MANDARA®
LEADERSHIP LAB

SURVIVING TO THRIVING

A WORKBOOK FOR EVERYDAY PRACTICE

A MANDARA™ LEADERSHIP LAB WORKBOOK

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Surviving or Thriving?

When a day gets hard, our bodies go into survival mode. The heart speeds up, breathing gets shallow, and attention narrows. That response is useful in real danger, but in everyday stress it's where snapping, rushing, and reacting come from. Thriving isn't the absence of hard days. It's having enough steadiness inside to meet them.

Steadiness is a skill, and like any skill it grows with practice. This workbook gives you four simple practices, one for each week of a month, with space to try them and notice what changes:

1	GETTING HOOKED Notice what hooks you, so you can catch it sooner. Self-awareness is where every choice begins.
2	MINDFULNESS Seven days of small practices, some set aside and some woven into the day, to train your attention.
3	GRATITUDE A few minutes each evening to balance the brain's pull toward what went wrong.
4	SELF-COMPASSION (hospitality) A way to meet your own mistakes with the same kindness you'd offer a friend.

There's no wrong way to use it. Go in order or start wherever you're drawn. Write as much or as little as you like; this is for your eyes only.

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PRACTICE 1

Getting Hooked

We all get hooked now and then. A comment, a tone, the same problem showing up for the third time, and suddenly we're caught. If we pay attention, we can usually find a pattern in what hooks us: certain behaviors, situations, or people. The key to avoiding the hook, or getting free of it quickly, is self-awareness.

Use the chart below for as many situations as you like, broad or specific. Leave the judgments behind and get curious. Most people find their body notices first, so that column is often the earliest warning you'll get.

WHEN I EXPERIENCE…	I FEEL (in my body)	I THINK (the story)	I DO (my usual reaction)

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REFLECT

Look back at your chart. What patterns do you notice? What is usually your first signal that you're getting hooked?

PRACTICE 2

7-Day Mindfulness Practice

Mindfulness isn't hard, but it can be hard to fit into the day. The more we practice, the more it simply becomes part of life, like brushing our teeth. Some days we won't feel like it, and we practice anyway.

There are two ways to practice. Set time practices are time you set aside, even a few minutes. Anytime practices are woven into what you're already doing. Try one of each every day this week, using these ideas or your own.

SET TIME

BODY SCAN

Lie down or sit comfortably and move your attention slowly through the body, noticing without fixing. Guided recordings help. A few favorites: Jon Kabat-Zinn's Mountain Meditation, or any of the lying-down meditations from his Guided Mindfulness Meditation series, and Yoga Nidra with Mehrad Nazari, Ph.D.

MINDFUL BREATHING

Close or lower your eyes and notice where you feel the breath. When your mind wanders, as it will, gently come back. Even one minute counts.

MINDFUL WALK

On a trail or a busy sidewalk, let sounds, sights, and the feel of each step wash over you with open awareness.

MINDFUL LISTENING

Choose a song you've never heard. Close your eyes and follow each instrument, the voice, its range and tone, even if it isn't your taste.

PRACTICE 2

ANYTIME

THE FIRST THREE BITES

Before you eat, take in the smell. For three bites, notice texture, taste, and temperature.

WHILE YOU WAIT

In line or on hold, skip the phone. Close your eyes and see what you can recall or notice about your surroundings. Sounds. Temperature. Quality of light. Odors. Sensations.

THE COMMUTE

Before you drive, feel your hands on the wheel and your back against the seat. Keep coming back to your body, what you see, and what you hear.

TEN SECONDS

Feel your feet on the floor, or the chair beneath you, for ten seconds. That's a whole practice.

"Mindfulness isn't difficult; we just need to remember to do it."

~ Sharon Salzberg

PRACTICE 2

My Mindfulness Week

Each day, note one set time and one anytime practice, and anything you noticed. Small is fine.

DAY	SET TIME PRACTICE	MINUTES	ANYTIME PRACTICE	WHAT I NOTICED
MON				
TUE				
WED				
THU				
FRI				
SAT				
SUN				

REFLECT

Which practice surprised you? Which one will you keep?

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PRACTICE 3

What Went Well, and Why?

Our brains notice the negative faster and hold on to it longer. It kept our ancestors alive, but at the end of a long day it means the one thing that went wrong can crowd out everything that went right.

Dr. Martin Seligman, a founder of positive psychology, offers a simple balance: at the end of each day, write down what went well and why. The "why" matters. It helps you see your own part in the good moments, and the people who made them possible. In his research, people who did this nightly for a week felt happier, and the lift lasted for months.

Try it for a week. Before you write, take a few breaths and let yourself feel the good moment again. Savoring it for fifteen to thirty seconds helps it stick.

DAY	WHAT WENT WELL	WHY IT WENT WELL
MON		
TUE		
WED		
THU		
FRI		
SAT		
SUN		

REFLECT

How do you feel after a week of noticing what went well?

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PRACTICE 4

Self-Compassion

Imagine if we obsessed over the things we love about ourselves.

Most of us would comfort a friend, or stop to help a stranger struggling with their groceries, yet we rarely offer ourselves that same kindness. We'd never tell someone "You're hopeless" after one mistake, but we say it to ourselves all the time. Self-compassion is simply offering ourselves the same hospitality we offer everyone else. We're often quick to notice what others need and to forgive their small stumbles. That same warmth belongs to us too, and it is often the hardest hospitality to offer.

Researcher Kristin Neff describes three parts:

- **Kindness:** speaking to yourself the way you would to a friend, instead of with harsh judgment.
- **Common humanity:** remembering that everyone struggles and makes mistakes. You are not the only one.
- **Mindfulness:** noticing the pain as it is, without ignoring it or blowing it up.

Self-compassion isn't letting yourself off the hook. It's what makes it possible to look honestly at a mistake, learn from it, and try again.

AN ANYTIME PRACTICE

When a hard moment hits, place a hand on your heart or your arm and say quietly to yourself: "This is hard. I'm not alone in this. May I be kind to myself." (Adapted from Kristin Neff's self-compassion break.)

PRACTICE 4

A Letter to Yourself

Think of something about yourself that makes you feel insecure or not good enough. It could be about your personality, your work, your abilities, or your relationships. Notice how it makes you feel: embarrassed, regretful, frustrated? With those feelings in mind, write yourself a letter offering compassion, understanding, and acceptance for this part of you. It's for your eyes only, so be honest.

If you get stuck, these may help:

- Imagine what someone who loves you just as you are would say about this part of you.
- Remember that no one is without flaws. Think of all the other people who struggle with the same thing.
- Consider what has shaped this part of you: your experiences, the people around you, the changes you've lived through.
- Ask yourself, kindly, how you might build a better relationship with this part of yourself.
- Set the letter aside for a while, then read it again, especially on a day you're being hard on yourself.

Adapted from Kristin Neff's self-compassion writing exercise.

KEEP GOING

My Practice Plan

Thriving is built in small moments, practiced often. Choose what you'll carry forward.

THE PRACTICE I'LL KEEP	WHEN AND WHERE I'LL DO IT

REFLECT

Looking back over the month, what has shifted for you, even a little?

Hospitality is a quality we embody.

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