

Mindful Leadership

Friends of NAFI/NFI Spring Newsletter

March 2016

Greetings!

Since its inception, NAFI/NFI has evolved as a Normative community with a strong emphasis on engaging every member of the organization to become a partner in achieving the mission. Engaging staff is a priority for informed, Normative leadership. In fact, every executive, manager and program director understands that his or her responsibility is to look for ways to enlist and engage all members of their organizations to achieve the greater purpose. This is important because we regard our identity as a community first and foremost, rather than a business organization.

Our definition of a community is best summarized by what German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies defined as a "Gemeinschaft," or a community that operates primarily through relationships, commitments and engagement. This is in contrast to what Tönnies called a "Gesellschaft," or an organization focused on formal rules, regulations and policies. This dichotomy is important to note. A Gemeinschaft creates interactions that are pro-social and engender connections.

A Gesellschaft is hierarchical, formal and impersonal. One depends on trust, which becomes an engine for achieving goals, while the other uses punishment and fear as prime motivators.

A Gemeinschaft also creates mindful leaders who become key to building an engaged community. At NAFI/NFI, we have avoided becoming an organization that enacts orders from the top down but rather an organization in which staff become engaged partners in



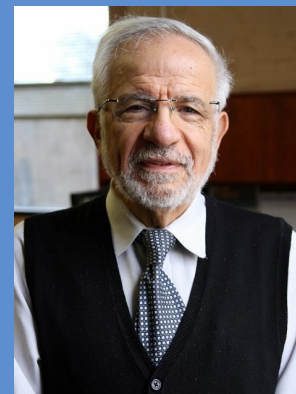
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Dr. Yitzhak Bakal
President NAFI/NFI

creating and maintaining the norms critical to achieving our goals. That engagement is essential to create the helping and therapeutic growth process that consumers need. In this way, consumers are not passive recipients of our treatment, but instead lead the way in achieving goals and finding solutions.

Our focus on engagement requires decentralized operations. Our most effective work reflects the needs of local communities. NAFI/NFI does not view itself as a foreign entity whose mission is to "fix," cure or repair the people or communities we serve. Rather, we seek to engage, listen and enhance positive elements that lead to organic solutions.

Feedback is another essential component to creating engaged consumers and mindful, Normative leaders. It is feedback that goes in multiple ways, always enhancing engagement. When leaders within a NAFI/NFI community receive feedback from colleagues or consumers, they integrate that communication into action. Engaged leaders who welcome feedback have been and continue to be the hallmark of NAFI/NFI operations.

Our effort to collaborate with other organizations is another form of providing Normative leadership and engagement. Throughout the organization we've made many efforts to collaborate and build partnerships to provide the impetus for positive change. From NAFI/NFI's inception, we fought institutionalization that isolated people from their communities and families, depriving them of the opportunity to take a leadership role in their growth and wellbeing. We strove to find alternative care that was community-oriented, always wanting families, neighborhoods and entire communities to build the capacity to heal from within. I'm pleased to say that, as we grew larger, we avoided building a hierarchical organization, instead operating with local autonomy in which leadership always empowers individuals and local populations to find solutions.

Dr. Yitzhak Bakal

Did you know?

NFI MA has moved!
NFI MA Corporate Office is now at:
300 Rosewood Drive
Danvers, MA 01923

NFI MA is still easily accessible to the programs, staff, and consumers.

All phone numbers remain the same.



Did you know?

NAFI's Corporate Office has moved! We are now located at:
90 Maple Street
Stoneham, MA 02180

NAFI 's new location is easily accessible for all of our regions, conveniently located off of Routes 93 and 128.

All phone numbers remain the same.

A True Learning Community

by *Mary Anne McIntyre, NAFI RI*

Having spent the last 26 years deeply entrenched in NAFI programming and culture, I've observed the mindful leadership of our humble president and founder trickle down through at least one generation. I asked some leaders throughout the agency to share their thoughts on their own leadership styles and influences along their paths. All were willing and excited to share their stories. That very combination of awareness and desire for collaboration and teaching is evidence that more than 40 years of mindful leadership have created an environment where "teacher" and "leader" mean the same thing.

Here are two stories of respected leaders in the agency and their journeys to their current roles.

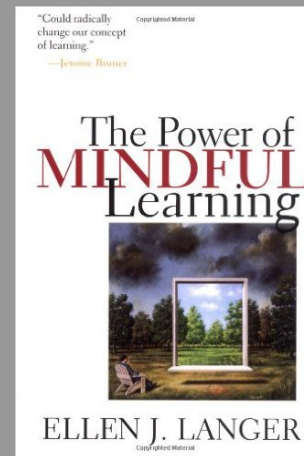
Lynn Bishop has been the executive director of NAFI Connecticut since 2012. She started her career with the agency 22 years ago as a direct care counselor at the Alternatives Program in Providence, Rhode Island. She became a shift supervisor, then was offered a position in Connecticut as the program coordinator for an outreach and tracking program. She came up through the ranks to become a director, and eventually agency supervisor overseeing all community based services. Twelve years ago, she was promoted to assistant executive director. Lynn took over the reigns as executive director four years ago.

Lynn didn't hesitate for a minute when asked her thoughts on the most important qualities a leader should possess. She shared, "you must not be afraid to fail; respect and seek others' thoughts, ideas, suggestions; and above all, you must be an active listener." Her clarity and conviction were admirable.

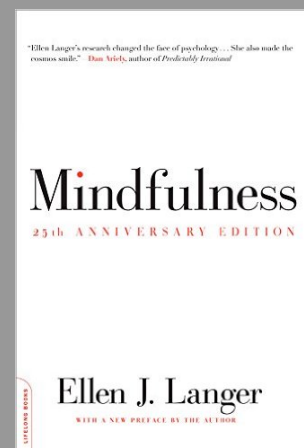
From Dr. Bakal, she has learned, "there is no point in assigning blame, but instead, we look from this point forward." From a long list of other leaders she has worked under and with, she has learned first-hand that,



To learn more on Mindfulness, we recommend the following:



The Power of Mindful Learning By Ellen Langer



"being part of a team is more important than your role or title. No one can do it alone."

Lynn's biggest challenge in her tenure as Executive Director has been having to close a large and important program in her continuum. In balancing all the bureaucratic demands of such a huge effort, it was her, "desire to protect her staff and clients through the transition," that saw her and her team through the process. Though she had had to make some compromises along the way, Lynn always keeps her responsibility, "to care for those under her," in the front of her mind. She states that, "the entire Connecticut leadership team has learned this together and pass it on daily as role models to their respective teams."

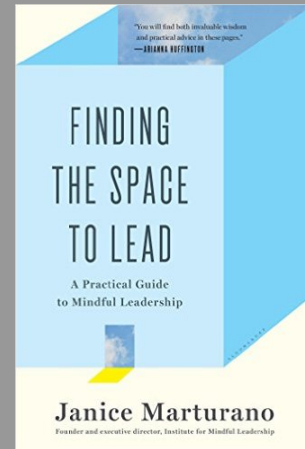
It is a comfort to know that NAFI Connecticut lives and grows under the guidance of a truly mindful leader.

Sue Frament, Site Director, works at the Oak/Ridge Program in Rhode Island, a 16 bed, staff-secure group home with two sites of eight beds each. Sue has been with NAFI for 17 years as a case manager, a culinary program manager, a residential manager, and an assistant director at two different programs. She has worked at six different programs in Rhode Island.

In observing a variety of leaders throughout her career with NAFI, she concludes that most importantly, "a leader should have and show courage, humility and passion." In describing her own leadership style, she cited two leaders in Rhode Island as her biggest influences. From Jerry Carnevale, she has learned, "a passion for and belief in the Normative Community Approach, followed by clarity and courage in decision making, are essential to making people feel safe." She also credits Mark Rhynard with teaching her, "being a collaborative leader; engaging people in decision making and building relationships, brings us closer to the vision of a nurturing, family environment."

Sue's biggest challenge has been, "following in the footsteps of great leaders." She's met that challenge by

Mindfulness By Ellen Langer



Finding the Space to Lead: A Practical Guide to Mindful Leadership By Janice Marturano

On Being with Krista Tippett - The Science of Mindlessness and Mindfulness By Ellen Langer

click link to watch video

<http://bit.ly/TZAnRs>

"Leadership presence is a tangible quality."

being introspective. Her priorities include "establishing trust with workers, being a role model, acting out of my comfort zone and seeking supervision from respected leaders." Sue hopes that her desire to learn and grow is "passed on to her staff and clients each time they collaborate in solving a problem."

Though space does not allow me to share *Julio Rivera's* complete story, it is truly one of learning and leading. Briefly, Julio came to the ACE program as a client in 1992. Because staff "nurtured him like parents," he was able to complete his education, start a family and a business. He returned to ACE 14 years later, asking to work part time so he could be a role model and give back to others what the people at NAFI had given to him. So far, he has succeeded in influencing another former client to come back as a direct care worker. As a team, they recently made a dynamic presentation to state officials in Rhode Island about the value of the Normative Community Approach in teaching them to "stay on mission, care for others and not be afraid to take risks."

The common threads throughout these stories - clarity, courage, collaboration, nurturing and service - add up to a mindful leadership presence throughout NAFI that is present, humble, focused and nonjudgmental.

Mindfulness in Leadership Practice

by Dr. Paul L. Dann

Executive Director, NFI North

Much of today's thinking about leadership centers on the importance of being a mindful leader. Mindfulness requires the ability to think about thinking. Mindful leadership involves Meta cognitions about your leadership thoughts, feelings and behavior. Inherent in this is the requirement that a mindful leader have a high degree of self-awareness, awareness of others and of their surroundings. Awareness in and of itself is a fascinating first cousin of mindfulness. It can be allusive. We may feel for example that we are fully aware only to suddenly discover that we are caught unaware. Like falling through thin ice, the awakening that results can be a chilling surprise.

It requires full and complete nonjudgmental attention in the present moment. Those around a mindful leader see and feel that presence"

What's remarkable about the Normative Community Approach is its ability to foster mindful leadership practice. The Normative processes require that we remain engaged in feedback and communication that consistently build the awareness we hold about ourselves and about those with whom we engage. The discourse we experience in our practice goes beyond simply agreeing with each other through dialogical exchange, demanding instead that we create a space for critical and unfiltered discussion. This dialectical exchange ensures that we come to fully understand each other and, through this, ourselves.

It's important to consider the impact of this phenomenon. Otto Scharmer, theorist, professor and author (2013) suggests that there are four ways that people listen and that listening is closely connected to mindful leadership. In the first instance he posits that there are individuals who listen from the center. In this case all that they know and come to understand is based on their own experience. Mindfulness as you might imagine isn't present in this form of listening. The second type of listening is seen in those that will venture "to the edge" of self to actively seek facts that affirm what they believe. This creates a self-fulfilling lens on the world that also lacks mindfulness; though the individual who listens in this way believes the facts prove they are mindful. The third level is that ability to understand another's view with empathy which is the beginning of mindful practice, while the fourth level is the ability to listen while understanding multiple views including one's own. Listening at the fourth level is the pinnacle of mindfulness and, as Scharmer suggests, critical to effective leadership. He's termed this fourth level of listening as "I in Now Listening" and suggests that this is where truly effective leadership identifies ways to solve problems and realize the path forward. When you bring Otto Scharmer's work alongside our own organizational practice you find that the Normative Community Approach becomes the engine for driving I in Now Listening.

Through our feedback and communication processes

we find that our individual and collective capacity to work as mindful leaders is heightened. Our Normative community makes it possible for us to develop an ever greater awareness of ourselves and of those with whom we work. Through this, we are able to be successful at solving problems and optimizing opportunities that present themselves. And while mindfulness is being touted as a new phenomenon within the field of leadership practice, we're fortunate that it has always been a central part of the organization's Normative Community Approach.

Reference:

Scharmer, O. & Kaufer, K. (2013). *Leading from the Emerging Future; From ego-system to eco-system economies*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

The Normative Community Approach and Mindfulness

by Jay Paris, NAFI

Mindfulness is a highly admirable quality that NAFI/NFI continues to encourage among its employees and consumers. Because NAFI/NFI is also an organization with a long history of creating Normative environments, it is worth looking at how mindfulness and building mission-driven norms work together to enrich our organization when expressed through leadership.

If mindfulness is defined as "non-judgmental, moment to moment awareness," then mindful leaders are those whose presence cultivates focus, clarity, creativity and compassion. As author Janice Marturano wrote in her book, *Finding the Space to Lead: A practical Guide to Mindful Leadership*, "Leadership presence is a tangible quality. It requires full and complete non-judgmental attention in the present moment. Those around a mindful leader see and feel that presence."

Mindful leaders are, therefore, self-aware people who are open-hearted and open-minded enough to see the value each person brings to shaping his or her environment, team and organization. Through many decades, NAFI/NFI has tested and honed the art of creating Normative communities in diverse

organizations across the United States, from large and small companies to homeless facilities, schools and programs and within its own programs. From building these strong cultures, it is easy to see how these qualities of mindfulness enhance every stage of the Normative process from clarifying the vision and mission to giving feedback and, ultimately, creating commitment among employees and consumers. Mindfulness truly enhances the ability of all participants in a community, from youth to top administrators, to shape their norms and create a positive cycle of care and support.

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