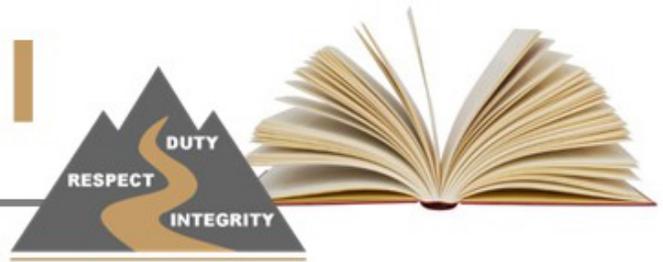


Professional Reading Program

Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program



Wherever You Go, There You Are by Jon Kabat-Zinn

Why Read *Wherever You Go, There You Are*?

“That’s a hard one to answer. (Pause) But if there has to be one, it would be mindfulness. That ability to take in your surroundings and sort out the important stuff, to be aware, to be vigilant. Then take all that information, put it together, and see if it makes sense to you. Another part of that mindfulness concept is the ability to relate to all types of people and see what they can contribute.” – **Paul Gleason** in 2003, when asked what the most important character trait for an effective leader would be, from the WFLDP’s “Leaders We Would Like to Meet” series.

<https://www.nwccg.gov/sites/default/files/wfldp/docs/paul-gleason.pdf>

“I feel the single best way to improve firefighting awareness, thinking and decision making is for firefighters to learn mindfulness meditation. ... we need mindfulness to unclog mental habits so we become more aware, better thinkers.” – **Ted Putnam** in 2004, from the WFLDP’s “Leaders We Would Like to Meet” series.

<https://www.nwccg.gov/sites/default/files/wfldp/docs/ted-putnam.pdf>

Wherever You Go, There You Are is an excellent introduction to the practice of mindfulness. As a leader you should seek continual self-improvement, and mindfulness is an important tool in the leadership tool box. While this is not a book on specific leadership skills, mindfulness is a skill that is valuable to leaders at all levels, for personal and professional reasons. Taking the time to practice mindfulness—at any level—is something that all fire leaders should do.

There are several videos on the book and topic of mindfulness available online. Find some of them at the links below, or by using an internet search engine.

- **What is Mindfulness? (5 minutes):**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HmEo6RI4Wvs>
- **9 Attitudes Jon Kabat-Zinn (27 minutes):**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2n7FOBFMvXg>

For more leadership ideas and to dig deeper, check out the Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program (WFLDP) blog, Facebook page, Professional Reading Program, and more at the links below:

Blog: <http://wildlandfireleadership.blogspot.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/WFLDP>

Professional Reading Program: <https://www.nwccg.gov/wfldp/toolbox/prp>

Main WFLDP page: <https://www.fireleadership.gov>

Wherever You Go, There You Are Discussion Questions

Part One: The Bloom of the Present Moment

What do you think of when you hear the term “mindfulness?” What are some ways that being mindful of yourself and your surroundings might be valuable for a fire leader?

Have you ever tried the breathing techniques described in the books (box breathing, for example)? Did you find that it helps with focus and awareness? What about stress?

Do you have any “effortless activities” in your life, things where you are present in the moment while doing?

Do you think it’s useful to be aware of your own thoughts and biases as leaders? As followers? As individuals? Why or why not?

What do you think about “voluntary simplicity” as described in the book? Are there things you do to weed out the distractions? How can mindfully “saying no” help you as a person or as a leader? What does mindfully “saying no” mean to you?

Part Two: The Heart of Practice

What are your thoughts on posture and mindfulness? Have you ever thought about how you stand, sit, and move can affect your state of mind, or how others perceive you?

There are many ways to practice mindfulness meditation. What practices have you tried? Has it benefited you? Why or why not? After reading this section, what are some things you could do be more mindful in your day-to-day life? Is there anything you’re doing already, maybe without realizing it is “mindfulness meditation?”

Have you ever tried the “body scan” technique? What was your impression? Can you, or have you, worked something like this into your daily routine? Could you find ways to incorporate these kinds of practices into a PT routine?

How could the concept of “loving kindness meditation” tie into the leadership values and principles of the WFLDP? How might it relate to the idea of authentic leadership?

Part Three: In the Spirit of Mindfulness

Do you spend any time in the morning just “being” or otherwise taking a quiet moment to organize your thoughts? Why is it important to spend even a few minutes on mindfulness at the start of the day?

Have you tried being present in the mundane, everyday moments of life? How can being mindfully aware during small tasks help with being mindful in general?

How does the idea of interconnectedness apply in real life for you? At work? At home? In the in-between places? Why might being mindful of connections be valuable for a leader or follower?

What do you think about the author’s approach to dealing with anger in a mindful way? How could you apply those ideas in your day-to-day life?