ForeWord Reviews

Wake Up! The Path to a Focused and Productive Mind
John Selby
Paul Hannam
Hampton Roads
978-1-57174-467-8
(April 2006)

Personal power, charisma, and success elude most people. Yet the skills to manage the mind and achieve those benefits are available to anyone—from workers on the shop floor to inhabitants of the executive suite, according to the authors of this breakthrough guide.

With decades of work on the front lines of business, psychology, and education, Hannam (entrepreneur, consultant, research fellow at Oxford University) and Selby (psychologist, entrepreneur, author), have created straightforward, practical exercises detailed in a user-friendly, interactive two-color guide. Designed to de-stress people in minutes, these mental workouts provide nearly instant gratification.

Part One, the basis of the program, outlines a four-step, "Wake Up" alertness process. It focuses on the breath, along with awareness of emotions and the whole body, awakening readers into the present moment. The authors recommend action saying, "Consciously begin to hold thoughts in your mind that refocus your attention in productive and enjoyable ways."

Parts Two and Three build on this foundation with the "Take Charge" process featuring seven simple phrases that rapidly shift the brain's focus. With one chapter devoted to each phrase, readers are advised to memorize seven thoughts including, "I give myself permission to feel good," and "I accept everyone at work, just as they are." Users then revisit the series of phrases often throughout a hectic day, in one-or two-minute intervals.

Potential benefits, both personal and organizational, result from these consciousness workouts. The authors observe, "The real action at work is not going on around you, but inside you. Learning to manage your own mind is the key to unlocking your potential at work, achieving extraordinary results and enjoying extraordinary levels of happiness."

The book concludes with a full-mind workout, techniques to generate trustworthy decisions, tools for long-term health and wellness, and a quick summary of the scientific research behind the concepts, with lists of references. The authors also offer a free web site providing audio guidance.

Each chapter opens with business examples, which will appeal both to individuals struggling with career stresses and leaders who want to address their own issues while

improving team performance. The principles are also applicable to a wider audience beyond the business world.

How hard is the program? The practices themselves seem simple enough, distilled from the leading edge of cognitive science, emotional intelligence, and other research. Remembering to regularly perform the mind-transforming exercises appears to be the biggest stumbling block. Some might dispute that a solution to workplace distress could be as simple as the authors indicate. If these techniques are put into practice and the results are replicable, this book offers a revolutionary toolkit that promises to radically transform the nature of how people cope at work.

Bobbye Middendorf