

YOUR MIND IN POLITICS

Being a political leader is an elite position of power with tremendous opportunity for positive social impact. It also comes with a unique set of challenges in an increasingly complex world. Finding yourself unable to find a moment amid the intensity? There is a solution. You have the power to focus your mind, improve decision making, center on vision and connect across divides. It's simple, though not easy: start by trying these practices when meeting political life's daily challenges. Pause. Breathe. **BE MINDFUL.**

	Political Realities	Mindfulness Practices	Benefits
	Politicking: vote changes by colleagues, partisan pressure and media misrepresentation	Noticing. Go outside. Breathe in for 8 seconds. Exhale for 8. Scan your whole body. Where is there tension? What is your body holding? Direct your attention there and think, "Soothe. Release." Repeat.	Master the internal. We hold stress from uncontrollable factors in our bodies, signaling how we feel. Focusing soothing attention to parts of our bodies that hold tension helps release stress, and cultivate calmness and self regulation.
	Partisan Tilt: partiality is alive and well – as such, much information is slanted	Observing. Sit quietly for 5 minutes. What thoughts ebb and flow into your awareness? When they do, observe them. Curiously. Free of judgment. Like a detective, ask open-ended questions with the intention to understand.	Balance data. Following curiosity through inquiry helps us examine from multiple perspectives with suspended judgment. This opens us to head and heart data we would otherwise be blocked from when making decisions.
	Infinite To Dos: unending asks, meetings, reading and events - and only so many hours in the day	Focusing. Close your eyes. Take a mindful minute. Breathe in and out, focusing on a word that describes you as a political leader and what you inspire in your community. What comes up for you? How do you feel?	Visualize. Focusing calmly inward on who you are helps reconnect with the energizing reason for entering public service. This puts events, asks and exchanges into perspective – and priority.
	Conflict: competing stakeholder needs and demands across political arenas	Opening. Scan the room. What sounds do you hear – inside, outside? Invite others to talk about themselves. Actively listen. What is shaping their position? Where is there alignment? What is not being said?	Engage with integrity. Mindful listening builds trust – and trust is the foundation of team, organizational and systems effectiveness. Listen to understand compassionately and openly – then respond.
	Complexity, uncertainty and constant change	Connecting. Set a timer for 3 minutes. Focus attention on a memo. What do you see? What words jump out? How does the paper feel between your fingers? Who is involved in its development? What is its intended impact?	Lead through change. Complexity is a natural part of the systemic change process. Focusing on the trusted process, we observe what we know, don't know and need to know - rather than on a specific outcome. This builds resiliency.

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