

Two Ways to Face Challenges



"My workplace is exceptionally inward."

"I am too busy to apply any of the outward mindset frameworks or tools."

"My boss expects me to shut up and produce, not be outward."

"My coworkers are lazy, and they get away with it."

"My boss is a jerk."

"Leadership serves their self-interest, not the good of the organization."

"Leadership dumps their problem people on me and then tie my hands so that I can't deal with them."

Let's face it. Suffering is an inevitability of life. Problems, challenges, unfairness, mistreatment, roadblocks, and even tragedy characterize much of our work and personal experience. On top of this, others sometimes act with malevolent intent. The news, history, and personal experience are full of examples of the malintent and harmful actions of people across the globe.

But there's something that can make all this tragedy and malevolence even worse.

Inward Mindset Exacerbates Suffering

The inevitable suffering of life is made exponentially worse by confronting it from an inward mindset. When we have an inward mindset, we are self-focused. We see only our own problems, challenges, and needs—and we tend to blame those problems on others. We do not see them as people, but as objects: roadblocks to our happiness.

To this end, there is a thought-provoking quote by Albert Maysles: “Tyranny is the deliberate removal of nuance.”

For our purposes, when we reject the ‘nuance’ of the humanity of others (their challenges, burdens, hopes, fears, laziness, malevolence, etc.), we tyrannize ourselves with our inward mindset. This mindset is characterized by blame, self-deception, and self-justification, excusing one from personal responsibility.

From this inward mindset, we often allow ourselves to wallow in our victimhood, carrying our hurt around with us long after the original incident. We allow ourselves to be weighed down—defined, often—by the injustices we have experienced.

Outward Mindset Thrives on Challenge

With an outward mindset, we account for our impact on others. We see others as people—people who matter like we do; who have needs, challenges, and goals like we do. We are connected to them and to their humanity.

And we do not blame them for our challenges in the same way. We may acknowledge—and address—misbehavior, mistreatment, or injustice, but we do not wallow in our victimhood in the same cyclical, self-excusing, self-justifying ways that we do with

an inward mindset.

Furthermore, when we have an outward mindset we thrive on challenge! An outward mindset allows us to see challenges as opportunities to learn about our own **“inward mindset red flags”** and develop our ability to turn outward when everything seems to be inviting us inward. If life were perfect, we could remain inward all the time and never know or care. But life isn't perfect—and an outward mindset lets us make the most of its imperfections.

The Big Question

In implementing an outward mindset in our work and personal lives, then, the question is not, 'Will I experience challenges and injustices in my life?' We know we will!

Instead, the question is, “What will I do with the challenges I face?’ Will we develop an inward mindset of self-tyranny, or will we leverage the challenge to become outward?

Which will you choose?