The Hidden Edge

Why Mental Fitness is the Only Advantage That Matters in Business

The EDGE

Powered by Symbia Partners

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For nearly 20 years it's been Jodie Rogers' business to understand what makes people tick, and to use that learning to help them be more engaged, feel more empowered and become more productive for the business they're in.

Jodie is a **human behaviour consultant**, **skills trainer** and **facilitator** with a background in **psychology and interpersonal communications**. Jodie founded her company **Symbia** with a specific focus of helping **leaders build dynamic teams of emotionally and socially intelligent individuals** who are proactive problem solvers, resilient in the face of change. With her team, Jodie works closely with global corporates empowering them with the insight and courage to drive business results and unlock **the importance of 'Mental Fitness' as a catalyst for growth.**

Jodie is Author of #1 Amazon best seller 'The Hidden Edge – Why Mental Fitness Is The Only Advantage That Matters In Business,' the core insights of which inspired the game-changing leadership development programme, The EDGE.

The EDGE

Book a call: symbiapartners.com/call

Preface

This book is the product of working inside and alongside businesses for the last 20 years. But it's not just my career experience that I've poured into the book, it's also my personal experience. I've seen what a lack of 'mental fitness' and even basic mental health can do to people. I grew up in a small fishing village in the north of Ireland where thinking about your thoughts, emotions, or behaviours was not a done thing (still isn't). I was a teenager during 'the troubles' where bombs and shootings were a routine part of life. Self-actualising, or any form of personal or professional development, was not generally on the top of people's lists, nor was mental and emotional well-being. But people fought, they believed thatmore was possible, that what you had wasn't all that there was. There was always hope.

My childhood was idyllic. My two brothers and I spent our days outside exploring, climbing trees, swimming in the sea, building makeshift huts, plotting against imaginary foes, inventing submarines, and flying go-karts. Yet, at the age of 11, I distinctly remember my twin brother, Johnny, slipping into a form of childhood depression which lasted for a year or so. There were many potentially contributing factors; reflecting on it today he believes it was because academically he was a square block being forced into a round hole. It was also the first year we had ever been separated (as I went to an all-girls secondary school at 11). The teacher who told him he was 'only good enough to build walls in the mountains' didn't help either. Small and not so small things can have a disproportionate impact on our life. One single comment can impact our belief in our capabilities and subsequently our performance, if we let it. But it was my parents' firm belief in him and his own inner resolve that saw him through that period.

My mum and our older brother Naithin were determined to find him something *practical* to focus on (none of us are what you would call 'natural academics'). Naithin discovered a film and photography course and, even though it was miles away, my mum drove Johnny there every day. It was this course that gave him a glimmer of hope, a chance to do something practical instead of theoretical like most of what is offered in academia. He flourished. Today he is one of the most successful people I know. He's a wildlife cameraman and has travelled the four corners of the world, working on natural history documentaries like *One Strange Rock, Earth's Natural Wonders*, and *Blue Planet* for the BBC, National Geographic, Discovery, Netflix, and Apple TV. You name it, he's done it. He could have easily

fallen through the cracks. Many of my friends and family (including myself) have experience a mental or emotional challenge at some point in our lives one that has had an impact on how we show up in life and work.

You have too.

How do I know? Because you have a mind, and you know very little about it. Besides, if you met someone who told you they had never ever had any form of physical illness in their life, not even a cold, would you believe them? Of course not It's the same for our emotional and mental well-being. But I don't want to focus on how and where things go wrong. I want to focus on how and where we can set ourselves up for success.

I've spent much of my life in despair at how little is done to enhance, strengthen, and leverage our inner resources, and how little is even known by the general public about our 'inner game'. I'm on a mission to change that, because the knowledge, the exercises, and the tools all exist. They are just not easily accessible or packaged in a way that is engaging, practical and, dare I say it, enjoyable!

That changes with this book.

My business, [Symbia,](#) has been working in this space for the last decade. We work with senior leaders and their teams at Unilever, Coca Cola, L'Oréal, Mondelez, and many more. Our company vision is to positively impact the lives of one million people in the next 2yrs, and we are on track to achieve that. Everything we do is based on the belief that there is untapped potential in everyone.We are our own brakes and our own accelerators. I've spent years shaking and waking people up to their limiting beliefs, the thinking traps in their minds, the emotional patterns playing out in their lives. If we only knew a fraction as much about our minds as we do about our washing machines, we'd be laughing!

In this book, I've sought to curate and blend a number of schools of thought from neuropsychology, behavioural economics, emotional and social intelligence, positive psychology, and so on. I've packaged it in an 'easy-to-grasp' way and brought it to life with real-life case studies, data, anecdotes, and stories from my life and my work. My career began in qualitative and quantitative research; as such, I've interviewed tens of thousands of people over the last 20 years. Every project we work on for our clients starts with a diagnostic phase. Therefore, we have gathered a lot of insight and can see themacro patterns and trends playing out in the companies we work with. I've weaved that insight into the book so you can see how the viewpoints are validated.

It's worth saying though, that I'm not coming to you as an expert, I'm here as a fellow human. I'm championing Mental Fitness because I truly believe in it, because I've had to practise it and rely on it as a way of life. Like you, I'm not immune to life's challenges; life throws us all curveballs, no one can change that. It's how we respond to them that matters.

I've had a pretty good life: the daughter of art teachers, a decent education, and an idyllic childhood: the sea outside my front door, mountains outside my back door. I've travelled the world for adventure and for work. There have been ups and downs, but nothing like 2020.

Like most, my business was affected. Clients postponed workshops, cancelled team sessions, or just completely disappeared as they dealt with the impact of COVID-19. I had a team to support in a time of crisis. My husband's business and income vanished overnight. We live in Spain, so we were in an extreme lockdown situation; no daily exercise for us. There were helicopters in the sky and police patrolling the streets (which reminded me of Belfast in the old days). My two-year-old and four-and-a-half-year-old were not allowed outside of our apartment walls for 45 days. Trying to run a business with two little people with intense cabin fever was enough to impact anyone's stress levels and performance.

But the hardest part of 2020 wasn't any of this.

In January, my dad was diagnosed with cancer. He passed away in May, when we were all still in lockdown. I couldn't get back to Ireland to see him. If he had passed away at any other moment in his 73 years of life I would have been by his side.

2020 kicked my ass, but I kicked its ass back.

What happens to us rarely kills us; it's the story we tell ourselves about what happens that takes us down.

It's easy to stay focused on the 'car crash'; we're designed that way. The negatvity bias insists we pay attention to the negative things because they could be threats to our survival. We therefore need to consciously make an effort to see the positive things that are in plain sight.

This year, I could get lost in the negative story – if I shared it, people would sympathise – but it doesn't serve me. Although my business was affected by the

pandemic, we have bounced back, our team has doubled, and we've brought on five more major corporate clients. The crisis gave us laser focus. We're busier than ever (businesses are finally realising the importance of mental fitness in playing the long game). My goal for the year was to travel less, move some of my business online, and spend more time with my kids. I didn't want a pandemic to deliver it, but mission accomplished all the same. I've also finally birthed the book that has been inside of me for the last seven years – there's a lot to be proud of, yet it's easily missed.

So, my mission with this book is for you to take away one key insight, exercise, anecdote, or tool that will positively affect your life – although I'm confident you'll take away much more than one. With everything that I share I've also shown how to apply it to teams because this is the work myself and my team do every day at Symbia.

I truly believe that we all have untapped potential within us. When we work on and enhance our 'mental fitness', we unlock possibilities in ourselves and in our teams that we didn't know were there.

Part Five
Values: Principles We Live By

Values are a concept that everybody seems to vaguely understand. Some instinctively know what their own personal values are. However, the reality is that most people don't properly understand the concept of values and have never truly done the work to understand what values they have (often unconsciously) chosen to live their lives by. I'm going to help you get clear on your values in the following chapters.

Your values are the principles that you're living your life by. You may have inherited them from family, friends, religion, or politics. Where they come from isn't what's important, but awareness of what they are is.

As with your beliefs, you need to know what your values are because they are influencing your decisions, whether you are aware of them or not. Once you become aware of your values, you can save yourself a lot of pain and time in the future because you can consciously use them as a filter for the big decisions in your life. Your values can accelerate you forward in those decisions. You can use them to help you navigate conflict. You can also use them to pre-empt situations that you might otherwise have to revisit due to a misinformed decision resulting from being completely unaware of your values.

In this part, I'll help you understand what your personal values are and the power they have. I'll share a number of real-life stories to show how an awareness of values has helped other people. I'll also share the impact they can have on teams and why co-creating your team values (and behaviours) can have a transformational impact.

12 Values and Decision Making

You know by now that the key to mental fitness is first learning about yourself, then learning how to optimise your inner game for performance. That's why we've taken you on a journey of self-awareness, helping you see how you see the world (perception), recognising the meaning we overlay onto events, and how that affects our thinking, emotions, and behaviours. Then we've drilled deeper into uncovering our beliefs and now our values. It's this foundational work that will allow us to fine-tune ourselves in the future. The 'fine-tuning' is self-regulation, our ability to mentally and emotionally step out of a situation before reacting; it's our intuition, that 'knowing' that there's a limiting belief working against us or showing up as resistance within our teams. It's here, in this 'knowing', that I believe wisdom lies.

When working with corporate teams, especially leadership teams, I always get people to work on uncovering their personal values. Although they like the idea of finding out a bit more about themselves, they don't always understand why it *matters*. I often get looks that say 'aren't we here to work on the team? Why am I looking at myself?' In many cases, people are also confused as to what exactly personal values are.

Let's face it, it's not as though we had a class on values in school.
From time to time (but rarely) they might come up in conversation, but generally it's not a topic that is well discussed or understood. That's why it's worth first exploring why they matter so much, as well as how we can access them to accelerate decision-making, to navigate conflict, and to understand our 'gut feelings'.

So, what are values? Essentially they are concepts (ways of being and thinking) that we deem to be important. They tend to be represented by single words that are often high level, conceptual, and open to interpretation (which is why it's so important that we go a level deeper and explain what the value means to us) – examples include transparency, justice, bravery, and integrity.

Much like beliefs, we adopt values from our environment, what we are exposed to, what we learn from our family, religion, culture, and politics and our experiences in life.

Values are usually fairly stable, yet they don't have strict limits or boundaries. As we move through life, our values may (but not often) change. A good example of how they might shift can be found in your definition of success. It's very likely that your definition of success in your twenties versus your thirties versus your forties will have changed.

In your twenties, there's a tendency to be focused on money, usually because you've been scraping by since you were a student. In your thirties, it might be more about status and promotion as you attempt to climb the ladder. In your forties, success tends to become about meaning, purpose, and contribution.

As our definition of success changes, so do our personal values. This is why keeping in touch with our values is a lifelong exercise. We should continuously revisit them, especially if we start to feel unbalanced … and we can't quite figure out why.

Values underpin the basis for much of our behaviour. They are abstract and tend not to be obvious to people (even ourselves). They represent a combination of who we already are and who we want to be, so they can be aspirational (a way of life that we are striving for but not always able to get right). Because they can be abstract, it's really important to know what they mean to you.

Whether you uphold values of loyalty or truthfulness, charity, or service, you need to know how *you* actually define that word. Take creativity, for example. How I define creativity might be very different from how someone else would define it. For one person it might be very much about the arts and the ability to express their emotions through painting. However, for me it might be the ability to come up with lots of ideas and to be spontaneous when brainstorming an alternative during problem solving.

You see this problem occurring in relationships all the time, because you may think you have the same values as your colleague, your boss, or even your partner, and you may both have the same words for your values. However, what those words mean to each of you can sometimes be quite different. If you're ever sharing or discussing your values with someone else, make sure you qualify exactly what each value means for you and ask the other person to do the same. The key is to avoid assumptions.

When I ask people what they think their values are, whether in a workshop or an online programme, I usually hear the 'sexy' ones. These are the aspirational ones (e.g. freedom, creativity, autonomy, flexibility, and so on). Hardly anyone ever says security, consistency, or fairness (they aren't very aspirational). But they absolutely are people's values, and often they're deep-rooted, operational values that influence our decision making (Figure 12.1).

The difference is they just aren't front of mind. That's why how we uncover our values is as important as the exercise itself. To go deeper, you really need to be forced to 'trade off' your values (be forced to choose between pairs) to fully understand which ones, when it comes to the crunch, you really care about. I'll explain more about that during the exercise later.
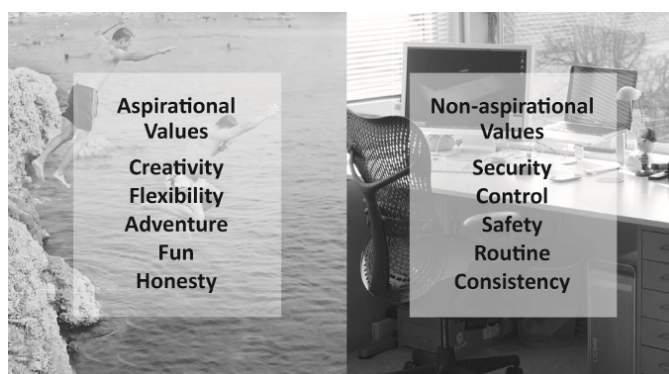
Figure 12.1 Aspirational versus non-aspirational values.

We shouldn't judge our values, though. They all bring meaning and help us live our lives in a certain way, and that matters (whether they are 'sexy' or not is irrelevant).

Let me share a story about Theresa. Theresa had a very successful marketing career; she was a vice president of a billion-dollar brand in one of the biggest marketing companies in the world. We met during a leadership session I was running (she was one of the participants), and she contacted me afterwards to see if I did private coaching. I tend not to do much these days as I much prefer working with groups, but I'll always make an exception for an interesting challenge.

Theresa was in her early 40s with a big life goal: to run her own successful business, after running so many successful brands for big corporations. She had indeed attempted to do so twice with no success and had returned to employment. The first attempt didn't go well because of the 2008 economic crisis; the second one was blamed on a weak business plan.

Now she had come to me for coaching and consultancy around her new business plan in preparation for the third attempt. After years of working with big corporates and a background in market research and marketing, I was very tempted to do just that and focus on her business plan.

Instead of talking about the business plan, though, we did a values elicitation exercise. This is because when there is a 'pattern' showing up in your life, it's a clue to a continued unmet value need. After 30 minutes, we were able to identify that one of Theresa's core operational values was 'security'.

Now, security and entrepreneurship don't exactly go hand in hand. That doesn't mean you can't be an entrepreneur if security is a value of yours, but it does mean that you need that value to be met elsewhere. This is the issue with values: if they are not getting met, you will be miserable, and you'll eventually quit that job, relationship, team – because you feel compromised or that 'something just isn't right'.

As I've mentioned though, the word 'security' can be ambiguous. It means different things to different people, which is why you always need to drill down one layer deeper. For one person it might mean a job with the same company for 40 years, for another it might mean a long-term loving relationship, and for someone else it might be related to money. For Theresa it represented money.

The next line of questioning was: What do you need financially to feel secure? Is it about pensions, investments, equity, cash in the bank? For Theresa it was cash in the bank.

How much cash in the bank do you need to have in order to feel secure? This is the amount Theresa needed so that when she hit the inevitable bumps in the road that come from starting a business, she wouldn't go running back into employment. The answer: £50,000.
Brilliant. That's the goal.

The goal is not to have a watertight business plan; as nice as it sounds, they don't exist, and curveballs will always laugh at your business plan. What matters is that you have a sound business plan and the wherewithal to mentally and emotionally withstand the ups and downs of entrepreneurship. So, that became Theresa's goal.

For the next two years her focus was on saving enough money to feel that she had a 'cushion'. In that time I also encouraged her to experiment (while remaining in her corporate job) with the business plan on a hobby basis to get a feel for whether it would work and if she actually enjoyed the 'side hustle'. Both strategies meant that by the time she eventually went 100% in, she was much more confident in her ability to make it a success and her value of security was already being met. I'm happy to say five years on, Theresa is still in business and hasn't looked back.

When making decisions about your future, knowing your values can save you years of trial and error. Where I tend to see them impact the most is in career choice, business decisions, relationships, and, of course, teams (which are just networked relationships). If you're unhappy working in a team, working on a particular project, brand, or business, and you can't quite put your finger on why, it's worthwhile looking at your values and checking whether they're being met or if they're being challenged. For the last five years we've taken probably 5000 execs on the journey of helping them identify their personal purpose. The majority of those people (but not all) were Unilever employees – because purpose is at the core of everything they do. Anyone in the branding and marketing world knows Unilever ensures all of their brands have a societal impact – they have a bigger purpose beyond selling more product. But what you might not know is that having people with purpose is just as important to

them. Because the data tells us that not only are people with purpose more resilient, they can more easily navigate change and are more engaged in the work they do. Besides this, they are just more fulfilled as employees and their retention is high. How does this relate to values? Well, in order to uncover your personal purpose you can't not know your personal values. They are integral to your larger purpose.

How Do Our Values and Beliefs Differ?

Beliefs and values are different concepts. Values represent our aims and our desires for how we want to live our lives. Beliefs, on the other hand, are rules we have made up based on our capabilities, views of the world, or attitudes towards ourselves or other people. Both values and beliefs shape our map of the world and our perception of what is going on around us. They act as filters on our perception and, as such, it's really important to understand them as they are also the key to shifting our perceptions of the world and thus our experience of it.

Beliefs versus Values

Beliefs	Values
Set of rules	Single abstract words
Come from real experiences that we have interpreted	Principles, standards, or qualities that an individual holds in high regard
Affect the quality of our work and all of our relationships because what you believe is what you experience	Guide the way we live our lives and the decisions we make
We tend to think that our beliefs are based on reality, but it is our beliefs that govern our experiences	A value can be defined as something that we hold dear or qualities that we consider to be of worth

Benefits of Knowing Your Values When Making Business Decisions

Knowing your core values allows you to make effective decisions in life and in business. They are already an unconscious filter by which you make decisions, but they can become a much more helpful *conscious* filter to help you make decisions about your career, relationships, health, finance, and all other aspects of life. They help you understand why you do the things you do.

If you know your values upfront, you can use them to help you when you are making important decisions, such as about whom to recruit into your team, whether to go for that promotion, or whether to move countries. To use your values for decision making, you should assess the options by comparing how many of your values each one meets. Look at which values each option doesn't meet and work out if that's a deal-breaker.

We can also use our values to improve our relationships and navigate conflict. You see, when we are in a disagreement with someone, without information, our tendency is to assume that our disagreement is personal or at the very least due to differing personalities. What's so helpful about knowing our values (and the values of the people we work with) is that this knowledge helps us have a different conversation.

I was once running a three-day workshop with a leadership team in a globally renowned telecommunications company, and during the break a side conversation occurred about the next promotion opportunity for moving someone from a senior manager role to director level. The conversation was quite heated because the two men speaking were in disagreement about who should be promoted. The conversation went something like this:

'The obvious choice is Henry, he's been here for 15 years, he's dedicated and knows the company processes so well'.

'I can see that Henry is strong, but the truth is Geetha is so much better suited to this role than Henry. I know she's not been here long, but she's sharp, she's hungry, and I think she will really challenge us'.

'I don't understand why you're being so dismissive of Henry. We hardly know

Geetha, what signal do we send to people if she's just in the door and gets promoted?'

'We will be communicating that we value talent, that if you work hard, you get promoted! Geetha is crushing it, she's come in here, questioned and shaken up our processes, she's doing things none of us have thought of and it's making a real difference'.

And so the conversation continued. Each one defending their candidate and taking it personally when they couldn't persuade the other to see it their way (remember perception?!).

The great thing was that we were about to go into our 'Values Poker' session, and I made sure they were both in the same small group. At the end of the session (which usually takes about an hour), the leaders shared their values with everyone – I wanted to use it as an example of how we can use our values to understand behaviours, preferences, and positions in arguments.

In the top four values of one of the leaders was 'loyalty'; the other leader had 'pioneering' in theirs. No prize for guessing that the leader who valued loyalty was championing Henry, who'd been there 15 years, and the leader championing Geetha (who was leading the way with new initiatives) valued pioneering.

So who's right? They both are.

The point isn't about who is right and who is wrong. The point is that understanding values helps us move beyond surface-level discussions to understand what we are really debating. The conversation is then not about what's more important – your value of loyalty or my value of pioneering – but instead you get to ask, what are the right values needed for this role?

The next step would then be to understand the values of the candidates and to make your selection based on what the role needs and who the candidate is – not just allow the 'lens' of the leaders (their personal values influencing their candidate choice) to be the only factor that matters.

It's worth noting that our careers don't need to fulfil all of our values, but our lives do. Let's take an example: fun. Most careers tend not to be high on the 'fun factor', but if you have a great social life and every weekend you are doing fun things with your family or friends, that value is getting met, so it's less

important in your career. We just need to know that our values are getting met somewhere because if they're not, it will lead to a feeling that something is missing.

We can *feel* our values, both when they're in alignment and when they're not. In our workshops with teams, I always get people to look back at a period in their career or life when they were unhappy. With the new knowledge and clarity of their values, I get them to post-analyse which value or values were missing. It's always a massive light bulb moment for people.

We typically default to logical and rational reasons for being unsatisfied/unhappy: the salary wasn't high enough, the boss was difficult, excessive stress, etc. We don't always realise that variety is a core driving value of ours, and we accidentally ended up in quite a predictable and routine job, which led us to feelings of boredom and being under-utilised and undervalued, which caused us to leave.

I constantly tell clients that we *feel* our values, whether we are aware of their existence or not. We feel them when they're being met (satisfied, fulfilled, aligned), and we feel them even more strongly when they're not. When values aren't met, it's called incongruence.

This usually makes us feel uncomfortable, unhappy, or heavy, as though something's missing or wrong.

Have you ever had a sinking feeling in your stomach, but you're not sure why? Has a decision been made at work which makes you feel uneasy, angry or disappointed? Have you heard a story about something that upsets you beyond belief?

This may indicate that there's an incongruence with one of your values. It feels uncomfortable and just wrong. When you get this unsettling feeling, look at your values, look at the situation, and understand which value is being challenged. You'll use language like:

'Something just isn't sitting right with me'.
'I'm uncomfortable with this'.
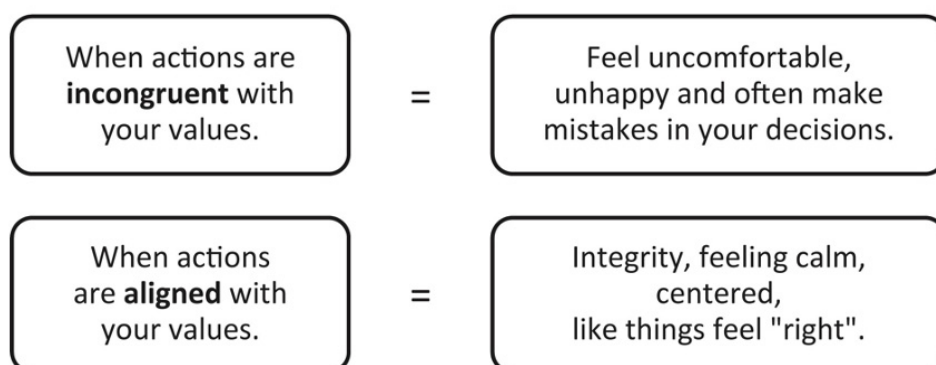**'I can feel in my gut that it's wrong'.**

This is where negative patterns come from in our relationships or our career choices. It's because we are making decisions that are incongruent or the opposite of what our value needs are.

For example, you've got very upset with a colleague over the fact that they've not given you credit for work you've done. People can see that you should be a little upset, but you are uncharacteristically annoyed about it. You wish it didn't annoy you so much, and you wonder why you are so upset. But when you know that justice is a core driving value for you, you can recognise you're upset because someone has violated this value.

Now you can have a different conversation. You can explain your values, what's important to you in life and why what happened is so upsetting. Values help to make sense of conflict, both for yourself and for the people you are in conflict with. Values can be a massive key to unlocking issues when you know how to identify them and when there is an incongruence (they are being violated) or when there is integrity (your values are being met). See Figure 12.2.

If patterns are showing up in your life, it's a clue. For example, maybe you notice that after a year you always get a bit jaded in your role? Or working in a team, if you're not the leader, you become disengaged? Or maybe you feel like your line reports always take up too much of your time? Perhaps you tend to meet the same challenges in your relationships, even if it's with different people? Maybe you always end up arguing over the same things? Or the same problems always come up? This means you need to look at your values, as it's likely there is an incongruence somewhere within them.

When actions are **incongruent** with your values.	=	Feel uncomfortable, unhappy and often make mistakes in your decisions.
When actions are **aligned** with your values.	=	Integrity, feeling calm, centered, like things feel "right".

Figure 12.2 Recognising incongruence.

Importance of Establishing Team Values

As you can see, knowing your values significantly improves decision making, and it's worth knowing that decision-making efficiency is pretty much always an area that the leadership teams we work with get feedback on during the diagnosis phase. Basically, teams want to see their leaders (and everyone really) making decisions swiftly, ones that keep them on course and don't get 'reopened' a week later. Besides the fact that it helps with decision-making efficiency, there are many other benefits to teams becoming clear about their values:

- Values support teams in the decision-making process.
- Values also help teams prioritise how to respond to opportunities and challenges.
- Agreeing on a set of shared values and behaviours means consciously discussing what you expect from each other as a team.
- When you agree to a set of team values, you are also committing to demonstrating them, so they act as a form of 'shared contract'.
- Being clear about a team's values and behaviours makes it easier to point out poor or unacceptable behaviour without becoming overly personal.
- Above all, the process of agreeing on values means that teams have important conversations about expectations and behaviour that they might not normally have.

You'll notice the word 'behaviours' appearing in the list above. That's because values can sometimes feel too conceptual and are open to interpretation. It's fine to stay at just the value word when only one person needs to know what it means (e.g. personal values), but when they are shared, it's best not to leave things open to interpretation. Therefore, it's important to be clear about the behaviours that bring those values to life. This allows you to define exactly what you expect (and don't expect) from people.

Usually in our sessions we always leave the Vision, Purpose, and Values work until the last day. This is when we focus on the future, on everything that's now possible (since the last two days are usually spent acknowledging and removing obstacles to performance). Before we get into the creative phase of

generating team values and behaviours, I always let people know that we will be working in small groups and that it will take at least three iterations. That's because the most important part is what happens in the conversations. Yes, having an inspiring and aligned set of values and behaviours is the objective, but the conversations people have to have with each other to get there is the real game changer. This is when people empty out all of the assumptions in their head onto the table. You get to hold things up, point at them, and ask: is this who we want to be? Do we need to change this? This is the moment when teams start to enhance their collective mental fitness, because they're raising awareness of the assumptions in their minds. There's always a shift in energy at the end of these sessions because there's a feeling that everything has just 'clicked' together. They've been able to address topics which before felt somewhat taboo or personal (people's ideals and behaviours) without having to offend anyone and consequently inspire each other instead.

I worked with a leadership team in the haircare category a few years ago in North America. They were facing some real challenges of trust which was affecting communication, team morale, collaboration, and more. We spent three days working together on the barriers holding them back. On the afternoon of the last day, we worked on team values and behaviours. The session was profound, for a number of reasons. When they shared at the end, one of the leaders couldn't hold back their emotion, saying they just felt an overwhelming sense of relief to finally have (what they felt) the solution to so many of the challenges they'd experienced over the last 10 years. The solution was ultimately an 'agreement' on how they were and weren't going to behave with each other. Of course, this isn't the solution: what you need is for people to follow through on their commitments. But as she had expressed it on that day: 'this just gives me hope, that what we want to achieve is finally possible'. As I said before, the values and behaviours themselves aren't the answer, but they catalyse important conversations which often aren't happening with teams – it's that transparency that can make a difference.

Below are the values and behaviours the leadership team came up with.

Trust
Communicate regularly and often.
Be authentic and transparent.
Make it safe for every single person to be heard.
Admit your mistakes and learn together.
Hold ourselves and each other accountable.
Ask for help.
Deal fairly and with integrity.

Entrepreneurial
Take risks. Break rules.
Challenge everything, but know when to move on.
Be hungry and get after it.
Engage in purposeless curiosity and seek outside inspiration.
Stay agile through growth.
Approach everything with a beginner's spirit.

One Team
Win together. No one left behind.
All hands on deck. Always.
Accept and embrace our differences.
Recognize the team.
Celebrate the wins.
Support and push each other.

Passion
Love what you do, so much.
Creativity is our lifeblood.
Own it. Do it.
Execute with pride.
Always be professional.

There's an issue in many organisations that they focus too much on competencies. Competencies are important, but the idea of mastering the self (or personal mastery) not only benefits the individual, but also the organisation because you've got a group of people who are striving for mastery but who are also becoming real experts in what they're doing.

– Dr David Wilkinson, Editor-in-Chief of the Oxford Review

13 Uncovering Your Values

As I said earlier, if I were to ask you, 'What are your values?' you would likely come up with a list of your idealistic (aspirational) values. They are the values you want to have and the ones you think are important. However, they might not be the ones you're 'operating' from (in other words, the ones influencing your decisions), and that's why going through a values exercise thoroughly is very important.

There are many different types of values exercises. The one I have here separates the values that you aspire to have from the ones that are already influencing your decisions. We call these your operational values.

When I work with teams, I use our 'Values Poker' card game as a fun but effective way of helping people identify their values and share reflections and anecdotes from their lives to help other people understand the context and driving forces behind their values. It's one of our most popular exercises because it allows for a certain amount of vulnerability without making people feel overly exposed. We run it face to face and also virtually (yes, we can recreate a poker table online, and it works surprisingly well). The game allows people to get to know each other at a more human level, to hear anecdotes from their lives, and understand the context in which a person is showing up to work. These conversations create a deeper connection between people and ultimately build empathy and understanding, which, of course, are the foundations that trust is built on. Never underestimate the importance of sharing your story with the people you work with. That's how we enhance the collective mental fitness of the team, by people connecting first with their own inner game and then to the inner game of their teammates – this is the hidden edge to team performance.

In workshops, as we build up to the Values Poker game, from time to time I'll have people pull me aside at the coffee break asking not to be in the same group as someone or mentioning that two people have a difficult relationship and so advise me to put them at different tables. All that means is that they should definitely be in a group together, because they need this deeper understanding of each other. The benefit absolutely outweighs the risk; I've never regretted it. Too often we default to blaming personality as a reason for why people don't get on, when more often than not it's because they have different worldviews and often different values. When you get the chance to see that and understand someone's behaviours through the lens of their values, it changes your perception. Suddenly you don't take it personally any more, because there is a deeper understanding of why the person is the way they are.

Let me bring that to life for you through an example. I was working with the CEO of an aviation company and their senior exec team. The CFO was typically seen as very controlling with money, never wanting people to spend their budgets and counting every penny in the business – which, to be fair, is an excellent attribute for a CFO. It's great for business but not always good for relationships. When playing Values Poker, the CFO described his childhood and how impoverished it was.

He revealed that growing up, his family often went to bed hungry, rarely had meat, milk, or cheese and largely got by on potatoes and grains. Most of his life he lived in poverty, but his father prioritised his education and, by candlelight every night, he dedicated hours to teaching him to read. He went on to get a scholarship, go to college, become an accountant, and eventually become a CFO.

But, he had vowed to himself and his family that he would never let them go into poverty again and that he would do the best he could do for any employer he worked with to ensure their money was safe.

There was a silence. Slowly the other people in his group shared how grateful they were that he had told this story because, until that moment, they just thought he was 'difficult', 'tight', and all of the other bad associations. It wasn't until this story, and the realisation that security was a core driver of his, that they realised why he behaved the way he did and why counting every penny

was so important to him. His behaviour suddenly made sense to people and was seen as a good quality. That's how powerful our personal story can be in helping people understand why we are the way we are. Too often I see teams fall into dysfunction because they operate at the level of assumption; they let too much go unsaid and don't have the right conversations. At the same time, they are charged with running successful businesses, building brands, and disrupting categories. This is usually happening in suboptimal conditions. Just imagine what is possible when your teams not only work on their own mental fitness but begin to work on their collective mental fitness; when they become aware of the narratives and beliefs they've created about each other, about the marketplace, about your competitors; when they understand that the inner game is as important as the outer game, that's when the game starts to get played at a different level.

Uncovering Your Values

This exercise aims to take you through six steps to uncover your personal values. These values will be based on your personal experiences of happiness, pride, and fulfilment, ensuring you are truly uncovering what's at your core. If you're interested on working on your team's values and behaviours, **contact us**, and we'll share a toolkit for you and your team.

The steps below outline how we will work to explore and refine your values:

1. Identify the times when you were **happiest**.
2. Identify the times when you were most **proud**.
3. Identify the times when you were most **fulfilled and satisfied**.
4. **Determine** your top values, based on your experiences of happiness, pride, and fulfilment.
5. **Prioritise** your top values.
6. **Reaffirm** your values.

1. Identify the times when you were happiest

Use examples from both your career and personal life to ensure there is balance in your answers.

- What were you doing?
- Were you with other people? Who?
- What other factors contributed to your happiness?
- What did the experience give you a sense of?
- What was it about the experience that made you feel happy?

2. Identify the times when you were most proud

- Why were you proud?
- Did other people share your pride? Who?
- What other factors contributed to your feelings of pride?
- What were the characteristics you displayed to get you to that point?

3. Identify the times when you were most fulfilled and satisfied

- What need or desire was fulfilled?
- How and why did the experience give your life meaning?
- What other factors contributed to your feelings?

4. Determine your top values, based on your experiences of happiness, pride, and fulfilment

Think about why each experience was truly important and memorable.

Then, using the list on the following page to help you, choose the values that resonate with you. Be sure to include ones that are being communicated in your answers in Steps 1–3. You are not limited to the list; feel free to add your own. Language matters when it comes to values, so pick the words which resonate most with you.

As you work through, you may find that some of these values naturally combine. For instance, if you value philanthropy, community, and generosity, you might say that service to others is one of your top values.

Example Values

Accountability	Determination	Hard work
Accuracy	Devoutness	Health
Achievement	Diligence	Helping
Adventure	Discipline	Holiness
Altruism	Discretion	Honesty
Ambition	Diversity	Honour
Art	Dynamism	Independence
Assertiveness	Economy	Integrity
Awareness	Effectiveness	Knowledge
Balance	Efficiency	Laughter
Being the best	Elegance	Learning
Belonging	Empathy	Love
Boldness	Enjoyment	Loyalty
Calmness	Enthusiasm	Money
Carefulness	Equality	Nature
Challenge	Excellence	Openness
Cheerfulness	Excitement	Order
Clear-mindedness	Expertise	Patience
Commitment	Exploration	Power
Community	Expressiveness	Recognition
Compassion	Fairness	Relationships
Competitiveness	Faith	Religion
Connection	Fame	Responsibility
Consistency	Family-centredness	Reward
Contentment	Fidelity	Risk-taking
Continuous	Fitness	Security
improvement	Fluency	Self-respect
Contribution	Focus	Serenity
Control	Friendship	Spirituality
Cooperation	Freedom	Spontaneity
Correctness	Fun	Stability
Courtesy	Generosity	Status
Creativity	Goodness	Success
Curiosity	Grace	Time
Decisiveness	Growth	Truth
Democracy	Happiness	Understanding
Dependability		

5. Prioritise your top values

Of the values you chose in Step 4, you will now choose 12 of them to represent your top values (or operational values). You will then organise them in order of importance to you.

This will likely be difficult, because you'll have to look deep inside yourself. However, this is important because, when making a decision, you'll have to choose between solutions that may satisfy different values. This is when you must know which value is more important to you.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

11. _____

12. _____

Select the top six from this list that you can't do without. It will be difficult to choose six at first, so create sets of two (e.g. autonomy versus security) and ask yourself which one is the more important of the two. A way to do this is to imagine that you have a job offer that has autonomy but NO security, and equally another job offer that has security but NO autonomy – you have to pick one, which one do you choose?

Keep doing this with all the values until you end up with the final six. It will be difficult but well worth it.

Next, look again at each value you have listed in the previous table. Answer the question: 'Which is more important to me – number 1 or 2?' If you answer number 1, circle the number 1 in the first column. Then repeat the process for every one of the values: 1-3, 1-4, 1-5, and so on, until 11-12. Work quickly. *Some values may overlap, but that's fine; make a choice anyway*. It might also help to visualise a situation where you might have to make that choice. Trading off your values:

1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11	11-12
1-3	2-4	3-5	4-6	5-7	6-8	7-9	8-10	9-11	10-12	
1-4	2-5	3-6	4-7	5-8	6-9	7-10	8-11	9-12		
1-5	2-6	3-7	4-8	5-9	6-10	7-11	8-12			
1-6	2-7	3-8	4-9	5-10	6-11	7-12				
1-7	2-8	3-9	4-10	5-11	6-12					
1-8	2-9	3-10	4-11	5-12						
1-9	2-10	3-11	4-12							
1-10	2-11	3-12								
1-11	2-12									
1-12										

Now count up the number of circles for each value. This is your weighted score. Write down the scores next to each value in the list from Step 5. They are now ranked in order of actual importance, not 'aspirational' importance.

6. Reaffirm your values

Check your top-priority values, and make sure they fit with your life and your vision for yourself by answering the questions below:

- Do these values make you feel good about yourself?
- Are you proud of your top three values?
- Would you be comfortable and proud to tell your values to people you respect and admire?
- Do these values represent things you would support, even if your choice isn't popular and it puts you in a minority?
- After you've shortlisted your values (try not to have more than 4 or 5 or you'll never remember them), a good stress test is to share them with someone close to you. They'll tell you in a heartbeat if you've got the right ones or not. It always makes for a good conversation.

Identifying and understanding your values is a challenging but critical exercise. Your personal values are an essential part of who you are and also who you want to be. By becoming more aware of these important factors, life will be easier.

We're developing awareness of what, within the heart, really motivates you and how you bring that to the situation you're in. We're building awareness of personal mastery, of what your edge is, what your challenges are and what mental and emotional makeup you need to work with. Thinking about the future, we're building an awareness of our world, of how the world is shifting, of how you have mental models and skills, and how you need to adapt those to the world that you're in. I think awareness is the deep capability of the inner game.

– Tim Munden, Chief Learning Officer, Unilever

14 Using Values to Navigate Conflict

When you consider your values in decision making, you can be sure that the decisions you make will be in line with your sense of integrity and what you know is right. You will then be able to approach decisions with confidence and clarity. You'll also know that what you're doing is best for your current and future happiness and satisfaction.

Making values-based choices may not always be easy. However, making a choice that you know is right is a lot less difficult in the long run.

Using Values for Decision Making

We tend to make decisions through reason and logic, sometimes with subconscious (or conscious) belief systems and often using intuition. Few of us actually use values for decision making, usually because of the lack of awareness of our values in the first place.

But many of life's decisions are ultimately about determining what you value most. When many options seem reasonable, it's helpful and comforting to rely on your values – and use them as a strong guiding force to point you in the right direction. In business, using values is essential for efficient decision making.

Values-based decision making allows us to avoid being distracted by external factors that may sway our decision making (e.g. societal expectations, expectations of competitors, shareholders, etc.). They help us make informed decisions based on what's important to us in *advance*, so we don't have to learn *after* the fact that our values aren't getting met.

In addition, values-based analysis is a very useful tool to understand if values are at the core of conflict as opposed to something else. Our tendency as humans is to take things personally and attribute challenges among our team members, or between line reports and managers, to 'personality clashes'. In taking this approach, we often do ourselves a disservice. There can be many variables influencing things, from culture and differing world views, to perception differences and, of course, values.

My team and I were working with a marketing team in the a marketing team at Unilever, where they had extremely stretching targets and very little time within which to achieve them. The team were working hard but didn't seem to be getting anywhere. The vice president of the team called us in as she'd noticed some challenges with the team, in terms of projects being delivered late, inconsistent reasons being given for why advertising campaigns weren't ready when they should have been, and a general bad vibe from the team that she couldn't put her finger on.

The vice president asked us to help get the team to a place of health and high performance in order to meet their business targets, as they were quickly running out of time.

As with all our projects, we started with a diagnosis phase to understand what was really going on. My team and I ran one-on-one interviews (completely confidential to ensure they were open and honest) with everyone in the team, and it quickly became clear that there was a problem between the director of the brand and the most senior marketing manager. It was the tension between them that was affecting the energy and motivation of the whole team.

Before moving on to the next stage, which would have been a two to three-day team session, I asked for six weeks to work one-on-one with the director and the senior manager (first separately and later together). The private coaching conversations usually began with frustration, finger pointing, character criticism, and so on. This is normal; people need to let off steam before being able to raise self-awareness.

The director was complaining that the senior manager only cared about time-lines and didn't really put enough thought into whether the concepts, packaging design, or brand campaign (whatever it was they were working on) was good enough in the first place. It just looked as though she cared more about the delivery dates of work than the work itself.

On the flipside, the senior manager was frustrated because she felt the director was too detail orientated, was a bit of a perfectionist and, because of this, had no regard for deadlines or milestones and would prefer to keep 'tinkering' with things to get them perfect than be respectful of the deadlines. Both parties were frustrated with each other, and it often meant their communication was fractured, with each one feeling that the other 'didn't care'.

What struck me was that they actually both wanted to do a good job and they weren't deliberately trying to annoy each other. The problem was that they had differing definitions of what a 'good job' actually meant.

When we see conflict between people but a clear alignment on the outcome, there is usually an underlying values issue. Rather than spend more time focusing on the relationship, I worked with each of them separately to uncover their core drivers and see if there were any that might have been contributing to the underlying friction between them. I was not disappointed.

Within the director's top values was 'quality' in the number one spot. For the senior manager 'integrity' took the top spot in her core values. On the surface it didn't look like an obvious conflict; indeed, 'quality' and 'integrity' looked like complementary values. But as I've said before, we always need to drill down an extra layer to know how a specific value shows up for a person at the behavioural level.

What was most interesting was that 'integrity' for the senior manager meant 'keeping one's word'. That meant if she agreed to a deadline or a milestone, she was going to put all of her efforts into keeping her promise and delivering on that date. The problem occurred in the relationship because the director was less concerned with dates, deadlines, and milestones (and because of her seniority she also had more influence to move these anyway) – she was much more focused on whether the work being delivered was the best it could be,

that they'd put the right resources, effort, and quality of thinking into the output. It was really clear they were both working with the best intentions for the business, but they were unknowingly 'rubbing' each other up the wrong way while they were doing it, which was affecting the whole team.

After the one-on-one sessions, I then brought them together for a paired session and shared what I had learned about each of their values – then I asked them to consider each of their values and how they might have influenced some of their discussions and even arguments.

It was a massive light-bulb moment for both of them, especially the realisation that they both just wanted to do a good job, but how they got there and what that meant looked different for each of them. Realising that the other person wasn't just being 'difficult' or trying to sabotage the project, but that they were actually extremely motivated to do a good job, went a long way towards easing tensions.

There was a palpable, if inaudible, sigh of relief in the room. This then made way for us to have a different conversation. Now that they both accepted that they wanted the same thing but their values were driving them towards different decisions, we were able to have a conversation about how to get the best out of these differing values and also how to navigate future potential conflict (which was really the same question).

They were both able to recognise that sometimes speed trumps quality and sometimes the reverse is true. So, they agreed that at the beginning of each project briefing they would align on what was more important, what would be the minimum number of quality checks they would put in place to ensure it didn't hinder speed, and *how*, *when*, and importantly *what* corners they would be allowed to cut.

Taking the conversation away from the personal (it's her/his fault) and being able to have a values conversation changed everything. The fact that we can point at values, explain what they mean, how they show up, and what it feels like when they are compromised allows for a less emotionally charged conversation and helps us navigate to solutions. After this work, we brought the team together for a three-day working session, and people were totally shocked at how well the director and senior manager were getting on with each other.

After three months, I went back and spoke to a handful of the team to see how the dynamics were – they said they were completely different! The director and senior manager were even able to poke fun at their values and constantly used them in discussions to make decisions. It had lifted the tension because there was no fault, just understanding, which changed the dynamic of the team for everyone. This is team mental fitness in action. Yes, business plans, budget, strategy, big campaign ideas, and so on are all important. But if your team don't have the right mindset and behaviours to work effectively together, the best strategy in the world won't help to limp into the future.

I know it's controversial to say that mental fitness is the only advantage that matters in business; it's deliberately controversial to encourage the debate. But after working with teams in business for 20 years, I know first-hand that if they don't have their 'inner game' sorted, any and all other advantages are wasted on them.

When leaders, teams, or companies do the work to identify their core values, they're forced to really examine and consider what they're doing and why it's so important. It also allows you to talk about the behaviours that really matter to the team and those that are unhelpful, distracting, or dysfunctional. What's more important is that it lets you address behavioural issues without having to point fingers or cast blame.

As I've said before, it's even more important though for a team to dig beyond the value (the one-word concept) and explain exactly what that means in terms of behaviours. Doing this means a team can align on, and commit to, how they are going to show up for each other. Later down the line, if issues arise, the values can be used as a way of calling out the behaviour that's not working and isn't aligned to the agreed values – meaning you can get back on track without unnecessary drama.

We have an interactive way of doing this with teams which is a lot of fun. As I always explain to the teams we work with, the end values and behaviours you create are excellent tools for helping each other navigate difficult situations, but what's more important than the output is the input.

The rounds of deep conversations they have to have in order to get to a final set of aligned values – it's these conversations that really make the difference. The level of truthfulness and transparency accessed means the team naturally accelerates their trust levels, which is, of course, a priceless benefit of the process.

Team values can then become their collective 'North Star' to centre around, a guide to measure themselves and aspects of their work by. They're a way to hold each other accountable without pointing fingers and also a new and fresh way to recruit new talent into the team. The benefits are really endless!

> If you don't empower people to bring their best selves, their best inner game, mentally and emotionally, then the only lever you're pulling is the 'skill' lever. It's like giving people a luxury pen, but they haven't got the skills and muscles in their hand and the rest of their arm to do the writing. I think the number one issue is that you're missing the opportunity. You're leaving the value of your company on the table. The second thing is you're leaving energy and motivation, by not really encouraging people to bring all of themselves to work. Therefore, you're also allowing creativity, innovation, purposefulness, passion and connectivity to go to waste when these are actually critical for an organisation to succeed in the 21st century.
>
> **– Tim Munden, Chief Learning Officer, Unilever**

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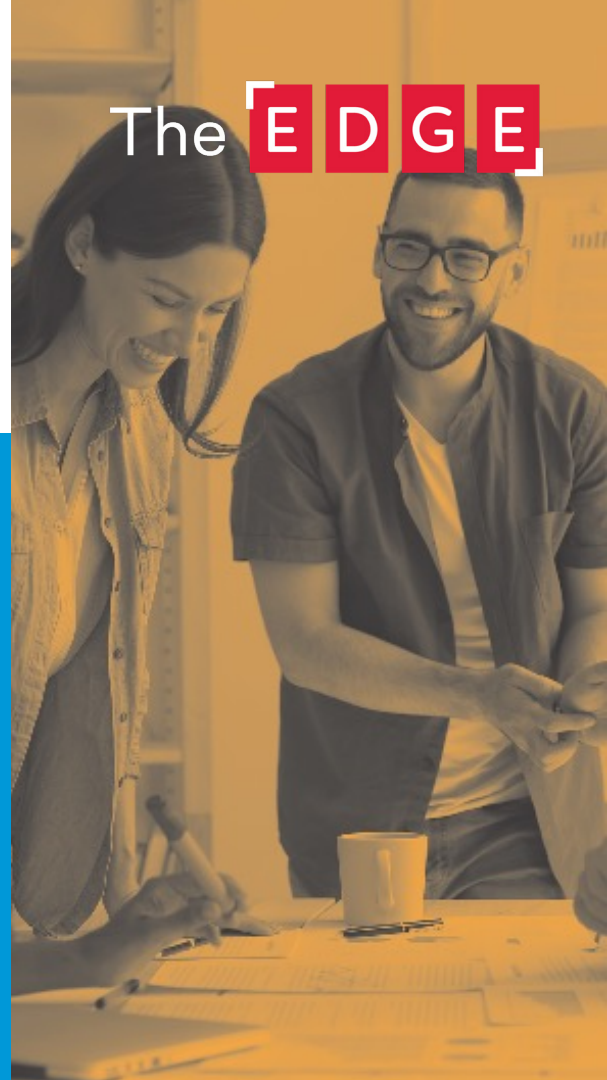
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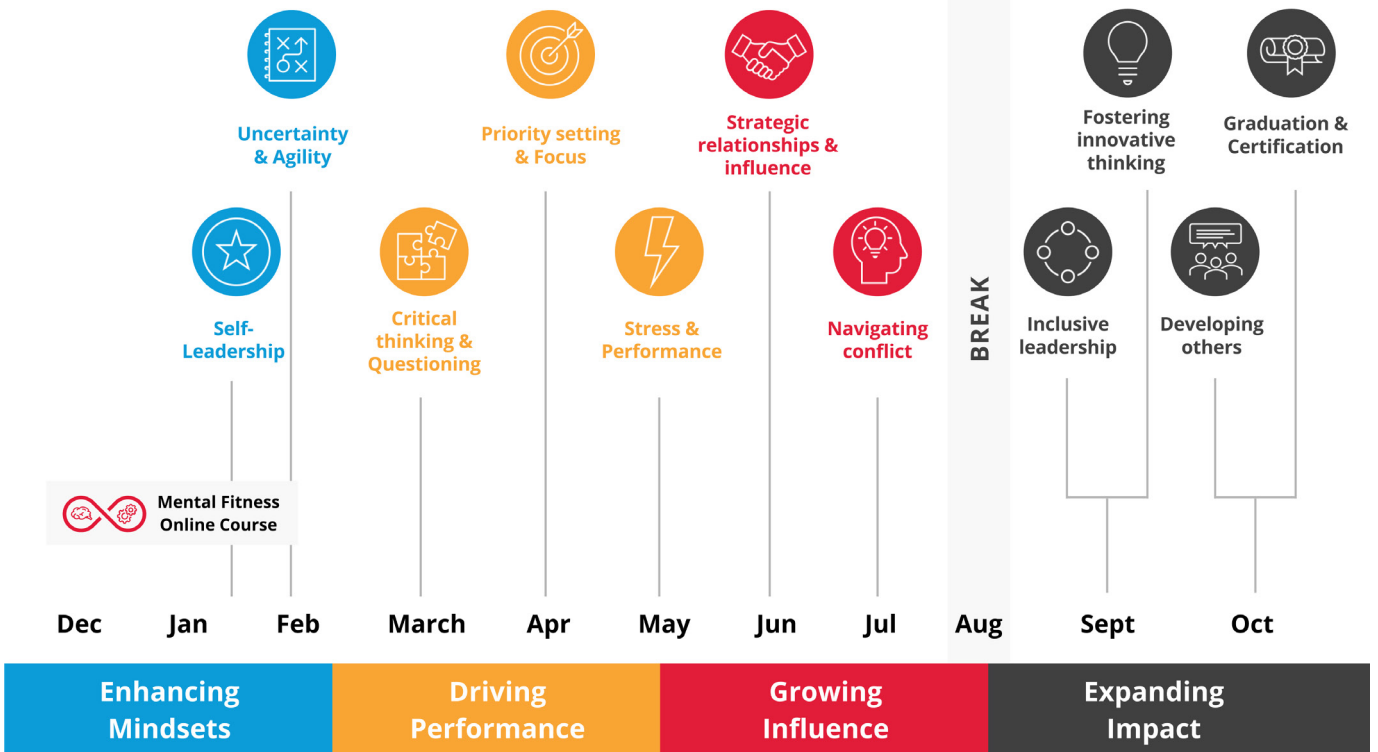
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