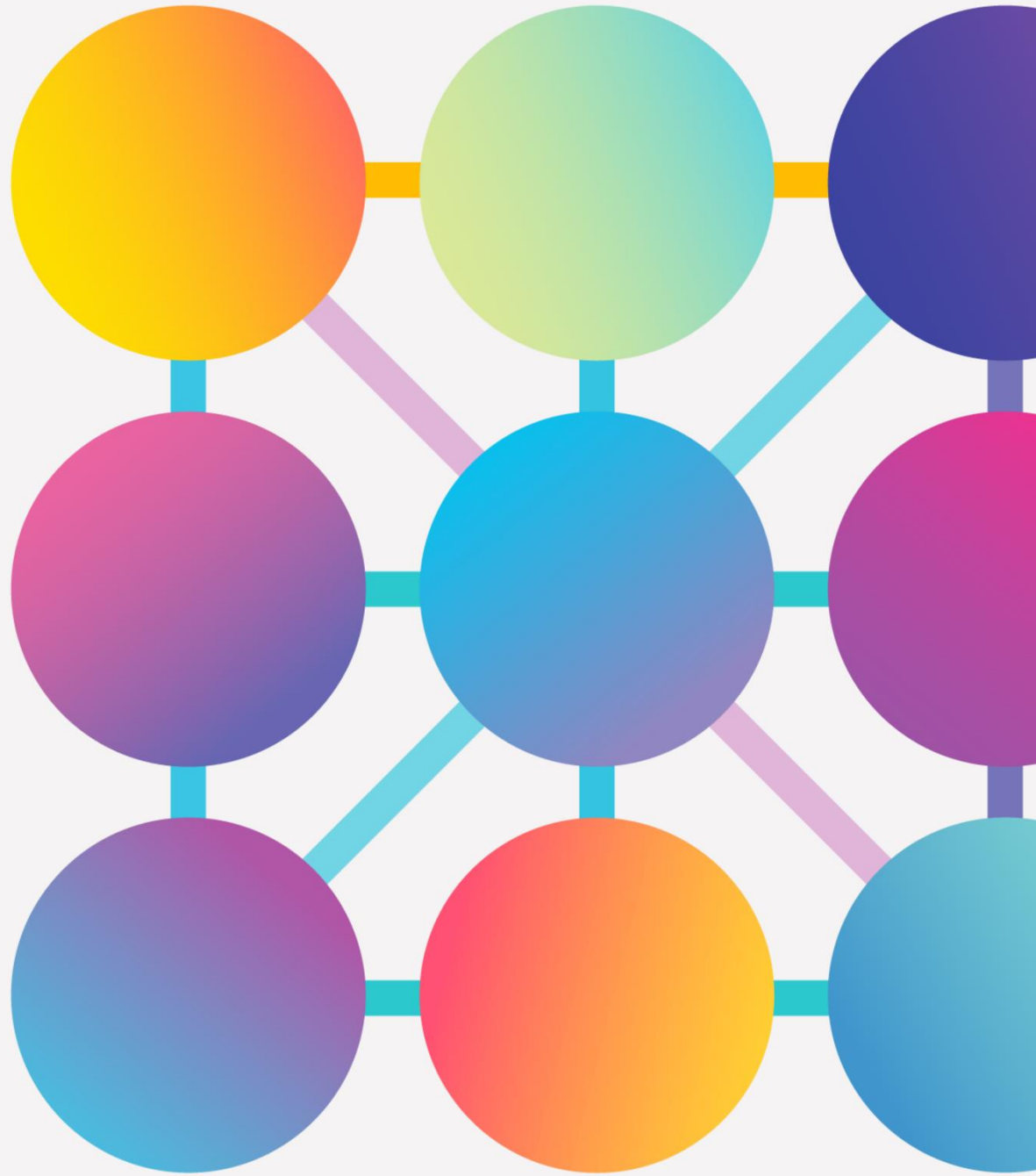
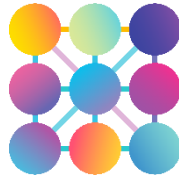


# THE POWER OF MATTERING



## COMPANION WORKBOOK

By Zach Mercurio



# Welcome.

By picking up this workbook, you've taken an intentional step toward building an organization and community where everyone knows they matter, including you. That's no small commitment, and I want you to feel just how critical this work truly is.

I wrote *The Power of Mattering* because I couldn't ignore the evidence. As disengagement, burnout, loneliness, and mental health challenges rose, so too did reported feelings of being unseen, unheard, and undervalued. As I dug deeper, it became clear that we're not facing a disengagement crisis or a "loneliness epidemic"—we're facing a *mattering deficit*.

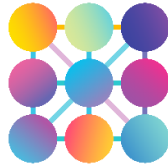
Believe it or not, that's good news. *Mattering* is the experience of feeling significant to those around you. Our research shows that we don't experience mattering through new programs, initiatives, perks, or pay. We experience mattering in everyday interactions in which we feel noticed, affirmed, and needed.

So, why is this good news? We all have direct control over our interactions and can learn skills to optimize them so people feel significant. So, you, me, and everyone reading these words can DO something, starting with your next interaction. And that's why we're here.

Inside this companion workbook, you'll find reflective prompts to help you explore your own experiences of mattering (and not mattering), guided activities to develop new skills or hone those you already have, and practical steps for applying what you've learned in the book to real-life situations.

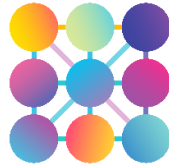
Like most things in life, this workbook is better with others, so I encourage you to share what you're learning and working on.

Thank you for doing what I believe is the most important work of our time.



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## CHAPTERS 1-3: WHY MATTERING MATTERS

### What is Mattering?

Mattering is the experience of feeling significant to those around you that comes from **feeling valued + adding value.**

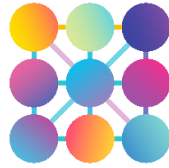
Mattering is a survival instinct and a fundamental human need for motivation, resilience, well-being, and performance.

Mattering is not the same as belonging. When we feel we belong, we feel welcomed, accepted, and approved of by a group. When we feel that we matter, we feel significant to the group's members. Cultivating mattering takes specific interpersonal skills.

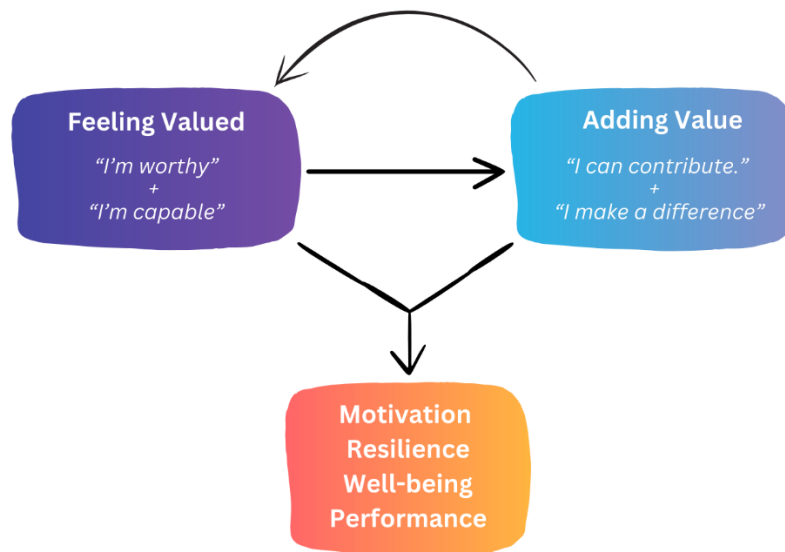
### How Does Mattering Work?

The two ingredients of mattering identified by psychologist Isaac Prilleltensky—**feeling valued** and **adding value**—have a reinforcing relationship. When we feel valued and are seen and heard, we develop the self-esteem (I'm worthy) and self-efficacy (I'm capable) needed to add value. The more we add value to others and the more those contributions are affirmed, the more we feel valued.

This is the virtuous cycle of mattering at work discussed in Chapter 2. When we both feel valued and add value at work, there are four primary outcomes: increased motivation, resilience, well-being, and performance.

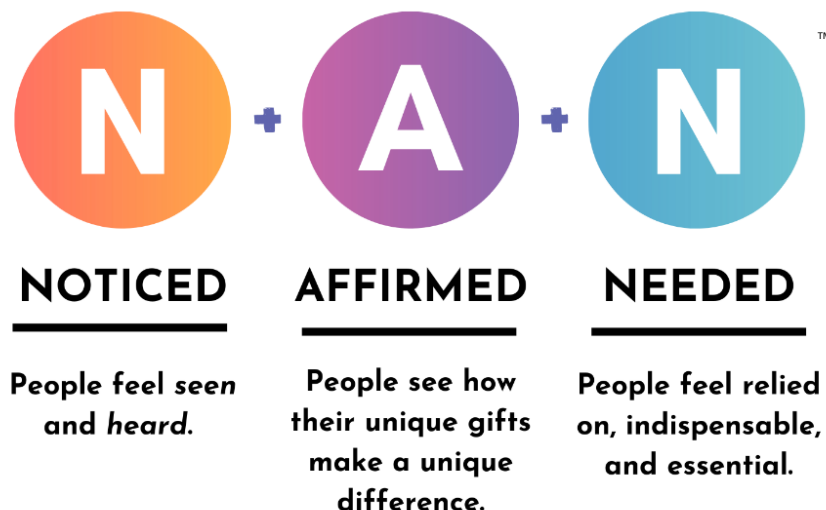


## The Virtuous Cycle of Mattering at Work



## Where Does Mattering Come From?

Mattering arises from three experiences: Feeling **Noticed**, **Affirmed**, and **Needed**. These three ingredients are also the foundation of the leadership skills of noticing, affirming, and needing. Each practice domain is detailed at the end of Chapter 1.





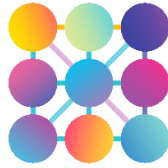
## What is Anti-Mattering?

**Anti-mattering** is the experience of feeling insignificant to those around us.

The five sources of insignificance that can lead to learned helplessness are:

1. **Being unseen** is when you're overlooked, and your presence goes unnoticed.
2. **Being unheard** is when your voice, ideas, or feelings are ignored or dismissed.
3. **Being unvalued** is when your worth or contributions are not affirmed.
4. **Being forgotten** is when your presence or contributions are no longer remembered or acknowledged.
5. **Being dispensable** is feeling easily replaceable and non-essential to the group or purpose.

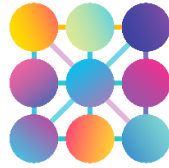
**Reading Notes:**



## Reflection | Moments of Mattering

When in your work (or life) have you *most* felt that you mattered to someone? What did that person do or say? What did it feel like? What impact did that moment have on your life?

When in your work have you most felt *valued*? When in your work have you most felt like you were *adding value*? What do you notice about these moments?



## Reflection | Moments of Anti-Mattering

When at work (or in life), do you feel that you don't matter? What is happening? What are people doing or saying? Which one of the five sources of insignificance in Chapter 3 do you struggle with most?

Think about the people you work with and the projects you work on. What are potential “sprinkler issues”—small moments like the maintenance worker experienced in Chapter 3—that may create an anti-mattering experience? What are some threats to experiencing mattering in your current team, organization, or community?



## Part One Exercise

### Mattering Self-Assessment for Leaders

Considering your current leadership approach, score the following statements using the scale below based on the frequency you perform the described behavior (1-5). Be honest. As you progress through the rest of this book, you can use your results to guide your reading experience and direct your attention and focus.

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

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I ask about and remember the details of others' lives, such as their full names, family and friends, values, interests, and personal goals and aspirations.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I remember and check on others' personal and work details during routine conversations.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ I ask others for their opinion, share that I value their voice, and follow up to ensure they feel heard.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I notice others' moods, and when I sense someone is struggling, I seek understanding and offer action to help.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I check in on people's energy levels.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ I name others' unique gifts, such as strengths, purpose, perspective, and wisdom.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ I show people how they and their work impact others.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ When I give tasks, I first show people the difference it makes.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ I go out of my way to provide opportunities for others to use and develop their gifts.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ I express verbal gratitude to others.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ I tell others how I rely on them.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ When someone isn't present, I'll tell them I missed them.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ I remind people how I and the organization need them and their work.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ I ask others for help.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ I tell others it's better when they're around.

## Mattering Self-Assessment for Leaders Scoring

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

\_\_\_\_\_ (total) / 25

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

\_\_\_\_\_ (total) / 25

Add up your score for items 11-15; this is your total score for the mattering component of **Needing**.

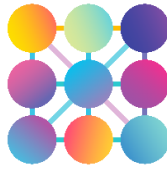
\_\_\_\_\_ (total) / 25

---

### Reflect | Assessment

What practice domain did you score the lowest in? A lower score may indicate that you need work in this area. What is a skill in this area you want to develop? Is there a practice area that you know is a weakness that you'd want to grow?

What practice domain did you score higher in? A higher score may indicate that you practice these areas more regularly, but they can always be strengthened. What is one deliberate practice you want to deepen in this area?

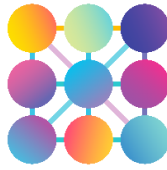


## CHAPTERS 4-5: NOTICING

### Exercise | Seeing Better

How we see someone influences how we treat them, and how we treat them influences who they become. To break this cycle, we must first learn to see better. Try this exercise from Chapter 4.

1. **Consider someone you may be having trouble understanding or are perceiving negatively.**
2. **Ask yourself: How do I see this person?**  
Write down two labels you've ascribed to them. Do you think they're "awkward"? "Difficult"? "Challenging"? You can find labels any time you think or say, "This person is \_\_\_\_\_." How did you form that perception? What information did you consider? What information might you be missing?
3. **List five positive traits about this person.**  
Because we have both a negative and a recency bias, it's also important to consciously recall the positive characteristics of this person. What do you admire about them? What strengths do they have? What are they good at? When they're at their best, what are they doing? Now, consider: Do you treat them as if they're defined by their positive traits or by their negative ones?
4. **Are you identifying the person with their behavior? What more do you need to know?**  
We undercut our understanding of someone by identifying the person with their behavior. For example, instead of saying, "This is a difficult person," say to yourself, "This is a human being behaving in ways I perceive as difficult."  
  
When we separate the person from the behavior, we become more objective and open to the many possible drivers of the behavior—including ourselves and the environment we create. Consider these questions: What do I not know about this person or their situation? What might I need to find out? What are the possible reasons for the behavior? What questions might I need to ask to find out?
5. **Who do you believe this person can become?**  
What do you see as this person's potential? Ask: Am I treating this person as who they're "not" or as who they *can* be?



## Exercise | Tracking Interactions

Our “hurry addiction” often results in our conversations and interactions becoming dominated by transactional interactions. While necessary, too much transactional communication can leave someone feeling like a means to an end. In transformational interactions, we treat people as ends in themselves.

Try this exercise to spot opportunities to shift from transactional communication to transformational communication.

1. **Track your interactions.**

For one week, log all your interactions with each team member and note the following details: Where did they happen? When did they happen? How did they happen (e.g., formal meeting, casual conversation)? What did you discuss?

2. **Reflect on the quality of the interactions.**

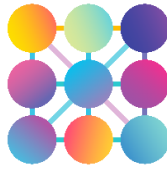
Review your log at the end of the week and reflect on the following questions: How much time did I spend on transactional tasks versus meaningful connections? Which interactions felt rushed, and which allowed for deeper engagement? Are there team members I interact with less frequently? Why?

3. **Analyze meeting structure and cadence.**

Review your meeting schedule and structures. Are there opportunities for one-on-one check-ins with each team member? How often do these meetings occur, and are they sufficient for building relationships? Are there meetings focused solely on tasks and updates, leaving little room for personal connection?

4. **Identify opportunities.**

Based on your reflections, identify areas where you can make adjustments: Can you schedule regular, brief check-ins with team members you see less frequently? Are there meetings that can be restructured to allow for more personal interaction? Can you delegate some tasks to free up time for meaningful conversations?



## Key Skill | Observe, Note, and Share

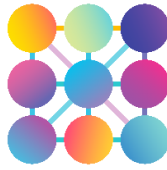
- **Observe:** Pay attention to what others say and the personal and work details they share. Use more meaningful questions to gather good data. Pay attention to people's demeanor, attitudes, and nonverbal cues.
- **Note:** Implement a deliberate practice (e.g., the Noticing Notebook) to note what you observe. Many of us are too pressured to recall everything about everyone we supervise, teach, or coach. We need tools.
- **Share:** Create a cadence to share what you noted. This doesn't need to happen immediately. It can occur a few days or weeks later. The time lag helps people feel remembered.

## Key Skill Reflection | Asking Meaningful Questions

Consider the three types of meaningful questions explored in Chapter 4: Clear, Open, and Exploratory.

Consider the questions you ask when opening conversations or checking in with others.

What are three new questions you could try to connect more deeply?



## Key Skill | Energy Check-ins

Use a regular check-in process to understand “how” people are doing. An example is the green, yellow, and red check-in below:



**Green** means you feel safe, passionate, content, or perhaps are in flow. You're able to be present, engage, create, and learn.



**Yellow** means you can be present but may be reactionary, you may feel overwhelmed or frustrated about something, or your attention is being pulled in another direction.



**Red** means you're overloaded, stressed, burned out, reactive, or feel it's difficult to be fully present.

## Act | My Check-In Checklist

Use the checklist below to ensure you’re set up to cultivate and fully see others through regular transformational interactions.

☐

I’ve designated time and space to check in on each person on my team at least weekly.

☐

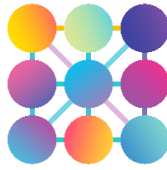
I have clear, open, and exploratory questions ready to ask.

☐

I have a process and tools to observe, note, and share back what I notice.

☐

I have a process to understand the energy and emotions of people on my team I will use at least weekly.

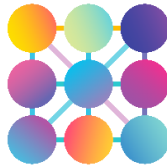


## Reflection | Truly Seeing People

Noticing is the deliberate act of paying attention to the details, ebbs, and flows of people's lives and offering action to show them you truly see them.

Think about the people you work with. Who do you need to notice more? What two actions can you do to help them feel more seen?


What is one habit you will implement from Chapter 4?



## Skill | Proactive Compassion

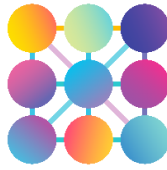
The closer we see someone, the more complex they become to us. This means that, inevitably, we'll encounter struggles. Moving beyond empathy (understanding someone's struggle) to compassion (taking action to alleviate that struggle) is critical.

To think more rationally and strategically about compassion, use the grid below to consider some struggles you may see on your team, how you might notice them, and then an action or resource you can take to alleviate them.

Anticipated struggle	Signs of struggle	Actions/resources to alleviate struggle
		

### Reading Notes:

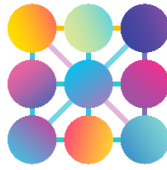




## Reflection | Barriers to Listening

Consider each barrier to truly listening explored in Chapter 5: Automatic Attention, Selective Attention, and The Difficulty of Truly Listening.

Which barrier is most prevalent for you? What strategies and practices from the “total meaning listening” approach can you use to more fully listen to others and ensure they feel heard?



## Exercise | Social Rules

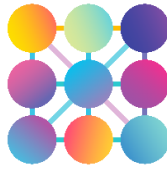
Consider the “social rules” approach to building psychological safety. What are five social rules you can implement on your team to ensure people feel safe to speak up?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

## Act | The Practice of Truly Hearing Others

Consider your team. What are three practices you will implement to ensure others feel heard?

Consider the skill of listening for total meaning, cultivating psychological safety via social rules, having a mistake policy, or responding better to emotional triggers.



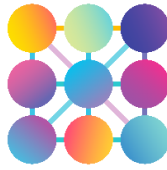
## CHAPTER 6: AFFIRMING

### Skill | Know, Name, and Nurture Gifts

Everyone has four unique gifts: Strengths, Purpose, Perspective, and Wisdom.

- **Knowing** someone's gifts means having a process for them (and you) to become aware of them.
- **Naming** people's gifts means routinely pointing them out.
- **Nurturing** people's gifts means providing opportunities for people to use and develop their unique gifts

Consider each gift described in Chapter 5. Which comes easiest for you to affirm in others? Which is more difficult? Why? What steps can you take to illuminate people's gifts?



## Act | Give Meaningful Gratitude

Real affirmation shows people how their unique strengths make a unique difference. Who needs to be shown the difference they make?

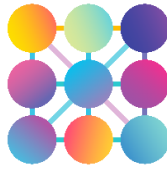
Use the guide below to structure meaningful gratitude and share it with them.

**Setting:**

**Behavior:**

**Gifts** (Strengths, Purpose, Perspective, Wisdom):

**Impact:**



## Act | Affirming Action Plan

### **Key Skill: Collecting and Telling Stories of Significance**

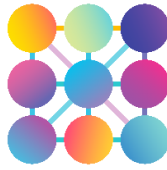
Where, when, and how can you incorporate collecting and telling more authentic stories of the work's impact?

### **Key Skill: Meaningful Gratitude**

In which key touchpoints can you incorporate Meaningful Gratitude?

### **Key Practice: Design Jobs for Mattering**

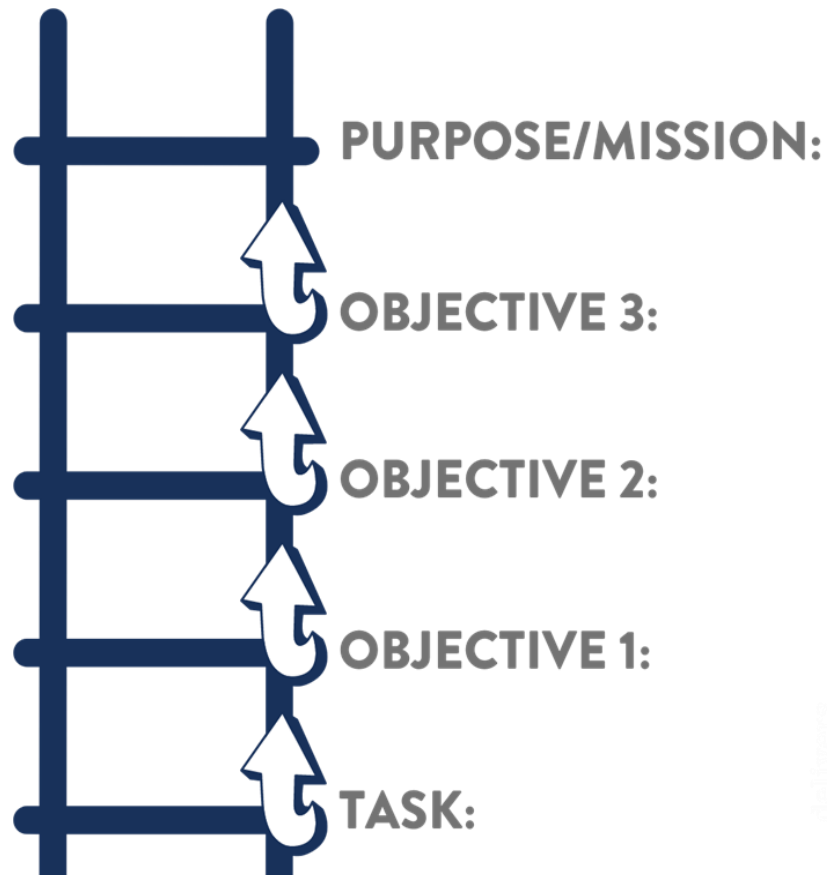
What jobs or tasks need to be “redesigned” so people can see 1. The significance of the work on others, 2. What the task/job is necessary for, and 3. Be reminded how they can use their strengths to do it?

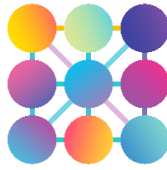


## CHAPTER 7: SHOWING PEOPLE THEY'RE NEEDED

### Skill | Laddering

Think about someone on your team. Use the ladder below to show them exactly how they and their tasks are indispensable to a bigger mission. Then, show them and walk them up the ladder. What do you notice?

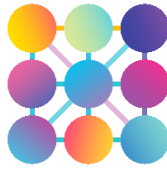




## Act | “If it wasn’t for you..”

Feeling needed means feeling relied on and indispensable. Who do you rely on in your work or life? Write them an “if it wasn’t for you...” statement.

*If it wasn't for you...*



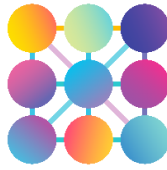
## CHAPTER 8: ORGANIZATIONS OF MATTERING

### Reflect | Ingredients for Scaling Mattering



Consider your current organization or team. What ingredients of scaling mattering are in place? What needs to be invested in?





## Practice | Mattering Audit

Consider the people you see or work with daily. Write down your current practices to Notice, Affirm, or show them how they're Needed. If you're not doing anything strategic, leave it blank. If you lead a large organization, you can also replace "Name" with "Team" to assess employee groups.

**NAME / TEAM:**

Noticed:

Affirmed:

Needed:

**NAME / TEAM:**

Noticed:

Affirmed:

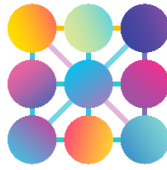
Needed:

**NAME / TEAM:**

Noticed:

Affirmed:

Needed:



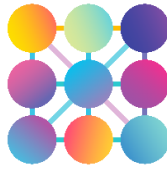
## Practice | Mattering Blueprint

**Our Commitment:** We/I will...

**Notice** People by:

**Affirm** People by:

Ensure people feel **Needed** by:



## CHAPTER 9: YOU MATTER

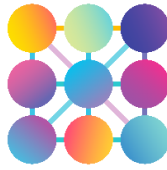
### Reflection | Underestimating Your Impact

Reflect on the “underestimation bias” reviewed in Chapter 9. How might you be underestimating your impact? What are small gestures you can begin taking to show people they matter?

### Act | “So, That” Mindset

Try the following exercise:

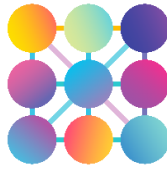
1. **Identify your key tasks and responsibilities as a leader.** Include those that may be routine or mundane.
2. **For each task, ask yourself why you’re doing it.** Who benefits from it? Then, write a “so, that” statement for it. For example, “I’m preparing this report *so that* the team has the data it needs to make informed decisions.”
3. **As you go about your day, consciously remind yourself of the “so, that” of your actions.** You can also use this mindset to intentionally seek feedback from the people you serve on the actual impact of what you’re doing.



## Reflect | My Gifts

Complete the following grid to reaffirm your unique gifts that people benefit from daily. Answer the questions to identify each gift introduced on pages 200-204 and write them in the grid. What does it feel like to “see” your gifts?

<b>MY STRENGTHS</b>	<b>MY PURPOSE</b>
<b>MY PERSPECTIVE</b>	<b>MY WISDOM</b>



## About Zach

**ZACH MERCURIO** is a researcher, leadership development facilitator, and speaker specializing in purposeful leadership, mattering, and meaningful work.

He earned a PhD in organizational learning, performance, and change from Colorado State University, where he serves as a senior fellow in the Center for Meaning and Purpose and an instructor in the Organizational Learning, Performance, and Change program. His research on meaningful work has been recognized by the Association for Talent Development, the Academy of Management, and the Academy of Human Resource Development.

Mercurio also advises leaders in organizations worldwide on practices for building cultures that promote well-being, motivation, and top performance, with clients including the US Army, USA Wrestling, JPMorgan Chase, Marriott International, and the National Park Service. As one of Simon Sinek's Optimist Instructors, he codeveloped and teaches a top-rated course on mattering-centered leadership.

His previous book is *The Invisible Leader: Transform Your Life, Work, and Organization with the Power of Authentic Purpose*.

Mercurio lives in Fort Collins, Colorado, with his wife, two sons, and two adopted dogs.

**Find more resources and explore Zach's talks or workshops:** [www.zachmercurio.com](http://www.zachmercurio.com)

**To take Zach's class with Simon Sinek, visit:** <https://simonsinek.com/product/how-to-be-the-leader-people-actually-trust/>

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