

MANAGERIAL AND LEADERSHIP BENEFITS OF READING *SEARCH INSIDE
YOURSELF: THE UNEXPECTED PATH TO ACHIEVING SUCCESS, HAPPINESS (AND
WORLD PEACE*

Maegan Heath

LIS 5023: Management of Information and Knowledge Organizations

March 22, 2018

Are good leaders born with innate traits that make them successful? Is special training needed to help people become leaders? Chade-Meng Tan (referred to as Meng), in his book *Search Inside Yourself: The Unexpected Path to Achieving Success, Happiness (and World Peace)*, helps readers to understand the answers to these questions. He uses personal experience, research, practical advice, and knowledge from practitioners in various fields involving the mind, emotions, and meditation. Meng wants readers to understand that qualities and actions attributing to success, happiness, and world peace are available to all people if they learn how to conjure them with mindfulness practices. *Search Inside Yourself* promotes the methods and research that demonstrate knowing one's self is the core of emotional intelligence. While Meng's book focuses initially on the intrapersonal level, he explains how understanding one's self deeply impacts how successful people are at managing and leading others.

The basic management message of *Search Inside Yourself* concerns emotional intelligence. Throughout the book, Meng (2012) frequently uses knowledge and research to exemplify that emotional intelligence is a prime predictor of success in the workplace. Meng quotes Peter Salovey's and John D. Mayer's definition of emotional intelligence as "[t]he ability to monitor one's own and other's feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (2012, 10). Many management skills stem from emotional intelligence as monitoring emotions and thinking thoroughly before acting are essential skills. For work performance in particular, Meng notes that "emotional intelligence enables three important skills "stellar work performance, outstanding leadership, and the ability to create the conditions for happiness" (2012, 12). He guides readers in understanding how mindfulness meditation and other mindfulness practices can help people, including managers and leaders, be happy and successful in what they do in everyday life as well as in the work place.

Meng's message, throughout *Search Inside Yourself*, centers around people having the innate traits to help them be successful leaders if those people will engage in practical mindfulness practices. Practicing mindfulness helps individuals realize their values, have minds that are peaceful, live happily, and have better communication between the parts of their brain used for emotion and the parts used for thinking purposes. It helps leaders see things from a third-person perspective, be compassionate, and practice empathy among many other benefits. Meng provided multiple success stories of those who practiced meditation. One specifically referring to a management experience described one participant who noted he became a better manager because he learned to listen better, gain control over his temper, and better understand situations. Other benefits of practicing mindfulness that would benefit anyone in a leadership role include: calming the mind, improvement of concentration and creativity, better perception and clarity of mental and emotional processes, improved self-confidence, more resiliency and optimism, and improved empathy as well as multiple other social skills.

Meng referred to several people's experiences and studies that support the management benefits of mindfulness meditation. For example, the book mentions a research study in which affection was the one factor that differentiated the top managers from the bottom quartile. Meng believes, based on results of various studies, that mindfulness practices yield results that will help managers be more affectionate (more open to sharing feelings, more likable) which will yield better results from the people being managed. According to Meng, a person makes others feel better as a result of mindfulness practices helping develop the skills of empathizing, having an open mind, possessing a kind heart, leading with compassion, using goodness to influence, and insightful communication. Each of these traits and practices are applicable to actions of a manager/leader. Overall, in the managing realm, *Search Inside Yourself*, works to emphasize the

need for inner reflection and peace on the intrapersonal level. This will impact the interpersonal level because emotional intelligence and social skills will be enhanced with proper practice.

These methods, and their results, are relevant to librarians in numerous ways.

Much of what librarians do, and the purposes of libraries, involves serving people. These people are likely to be very diverse and have varied needs. Meng's writings and advice can be applicable to all situations involving others. His writings will help readers gain an understanding of core skills and quality thought processes that will assist in many interpersonal situations. These include situations with library coworkers, staff, upper management, and users. Managers of libraries may face negative situations such as complaints, delivering negative news, and advocating for their library and funding. They may need to defend a book in their collection, ask someone to leave the library, lead during a disaster situation, and more. Meng notes that starting with mindfulness training will help a person manage situations such as these because they will hone their emotional intelligence skills. Meng emphasizes the need for compassion in handling work-related situations. This compassion helps organizations go from "I" to "We" to focus on the entire team and the greater good. This helps the organization know that a manager's leadership is authentic and trustworthy; therefore, the leader shows and gains the ever important affection. Affective and cognitive realms of compassion assist the leader is being seen as understanding and as having humility. The motivational component of compassion impacts the desire to help people and serve many. This practice of compassion and serving the greater good will assist in difficult situations as leaders will be better at empathizing and, as a result, will earn respect. Employees will know the leader as someone who is truly looking out for everyone the library impacts. Leading with compassion, and the mindfulness methods involved in becoming successful at leading this way, will have a significant impact on my professional growth.

I feel I could improve in the area of emotional intelligence and related skills. At times, I feel like I can empathize with certain people, but other times I feel insufficient. I am a first grade teacher, and I have to implement empathy quite frequently with my students as their situations and needs vary greatly. Those that live in rough situations often act out with behavior issues. Over the years, my ability to empathize has improved immensely. My ability to take breaths and think with cognitive driven thoughts as opposed to emotionally driven ones has improved. Much of my emotional intelligence struggles arose more with adults. I lacked empathy with them because I felt they are grown and have chosen the way in which they act and how they perform their jobs. This caused me to be less tolerant of people's needs and insufficiencies. I have always approached situations with visible kindness, but I want to feel more positive internally about others. Upon reading the book, it has changed my perspective on working with all people.

My perspective changed because of a few pivotal explanations and ideas in *Search Inside Yourself*. I have already grown, and will hopefully experience more with practice of mindfulness methods, in my ability to empathize with others. Meng notes the importance of seeing the goodness in others and seeing similarity between others and one's own self. Meng has helped me to remember to see the good in people in order to help me treat them with kindness. Much of the book will assist in my professional growth; however, there is one more strategy I find particularly helpful. This is to envision people to be just like me. All people make mistakes. Seeing the negative, even if not intended, will cause an outward negative impression. Changing my perspective, and seeing goodness and similarity, will help create an outward expression of kindness, and this is proven to be more affective. Seeing people just like me and seeing goodness in others helps to create trust and understanding which is more productive in leading other people. They will be more willing to listen because they know the manager wants the best for

them. Overall, *Search Inside Yourself* will assist me in having a more patient and optimistic outlook which will benefit the library, library staff, and patrons!

Although, I think it will take a considerable amount of time to implement many aspects of the book, I do think the book can be beneficial to an open-minded person who is willing to change. Meng writes that meditation needs to be seen as a science that can greatly benefit people. He notes several research findings that show its benefits and that these benefits and practical practice methods should be made available to everyone. In the current culture, I think people continue to stereotype and stigmatize meditation. It is my hope that librarians, and future librarians, would be open-minded. With that hope, I would recommend this book to others in this class. *Search Inside Yourself* would be beneficial to anyone who is willing to consider mindfulness meditation. Its practical advice can assist future leaders in any field become more successful as increased emotional intelligence affects empathy, inner happiness, and compassion. These intrapersonal traits affect interpersonal skills that can then be linked to becoming more effective at work, to helping build relationships, to more effectively working with others, and more. If a person intends to work in a field that involves other people, as most library and information science professionals do, I would recommend this book to that person.

References

Tan, Chade-Meng. 2012. *Search Inside Yourself: The Unexpected Path to Achieving Success, Happiness (and World Peace)*. New York: HarperCollins.