

*'A very practical, engaging guide ... highly recommended.'*

**Stuart Chambers**, former CEO of Pilkington plc

# Key Management Development Models

70+ tools for developing yourself and managing others

David Cotton

# Praise for *Key Management Development Models*

*An accessible and interesting book – a great resource for all those looking to develop and hone their skills as managers.*

LUCY DALY, PROGRAMME DIRECTOR, MANCHESTER BUSINESS SCHOOL

*A very practical, engaging guide to the essential tools which managers at all levels need to be effective themselves and to develop others. Highly recommended.*

STUART CHAMBERS, FORMER CEO OF PILKINGTON PLC

*I found Cotton's book very helpful. It is clearly written and superbly set out. I recommend it to any budding and established manager.*

PROFESSOR DENNIS KAVANAGH, UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

*David Cotton has compiled a short compendium of accepted behavioural theory. As such, it provides an excellent reference point for those seeking to understand how to achieve improvement in themselves and others. Its application is business but the concepts are universal.*

RICHARD C. BAILEY, ROTHSCHILD PARTNER, NON EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
BUSINESS MANAGER

If you act confidently, people will treat you as though you are confident and doors will open for you. Aggressive people at work will prey on those who appear to lack confidence. Some people have innate confidence, some build that confidence and some simply pretend to be confident. Your starting point doesn't matter too much – you will be more credible as a manager if others believe that you have confidence (tempered with humility and never spilling over into arrogance).

Work can be hugely stressful and often our reaction to stress is to work even harder. We are at our best when we have sufficient stress to give us a little 'edge', but not so much that it cripples us. In this part you will find some ways of reducing stress and becoming calmer at work.

# Anchoring a calm state

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## The big picture

Russian psychologist Ivan Pavlov (1848–1936) carried out a number of experiments into conditioning of animals. In one experiment he rang a bell each day immediately before feeding his dogs. After several days he rang the bell on its own and the dogs rushed to their food bowl and salivated. He had conditioned them to associate the bell with eating. Many now call this kind of conditioning ‘anchoring’. Using a variant of this technique, you can ‘trigger’ a calm state in yourself in a fraction of a second.

## When to use it

Any time you feel tense or stressed, you can instantly create this calm state.

## How to use it

- 1 Think of a small, unobtrusive gesture you can make, which is going to signal to you that you should be calm and confident. An easy one, which nobody else will notice, is a small ‘O’ made with your first finger and thumb. Now think of a word or phrase that captures the idea of a calm, confident state. You could, for example, choose the word ‘calm’.
- 2 Sit somewhere where you will not be disturbed for a few minutes and close your eyes. Keep your legs uncrossed and your arms unfolded.
- 3 Think of a situation in which you have always been very calm and confident. It doesn’t matter what the situation is, nor how personal it is, just take a few moments to think of it.

- 4 See in your mind's eye what you saw at the time; imagine hearing what you heard and feeling what you felt. Make the visual image as clear, colourful and vivid as you can, allow the feelings to spread all the way down to the tips of your toes and cycle back down again through the top of your head. Imagine turning up the volume of the sounds until you can see, hear and feel what happened in this situation as though you are back there, reliving it. When the memory is at its strongest – you can see what you saw, hear what you heard and feel what you felt – anchor it by making your physical gesture at exactly the same time as saying your keyword or phrase in your imagination.
- 5 Open your eyes and break out of the state by thinking of something entirely neutral and unrelated.
- 6 Repeat the whole exercise. Think either of the same situation in which you were calm and confident, or of a different situation. Imagine it as realistically as you possibly can and when you can see, hear and feel it then anchor it with your word or gesture.
- 7 Open your eyes and think of something neutral again.
- 8 Repeat this cycle five or six times.
- 9 You'll find now that each time you make the little physical gesture and say your key word or phrase in your mind, your whole physiology will change to one of calm and confidence.
- 10 Use the anchor any time you want to feel calm and confident. As you enter a situation that might otherwise have caused you to feel uncomfortable or stressed, invoke your anchor with your keyword or phrase and your gesture. Nobody else will notice and you will feel instant confidence.

To reinforce the anchor, trigger the calm state as you enter an otherwise stressful situation and then, when you find yourself being calm in that situation, anchor it again.

## Final analysis

This is a wonderfully simple, elegant technique to create a sense of calm.

## Reference

Rescorla, R.A. (1988) 'Pavlovian conditioning – it's not what you think it is', *American Psychologist*, 43(3), 151–160.

# Meditation

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## The big picture

Within limits, stress can be good for us. A little stress gives us a burst of energy, which can help us to achieve our goals. Too much stress floods our body with chemicals, which may increase the heart rate, the blood pressure and over time cause mental or physical illness.

Meditation is a great way to induce a sense of calm and counter the effects of a stressful lifestyle by focusing your mind entirely on one thought or one area of your body. Meditative practices were documented as long ago as 1,500 BC. There are many methods of meditation and most include breathing practices to induce a calm state, clear the mind of troubling thoughts and eliminate distractions.

## When to use it

Ideally, meditate as a preventive rather than a curative measure. Regular, short meditations can be hugely beneficial in preventing you from becoming too stressed at work.

## How to use it

Before meditating, stretch your limbs, loosen tight clothing and find a place where you are unlikely to be disturbed.

Here are some sample meditation techniques:

- 1 Sit in any position that is comfortable, with your back straight. Partially close your eyes (a state known as 'soft focus') and breathe through your nose, noticing the sensation of your breath as it enters and leaves your nostrils. Focus simply on your breathing, as far as possible to the exclusion of everything else. Push any intrusive thoughts gently to one side and return

your focus to your breathing. This simple technique can clear the mind and make you feel refreshed.

- 2 This is a variant on the first technique. Sit comfortably, with a straight back. Close your eyes and breathe through your nose, first noticing the sensation of your breath as it enters and leaves your nostrils, then turning your attention to each part of your body and how it is affected by your breathing. For example, focus for a while on the way your shoulders rise and fall with each breath, then notice your chest expanding and contracting. Notice the effects of your breath without making any effort to control your breathing.
- 3 Remember a place that you love and that you find relaxing. Start with the breathing exercise above and then mentally take a journey to your chosen place, imagining as vividly as you can the sounds, the sights, the smells and the feelings that the place induces in you.
- 4 Choose a calming word or short phrase. As you breathe calmly, repeat the word or phrase silently to cut out other distractions, so that the word or phrase becomes the single focus of your meditation.

## Final analysis

There is a wealth of published material about meditation. Once you can induce a calm state in which you are able to acknowledge your thoughts and gently push them away, then read about other methods of meditating.

We are often judged at work on the basis of being *seen* to be doing something. The focus is very much on *doing* rather than *being* and sometimes it is necessary to step away from the pressures of doing to become calm and still for a while. The beauty of meditation is that the techniques can be performed on a train, a tram or a bus, on your commute to work or on a park bench. It doesn't have to take much time out of your day and it takes very little time, with regular practice, to feel the rewards.

## References

Chavan, Y. (2014) *Meditation: Meditation for beginners – how to relieve stress, anxiety and depression and return to a state of inner peace and happiness*. Create-Space Independent Publishing Platform (online).

Harrison, E. (1994) *Teach Yourself to Meditate: Over 20 simple exercises for peace, health and clarity of mind*. London: Piatkus.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2013) *Full Catastrophe Living: How to cope with stress, pain and illness using mindfulness meditation*, revised edition. London: Piatkus.

## The big picture

Mindfulness is a meditative technique in which, rather than focusing on your breathing and body, you become aware of the present moment, calmly and non-judgementally observing your thoughts as they drift through your mind. Mindfulness allows you to observe negative thoughts before they escalate into something damaging. It has been said that mindfulness promotes general well-being, enabling you to deal with life more calmly and reducing stress, depression and anxiety.

Though its origins are in centuries-old Buddhist meditation techniques, mindfulness was first brought to the public's attention in the late 1970s by Jon Kabat-Zinn, a molecular biologist, who started a stress-reduction clinic at Massachusetts University Hospital.

Those who practise mindfulness become more acutely aware of the moment they are in. Instead of being hijacked by negative thoughts, they focus on the present moment. Someone going for a 'mindful' walk would be attuned to every little detail of what they see, hear and feel. It is in the little details that they rediscover a sense of peace and wonder.

Instead of constantly rushing through life, doing things, mindfulness encourages you to step back, relax and simply notice what is happening around you and to lose the sense of guilt over wasting time which haunts adults and passes children by.

## When to use it

Like meditation, mindfulness is not a one-off remedy for anxiety and stress but a long-term commitment. If you are prone to stress at work, then mindfulness may be the answer.