help people. I feel a lot more effective.

Fraser's clarity and focus make his more sensitive and aware of matters that are skewed or out of true, something the other leaders also experience. Steve speaks of how clarity and awareness are essential to successful communication:

> …at work I can experience the need to be self-critical, in situations that I have to be mindful about how I communicate and so my intention always is to be as clear as I can

in my communication and with the communications I put out as well to be cautious about the perspectives of the people. So I am trying to be aware of that and how I know it is my style but I also need to be aware of how can I be clearer, be more succinct in what I say.

Thus, it seems that the mindful leaders in this study are aware of the importance of being understood and are aware when they have not established shared meaning. By leading *self,* they take responsibility for the message and its delivery not because they are self-serving and desirous of showing how they are in charge, but more because they are concerned with the greater good of the matter at hand. Ruth feels that her mindfulness allows her to contribute meaningfully to interactions:

> ...it is a sense of safety of being with others. I am able to slow down to be there with the other(s). I am able to take the time to respond to the situation. I am not reacting as I did in the past, I am aware of the bigger picture. There has been a recognition that it is a wider experience and that the experience is not set or permanent: it is fluid. This has provided me the opportunity of seeing things more clearly with a focus through trusting my intuition.

Clarity and focus permit the participants to prioritise what they pay attention to, and to remember the big picture even while they concentrate on smaller tasks. They all remarked that they no longer permit the confusion and detail of big projects to overwhelm them, but rather, that they trust their intuition and lead the *self* in such a way that Situation produces strong outcomes. Fraser expressed it like this:

> ...mindfulness has almost seeded a more planful practice in the day. I need more structure in how I organise my ideas and practice. Having a plan and structure in place makes me less anxious about this open enededness. I feel I have a handle on the situation. This helps in lessening the pressure when I am having deadlines for proposals and projects. Without a plan there is a danger that I spend a vast amount of time on something that actually does not really matter. Being mindful of my plan brings this bigger picture that allows me to focus on smaller pieces of a bigger picture. I am able to trust the process and that I will get the work done before the deadline. I gain a sense of focus and clarity of what I need to do and that is what brings peace

into the experience. I use intuition and my intuitive sense a lot when it comes to decision making.

As I have already mentioned, one of the distinguishing characteristics of the mindful leaders in my study is the clarity that enables them to be effective. Ruth talks about her experience of clarity as a less direct engagement:

> ...I experience a more observer approach and can see more of a big picture. So it is almost like it is not with me in the middle, it is me seeing myself and everything else, playing in a movie. I think it allows me to see the bigger picture, and so make those connections between what is really going on to truly interact with people.

What Ruth is experiencing is the ability of being able to distance herself from the busy-ness of her thoughts to and attain clarity through a 'bird's eye' observation which allows her to see the full picture without intense emotional engagement, which may be helpful, because when emotions dominate, it is sometimes difficult to maintain rationality or even remember the reason behind certain decisions. Heidegger (1927/62) attributes the power of emotions to inauthentic experience in the sense of unresolved, powerful ongoing influence from others that interferes with the individual. The mindful leaders use their awareness to take responsibility for the *self* in their interactions. Steve, for instance, describes how mindfulness prepares him for the day:

> ...every morning I do meditation that helps to set me up to being real. It sends me to that space of calm and I think it is such an important space to be in when you are working, rather than being in a rush sort of situation the whole time. So you can still be sitting here but feel rushed inside but we do not have to be, that is the difference and so it is acknowledging that difference and then seeing throughout the day "Oh hold on, I have shifted out of my space again".

Steve's example shows how practitioners see themselves slip out of the mindful state, and then realise and act on the need to re-enter the space where they have focus and clarity, and are no longer susceptible to the power of their thoughts and emotions, which can sometimes disable, dominate and become all-consuming. Steve explains that both the clarity to perceive the change of state and the ability to acknowledge it is what enables the shift back to a more

resourceful state. This is also emphasised by Tony, when he firmly explains that, "… you must practice regular mindfulness sessions and if you do not see the value in it, you will not get the value out of it. So it is absolutely paramount."

Tony finds that mindfulness allows him the clarity to listen to and trust his intuition:

> …my intuition will become conflicted and, quite often, when I have conflict my intuition tells me that something does not feel right or I am just not comfortable. If I am in a space and it feels right, my heart rate is not changed, I am not feeling any anxiety, I am comfortable in my own skin and then it is right. But the moment I feel a change it is because there is a conflict, and my body is saying, my mind is saying no, because it is not right.

In Tony's case, clarity is strongly connected to a literal 'gut feeling', a deep, visceral knowing that and element of Situation is wrong, or right. He continues:

> …I feel unease and I just feel that something is incomplete. And that is when I have to do my research. Now I can use your mindfulness to actually do that research…what I am putting together, either if I am planning a team meeting or if I am planning a team strategy or if I am planning a company strategy or if I am forecasting I quite often will use that where I will work through the numbers and if I am not totally satisfied with the numbers, if I am with the team dynamics, I will investigate that part, I will go through every single sequential piece of the process. I always know when I am reaching that point where there are question marks because everything else I feel comfortable with in terms of the information and detail I have on it. Whenever I reach the component that is not making sense it is because I always realise, a 100% of the time is because I do not have enough information and that is what my brain is trying to tell me.

The physical unease that Tony experiences appears to focus his mind, rather than distract it, possibly because he has taught himself to frame his discomfort as a signal to focus on Situation, but he also uses it to analyse and achieve clarity about his work.

Heidegger (1927/62) argues that it is important for Dasein to face the truth of existence, and it is my contention that mindfulness is one way to confront the real experience of being a

leader. In the previous chapter, I defined the confrontation as *courage of being,* the courage, in other words, to face reality. In 1923/99, while delivering a lecture, Heidegger told a depressing – actually, an *alarming* – story about Gogh, who "...drew the picture in his paintings from the depth of his heart and soul, and went mad in the course of this intense confrontation with his own Dasein." (Heidegger, 1923/99, p. 27). It is by no means my intention to imply that my participants are going mad, but I do want to allude to the courage they show in facing reality through trust their intuition, clarity and focus. For Dasein to face the often uncomfortable nature of reality is to expand the connection with *self,* which Krishnamurti (2001, p. 62) explains in the following way:

> ...man has always exercised thought as a means to get rid of sorrow by right effort, by right thinking, by living morally, and so on. The exercise of thought has been his game; thought with intellect, and all the rest of it. But thought is the result of time, and time is his consciousness, sorrow, can never end. Whether you go to the temple, or you take to drink, both are the same. So, if there is learning, one sees that through thought there is not possibility of a radical change, but there will be continuity of sorrow. If one sees that, then one can move in a different dimension.

Here, Krishnamurti argues for the realisation that change depends on insight, not reasoning. I maintain that it is in insight, or intuition, that clarity is fully experienced, which is also Fraser's experience. In his job, he needs to be present and focused all day long, and he discovered that one way to achieve the presence he requires is to prepare thoroughly for the day ahead:

> ...so I soon learned that what I would do, and what really an easy way around it, was the night before to draw a list of who I would call in the morning. I would be right so, because there was no pressure then. Absolutely no pressure because I could not call them at 8 pm, 9 pm or 10 pm at night. So cool, so I am feeling all excited about tomorrow, here's the five people I will call, I will call five people first thing in the morning and then that is cool and then I can do what I want for the rest of the night.

Fraser's clear focus on the day to come removes anxiety and urgency from his evening, leaving him free to enjoy his time away from work. It builds a sense of flow and acceptance of what is being in here and now.

Flow in experience

The flow of experience results from clarity, focus and trust that the bigger picture will not be lost in a slew of detail. Flow happens when the need to control is absent. When Gadamer (1975) talks about playfulness, he argues firmly that players do not wish to direct and control as play is effortless and spontaneous. My participants seem to have the same sense of play in the flow of their days, letting go of a command attitude, focusing on the bigger, and allowing events and unpremeditated possibilities to unfold, to the benefit of all involved. Fraser says:

> …in my experience as a leader I am a big picture thinker and my experience of moving into the mindful space has made me aware of the importance of connecting and reflecting on my present moment experiences. This allows me to see things from different perspectives. I am able to connect the pieces of my business puzzle more reflectively.

He goes on to reflect on the power of elevating himself to his mental balcony, which allows him a bird's eye view of Situation:

> …the experience of practice through elevating up onto the balcony provides me the full picture of what is going on and what is important and through focusing on my breathing I am able to reconnect with self and experience a sense of calmness and ease.

Fraser's ability to distance himself and observe events from above, as it were, puts him in a place where the flow of experience is real but causes no distress. In fact, his story suggests that everyday life is not as complex as people think or make it, and in large part, it is a life lived in an inauthentic state that imposes the limitations that complicate existence (Heidegger, 1927/62). When clarity is found, as Fraser showed in his story, flow and ease follows. Steve explained flow in experience as moving events and issues from the birds' nest to the heart, which enables different connections, conversations and, ultimately, solutions.

It was never the intention in this research to produce models that teach ten steps to increased productivity through mindfulness or something similar, but I did set out to show how mindfulness can assist leaders to strengthen rather than buckle under the burdens of their professional roles. Thus, I believe that embracing flow in experience is significant for

leaders because it facilitates trust between and among leaders and followers and thereby boosts team dynamics, which in turn enhances performance (Turkel, 2014). All of these flow-on benefits loop back on to the leaders themselves, reducing their stress and anxiety and increasing their personal sense of satisfaction in the jobs they do.

Even when parts of the leaders' jobs involve difficult conversations (Turkel, 2014) flow in experience helps get the job done, because there is time for detached reflection on the salient aspects of the issue at hand. Steve, for instance, shared a story about how he provides feedback on behaviour that he does not agree with, and drew on the strength he attains from mindfulness to achieve his goal in the session

> ...there is flow state that happens too in being present. You are not sort of thinking of the future all the time. And, not to say that is not important as it is good to have that aspect, but when you are in that now space, it is amazing what you can be aware of to what comes up that then can be resourceful for you later when you are doing things.

Steve shows here how the sense of flow assists him as a leader, and how it enhances his perceptiveness as he works with his people, which happens also in situations where constructive feedback is required. His actions create meaning for the everyday.

Heidegger (1923/2009) talks about the importance of the flow of what is:

> ...a concept is not a schema but rather a possibility of being, of how matters look in the moment [Augenblick], i.e., is constitutive of the moment – a meaning drawn of something – points to a forehaving [Vorhabe], i.e., transports us into a fundamental experience – points to a foreconcpetion [Vorgriff], i.e., call for a how of an addressing and interrogating – i.e., transports us into the being-there for our Dasein in accord with its tendency to interpretation and its worry [Bekummerung]. (p. 16)

Here Heidegger explains the power of the individual to create, rather than merely suffer or endure, experience through the possibilities of the flow in their everyday interaction with the world. Heidegger dismisses organised religion, emphasising instead that each Dasein should read individual religion using personal existential categories. I suspect that my participants find a quasi-religious element to their personal involvement with the flow in experience. Certainly, though it might not have been something they deliberately sought, one outcome of

their mindfulness seems to be an experience that is equates qualitatively to the best that religion can offer. Tony said, "…the main benefit for me with mindfulness, is to experience a state of tranquillity, harmony and peace". Tony may well be approaching what Gadamer (1975) explained: that self-understanding is more than just coming to terms with the *self,* it is a profound unity with the integrity in others. Being aware of the flow in experience and being able to enter it may contribute to that deep awareness of which Gadamer (1975) speaks.

Being-with-one-another

According to Heidegger (1927/62), *being-in-the world* also means *Being-with-one-another* connected in a network in which there are two distinct modes of existence:

> …the Being-with-one-another of those who are hired for the same affair often thrives only on mistrust. On the other hand, when they devote themselves to the same affair in common, their doing so is determined by the manner in which their Dasein, each in its own, way, has taken hold of. They thus become authentically bound together, and this makes possible the right kind of objectivity, which frees the Other in his freedom to self. (p. 159)

According to Heidegger, then, in order to form a cohesive unity with others in the social world, Dasein must see past the general situation (*they*) and find the true *Situation* of *Being*. The mindful leaders in my study seem removed from the selfish *self* and are operating instead with a desire to serve others. They all displayed an intense care for the wellbeing of others and seem willing to commit resources to support the people around them, because their deep purpose is being with others. In this respect, my participants match the Heideggerian (1927/62) notion that the point of existence is not to be *knowers,* but rather, to engage in tasks and people. The participants' attitude to *being-with-one-another* resonates also with Gadamer's (1975) argument that to understand *self*, individuals will also need to understand others. Tony, for instance, illustrates his ability to 'tune in' to other people through his high level of compassion and his intuition:

> …mindfulness in the capacity as a leader has had a significant impact on me through the knowing and awareness of the universal coherence. I experience the connection

with others on a deep level and can easily read the situation and take appropriate intervention. I am aware of the synchronicity with others, I feel a certain chemical response which is very positive, I experience the good feelings with the connection or with the work that I am doing…For me ongoing mindfulness reflection however allows me the experience of universal coherence and close relationship with others that ought to be fully embraced through meditation and reflection.

Here, Tony shows an intense attention toward other beings, tuned into their senses and wellbeing. He achieves this level of awareness by go of his own "drama" so that he is able to dedicate his *self* to the needs he perceives around him, and he does not do this out of a sense of obligation, but because he actively wants to support and guide others. Tony continues:

…I am more open with others, it is no longer all about me and my perspective. I am open to hearing and listening to what others have to say. Even if I have another opinion I can put it aside. I know when it is time for me to listen. It has changed my perspective and how my life is unfolding. Instead of jumping to conclusions I actually do pause and slow down or stop myself… mindfulness allows me to be a better me interacting with people, to make better decisions and to go through by being more aware of everything that is going on.

Tony was not alone among my participants in leading *self* in order to lead others. One way or another, they all created environments in which it is possible for different views to flourish and different needs to be met.

Part of *being-with-one another* is what Heidegger (1927/62) talks about as *Care,* which he states is synonymous with Dasein. Taking care, caring, being care-full – all these subtly different English expressions bring something to bear in understanding Heidegger's concept, but essentially, care means to direct the *self* towards an activity or concept that is meaningful. The mindful leaders have found their purpose of being in others: they have shed their inauthentic lives, and, in marked contrast to the way people live in an inauthentic life (Heidegger, 1927/62), pay attention to what is happening around them and the people they interact with. Because Care directs the focus outward to the other person, the ability to relate seems to deepen, as Fraser says:

...for me one of the big drivers is the privilege to be able to work with some amazing people. I feel they deserve my full attention and I am responsible to make this happen. I need to be in a space where I can give them the 50 minutes or whatever it might be, I am here with them. It is important that I reflect and let things go or put them aside for me to deal with later because right now I need to be here and now.

Fraser's *Care* is evident in the concentrated consideration he pays others which seems to be a way of honouring them as individuals. Fraser's gift of *Care* to his people his purpose in leading others to understand themselves better, and it could not happen unless he had clarity about his own existence and its impact on others. One expression of *Care* among the participants*,* therefore, is their willingness to prepare thoroughly for the moments of encounter with others, so that every is meaningful. Fraser again:

...I find myself regularly stopping to take stock to fully experience my mental and physical space in the moment. I have recognised the importance of being present and engaged to actively listen to people that I engage myself with.

Tony also demonstrates his genuine desire to help others, not for any personal gain, but because he want to assist others to achieve. As he approaches the moment of engagement, he does not seem to carry any sense of entitlement, need for recognition, or status as an expert. He seems instead to migrate into the heart of true Dasein*, being-here-now*:

...I know when to approach and when not to, I know when it is the right time. I feel what other people feel through my complete openness to what is and what is happening in this moment. In being mindful in my leadership I experience people coming together and starting to work cohesively together, as through my own intuition I am able to connect and facilitate this to happen.

Ruth admits that in the past, her communication was about gaining attention and recognition. Ruth has, however, found that mindfulness has significantly changed the way she leads and works with others:

...so I think I am more conscious of us having different perspectives. I did not even think about that before so I think it is, you know it was my perspective and everyone

surely agreed with it. And now I think I see things differently and I can stop and pause and see where other people are coming from. I think that allows us to resolve things differently or see better outcomes…more of a win-win.

In Ruth's connection with others, she becomes aware that most people have different views from one another, and her awareness of this enables her to identify different ways of doing things, and accommodating difference, in fact, was a characteristic of the mindful leaders in leading *self*. The acceptance they showed had a positive impact on all parties involved, as Steve said:

> …in my daily life as a leader I am mindful of the people around me and what impact I have on them either through the language that I use or the actions that I take. I find it very important to be a role model, so what I preach to my clients, colleagues and children I will also do. I have realised that to be a mindful leader is to be the best that I can be and I do not tell anyone how to do that. If I operate as an example, my staff learn that from me through observing my actions so I walk the talk.

Heidegger (1927/62) argues that contemporary human beings have replaced authentic questioning with a reliance on the readymade answers provided by ideologies and the mass media. What he means is that *being-one-with-another* may suffer if individuality is subsumed into a generic way of being. The mindful leaders in this study are aware of the possibility that they could fall into *theyness,* and instead, are conscious of and embrace their singular styles of authenticity in their *being-one-with-another*.

Falling back into theyness

Heidegger (1927/62) suggests that human beings are not able to be authentic all the time, and even though the participants in this study are deeply committed to mindfulness as a way of being, they are not always in the mindful state. There are times that they get confused and experience strongly destructive emotions, or are drawn into the drama of other people's experiences instead of seeking their mindful place. Heidegger explains that people can have times of *fallenness,* those times when politics dominate relationships, when everybody wants to be critical and force their opinions on others, needs to argue and engage in unproductive

conflict. This *fallenness* occurs when an individual stops wondering about existence and moves into a pre-ontological position, into *theyness*. This is not necessarily wrong: it happens, it is part of existence, but its effect is to diminish individuality to the point that fitting in with a prevailing *status quo* can be challenging and draining.

The mindful leaders in this study sometimes cannot avoid organisational politics and concerns. Fraser, for example, shows stress in relation to building up his business and providing a good service and has strong thoughts about being good enough and being able to fully meet needs:

> …the downside is that it is deadline driven. Sometimes there is in fact actually you have to compromise on other things. Now part of it is that the deadline and the pressure of the deadline energises me, I get great work done under the pressure of the deadline. But that is not always good for my mindfulness. That is not for me being present. Because as we get there I am actually becoming increasingly stressed, everything is going on and I become immersed in the here but all the other distractions are also going on. The problem with that then is that I have too much stuff on my mind. When I have got too many things in front of my mind, it is very easy to get distracted by the detail of some stuff and I lose the perspective from the balcony.

When stress dominates, the mindful leaders sometimes slip into the chaos of everyday drama, and start doubting themselves and others. One cause for slipping back might be the guilt that Heidegger (1927/62) talks about, the sense of not being good enough or of wanting to be something other. Ruth talks about her experience with a difficult client and how this person managed to get a "hook" on her over a longer period of time that created confusion and irritation:

> …the challenge that we have had recently as a business is we have done some really good work for a client that keeps saying that she is really disappointed and yet all the feedback and when are together it is all fine. But she keeps sending these emails saying this is not right and that has never been right and I am really disappointed and it has been really challenging and, at one point I wanted to say but you know we are so good at what we do but you know it is not that. And trying to work with her and

you know asking what she needs and what are we missing really looking at that. There are those sort of things that come up where it is easy when you believe in that reputation and quality and all those things and you feel that those things are being questioned, it is really easy to kind of go defensive.

Krishnamurti (1970) talks about how easy it is to give undue weight to individual thoughts, which then become the reality of a person's perceptions and existence. As Ruth has shown here, it is easy to pile up a high level of expectations and then feel distraught and inadequate when those expectations are questioned. Unlike many people, the mindful leaders are aware that they have fallen back into old habits of thought and outworn norms, and they face the change in their state, seeking to regain their equilibrium. Fraser said:

> …I am still feeling a sense of frustration and not able to focus, and in some cases difficult (and important) relationships can be overwhelming and very challenging. I am finding myself waking up in the middle of the night stressing about things that need to be done. The difference now is that I recognise the experience and through mindfulness practice gain a moment of reflection and re-alignment into what matters.

Here, Fraser acts on his belief that mindfulness is beneficial, and responds to the resistance he senses by actively re-entering mindfulness Ruth also took action: she severed her business connection with a difficult client, and the effect of that action was immense for her as a leader and for her business. Thus, it seems that even when the mindful leaders fall back into *theyness*, they will see possibilities for action. Steve in particular told a story reflected the interaction of mindfulness with

> …so I went in [to work] with the intention to get something done and then something gets put on my plate that I will have to redo this for the person that provided it to me. They have not thought it through and so there is frustration. What happened is throughout the day I was mindful, even though I was allowing it to happen I was mindful of the emotions I was going through and then how I was behaving and reacting and playing it. I was playing out that behaviour of being frustrated, and I kind of enjoyed it in a way, as I was having a bit of fun. I realised that it probably was not that healthy as well at the same time and there was someone else at work. I

apologised to him for being a bit frustrated with stuff but he understood at the same time so we had a bit of a laugh about it.

Even through his frustration, Steve is allowing the play through his mindful awareness and accepts the frustration as part of being but he also shows that he understands the importance of questioning what he gains from his mindfulness. Even in frustrating situations, the mindful leaders question and wonder about their involvement with the world.

Thus it is fair to say that the mindful leaders in this study still find that it is possible to be caught up into inauthentic living but that through mindful awareness that they need to change their thinking in that moment, they are able to remove themselves from the situation, and see it from a perspective of observation and participation. This is significantly different from getting caught in the drama and experiencing the pull and tow other people's perceptions and ideas. Fraser said:

> … I am aware that there are still times, or there are a lot of times in the day, when I am actually not completely present but I am aware of it. And when it is important, some of the time, I can pull myself out of it and move into a different space. With the use of mindfulness, I am becoming more adept at actually recognising and saying "…Oh, step up" when necessary.

Tony, like Fraser, experienced a similar reaction to being in a state of frustration:

> …when I start to feel unease and I just feel that something is incomplete, that is when I have to do my research and that is very important to me. I use mindfulness to actually do that research, so I can actually intuitively start looking at information and I have quite often done that. If I am planning a team meeting or if I am planning a team strategy or if I am planning a company strategy or if I am forecasting, if I'm doing budgeting I quite often will use mindfulness where I will work through the relevant processes. I always know when I am reaching a point where there are question marks because everything else I feel comfortable with in terms of the information and detail I have on it.

Heidegger (1927/62) argues the recognition of truth begins with openness to seeing the world as it is by engaging in ontological questioning. For Heidegger the importance of

questioning *being* brings the awareness of the human condition into play, which, in the case of my research, is what pushed the participants into releasing their frustration and the power of historicity in their lives.

This chapter has laid out the experiences of *opening up to self in being a leader,* showing that mindfulness helps the participants to operate with clarity and focus, a flow in their engagement with their individual worlds, and with *Care*. They sometimes fall back into *theyness*, but their awareness of leaving the mindful state often triggers them back into it. In *opening up to self in being a leader* the mindful leaders are recognising that being mindful is a way of engaging with the world truthfully. As mindfulness is helping them in becoming more authentic, the next theme explains how the mindful leaders are *moving forward authentically as leaders*.

Chapter 9

Theme 3: Moving forward authentically as a leader

The last chapter unpacked the theme *opening up to self in being a leader.* The theme in that is the focus of this chapter is *moving forward authentically as a leader*. The mindful leaders have moved into the experience of fully integrating mindfulness into their engagement with the world. In doing so they have become more authentic in how they approach their everyday living. This chapter will focus on how they can authentically move forward by focusing on the better understanding of mood, possibilities, creativity and meaningfulness in   being a mindful leader leading *self*.

Mood awareness

According to Heidegger (1927/62), Dasein experience their existence through the engagement with different changing moods, which are a significant factor in in everyday existence. In Being and Time, section 29, Heidegger examined the emotional characteristics of *Befindlichkeit,* a German term that is hard to translate, but does relate to mood. The German is, "Wie Befindlichkeit Sie sich?" which comes across in English as, "How do you feel yourself to be?" The important aspect of *Befindlichkeit* is attunement to experience, which is processed through registration, reflection and description in a phenomenological process aimed at uncovering experience of being in the world. In short, the single purpose of ontological attunement is to understand *Being,* and in that quest for understanding, moods are a useful guide to the enquiry. Krishnamutri (1991) teaches that moods should not stimulate analysis, but rather should induce awareness, acceptance, and abdication from their power. Heidegger explains that people react in one of two ways to their awareness of moods: they either choose avoidance or rejection because they see the mood for what it really is.

Awareness of *self* is pivotal to the mindful leaders' experience of *being-in-the-world*. The quality of their engagement with their world, through leading *Self,* helps them to be aware of the impact their moods will have on the organisation as a whole and on the people in their immediate vicinity, for, as Heidegger (1927/62) defines mood, it does not belong to a single individual, but becomes part of the experience of the whole world. All the mindful leaders in this study were *self*-aware and conscious of how they lead *self,* staff and clients. Tony explains this:

> …every day I wake up, like anyone else, I have the distractions, I have the things that the "beast" within me would love to do right now but there is another side of me that says today, if I do these things, just for today it is going to be able to do those things tomorrow which going to lead to the bigger picture of where I am going.

Tony shows a decisiveness about the effect his mood could have on both this day and the future. In determining his mode of interactions with the world and everything in it, his mood will guide him in his chosen direction. As Heidegger (1927/62) explains, mood should permit *Feeling-at-home-in-the-world*, the sense of living a purposeful existence. These mindful leaders, purposively focused on leading *self,* are seeking to enhance their *feeling-at-home-in-the-world,* and they know they sometimes need to make adjustments to achieve it. Ruth reflects on her moods:

> …there is one thing that I have learned, which is when something starts to feel difficult it is probably not the right time to be doing it. So when things start to be too pushing, I stop doing it. I experience a sense of responsibility for my own actions in moving forward and seeing things happen naturally and organically. In the process of making decisions I am now able to tap into a wider sense of expression by being open to more sensitive issues that can be challenging and difficult to deal with when stuck in a certain way of doing things.

Ruth recognises and accepts her responsibility for own mood and its potential impact on the situation. For someone in a leadership role, self-reflection is essential to enabling a working environment that encourages cooperation and trust, providing, as Steve says, empowerment to everyone:

…every morning that I do meditation it helps me being relaxed and it sends me to that mindful space, such an important space to be in when you are working rather than being rushed the whole time, and in reality this is only a chosen feeling, that I bring with me into my day. I do not have to feel rushed inside as I do not have to be, that is the difference and mindfulness is about acknowledging that difference and then being with it throughout the day and be aware when I have shifted out of my space again. It is that constant awareness of how my body is responding to different situations.

Steve uses mindfulness to set himself up for the day and engage with his being before his activities start because he understands the effect of the leader's and does not wish to capriciously impose unproductive emotion on his team. Sometimes he will allow a particular mood to exist to helps him achieve certain tasks, but at other times he knows that he needs to take responsibility and change his emotional focus. Either way, he is willing to face that of his experience (Heidegger, 1927/62).

The mindful leaders have recognised through their awareness that they no longer need to be dependent on others, which allows them to respond to situations constructively, rather than reacting mindfully. Ruth remarked:

…I am more aware of my own reactions in the experience that I find myself in and adjust accordingly if necessary. This has given me a less sense of dependency on others to be a good leader and business owner.

Fraser experienced something similar. Here in by let go of being a "worry wart" and became more accepting of what is happening in his being:

…I am experiencing less of being a "worry wart", rather it is as sense of acceptance of what is in this moment. My mood levels have changed and I am more productive and positive both in relation to myself and to others. In moments when I am feeling very distracted and not fully present I am aware that I am not in the moment… I get caught up because of busyness. That is when the second nature just kicks in and the habitualised routine also starts and I know when that happens it is when my capacity is low and limited.

The mindful leaders are aware of their habits in falling out of engagement into *theyness,* but equally, they are conscious of the need to re-enter an authentic state in which they can lead *self* for the betterment of their people and their organisation. As Steve says, mindfulness is always with him, though he is sometimes less aware of it than at others, when he connects to a sense of the profound meaning of life:

> …mindfulness has been part of me the whole time but sometimes I am aware of it consciously and other times I am not so much. So I have always had the belief that there is stuff that happens that we cannot explain scientifically and I am sure will continue to happen as well. Whether it is synchronicities or whatever it is within a group of people from the Shamanic kind of perspective. I have learned the more that you are unlearning the more release of pressure you experience.

The fear and frustration that are part of the human condition are integrated reflectively into the totality of the mindful leaders' experience in leading *self*. Because of mindfulness, however, the leaders have an acceptance of the reality of their days, which allows the presence of emotion, but denies it any power. Steve found this realisation particularly helpful:

> …it is only when I actually learned to relax in situations that are perhaps stressful situations I can be so much more mindful. I can see a lot more about what is going on but when I am tense, it's like my blinkers go on because I have got this fear and these other things that might be happening. This is why meditation is so good for mindfulness because it helps to bring me into that peaceful relaxed kind of state more easily.

The mindful leaders' ability to assess and react appropriately to their mood are supported by trust in their intuition and this relates to their sense of *Care* and purpose. The practice of mindfulness gives them the *courage of being* needed to interact honestly with the world, which is valuable in a work environment as people can assess their performance against the leaders' clearly communicated standards. Tony sees it this way:

> … I trust in my own ability and mind and therefore find myself to be in a good place and even at times where I find myself in a chaotic situation I feel calm in the

experience. I know that whatever is happening now will change and being in a good space will create focus and clarity in what I am doing.

Heidegger (1927/62) relates the mood for an authentic existence. The mood is the guide to the way the world is seen, and mindfulness permits it to be adjusted and aligned with an authentic existence. Thus, being caught in a destructive and indecisive mood, even if it is a reasonable and understandable response to provocation, may temporarily destroy the leaders' sense of *self*-truth and they understand that they must take responsibility for the effect of their presence in Situation. Leading *self* by changing mood in this way has proven to be a powerful intervention that is integrated into the mindful leaders' behaviour. Both Ruth and Fraser found that dealing with difficult people produced such powerful negativity that they were *thrown* into a negative spiral, yet both realised that they had both the responsibility and the capacity to respond to the experience with change: Ruth decided to terminate doing business with her client, and Fraser accepted that the difficult behaviour existed but chose not to let it dominate him.

This chosen flexibility of mood is not a weakness, or a willingness to be swayed by dominant voices, but originates in an understanding that while a variety of views is valuable in teams, reactions to those views cannot be standardised. Ruth sees her interchange of mood very clearly through her mindful reflection:

> …I notice, for example, if I am focused on the wrong type of work, because it is easy, I go and check my emails as it takes less energy. Now I can consciously through my awareness recognise that I have the wrong focus and just switch straight away. I think there is something about some sort of willpower and conscious thinking which goes against what your habits are.

According to Heidegger (1927/62), mood discloses the uneasy sense of *throwness* that people have, but as my participants have shown, it is possible to lead *self* through mood to a clear focus on Situation and to take such action that all benefit. The mindful leaders, therefore, are not at the mercy of their moods: rather, even when they fall back into *theyness,* they are able to return to their mindful state and regain authenticity.

Emerging world of possibilities

Heidegger (1927/62) refers to possibilities as part of *Being-a-whole*, which means to live for what imparts meaning and allows people to realise their potential for being. Even when moods produce hopelessness, and Dasein fall into *theyness* because they are beset by idle talk and the undue curiosity and influence of others, it is possible to find a meaningful existence by *being-towards-the-possibilities*. Krishnamurti (1991) explains that to see the possibilities of existence, people need "...honesty of thinking, clarity, the desire to be open, to invite what is without fear and suffering" (p. 235). Authentic existence is all about possibilities and choice and according to Heidegger, being open to possibilities is a matter of self-appreciation.

My participants lead *self* in such a way that they see the possibilities inherent in their interactions with the world. Some people are influenced by others, and conclude that their own opinions are wrong, changing them to suit their 'audience', which leads to a second-hand life, and is perhaps an easy option for leaders, because they may hope to 'please the people'. The mindful leaders, however, showed an urge to do the right thing for others rather than the easy thing. Allowing solutions to cohere out of a mass of unformed possibilities takes courage, which Tony showed when he trusted his intuition about the set-up of a work team:

> ...all of a sudden everyone is playing in the sandpit nicely together but they are trying to find a way to get it to work. And they actually communicating with each other in a way that I didn't even think was possible. And then I start seeing amazing knowledge coming out of the both of them but then something else amazing starts happening, they actually start acknowledging each other for it. It's like, "God, was this just the two guys that actually were at the table before, they were just about ready to reach over and strangle each other and couldn't stand each other?"

It is brave of Tony to commit to a course of action when he does not know if the result will be favourable or not, but the result of this trust is the opening for possibilities and creativity to emerge. Ruth likewise was brave: she recognised that she was too needy in her interactions with others and that this limited her ability to see the emergence of new ideas. By *taking hold*

of self she allowed herself a wider range of interactions with the world, which had a positive outcome for both her on herself and others in her team:

> …these actions lead me to experience clarity in my thinking. The feelings I experience is a sort of openness, a sense of freedom with no boundaries and limitations. The purpose becomes about the possibilities that present themselves.

The recognition that Being can be limited by their moods and actions impels mindful leaders into a clarity and focus that permits them to see all the possibilities inherent in Situation. Steve sees possibilities in using his gift of healing:

> …I see my body as a gift for healing. Rather than being stuck in a blinkered kind of a conditioned perspective of the world I am able to expand out more and look at what exists beyond that and be open to those things so therefore to be mindful is to be mindful of what else does exist as one part. I am mindful of my thoughts, mindful of my emotions and my behaviours and mindful of other people that surround me and how I interact and affect them.

Steve is letting go of clutter that accumulates from being stuck in a certain limiting condition, understanding that limitations in a leader can have a serious effect on decision making and relationship building Steve's de-cluttering is a form of *throwing* the *self* back out of the *fallen*, letting go of ~~t~~*heyness*. The people around the leaders may or may not understand the leaders' behaviour as openness, but they may perhaps sense the commitment to what is going on. Steve's enthusiasm and conviction would be difficult to ignore:

> …when I am in that now state, it is amazing what I can be aware of, to what comes up, that then can be resourceful for me later when I am doing other things. I fully trust my intuition in how I approach a new idea, the ideas come rolling into patterns. I may be perceived as jumping from one idea to another, but in my experience it all comes together in a beautiful shape.

Being true to what makes personally develops a meaning and purpose for a wider constituency than, not necessarily just for the mindful leaders Fraser reflects on his symbolic for mindfulness, and how it allows him to perceive the possibilities that occur 'below' him:

...the term that I use is going out onto the balcony to be elevated from the issues and stuckness on the ground. The balcony perspective for me is about actually stopping and going out onto the balcony to get a full perspective. What this is for me is about stepping up and out away from the dance floor, I am stepping away from my emotions and the heat and the pressure and the distortion of perspective. And it gives me that bigger picture. So for me the process of consciously stopping and stepping up and out and away is a mindful practice to elevate me to see things differently.

Another aspect of being aware of possibilities is a shift from being *self*-focused to being other-focused, which will encourage possibilities to emerge in good dialogue. As Tony demonstrates, the mindful leaders are able to absorb feedback and ideas from others:

...I have experienced a shift from being self-focused to being other focused from a genuine and authentic place. It is not about me, it is about the full picture of what is happening in the moment and to find the best way to explore all possibilities.

This shift may occur because the mindful leaders are so aware of their being and who they are that they have no fear of learning from others, although for some people in similar positions, this would be an unacceptable declaration of vulnerability and inadequacy. Steve is happy to take action based on his values and sense of *self:*

... I have a deep sense of who I am and what I stand for, and am very aware of the possibilities through my entrepreneurial practices.

Heidegger (1927/62) debates whether the *self* has the *ability-to-be,* to be unified with the sense of *mineness* of existence, and to connect with the past, present and future without being trapped by any of these times, but rather, to observe and learn. The mindful leaders in this study have become aware of the overall experience of who they are and of their *mineness* through self-reflection and meditation taking the knowledge as a freedom which allows for new insights and the courage to act on those insights. This is evident in the work that the mindful leaders carry out daily: they are allowing possibilities to eventuate as they build up businesses that reflect their *selves* and the values they have come to know through embracing authentic experience.

Opening up to a creative existence

Heidegger (1927/62) explains creativity as the ability to be in thought and wonder, to question everything in relation to recognised habits and understanding, and to allow the mystery to emerge.

If I apply Heidegger's (1927/62) concept of creativity to the mindful leaders in my study, they seemed to function at a highly creative level, seeking to move beyond the factual into a realm of activity that cannot quite be explained, and so might be labelled "mystery". Tony said:

> … I am able to consider the bigger picture of a situation as I am more aware of my gut feeling and how to deal with the issues at hand. The difference in the experience is that I am noticing more and I align with what is going to enable the situation to move forward. I am in other words able to pick up more about the information being shared and delivered to come up with a strategy on how to deal with it or move it forward.

To some extent, human existence shows forgetfulness of *Being* because life becomes meaningless when it is too influenced by others. Most people are caught in the blur of everybody else's view which limits creativity, but by contrast, the mindful leaders in this research embrace a creative existence. Tony talked of his creativity like this:

> …I see ways of creating through listening to the gifts from my vivid imagination. I see opportunities by being in the moment, I allow myself to be part of the invention of something new and exciting.

Tony's words bring the discussion back to Gadamer (1975) and his view that being part of the play encourages listening and being mentally, emotionally and spiritually present in that part of existence that is *Being* experienced so that new ideas emerge and take on form through individual and shared action. The act of creation builds a virtuous circle, in which the new ideas stimulate further new ideas, and inspire new models of interaction with *self* and others in their business. Steve speaks of the process of creating:

> …for me the mind is like a parachute, it works best when it is open, it allows for thinking through intuition to know where things are heading and seeing emerging patterns by having the ability to do so through a bigger picture thinking.

The mindful leaders use the gift of their intuition as forward momentum for their creativity and their practice of mindfulness as a way of removing some of the barriers that might limit new ways of thinking. The mindful leaders express themselves with a considerable depth of feeling about seeing new ideas. Fraser said:

> … my intuition is telling me something that is worth listening to, therefore I trust in my intuition when making plans and decisions. The mindful practice allows me to connect with this internal space.

while Steve commented:

> … I find myself to be a very creative soul and see ideas and make them happen, I am not hesitant to try something new and creative.

Both participants showed true enthusiasm for their ability to be creative. Opening up to inspiration while being objective and reflective allows for the pure state of being, as Tony says:

> … my experience is like being in a different mental state, as state of opportunities and creativity. When I am in this space that is when I start to get a lot of inspirations and I start seeing things from a very objective point of view …When I am in a mindful state it means that things start to become a lot clearer with more ideas and concise strategies that then start to resonate in a more positive way. Ideas start to flood in and that is when it is a good idea to start mind mapping, without structure, on a piece of paper or even on my IPhone by using key words. I list the key words and let the idea come into fruition, become real and then make it happen.

Heidegger (1927/62) explains that the truth of being lies in being open to allowing space for the play that permits appreciation for different determinations of *Being*. Through being aware of their moods, seeing possibilities and allowing for the creativity, the mindful leaders see the world from the play of being open to what is and what may be, moving forward authentically.

Meaningful existence

The core of Heidegger's (1927/62) philosophy is about creating a meaningful existence by being present in experience. He refers to this as *staying-here-before-us-in-disclosures*. To understand the way that the participants in this study lead *self,* it is necessary to grasp their whole experience of mindfulness, not just a part of it that may appeal. The mindful leaders experience mindfulness as a totality, not just as a tool for productivity, and furthermore, they know on multiple levels – physical, mental, spiritual, emotional -- as something real that works for them in leading *self*. It is not something I set out to establish with my participants, but I surmise that if mindfulness were not as vividly real to them, it would be nothing more than a burden of unfulfilled hopes. Heidegger (1927/62) explains if a piece of some equipment is removed, the whole tool will no longer work, and so it is with mindfulness: if it is just a tool for self-improvement, it will not work, because its purpose is misunderstood and it is separated from the totality of the experience. For mindfulness to be a true part of human existence, it will have to be the basis of everyday life, as it is for the mindful leaders, who are interested in an ontological inquiry into who they are. Ruth makes this point:

> … I am experiencing the fulfilment of moving into the space and the benefits it has on me personally and as a leader. I am surprised at how easy it was to move into the space of mindfulness and how it actually becomes my experience of being. In my world mindfulness is not something you do, it is something you become and when you have moved into this space it is difficult to change that perspective of being, it creates a sense of meaning and purpose.

Mindfulness gives the mindful leaders meaning, and also it gives them the pleasure of experiencing their *Being* through the eyes of clarity and flow.

The mindful leaders do not try to prevent challenges and problems. They know problems will occur, just as they also know that all experiences, good and bad, easy and hard, have a discoverable meaning for their current and future lives. This knowledge is powerful and becomes part of their engagement in the world. When the leaders move into their mindful space, their view of the world and people changes, and they incorporate the changed view into their leading of others, letting it affect the way they make decisions and see new opportunities. To enable this process, the mindful leaders let go of their neediness and allow

for the flow of existence to become their habitual state of being. No matter what style of mindfulness the leaders practise, they become more aware and attentive to the details of life. One aspect of mindfulness that is fundamental to the profoundness of the leaders' experience is their resoluteness in making things happen. Heidegger (1927/62) explains this:

> …resoluteness does not first take cognizance of a Situation and put that Situation before itself; it has put itself into that Situation already. As resolute, Dasein is already *taking action*. (p. 347)

In other words, to enable meaningful existence, Dasein needs to put itself into the *Situation* and must become the experience. I consider that my participants are doing all these things and that they are creating a more meaningful existence for themselves by mindfully leading *self* in everyday experience, giving them meaning and purpose to live an authentic life.

The three themes show the movement of being mindful of the world through *taking hold of self*, *opening up to self in being a leader* and *moving forward authentically as a leader*. The data gathered for revealed that there are commonalities among the mindful leaders in their experience and understanding of mindfulness in leading *self.*

This chapter shows how the mindful leaders leading *self* are moving into the mindful experience, in *taking hold of self* through courage of being, and by allowing their knowing-awareness to guide them into a different space of being through their ownership in how they practice mindfulness. The next theme, *opening up to Self in being a leader*, explores what *taking hold of self* has done to and for the mindful leaders in their everyday experience.

Chapter 10

The mindful leaders leading *self* – the play in existence

The aim of this study was to explore the experience of the mindful leader leading *self* in order to gain insight into a hidden side of leading: not the theoretical or speculative possibilities of leading, but rather, the conscious, deliberate everyday activities in which leaders engage as they fulfil their roles. Four mindful leaders shared their individual stories of leading and mindfulness, and their stories, when considered from a Heideggerian perspective, yielded rich themes. Some of the themes showed the leaders making individual sense of the practice of leading, while other themes revealed strong commonalities, as though mindful leading produces experiences that, from leader to leader, would be different in detail but similar in essence. The themes provide the sense of a journey, from moving into the mindful space, the effect of the move on the leaders' everyday experiences and moving forward authentically. The findings outlined in this chapter include the profound involvement with mindfulness in leading, the openness to connect with purpose and intention, the idea that there is no single formula for mindfulness, that the mindful leaders experience mindfulness as a way of living by experiencing a deeper awareness of leading and Heidegger's idea of authenticity and its deep connection with mindfulness. The findings are summed up with the idea of the mindful leaders being in their play of existence.

This chapter reflects on the process of undertaking my research and preparing and writing this thesis. First I will present a summary of my findings in relation to the research question, and this will lead into a discussion of the contribution my research makes to knowledge about leaders. Next I will outline the limitations of the study in relation to suggestions for further research on mindful leaders leading *self*. The last section of the chapter records my personal reflections on doing this study.

The research question and findings

The foundation of this research was the question, "*What is the experience of a mindful leader leading* self *in a professional environment?*" The question was formulated so as to direct my research attention towards the everyday life of leaders as they grapple with the pressures

and difficulties of their jobs. As I have already said, my own experience as both as a mindfulness practitioner and as a senior Human Resources professional engendered my fascination with this research topic. I was curious to see if there would be parallels for other leaders with the changes I have noted in my personal engagement with my personal and professional worlds.

The findings confirm my own experience that mindful leaders are profoundly involved in the processes and outcomes of leading. Here, 'profound' is not a word that I am using lightly: it is a considered lexical choice which I want to unpack. The leaders in my research have found ways to connect to *self* in a way that imparts meaning to their lives. In a Heideggerian sense the leaders have let go of "theyness" (Heidegger, 1927/62, p. 177) and allowed themselves to interact with the world and their followers with no artificial barriers of ego or status needs. I think that the profound place from which my participants lead is defined by courage, which I have come to see as a necessary antecedent to entering and operating from a mindful space. Becoming mindful, in all contexts, but in leading in particular, requires courage: first, because it requires openness to the unfamiliar and second, because also it may attract criticism for lying outside the accepted norms of management behaviour.

The findings show how deeply the leaders have embraced mindfulness, and how this integration permits clarity of thought, openness to possibilities and creative flow (Gadamer, 1975). Mindfulness seems to diminish the drive for recognition and status, building instead a sense that the leaders live true to themselves and to others, a finding that resonates with Heidegger's (1927/62) explication of authenticity towards the s*elf*. The findings show that mindfulness does not remove unhappiness, problems and stress, but rather, that it points a way towards comprehending and accepting the events that created adverse reactions. This finding supports Manz's (1986) notion that mindfully leading *self* prompts less reactive assessments of challenging situations. In the light of this finding about the advantageous outcomes of mindfulness, it would be wonderful to be able to report that mindfulness is easy to embrace, but unfortunately, it takes courage to be mindful, and courage is hardly ever easy or straightforward. I maintain that it is an act of courage to face and release the mistakes and disappointments of the past, and then review the present for possibilities and solutions, especially for leaders, who are trained to understand problems by tracing their origins through organisational history, habits and established practices. For a leader to adopt mindfulness is not just "doing some meditation": it is more about changing unsatisfactory

ways of doing things and being open to surrendering habits, ideas, values and beliefs that no longer serve themselves or the organisation. This process can be painful, but it appears to allow the leaders to enter a place of possibilities and authentic existence as part of the play of life.

Two other clear findings in this study are that becoming mindful is an experience that individuals open up to with purpose and intention, and further, that there is no one formula for how to be mindful. These ideas are closely intertwined: for instance, my participants related that (for different reasons) they all needed to find meaning in their lives, and that in opening up to mindfulness, they changed and in the change, they realised an openness to being real and authentic to themselves and others. At the same time, the four participants each experienced the change differently, though perhaps it might be more true to say that they each experienced a different change: Ruth, for instance, loosened her tight focus on her own affairs and realised the value and meaning of listening to others in their worlds. Tony found that mindfulness stimulated his creativity, while Steven experienced mindfulness as openness to new and different ways of understanding everyday life. Fraser's connection with mindfulness has reduced his inner turbulence and has had a positive effect on his work with projects and clients. Each participant, therefore, has reaped different benefits from mindfulness, because each took a different need to the mindful space. Similarly, each participant enters the mindful space in a different way: the metaphors of place or movement that signaled entry into the mindful state were as individual as the need and the experience. One interesting observation about my participants is that although they all come from a Western background, in the totality of their mindfulness practice, they exhibit strong elements of the Eastern perspective (Djikic, 2014; Weick & Putnam, 2006). In other words, they seem to have moved beyond merely 'doing mindfulness' to the point that mindfulness has become a way of life.

The implication of these findings is that leaders and organisations should not envisage that the introduction of mindfulness programmes is the 'next big thing' as a form of professional development or (more cynically) as a cheap way of reducing stress and burn out among senior staff. There is no single teachable formula of mindfulness that that can be successfully delivered: mindfulness is not a vaccine against stress and unhappiness. In fact, it may even be counterproductive to push the concept of mindfulness to people who are not willing or ready to reach inside themselves to that place of profoundness accessed by the four mindful

leaders in this study: unwilling, compulsory participation might well create anger and increase stress and suspicion.

Chapter 3 showed that there has been a gradual but significant move in the conceptualisation of leaders and leading, away from a very dated model of command and control (Drucker, 1988) towards a greater self-reflection and self-awareness among leaders of their impact on the world around them (Argyris, 1994), towards understanding the management of meaning (Schein, 1985) and towards transformational leading and visionary thinking (Bass, 1985; Holladay & Coombs, 1993). Leaders are envisaged becoming more authentic in their interactions (Goleman, 1998; Terry, 1998; Mayfield et al, 1998) and as leading them*selves* in truth and happiness (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Furthermore, the literature is clear that the practice of mindfulness can give leaders a beneficial awareness of followers' reactions and needs (Carroll, 2010; Dhiman, 2009; Gehrke, 2008; Passmore, 2009). My research has contributed to the body of knowledge about leaders, especially about leaders leading *self*, by offering conclusions based on an empirical study. In other words, I have found out what four leaders actually *do* to lead *self*, and there is little evidence that other researchers have approached the topic from the perspective of hermeneutical phenomenology.

A further contribution to the body of knowledge is that I have moved away from any prescriptive models of leadership to the actual experience of leaders, digging into the core of the existence of leaders and the essence of leading *self* in self-awareness through self-reflection. Ancona, Malone, Orlikowski and Senge (2007) argue that leaders carry a significant burden of expectations which can cause distress and affect their personal lives to the point of burnout and illness. My study shows that mindfulness in leading *self* develops a deeper, positive awareness of the meaning of leading, which includes care of followers, the greater good, and importantly, one's own being. In this respect, my work supports Carroll (2010) in conceptualising leaders moving into a place of wisdom and gentleness towards the *self* and their individual worlds.

That leaders understand that to lead *self* has potential for working good in the world. For leaders to lead *self* means they take responsibility for both their actions and their reactions, and that they are so conscious of the world in which they operate that they can adjust to their experiences, not over-emphasising the matter at hand, seeing life for what it is and in trusting the outcome. Leading *self* develops self-trust and allows for the action of intuition and letting things happen if they 'feel right'. This deep self-trust develops "flow" (Chakraborty, 1995, p. 211) for leaders, the people around them and the organisation as a whole. In this sense and application, leading *self* creates possibilities for movement and exploration where previously, there was a feeling of being stuck, and being bound by certain ideas and procedures.

People who lead *self* are more likely to recognise mindfulness as more than simply a tool for problem-solving or facilitating meetings, and rather as a complete way of being that emanates from a deepened understanding of the essence of being. It is likely that leaders in the western world will realise the benefits that accrue from mindfully leading *self*, and it is therefore important that they come to understand mindfulness not simply as learned knowledge but as an ontological awareness of the nature of being and becoming. Individuals need to understand mindfulness from a broader ontological standpoint so that they experience and practice it from a perspective that is right for them. Therefore, mindfulness must be introduced in ways that allow for individual development, and programme must emphasise an authentic journey, flexibility and openness. *Self* is not easy to explain or define: people need to understand it as part of being and awareness of being: as the dimension of being that allows changes of viewpoint about the meaning of existence. Leaders who are willing to open up to mindful living will need to find their own ways in to the space and their own meaning once they are there. The benefit of this, however, is that other leaders may, like the participants in my research, find open-mindedness, flow, clarity and creativity, leading to useful new ideas, improved procedures and trusting, meaningful relationships with colleagues and other leaders.

Being mindful shows a high level of trust in *self* as well as in others (Gehani, 2011), which is evident in the stories told by the mindful leaders in this research. The lived experience of my four participants resonates with the concept of being *in tune* with what is and their everyday experience, with the 'realness' of individuals' existence (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). In this

study, 'to lead' is synonymous with awareness of the *self* in all aspects of leading behaviour, and mindfulness has been shown to help the leaders move into space that is attuned to the true *self*. The research makes a further contribution to the body of knowledge about leaders by exploring how mindfulness contributes to letting go of the inauthentic existence that causes the suffering and pain that many leaders currently experience (Tuleja, 2014). In relation to this point, my research confirms and extends Gehrke's (2008) idea that when leaders find meaning in their roles, they are better able to support the development of both people and organisations.

The stories of the participants indicate that for them, mindfulness is not simply a form of knowledge, it is a way of being, and the 'way of being' therefore needs to be questioned (Heidegger, 1927/62). Carson and Langer (2006) argue that one of the positive effects of mindfulness is that it increases awareness of everyday situations because it tends to lead people into dialogue, and that these conversations create calm and clarity because people connect on a deep and authentic level. I would like to see such conversations occur more frequently between and among leaders, to help them release their practice from any limitations in their mind-sets. I have witnessed the power of such conversations with leaders, and have observed that although they often cannot name what they gained, they are nevertheless cognisant that they did gain something of significance. My research has confirmed for me how important it is to let meaningful conversations happen and so that leaders find the authentic *self*.

Another significant contribution of this research is the connection of Heidegger's (1927/62) view of authenticity to the experience of mindful leaders. The mindful leaders who are the participants in this study opened up to the possibilities of their lives by seeing *self* as it is, which resonates with the Heideggerian view of authenticity. My study shows examples of authentic existence: the participants see themselves for what they are and accept that insight into the essence of their being. Shamir and Eilam's (2005) definition of authenticity is borne out by my research. They nominate the following four characteristics of authentic leading: (1) "… authentic leaders do not fake their leadership" (p. 396); (2) "… authentic leaders do not take on a leadership role or engage in leadership activities for status, honour or other personal rewards" (p. 397), (3) "…authentic leaders are originals, not copies" (p. 397), (4) "…authentic leaders are leaders whose actions are based on their values and convictions" (p.

397). This study shows that the style of authenticity delineated by Shamir and Eilam (2005) occurs naturally when leaders move into mindfulness. I maintain that by allowing their authenticity to come to fruition, the leaders will lead a simpler life because they will relinquish the complexity of the mind, often produced by fear and high expectations of themselves based on others' ideas. A different approach to the world may lead to a place of less strain, openness to others' views and optimism about the benefits that might emerge from real conversations and a less judgmental attitude. Ultimately, organisations are likely to be served by such a change, because if pressure is less, productivity may well be more.

Previous research has revealed certain factors that can help people towards more mindful living: self-leadership (Brwon & Fields, 2011; Chakraborty, 1995), emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2004; Landy, 2005; Scott-Hall et al., 2007), and an understanding of neuro-science (McDonald, 2009; Schmidt, 2011; Sousa, 2012), all of which provide leaders with a basis for developing self-awareness about how they interact with their worlds. Concepts such as self-leadership or emotional intelligence may be influential factors in the early stages of mindful understanding of *self*, but Heidegger (1927/62) maintains that the further individuals move into beingness, the less conceptual and the more experiential they become. Nevertheless, these are good starting points for becoming familiar with *self* and for entering mindfulness. When I began my journey into mindfulness, I used many concepts developed by others to try to understand the idea better. The ensuing confusion then encouraged me to simply let things be as they are, and I now find myself able to be the being that I am by being awake to and aware of my ongoing experience. I share with the participants in this research the benefits that mindfulness brings to my role as a leader: like them, I can take part in what is going on around me, but I am not held down by them.

Although it may seem counter-intuitive, this study has shown that in developing awareness of *self*, mindfulness also fosters connection to the world beyond *self*. The stories of my participants show that mindfulness is not necessarily a case of understanding, but rather, of acceptance. Leading *self* shows the mindful leaders investigating experience and becoming authentic in dealing with both the experience and the people around them. The mindful leaders in my study have recognised the importance of bringing meaning into their everyday life and using it in their engagement with the world. This finding bears out Langer's (1998; 2000) exploration of mindlessness, which in her work meant to be separated from authentic

experience. The leaders in my research, however, were not mindless, and showed, in fact, that opening up to *self* has brought them richness in a world filled with suffering and pain. Mindfully leading *self* has not made them immune to pain, but for them, its effect is different: they are able to move from mindlessness to meaningfulness through the formal meditation or reflection of their mindfulness practice.

The play in existence

Gadamer (1975) speaks of "being of play" (p. 107), by which he primarily means both the interactions of people with one another and with phenomena, and also the intra-actions of individuals with *self*. The concept of play as action, whether inter- or intra-, however, is not fully realised, unless it is understood in relation to the wide scope of meaning the word has in English. For instance, 'play' can refer to 'playfulness', passing the time and having fun, or it might bring to mind organised games, with rules and referees. It raises the idea of something being 'in play': that is, going forward, taking place, under action. The same notion underpins 'playing out': waiting for the result of an action (or inaction), seeing what will happen. It can also mean 'performance', bringing something into being. My point here is not to give an exhaustive list of the different ways in which 'play' can be used, but rather, to deepen the idea that leading *self* mindfully opens people up to the play in existence, which is interaction and intra-action interpreted through all the subtle variations of meaning possible in 'play'.

I maintain that the participants in my research function in, as I will call it, the *play in existence* in the richest way the word can be understood, and that this is the outcome of the *self* engaging with mindfulness. In this sense, the *self* is open to possibilities and limitless creativity as children are when they play. However, in another and very real way, the "play in existence" is also the performing of *self*: the bringing into being of the essence of an authentic person. This can be explored in opening up to the idea of ontology by being curious and passionate about the meaning of life.

An ontological questioning of the meaning of life is pivotal to this study, and the vehicle of this questioning is the experience of being a mindful leader leading *self*. The participants' stories show how important mindfulness is to leading *self* in their engagement with their professional roles and with their lives. Previous research talks about self-leadership from the

point of view self-motivation and following personal values and beliefs (Manz, 1996): moving forward, in other words, by self-regulation (Manz & Sims, 1987). My study shows that mindful leaders find a stronger sense of freedom in their existence and that this opens possibilities and creativity in leading. Current research (Baron, 2016; Sethi, 2009; Tuleja, 2014) shows how mindfulness can help in leader*ship*, but not much has been done to show how mindfulness affects *leaders*. The themes identified in this study have been captured in the 'reflective' model drawn below. This model is not intended as a framework of what a mindful leader is about, but rather, as a starting point to encourage ontological enquiry for individuals. Mindfulness is such an individual encounter that I do not believe it is possible to formalise the phenomenon of being a mindful leader leading *self*.

Moving into mindfulness
Taking hold of Self
- *courage of being*
- *knowing-awareness*
- *authentic journey*

Experiencing mindfulness
Opening up to Self in being a leader
- *clarity and focus*
- *flow in experience*
- *being-with-one-another*
- *falling back into theyness*

Leading self
Moving forward authentically as a leader
- *mood awareness*
- *emerging world of possibilities*
- *opening up to a creative existence*
- *meaningful existence*

Model 1: Mindful leaders leading *self* –the play in existence

Drawing on the experience of the participants in this study, Model 1 lays out the meaning of mindfully leading *self*. The figure reveals the openness and reflexivity in what it meant for

these mindful leaders to lead *self*, and shows how the themes emerged from the leaders' reflection on their sense of the nature of existence. These themes offer a holistic interpretation of leading *self* in an ongoing search for self-knowledge through reflection and participation influenced by the teaching of Martin Heidegger (1927/62), Jiddu Krishnamurti (1991) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975).

Gadamer (1975) asserted that play could be captured in the form of art, by the "...true being in the fact that it becomes and experience that changes the person who experiences it" (p. 107). In relation to his idea, I will argue that the model above represents the art of being mindful, which is something that changes continuously, never setting into a firm shape. Gadamer (1975) refers to the idea of "...being totally involved in and carried away by what one sees" (p. 125), which is not simply a search for knowledge, but a search for the truth in experience. The leaders in this study show their dedication to mindfulness and are, as Gadamer urges, "totally involved" in seeing the world from a perspective that allows life to be a play rather than a struggle. Leaders who can embrace "the play" (Gadamer, 1975, p. 107) will be creative and adaptable to failure and gain. This will lead to fewer arguments about what is right or wrong, and it encourages stronger relationships with less competition and fewer comparisons between and among people. Encouraging staff to be real about their participation in the play will bring more humor and lightness to organisations, and should encourage fruitful conversations, with less manipulation to gain favors or benefits. I personally believe being in the play of creativity will lead to a fruitful existence.

In summary, I submit that this study has contributed to new knowledge with its empirical focus on leaders and the function and integration of mindfulness into the practice of leading *self;* the focus on leading *self* to become more aware of the meaning of being a leader; the use of hermeneutical phenomenology to examine how mindfulness connects with leaders, and finally, the individual stories themselves, and reflective process used in identifying the commonalities in the stories to explicate the phenomenon of being a mindful leader leading *self* mindfully. In short, the overall contribution lies in understanding authenticity in leading *self.* This is not only important to research: it is also important to leaders practicing leadership on a daily basis.

Implications of the study

As the aim of this study was not to create a conceptual framework, the significance of the research lies in the stories told by the mindful leaders. The stories are personal and reflective. The themes that were drawn out showed how the four mindful leaders experience being a mindful leader leading *self*. It would be a wonderful outcome of the research if other leaders entered the hermeneutic circle by reading the stories and were thereby encouraged to see the benefits of mindful leading. The model above is the starting point of identifying their response to the findings in this study, and to question what it means for them, which is the start of *taking hold of self*. Passmore (2009) showed mindfulness lends meaning to leading: the stories told by the participants in this study confirm his argument.

For leaders to take hold of *self* and to apply a mindful approach in their leading, it is essential that the concept is communicated in such a way that their curiosity is piqued and their courage is stimulated to move into a mindful space. As I argued in chapters 1 and 2, among the uninformed, mindfulness is often equated with religion, and is therefore seen as something that only certain types of people take hold of. I therefore contend that it will be important to translate the benefits and purpose of mindfulness into a language of authenticity that encourages leaders to be true to their purpose through possibilities and creativity. Mindfulness is not just a tool to achieve greater calm and less stress, but rather, a way of participating in this world. It gives a perspective that life is in the *play in existence*, something to actually enjoy. Mindfulness alerts followers to the cycles of change and movement, and in *being awake to and aware of what is,* leaders can let go of their everyday suffering and live a more fulfilling professional life, and a deeper sense of *self.* Therefore, if leaders integrate mindfulness into their lives, they will view the world with more clarity, and the noise and the influence of others may diminish, which will not only be favourable to the individual but also to the communities with whom the leader engages. I firmly believe that by reading the stories and taking hold of s*elf,* leaders will become more authentic in their leading.

This research has shown that mindfulness is not just another leadership fad in a continuing 'wave' of appealing ideas that sweep through management teaching and practice, but is something that really works for leaders if it becomes part of their lives. This message needs to be directed towards as wide a group of leaders as possible: captured in books and

workshops and ongoing communication with those leaders who have been courageous enough to tell their mindfulness stories. This could easily become a movement of change that will show leaders how to truly be themselves. My work shows that such deep change is real and is possible, but I suspect that many leaders need to lose their present concept of their identity and open up to who they truly are.

Limitations of the research

The aim of phenomenological research is not to produce a concept or framework that can be generalised to other situations, but instead, to shed insight on a particular, quite parochial, phenomenon. In this research, the depth of insight required in phenomenological research was obtained through twelve interviews with four mindful leaders actively concerned with leading *self*. The stories deal with personal experience, and therefore cannot be extended as exemplars of practice to other leaders, although the stories might well encourage other people to emulate my participants and find their own way towards mindfulness.

Four participants may well be perceived as a very small number – perhaps even too small a number – but I can defend this limitation because I am interested in the lived experience of mindful leading, and I knew that it could be gained only by establishing deep rapport with participants, so that they would be willing to share their stories. From the beginning, I designed the research with multiple data-gathering sessions in mind, and so repeat interviews with four participants was manageable, giving deep insight into their worlds. On the other hand, to have only four participants inevitably limits the voices that speak, in the sense of having a range of cultural backgrounds, socio-economic standing and education, but this may be countered by the richness of the data. Then too, the study does not focus on any particular style of mindfulness practice, so groups of practitioners who employ a more formal approach may consider that the research adopts an overly narrow, or even a flawed, approach. However, my interest lies in the experience of being-in-the-world; therefore, I chose not to specify the style of mindfulness, which I could have done had I singled out a particular group of people to participate.

Future research

The latest research shows and increasing interest in mindfulness and leaders, explicating what it offers leaders in terms of benefits and how it works (Perlman, 2015; Sinclair, 2015; Waldron & Ebbeck, 2015). Recent research further also explores the relationship between mindfulness and ethical behaviour, not only for leaders but also for organisations too (Eisenbeiss & Knippenber, 2015; Lucas, 2015; McGhee & Grant, 2015). Some research touches on leaders and well-being and how mindfulness assists productivity (Malinowski & Lim, 2015), and there is even work on the global need for managers and how mindfulness can help in becoming more united as a world (Griffith, Sudduth, Flett & Skiba, 2015). All of this research is valuable, because it all contributes to drawing attention to the importance of mindfulness for leaders. However, I hope to extend my research in mindfulness and leaders into developing a better understanding the philosophical underpinnings of the teachings of Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Jiddu Krishnamutri, examining their standpoints in relation to mindfulness practice and leading. I see their teachings as being powerfully significant to philosophy, and not to be ignored, because understanding of *self* is pivotal to leading a meaningful life.

In relation to this ambition, I would like to undertake a comparative exploration of the thinking in the West and the East, to simplify the density of the subject and to encourage further research in how to lead *self*. I would like to use these research projects to encourage more leaders to lead *self,* so it will be important that the projects are reported in a way that guides and facilitates das-man by opening up their awareness to existence, Dasein.

As a phenomenologist I would like to undertake research that would specifically deal with mindful leaders in their relationships with others, and at the same time, investigate the experience of people (not necessarily mindful people) who work closely with mindful leaders. The richness of ontological questioning through the hermeneutical circle offers valuable insights into experience through the stories of people living through the phenomenon in question. The richness of these stories may encourage more questioning and self-reflection about how mindfulness can help to lead a more meaningful life as a leader.

Last words

In this study, reflection has been essential to my involvement with the research. I myself have been mindful in every aspect of the research, both in my interactions with my participants and in relation to sharing my personal experiences of mindfulness and its benefits for me as leader. I have shared my presence in and involvement with the study, and my efforts to present the participants' stories in as real a way as possible, letting their voices speak so that their insights light up the pages. However, I too participated in this research, and some personal involvement with the interpretation is inevitable: I am in the world with others, I am influenced by my historic perspective, my personal awareness of *self,* and so forth. The stories therefore contain a sense of my experience intertwining with the participants' experience, and I believe this adds to the richness of the stories and the themes. I strongly agree with van Manen (1984), who says that the researcher needs to have a level of passion and understanding of the phenomenon in question, because if this is not so, the realness of the recorded experiences is limited. As I indicated in Chapter 5, when I explained my personal experience during the conversations and being able to join in deep speech with the participants, I was able to gain even more profundity by reflecting on and questioning their experience based on my own experience.

Carrying out this research has given me a deeper sense of being-in-this-world and a deeper understanding of the meaning of life. I have felt that the discovery of understanding phenomenology through the hermeneutical circle was a gift, and I have found intense joy in reflecting on and exploring something that I am passionate about: finding meaning in life. Reading Heidegger (1927/62), in particular Being and time, has deepened my understanding of mindfulness, because, although Heidegger uses different language and has different ideas from mine, much of what he writes of speaks fluently to me. That said, I did not try to understand every aspect of his philosophical teaching, because if I uncritically accepted everything he proclaims as real, I would not be real and authentic to my own experience. Throughout this study, I have been fully aware of the experience of the research, which includes reflecting on the meanings I derive from other people's opinions, and so the research contributed to my lived experience of being true to myself leading *self* through an awakeness and awareness of how the research affected my existence. I will always be grateful for the experience of doing a doctorate built on my passion for ontological enquiry.

Just a last few words before temporarily closing the hermeneutical circle: choosing mindfulness as a way of living opens immense and rewarding richness in being-in-this-world. Chaos and suffering do not dominate my everyday experience: I am in peace with what is and what will become, and this is something that gives a deeper meaning to everything I do. Like the participants, I still live through days when I am caught up in inauthentic experiences, but I perceive those days as offering a different kind of richness, because they deepen a particular form of experience and understanding. I am a deep advocate of mindfulness and would like to see more leaders realising the same richness and how being mindful in leading *self* changes the perception of existence …in other words, *opening up to the play of existence.*

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A U T E C
S E C R E T A R I A T

16 April 2015

Rosser Johnson
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Rosser

Re Ethics Application: **14/370 A phenomenological study: A reflection on the mindful leader's behaviour.**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 16 April 2018.

As part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 16 April 2018;

- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 16 April 2018 or on completion of the project.

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this. If your research is undertaken within a jurisdiction outside New Zealand, you will need to make the arrangements necessary to meet the legal and ethical requirements that apply there.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at ethics@aut.ac.nz.

All the very best with your research,

Kate O'Connor
Executive Secretary
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: Therese Walkinshaw

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

   31 October 2014

Project Title and Questions

A Phenomenological Study of a Mindful Leader's behaviour

 1 a: What triggers leader's decision on entering the mindful state?

1 b: What behaviours result for the leader entering the mindful state?

2:   What does the leader gain from being in a mindful state?

An Invitation and purpose

My name is Therese Walkinshaw, and I'm a PhD candidate at Auckland University of Technology. I'd like to invite you to participate in a research project about mindful leaders. The aim with this study is to investigate the mindful leader in action by focussing on mindful leaders' behaviour and hearing their stories (via interviews). Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the project at any time prior to the completion of data collection.

The benefits are that you will be provided with the opportunity to reflect on your experience as a mindful leader and, potentially, becoming more aware of how this manifests in your everyday life. Further, by sharing your stories this may help others to gain a better understanding of the benefits and the practice of being mindful. And because there is very little research on what it means to be a mindful leader, I anticipate that my PhD will advance the scholarship in this area.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

I have identified you because we know each other and I know you practice mindfulness and you have been in a leadership position in your professional life for at least five years.

What will happen in this research?

Over a period of at least three months I will interview you three times. Each interview will last for between one and three hours. This means the total time I am asking you to commit is between three and nine hours. In total, I will interview four leaders including you.

What are the discomforts and risks?

I don't foresee many discomforts or risks. I will not be asking questions about sensitive or personal matter and, in the very unlikely event that some part of the interview causes you discomfort or upset, you are free to ask for me to stop the recording device, you are free to choose not to answer any question and you can ask for the interview to stop at any time.

How will my privacy be protected?

When I refer to you in my research (in my thesis, a conference paper or journal article), I will use a pseudonym, so that no-one will be able to connect you to any of the comments in my work. I will also change the name of the organisation you work for, and ensure there are no other details that could identify you in my work. Only my supervisors and I will have access to the interview transcripts.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There are no financial costs; the primary cost is time. I would like to gift you a $50 voucher from Withcoulls to say thank you for your participation and time.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Please let me know within one week if you would like to take part in my research.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

By completing and signing a Consent Form.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

I will provide you with a summary of the research once I have analysed the interviews.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Rosser Johnson, rjohnson@aut.ac.nz, phone (09) 921 9999 ext 7818.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, koconnor@aut.ac.nz, phone (09) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher Contact Details:

> Therese Walkinshaw, PhD Candidate, School of Communication Studies, Faculty of Design and Creative Technology, Auckland University of Technology (09) 921 9999 ext 9204 or therese.walkinshaw@aut.ac.nz

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

> Dr Rosser Johnson, Associate Dean (Postgraduate), Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies, Auckland University of Technology (09) 921 9999 ext 7818 or rjohnson@aut.ac.nz

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Consent Form

AUT
UNIVERSITY
TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TAMAKI MAKAU RAU

Project title: The mindful leader in action: A phenomenological study of mindful leaders' behaviour.

Project Supervisor: Dr Rosser Johnsen and Dr Frances Nelson

Researcher: Therese Walkinshaw (PhD student)

○ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 15 October 2015.

○ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

○ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.

○ I understand that data may be kept indefinitely and may be used anonymously in future research projects.

○ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.

○ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.

○ I agree to take part in this research.

○ I wish to receive a summary of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes○ No○

Participant's

Signature ....…………………………………………………………

Participant's

name: ....…………………………………………………………

Participant's

Contact Details (if appropriate):

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Date:

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Attachment 4

Confidentiality Agreement

Project title: The mindful leader in action: A phenomenological study of mindful leaders' behaviour.

Project Supervisor: Dr Rosser Johnsen and Dr Frances Nelson

Researcher: Therese Walkinshaw (PhD student)

○ I understand that all the material I will be asked to transcribe is confidential.

○ I understand that the contents of the tapes or recordings can only be discussed with the researchers.

○ I will not keep any copies of the transcripts nor allow third parties access to them.

Transcriber's signature: ……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Transcriber's name: ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Transcriber's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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Date:

Project Supervisor's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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***Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on** type the date on which the final approval was granted **AUTEC Reference number** type the AUTEC reference number*

Note: The Transcriber should retain a copy of this form.