

Novel ways to prevent burnout and depression: Authentic and mindful presence

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Not only is our world changing more quickly than ever, it is becoming linked together in ways that we did not imagine before. With too many things to keep track of, too much information to absorb, and too many people to stay in touch with, it is incredibly easy to get distracted, overwhelmed, and fragmented. In addition, we are facing ever increasing demands and crises on a daily basis. Rather than getting locked into a rigid style of managing or overusing winning strategies from the past, these challenges require a more sensitive assessment of the situation, a new way of viewing problems, and creative approaches to prevent burnout.

How can we give our full attention to what is needed and be fully present to others,--not to mention to ourselves? How can we strengthen our connection to our own natural confidence and resourcefulness? How can we inspire positive change in us and others?

Authentic presence is the ground of individual authenticity. It's knowing and being comfortable with yourself, optimized access to our instincts, being mindful and genuine. Practicing this stance, we are perceived as transparent, trustworthy, and compassionate by others. However, authenticity is not just an end state, but a journey in itself. It means choosing moment-to-moment to be completely present to the situation and to synchronize mind, body and communication in all interactions. It also means learning more deeply about the things that really matter to us as individuals, and being willing to share our aspirations with others.

This program will focus on three general competencies:

1. Authentic Presence

We all possess it but sometimes anxiety and fixation on the past or future makes it difficult to experience the presence. However, by settling into the very moment and relating with what is actually occurring, we can release the things that keep us preoccupied and limited.

Mindfulness practice (i.e. being aware in the moment, stepping back, breath) helps strengthen the ability to be present. One focus of the course will be the use of mindfulness at the workplace.

2. Skillful Authentic Communication

From this ground of authentic presence we can then learn to communicate skillfully. Blending honesty with clarity and compassion, we can honor our differences and practice the essential skills of collaboration. Appreciating a variety of styles, we see the strength that each represents, both in ourselves and others.

3. Effective Action

Honoring our own authenticity and that of others' and becoming skilled at communication provides the ground for a most important competency—that of promoting effective action. Working with a simple, yet sophisticated model of change, we learn how to navigate change with more resilience and to respond courageously to the many challenges we encounter.

Methods of the course program

In this course, modern and effective approaches of burnout and depression prophylaxis will be combined with mindfulness practice and ancient wisdom. The coursework utilizes practical theory, skill building and real world application to foster in-depth practical, professional and personal development.

Benefits of the course program

- Use mindfulness and presence at the workplace
- Find well-being and meaning in work
- Balance work and life commitments
- Integrate core values and performance
- Gain skills and confidence in leading change
- Optimize your strengths

About the history of the program:

The Authentic Leadership program was developed out of a series of workshops that Fred Kofman and Susan Skjei conducted at Naropa University in 2001.

The basic premise of the workshops was that people who take fundamental responsibility for themselves and their lives, and are willing to “live in the challenge” of being authentic.

The workshops seemed to capture the imagination and excitement of participants and many people asked for a more in-depth version of the program. In response, Susan developed a certificate program in “Authentic Leadership.” which she has continued to offer at Naropa University for the last 10 years. This program, with its emphasis on mindfulness, awareness and social engagement has forged new ground in the exploration of these principles.