



The Practice of Purposeful Leadership

Create a Culture Where Everyone Matters

Leader Workbook

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MATTERING DEFINED

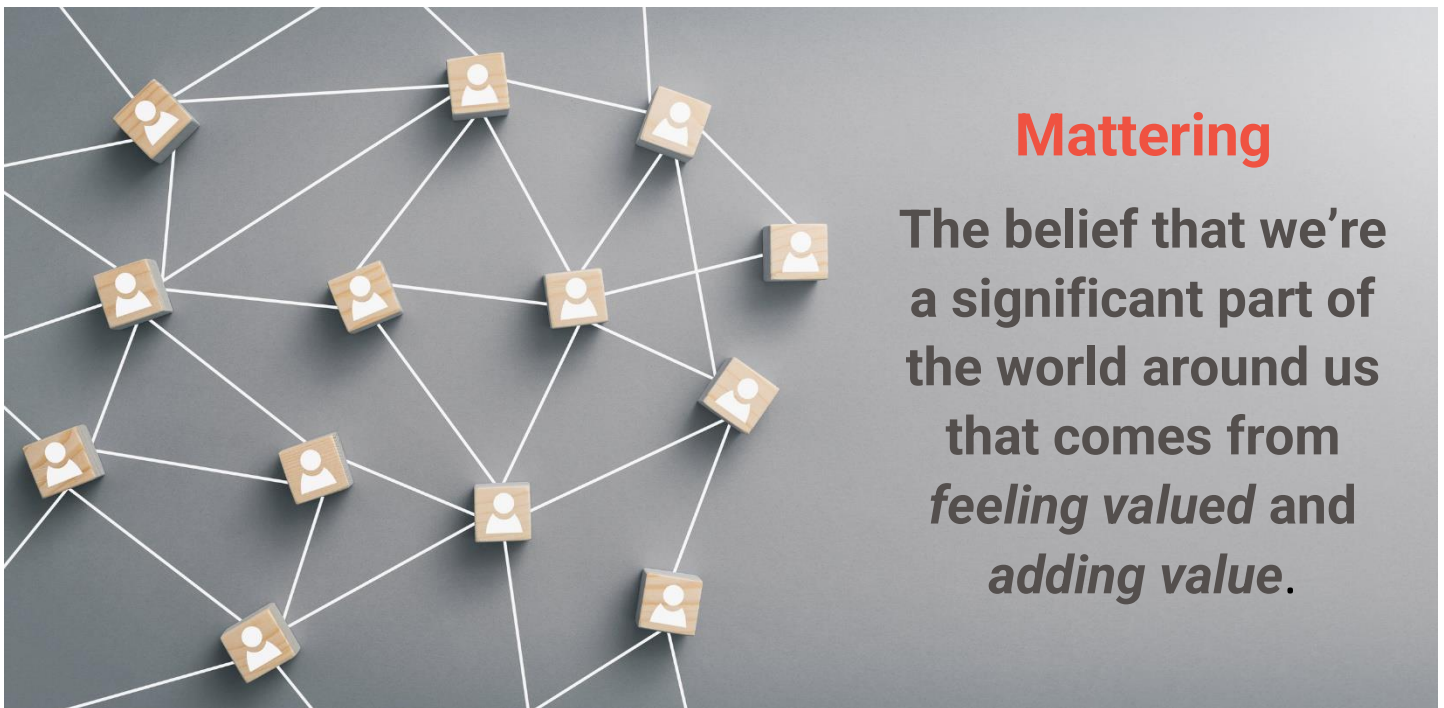
Mattering Defined

Feeling significant is a basic human instinct, need, and desire. From the moment we're born, and we tilt our eyes upward to search for a caretaker. We're looking for someone to value us.

[Research](#) shows that mattering is fundamental for mental, emotional, and physical well-being in work (and life).

Mattering is also largely dependent on how we treat each other. We experience mattering because the community around us shows us evidence of our significance.

In other words, creating consistent experiences of mattering is a leadership *skill*.



THE MATTERING DEFICIT

The opposite of mattering is **anti-mattering**; the belief that we're insignificant to the world around us, that we aren't valued, and we don't add value.

Research indicates that anti-mattering is an epidemic in organizations.

Why?

While mattering is "common sense," it's often not common practice.

Here's how we know common sense isn't common practice:

At work...

- **65%** of workers feel underappreciated and undervalued in work ([Gallup](#))
- **67%** of workers claimed they weren't even recognized one time last year ([NBCNews](#))
- **79%** of employees who quit their jobs claim that a lack of appreciation was a major reason for leaving ([OC Tanner](#))
- **40%** of office workers globally feel lonely or invisible ([LA Times](#))

In school and life...

- **47%** of people feel "forgotten." ([Cigna](#))
- **33%** of all adults in the world indicate they feel lonely ([Ipsos](#))
- **35% of children and 50%** of adolescents surveyed indicate low feelings of mattering ([Flett, 2019](#))
- In a survey of 66,000 school-aged kids, almost **half** indicated they don't think their teacher would notice if they were absent ([EducationWeek](#))

THE SCIENCE OF MATTERING

Researchers find mattering is the [feeling](#) that we're a significant part of the world around us; it's the belief that we're *noticed, important, and needed* — right now. While studies show experiencing mattering increases a sense of [self-worth and motivation](#), research also finds it reduces the risk of [severe depression, anxiety, and can save lives](#).

Why?

First, mattering influences [self-esteem](#), the confidence in one's worth. [Researchers Robert Chavez and Todd Heatherton](#) from Dartmouth College find self-esteem resides in the frontostriatal pathway of the brain. This pathway connects the medial prefrontal cortex, which deals with self-awareness, to the ventral striatum, which influences motivation.

Individuals with higher self-esteem seem to optimize this pathway, leading to more positive self-knowledge, self-worth, and increased internal motivation and energy.

[Feeling significant is also found to increase serotonin](#) levels, sometimes called the "confidence molecule" that influences overall mood and lowers anxiety.

Experiencing mattering also reaffirms that we contribute to others and that we have a purpose. [A sense of purpose is associated](#) with increased dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin, also known as the "happiness trifecta," the neurotransmitters that control mood, movement, and motivation.

Mattering may also help us live longer. In the 1970s, [Harvard scientist Ellen Langer](#) studied two groups of nursing home residents, controlling for numerous risk factors. She gave plants to each of them. Researchers told the first group that they were directly responsible for keeping the plant alive. They told the second group that the staff would take care of the plant.

After 18 months, twice as many patients in the first group were alive.

Mattering is a public and occupational health issue, one that leaders must address now.

FEELING VALUED + ADDING VALUE

I MATTER

I'm valued.

You know my full name.
You ask about my life.
You know my struggles.
You remember me.
You miss me.
You check in on me.

+

I add value.

You show me how I make a difference.
You affirm my unique gifts.
You ask for my opinion.
You give me responsibility.
You show me I'm relied on.

Mattering arises through two primary experiences: **Feeling Valued** and **Adding Value**.

We **Feel Valued** when others see and notice us for the unique, irreplaceable human beings we are.

Feeling valued is manifested when others know our names, ask about our lives, know our struggles and act to alleviate them, remember us, miss us, and check in on us.

We **Add Value** when we can see how we make a unique difference, when we know our strengths, when we can offer our voice, take on responsibility, and feel we are relied on.

For more on the components of **Feeling Valued** and **Adding Value**, we recommend reading community psychologist Isaac Prilleltensky's research, "[Mattering at The Intersection of Psychology, Philosophy, and Politics.](#)"

THE 3 INGREDIENTS OF MATTERING

We can create the experience of mattering for others through three actions: **Noticing**, **Affirming**, and **Needing**.

The NAN model is central to coaching others to create moments of mattering. To help you and others remember it, "NAN" means "Not A Number" in computer coding language.

1. Others feel **Noticed** when we make eye contact, know their full names, remember and check-in on personal details about their lives, and invite their voice.
2. Others feel **Affirmed** when we point out their unique gifts and show them how their uniqueness makes a unique difference in our lives and the lives of others.
3. Others feel **Needed** when they know they're relied on, that they have responsibility for something important, and that they are an indispensable part of something bigger.

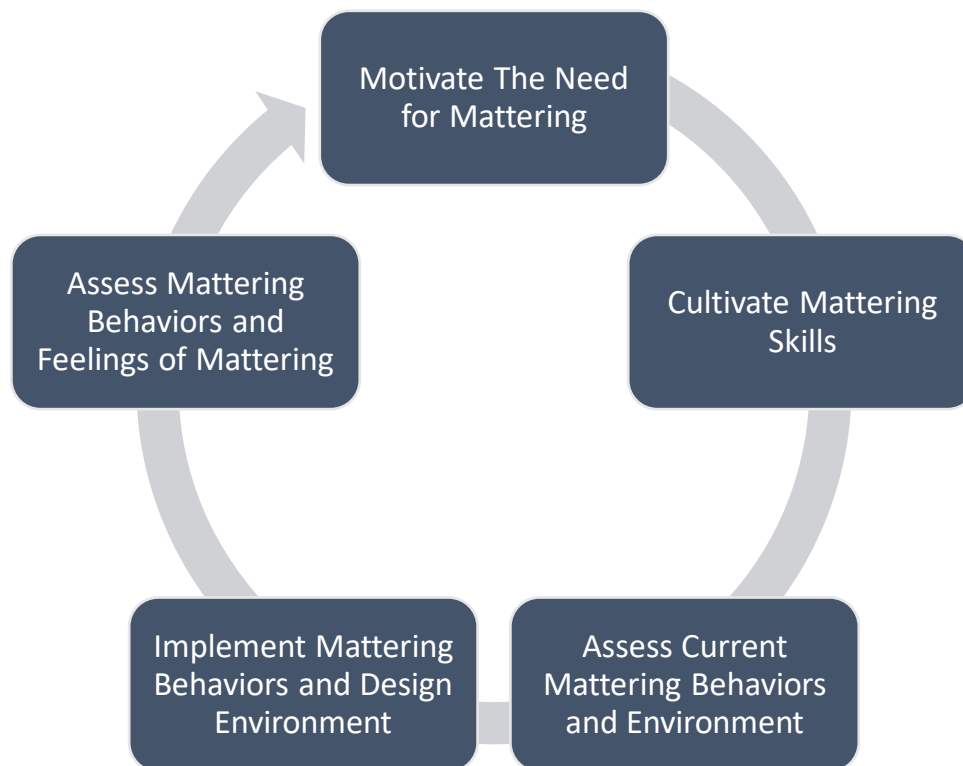


CREATING A CULTURE OF MATTERING

To create leadership behavioral change, we must cultivate motivation, ensure ability, and design environments that reinforce the desired behavior.

Behavior = Motivation x Ability x Environment

Mattering interventions at the individual, group, or organizational level have five major components to create motivation, ensure ability, and engineer environment



WORKSHOP EXERCISES

Reflection | Moments of Mattering



Describe a moment in your life when you most believed that you mattered to someone else. What happened? Who was around? Be specific.

Describe a moment in your work when you most felt like you and your work mattered because of what someone else said or did. What did they do? What did they say? What did you feel?

ACTION | Noticing



Think about the people who work for and/or with you. Who do you need to notice more? Choose 2 – 3 people. What is one action you can take to help them feel more seen?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Think about the teams or employee groups you oversee. What is a regular practice you will implement to ensure everyone feels noticed?

ACTION | Purposeful Affirmation



Real affirmation is showing people how their unique strengths make a unique difference. Who needs to be shown the difference they make? Use the below guide to give them purposeful affirmation.

SITUATION:

BEHAVIOR/STRENGTHS:

IMPACT:

ACTION | Affirming Action Plan



Key Practice: Impact Story-collecting and Storytelling

Where, when, and how can you incorporate collecting and telling more authentic stories of the work's impact?

Key Practice: Purposeful Affirmation

In which key touchpoints can you incorporate Purposeful Affirmation?

Key Practice: Purposeful Delegation

What jobs or tasks need to be "redesigned" so people can see the significance of the work on others, what the task/job makes possible, and be reminded how they can use their strengths to do it?

CREATE MATTERING SELF-ASSESSMENT

1 – Never 2 – Rarely 3 – Sometimes 4 – Frequently 5 – Always

Considering your current leadership approach, score the following statements using the above scale (1-5). Be honest.

1. ____ I ask about and remember the details of others' lives, like their full names, who their family and friends are, their values, interests, and their personal goals and aspirations.
2. ____ I make it a point to remember and check in on others' personal/work details during routine, regular conversations.
3. ____ I ask others for their opinion, share with them that their opinion is valued, and follow-up to ensure they feel heard.
4. ____ I notice others' moods, and when I sense someone may be struggling, I inquire about it and offer an action to help.
5. ____ I notice and show appreciation daily for others' small, everyday actions.
6. ____ I make sure I know and can name others' unique strengths.
7. ____ I regularly show others how their unique strengths make a difference for myself or others.
8. ____ I express verbal gratitude for others and what they do.
9. ____ I acknowledge others' efforts and achievements.
10. ____ I go out of my way to enhance others' well-being and future.
11. ____ I tell others how I rely on them.
12. ____ When others aren't present, I'll tell them I miss them.
13. ____ I show people what they make possible for the organization or me.

14. ____ I try to make it easy for others to share their feedback, ideas, mistakes, and failures with me.
15. ____ I ask others for help.

SCORING

Add up items 1-5; this is your total for the mattering component of NOTICED.

NOTICING: ____ (total) / 25

Add up items 6-10; this is your total score for the mattering component of AFFIRMED.

AFFIRMING ____ (total / 25)

Add up items 11-15; this is your total score on the purposeful culture element of NEEDED.

NEEDING: ____ (total / 25)

REFLECTION | Create Mattering Assessment



What practice domain (NAN) did you score highest in? What is one practice you'll formalize and continue doing?

What practice domain (NAN) did you score lowest in? What is one practice you can implement to improve this area?

MATTERING AUDIT

Consider the people you see or work with daily. Write their name in the first column below. Write down what you currently do to Notice, Affirm, or Need them. If nothing, leave it blank. Next, write what you will commit to doing. If you lead a large organization, you can also replace "Name" with "Team" to assess employee groups.

NAME/GROUP	NOTICED	AFFIRMED	NEEDED
	Current practices: Committed practices:	Current practices: Committed practices:	Current practices: Committed practices:
	Current practices: Committed practices:	Current practices: Committed practices:	Current practices: Committed practices:
	Current practices: Committed practices:	Current practices: Committed practices:	Current practices: Committed practices:
	Current practices: Committed practices:	Current practices: Committed practices:	Current practices: Committed practices:

TEAM/ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT ITEMS

1. ____ My leader asks about and remembers the details of my life.
2. ____ My leader makes it a point to remember and check in on my life during routine, regular conversations.
3. ____ My leader asks me for my opinion, shares with me that my opinion is valued, and follows up to ensure I feel heard.
4. ____ My leader notices when I'm struggling and offers actions to help.
5. ____ My leader notices and shows appreciation daily for my small, everyday actions.
6. ____ My leader knows and can name my unique strengths.
7. ____ My leader regularly shows me how my unique strengths make a difference.
8. ____ My leader expresses verbal gratitude for what I do.
9. ____ My leader acknowledges my efforts and achievements.
10. ____ My leader goes out of his/her way to enhance my well-being and future.
11. ____ My leader tells me he/she relies on me.
12. ____ When I'm not here, my leader tells me I'm missed.
13. ____ My leader shows me what I make possible for him/her and the organization.
14. ____ My leader makes it easy for me to share feedback, ideas, mistakes, and failures.
15. ____ My leader asks me for help.

SCORING

Add up items 1-5; this is your total for the mattering component of NOTICED.

NOTICING: ____ (total) / 25

Add up items 6-10; this is your total score for the mattering component of AFFIRMED.

AFFIRMING ____ (total / 25)

Add up items 11-15; this is your total score on the purposeful culture element of NEEDED.

NEEDING: ____ (total / 25)

SUPPLEMENTAL TOOLS

LADDERING

"Laddering" is the practice of making a higher organizational or individual purpose real and tangible in everyday work and life. We call this "high purpose clarity."

For leaders, it should be used when delegating, assigning, and reviewing tasks as well as when communicating new changes or tasks. It's also helpful to ensure decisions can be clearly mapped to delivering the stated purpose (just replace "Task" with "Decision").

For individuals, laddering helps connect daily work and life tasks with either your own or the bigger purpose.

The key is to state the task/decision/action/etc. Then, as you move up the ladder, state a measurable, concrete objective the task enables. Then connect that measurable objective to another, higher-order, measurable objective, and so on until you can connect it to the bigger purpose.



MEANINGFUL JOB DESIGN

Meaningful Job Design is a powerful way to bring more meaning to people's work by framing how the work is learned, delegated, and done. The following prompts help you to remember to ensure that the key elements of work motivation are embedded in all jobs and tasks: The work's significance, what it makes possible, and how one can use their strengths to do it.

The Job: _____

How does this job impact other human beings? Who does it impact the most? Be specific.

What bigger outcome or product is this job integral to making possible?

What strengths are needed to do this meaningful job well?