



8 MINDSETS OF AN AGILE LEADER



**"WE DON'T SEE THINGS AS THEY
ARE; WE SEE THEM AS WE ARE"**

- Anaïs Nin

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 2

Your perceptions
determine your actions

Natural mindsets
vs stretch mindsets

Composed Mindset 4

What is it?

When should you use it?

What are the benefits?

Dynamic Mindset 5

What is it?

When should you use it?

What are the benefits?

Objective Mindset 6

What is it?

When should you use it?

What are the benefits?

Outgoing Mindset 7

What is it?

When should you use it?

What are the benefits?

Resolute Mindset 8

What is it?

When should you use it?

What are the benefits?

Empathising Mindset 9

What is it?

When should you use it?

What are the benefits?

Self-Assured Mindset 10

What is it?

When should you use it?

What are the benefits?

Receptive Mindset 11

What is it?

When should you use it?

What are the benefits?

In closing... 12

A Quick Quiz:

What's your natural mindset?

EIGHT WAYS TO BE A MORE AGILE LEADER

Introduction

We are told that to be an effective leader of people in the current, every-changing office landscape, we need to master agility and resilience. Reading books, following inspirational leaders, and learning fundamental leadership skills will get us part way there. Yet to master the agility and resilience we need to be a leader with the emotional intelligence to handle just about anything, we must recognise that becoming an agile leader is multidimensional.

Understanding our strengths is one thing. Yet knowing our blind spots and weaknesses in a people leading context is also incredibly important. There are times when using our natural style works exceptionally well. And times when we need to use other approaches that perhaps don't come as naturally. This requires stretching ourselves beyond our comfort zone.

The art to achieving well-rounded agile leadership starts with personalisation – first self-awareness of how you need to develop, then working on the leadership approaches that require more effort to use.

How you view and think about a situation will determine how you act.

Leaders with agile emotional intelligence (EQ) know how to manage their mindset to achieve the best outcome in any given situation. But first you need to be able to understand where you are in order to design the outcome you're looking for.

According to Daniel Goleman, there are four basic principles of EQ:



Your EQ ability is related to how well you apply all four principles in your interactions with others, and by developing EQ, what we call Agile EQ, you open up your options to better manage in times of change and uncertainty. This can be reached through awareness and application of a range of mindsets that you can shift between to achieve your desired goals.

Natural mindsets vs stretch mindsets

In their profile called Everything DiSC® Agile EQ™, John Wiley & Sons (an international publishing house) talk about the importance of understanding the link between EQ and behaviour. If you can understand the mindsets that come most naturally to you within an emotional intelligence context, along with the EQ mindsets that require more effort (stretch mindsets), you open up a world of possibilities for developing your EQ agility so you can tackle the leadership challenges of the modern world.

The combination of these natural and stretch mindsets is what gives you the full ability to be able to be a more responsive and agile leader. It's a simple method to meeting the four principles of EQ we outlined on the previous page.

Firstly, by creating self-awareness of your own behavioural style and preferences (principle 1) you better understand what your default position is when it comes to thinking and acting. In other words, what mindsets and behaviours do you normally demonstrate without putting a lot of cognitive thinking into it.

Once you have this concept of your “home base” you can learn to control and manage your behaviour by pausing and asking yourself “Will I get the best outcome if I act in the way I normally do?” (principle 2). This act of pause and reflect enables you to self-manage how you deal with a situation. You come off autopilot and take a more proactive approach.

Second to developing awareness, is applying the knowledge that you have of the natural and stretch mindsets available to you. The combination of options gives you choice for how to handle different situations, and people, in a multitude of ways (principles 3 and 4)

In short, it is the awareness and utilisation of this range of EQ mindsets that helps to makes you a more agile leader.

We will explore each of the mindsets in the following pages, describing what they look like, when they are best used, and what the benefits are.

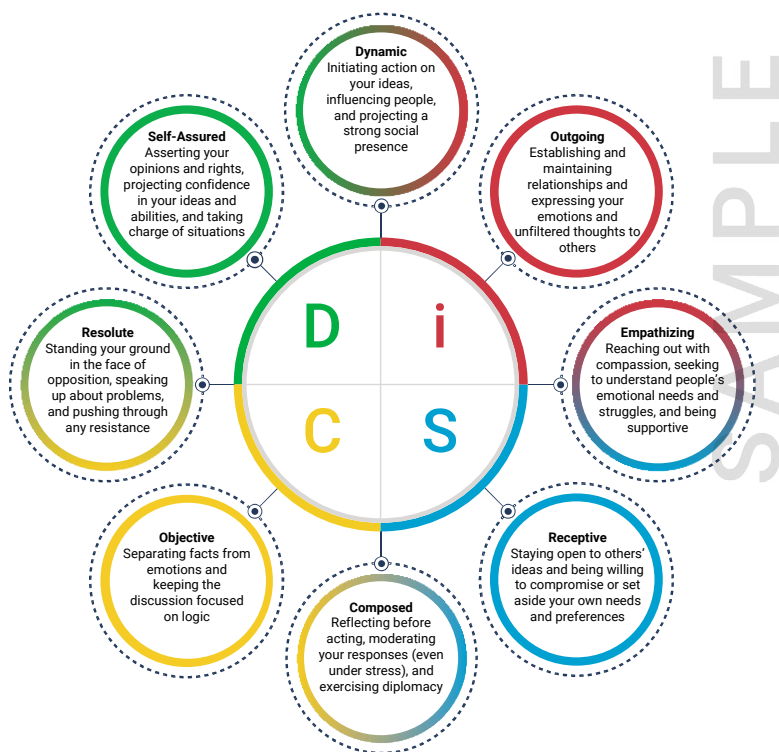


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EVERYTHING **DiSC**
A Wiley Brand

ACCREDITED FACILITATOR · AUSTRALIA

Everything DiSC® Agile EQ™ mindsets are:

- Composed
- Dynamic
- Objective
- Outgoing
- Resolute
- Empathizing
- Self-Assured; and
- Receptive

COMPOSED MINDSET

What is it?

People with a naturally composed mindset are very skilled at keeping their cool regardless of what's going on. A composed mindset creates a state of calm for you and those around you. People adept at using the composed mindset will typically reflect before they act or say something. They come across as a peacemaker; someone who is thoughtful and considered in both language and behaviour.

When should you use it?

Being composed helps to deescalate tension; it is great for when people need to broach sensitive subjects with their teammates. And when difficult or important decisions need to be made, being composed allows others to have the space and time they need to think something through carefully.

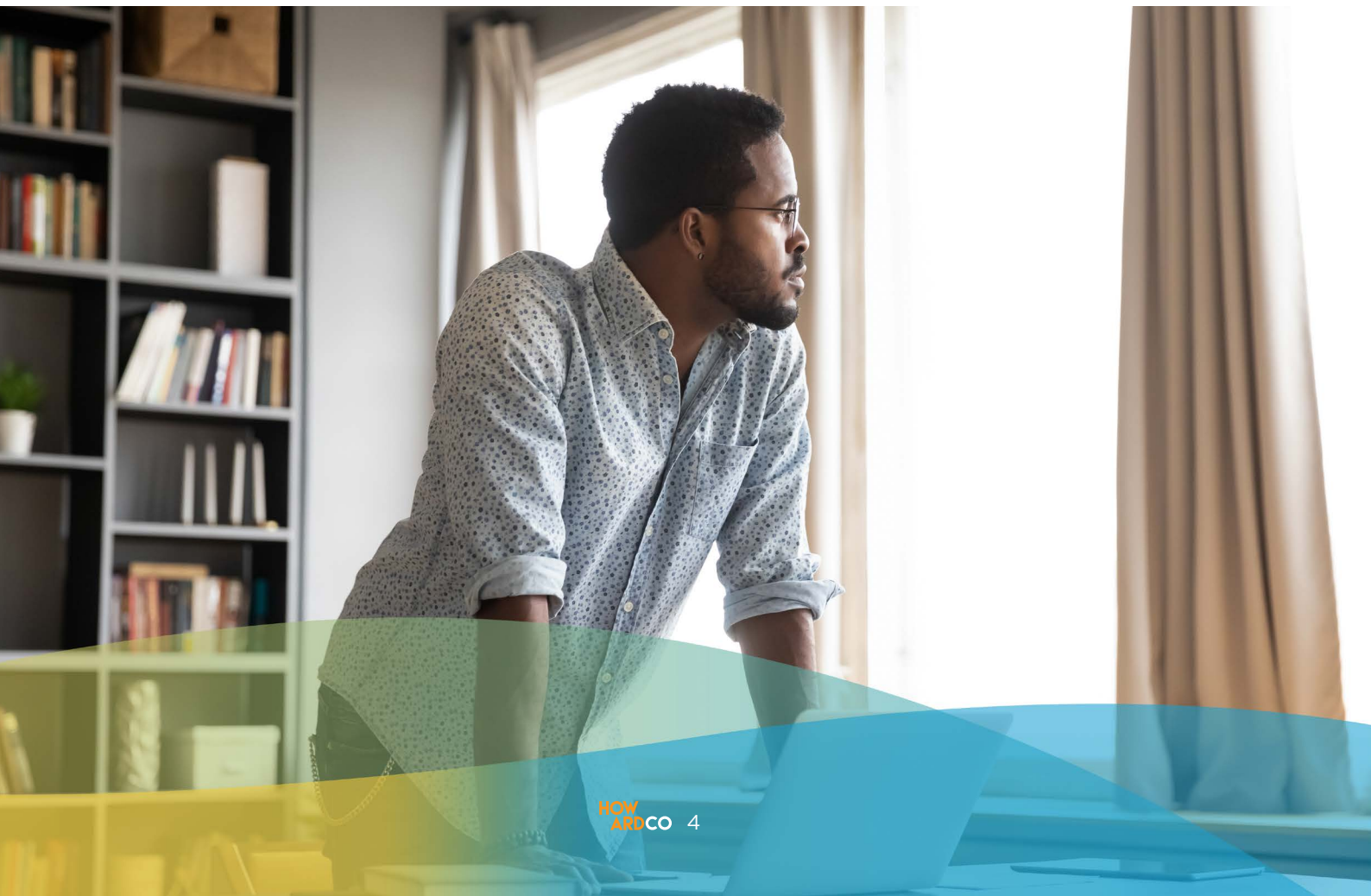
What are the benefits?

The composed mindset gives you space between your automatic response and your actions.

- It keeps you from overreacting to a situation;
- Helps you to think through what you want to say before you say it;
- Provides a calming environment for others to contribute and engage in

Being composed has its benefits, but it is also situation dependent. If you are composed all of the time you may miss out on being heard because you are being too considered or putting others first. When the matter is urgent you may also miss the cue to respond quickly.

As with all things, there is a time to be composed and think things through, as well as a time to be bold and take action.



DYNAMIC MINDSET

What is it?

People with a dynamic mindset tend to be a positive influence on others around them. They are great at initiating action on their ideas and are often driven by a need for excitement and doing something different just because it is different. Change can be fun for those with a dynamic mindset, as is the pursuit of reward and recognition.

When should you use it?

The dynamic mindset will help you when you need to engage people in a new project or get them to rally behind a change that needs to take place in your organisation right now. Or maybe your team has hit a flat spot and needs help to regroup and recharge before moving on.

What are the benefits?

A dynamic mindset helps to create interest and momentum behind new ideas. And it is ideal for gaining greater engagement in the team, as people with a dynamic mindset have high energy and are great at conveying passion and enthusiasm.

A dynamic mindset is perfect for the Agile leader; especially one who has had to deal with increasing disruption and change. However, it's important to choose your situation carefully. Being always dynamic can sometimes lead to dismissing others' concerns, or not allowing people enough time to process a change, which can lead to disengagement.

So, one tip when you engage a dynamic mindset, is to slow down so that you can read the room to make sure people are engaging with you.



OBJECTIVE MINDSET

What is it?

People with an objective mindset tend to do well by closing in on the essential facts of a situation and clearing away the emotional fog that can sometimes cloud judgement. This can help to avoid the bias that overly emotional responses can produce. An objective mindset is often driven by a need to get things right or avoid mistakes but can also be driven by a need to avoid blame if things go wrong.

When should you use it?

An objective mindset is helpful to use when you notice that your emotions, either good or bad, are rising up and distorting your view of your current situation. Whether these are feelings of enthusiasm or anxiety, or anywhere in between, it's important that you make sure that you pause, slow down your thinking and check in with the specifics of the situation.

If we don't give equal consideration to facts as well as emotions, we may find that we miss critical information that could be highly relevant in making sound decisions and producing well thought out goals and plans.

What are the benefits?

Objectivity can help you be more proactive about what's happening both now and, in the future, thus giving you a more thorough and balanced understanding of the whole picture.

Using the objective mindset also enables you to be more open to important, longer-term considerations for you and your team, such as: "What are the bigger goals you are wanting to achieve, and what are the blockages that may get in your way"?

Regardless of your natural or automatic response to a situation, there is always a benefit to taking stock and checking in with your environment and the people around you before acting. If you are someone who only acts on your emotions, you could not only get people offside, but also miss important information and feedback that can lead to better decisions or responses. Being objective ensures you weigh up the facts before you act.



OUTGOING MINDSET

What is it?

People with a naturally outgoing mindset are very good at building friendship and togetherness in a work and social context, as connection is very important to them. They encourage honest and open interactions, and by engaging an outgoing mindset they build greater trust within their teams, whereby people feel more welcomed to speak up. People embrace the positive energy of those with an outgoing mindset, however, be aware that if overused some may find it to be overwhelming or insincere.

When should you use it?

One of the best times to use an outgoing mindset is when you are building new relationships or need to develop existing ones. For new leaders, being seen as someone who is open to meeting others and confident in group situations can be an early contributor to building trust. An outgoing mindset is a good icebreaker.

If outgoing is not a natural mindset for you, it may involve taking a bit of a risk to reach out to people. Others will appreciate you letting your guard down (even a little bit!) and getting to know more about you and your interests. You will find that the greater the understanding you have of each other, the smoother your interactions will be.

What are the benefits?

The outgoing mindset can produce wonderful long-term benefits for you and your team such as:

- improved communication,
- greater interpersonal trust,
- a deeper understanding of one another, and
- an increased willingness to try new things.

All of these benefits go towards creating strong workplace relationships and team success.

Another benefit to the outgoing mindset applies to networking, whether internal or external. You will find it easier to achieve the goals you have set for yourself and your team, by building a solid base of collaborative and supportive relationships around you.

If being outgoing isn't a natural mindset for you, you may find initially that it can be an exhausting way to approach to your relationships. However, in the long run, you will find that it requires less energy as your relationships become stronger and more effortless over time.



RESOLUTE MINDSET

What is it?

Leaders with a naturally resolute mindset are very good at speaking up about problems. They are great at standing their ground in the face of opposition and can naturally push through resistance and roadblocks to achieve results. Resolute leaders tend to maintain confidence in their perspectives and decisions, even if others cast doubt over their ideas. They are able to do this because they have confidently put the work into a topic, and they are driven to achieve.

When should you use it?

An ideal time to use a resolute mindset is when you need to defend an idea that you have thought through well and that you believe is the right course of action to take. This is especially true when engaging with strong or forceful personalities. If you have a tendency to keep things friendly and avoid conflict, then without being resolute you may give over to others' ideas too easily, failing to back yourself up.

It's also important to use a resolute mindset when you need to give critical feedback to someone; an important part of leading and developing others. Showing tough-minded resolve may be difficult for some people if they are genuinely concerned that their feedback may be misconstrued as criticism and will threaten the relationship. However, there will be times when it is important to be firm and purposeful in your communications.

What are the benefits?

The resolute mindset produces many benefits for the agile leader. One benefit is expediency in making decisions and sticking to a plan without being dissuaded by obstacles, resistance or tension. Whilst this won't always be the right path, there are times when leaders need to act decisively and forge ahead.

Another benefit of the resolute mindset, especially if it isn't a natural mindset for you, is that it demonstrates to people that you care about the topic at hand and are willing to stand strong in your belief that it is the right approach to take. If you come across as indifferent on a subject, or hint that your perspective is less important than someone else's, you can create an unhealthy dynamic within your team.

Of course, as with all mindsets, there are downsides to being too resolute. Be careful not to be so inflexible that you alienate others, or too fixed on the "win" that you don't consider other valid ideas and approaches. You'll find that it will come down to timing and circumstance to know when it's best to be more resolute.



EMPATHISING MINDSET

What is it?

People with a naturally empathising mindset tend to be the first people to show compassion for others. They seek to understand what peoples' emotional needs and struggles are and focus on being supportive and open. People strong in empathising pick up on cues when something is wrong and will invest time and energy into understanding what's happened. They are driven by a need for a harmonious environment and connecting with others.

When should you use it?

One of the most natural times to use an empathising mindset is when someone you work with is struggling and you want to help by understanding what has occurred and how it has affected their behaviour. Empathy gives you a better picture of the situation because it requires you to step into someone else's shoes and really consider what the other person is experiencing.

It can also be helpful to use the empathising mindset when you're wanting to build an effective path forward with your team by understanding their emotional drivers. When you build solid relationships with your co-workers, and are more approachable with them, they are more likely to share information with you... information that could be critical and relevant to the goals you're wanting to achieve.

What are the benefits?

An empathising mindset is a core foundation of creating a supportive, collaborative and open environment where people feel safe to speak up about their concerns and are comfortable to share their ideas freely and unencumbered.

Empathising also helps you to be respectful of the concerns of others, regardless of whether you agree or not with the thoughts and ideas being tabled. Investing time into listening to others helps you better understand their perspective and the better you can relate to others, the stronger your working relationships will be.

Always seeking harmony can have its setbacks though. If you focus too much on feelings, you may find yourself perpetually excusing poor behaviour, giving people third, and fourth (or even more!) chances without addressing the root cause of what's going on. This can ultimately compromise your judgement, which may in turn impact on the long-term health of your team.



SELF-ASSURED MINDSET

What is it?

People with a naturally self-assured mindset confidently stand up for what they believe in and generally have no trouble in speaking freely and frankly with others. They tend to take the lead in situations and turn ideas into reality. Naturally self-assured people easily assert their opinions in order to push forward with ideas and achieve results.

When should you use it?

A self-assured mindset is ideal to adopt in situations where you need to convey confidence about the decisions and plans you need to make. If you're responsible for leading a team, displaying certainty can foster support for your plans and helps to pave the way for success. Alternatively, if you come across as being overly cautious, or too modest in your abilities this may cause others to question your conviction or raise doubts about their support.

What are the benefits?

In addition to expressing confidence in the idea itself, adopting a self-assured mindset, gives confidence to others in your team that you are the leader who has the capability to deliver. You will have a far greater chance of success if you take charge of the project or your team with a healthy dose of self-assurance.

It's important to remember that if you do not believe in yourself, others will struggle to believe in you too. Being self-assured creates a natural, healthy respect for you (as well as your ideas) and creates a solid foundation for buy in and support from your team.

As with all the mindsets we have been discussing, there are ideal times to use your self-assured mindset, and times when you need to be cautious. Be mindful not to be overly confident in your ideas, or so steadfast that you shut down listening to others – especially those on your team that may be more reserved or reflective, on whom you also rely for support.



RECEPTIVE MINDSET

What is it?

People who are naturally receptive recognise that other people's ideas and needs warrant consideration alongside their own. They are often willing to set aside their own preferences so that others feel heard. They may even go along with ideas they don't necessarily agree with to maintain peace and harmony. Receptive people like a calm and friendly environment and so they avoid may tension in their relationships as they can find it quite unsettling.

When should you use it?

When you need to be collaborative a receptive mindset keeps the focus on being co-operative and open-minded. If you close yourself off to others, or are too invested in your own ideas, you risk missing out on perspectives and inputs that may lead to a better result. A receptive mindset helps to maintain team balance and ensures everyone is heard.

Establishing a mindset of receptivity also encourages the quieter, more reserved team members and ensures they get a say. Whilst some may naturally avoid speaking up, or just like to "go with the flow", if they are not heard, there is a risk they may end up being resentful or not supportive of any decisions that are made.

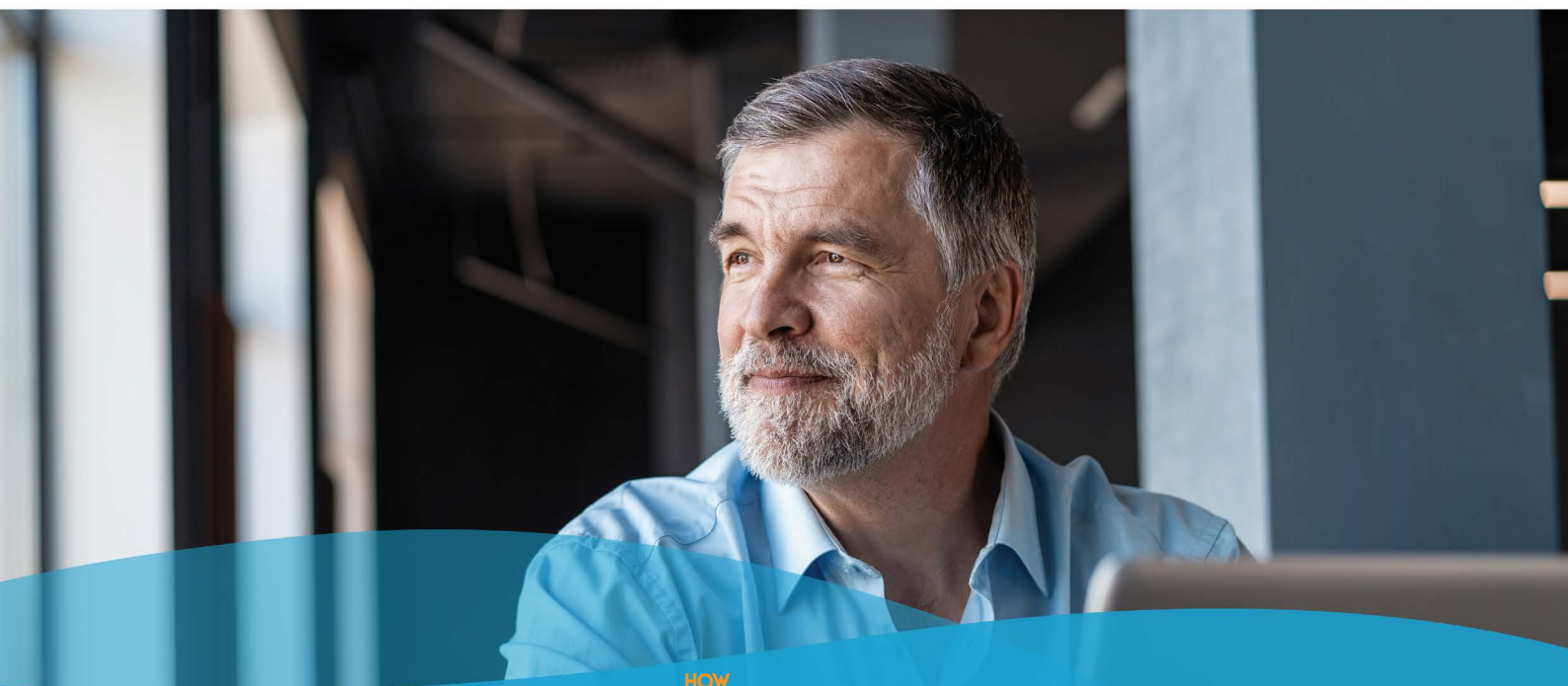
What are the benefits?

Being receptive portrays you as an inclusive leader. One who is open to and welcomes inputs from those you work with. Your decisions are better informed, and you gain different perspectives. More importantly, by being heard and considered, you gain the support and engagement of your team.

It can be easy to feel swept up in the ideas that you're passionate about and, if you're under time pressure, to want to act swiftly. Yet taking time to step back from your own ideas and assumptions to truly appreciate the perspectives of others will pay dividends for the long-term health of your team and your business.

When others feel heard, they are more engaged with what you're working on, and they will have greater buy in and contribution to the success of the team. Making short term concessions to meet the needs of others can go a long way to establishing a more stable, sustainable and positive work environment.

Being receptive, like all the mindsets we've explored, can have some limitations, so you need to be aware. These typically come about when you want to avoid tension or not hurt others' feelings and therefore, you give up on sharing your own ideas or thoughts. You need to ask yourself what is in the best interests of the team, and build up your resilience to constructive disagreement and see it as a productive tool for your development as well.



IN CLOSING

A Quick Quiz: What's your natural mindset?

From the following list of mindsets, select the top one or two that are the most natural for you:

- 1. You thrive on initiating action on ideas, especially your own and, influencing others to join in
- 2. You like to focus on building relationships with other people and expressing your thoughts and feelings
- 3. You are very good at reaching out to others, showing compassion and working to understand their needs
- 4. You don't mind setting aside your ideas as you value the contribution of others
- 5. You are very practiced at maintaining calm under pressure and reflecting before you act
- 6. You are very good at separating emotions from facts, maintaining a focus on logic and reason
- 7. You don't have any issues with standing your ground in the face of opposition from others
- 8. You are confident in your abilities and like to assert your ideas and opinions to others

The corresponding mindsets are below. Once you've worked out your top two, you can head back to the relevant pages to read more about your mindset again.

- 1. Dynamic
- 2. Outgoing
- 3. Empathising
- 4. Reflective
- 5. Composed
- 6. Objective
- 7. Resolute
- 8. Self-Assured

SUMMARY

We hope that you've found it valuable to learn more about the leadership mindsets that develop your agile emotional intelligence. These mindsets are most commonly used in the workplace for leading others, however they're also highly applicable across other areas of life.

If the pop quiz is not enough, you can also access a personalised report of your Agile Emotional Intelligence, using the Everything DiSC® Agile EQ tool. After completing a confidential online questionnaire, you will receive a personalised 26-page report detailing your specific results for the three mindsets that come most naturally to you along with strategies and action plans for developing your stretch mindsets to help you become an even greater leader of your team.

For more information on the report and to enquire about our short 1-on-1 coaching programs or team workshops, please contact us via info@howardco.com.au or visit this page on our website: www.howardco.com.au/programs/everything-disc-agile-eq

Thank you for your time and we hope that this ebook has given you some helpful insights.

IN CASE YOU'RE NOT SURE, WHAT IS DiSC®?

If you are yet to familiarise yourself with DiSC® profiling, here is a really quick summary. DiSC® is a personal development tool that is most commonly used for improving workplace performance and relationships. In answering a questionnaire, DiSC® provides you with insights on your natural behavioural preferences to help you better understand yourself and therefore others. DiSC® is a great equaliser, as we soon realise that we are not all the same, and we can therefore learn to navigate our relationships and teams with a fresh new perspective.

Meet our accredited DiSC® facilitators...



Warren Howard

As Director of Howardco Business and HR Solutions and Licensed Member of the National HR Coach Network, Warren is an experienced executive and consultant with over 30 years' experience in building successful teams.

Warren aligns business strategy with the management of people and as an experienced change agent loves nothing better than working with his clients to achieve consistent and outstanding results. Warren is an accredited and experienced DiSC® Facilitator. His passion is helping great teams grow and developing leaders to run successful, profitable businesses.



Lauren Ayers

As a Senior HR and Recruitment Consultant with Howardco, Lauren has over 20 years' experience working in business - including family businesses, business coaching, and people and culture.

Lauren was formerly CEO of Integro, specialising in DiSC® profiles and programs to improve workplace communication, build team effectiveness and harness leadership capabilities. Lauren now shares her skills as an HR consultant helping people to fulfill their life's work and fostering incredible business environments.



Shelly Harris

As a Senior HR and Recruitment Consultant at Howardco, Shelly has over 20 years' experience in HR, learning & development and recruitment and brings a highly developed business strategy approach to her clients' work.

Shelly's passion is people, she partners with organisations to develop their teams, human resource processes and management capability. Shelly is an accredited DiSC® facilitator for team and individual development. Shelly helps her clients successfully drive organisational performance to maximise productivity and growth.

HOW ARDCO

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**OUR GREATEST SATISFACTION
COMES FROM SEEING PEOPLE
THRIVE IN A POSITIVE
AND SUCCESSFUL TEAM
ENVIRONMENT**

“The team at Howardco provided an extremely tailored experience, which means that I was able to work on skills that were highly specific to my role as well as my AgileEQ profile. My coach, Lauren, not only provided me with effective and practical tools to grow in my professional role, but checked up between sessions and was always readily available to give me advice. I felt very well-supported by both my coach and the wider Howardco team throughout the whole experience.”

*Baya Ou Yang, Senior Account Manager
at Milkbar Digital (Future Leaders Program)*