

UNIVERSITY OF
LOUISVILLE
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

*The Center for
Positive Leadership*

Beyond Burnout

The Power of Playfulness and Mindset Mastery

Daniel Montgomery,
CEO/Founder/Lead Consultant



LEADERSHIP
— REALITY —

Beyond Burnout: The Power of Playfulness and Mindset Mastery

Journeying Through Mindsets

Fixed Mindset: Ever felt trapped by the idea that your talents and abilities are predetermined? You're not alone. Neuroscience once supported this, suggesting our brains are static past a certain age. But that's the old playbook.

Growth Mindset: Recent studies hint at something remarkable: our brain's plasticity. This means that with dedication and the right strategies, we can rewire our minds, unlocking vast reservoirs of potential. The horizon? Limitless.

Mutual-Benefit Mindset: Here's where it gets deeply human. It's about interconnectivity. Studies on emotional intelligence and community health underscore the power of mutual growth - how our individual progress impacts the collective.

The Essence of Playfulness:

In a world that often feels like it's spinning too fast, where burnout shadows our every step, there's an antidote - playfulness. Science has repeatedly shown the benefits of play for adults: from sparking creativity, reducing stress to improving emotional well-being. It's not just child's play; it's human play. Let's illuminate six transformative attributes:

- *Enthusiasm:* A state that's wired into our very biology, enhancing our mood and broadening our perspective.
- *Spontaneity:* Neural pathways love novelty. Welcoming the unexpected can revitalize our mind, keeping it agile and young.
- *Imagination:* Creativity isn't just about art. It's a cognitive function, a survival tool, and a source of endless innovation.
- *Connection:* Social bonds? They're not just heartwarming. They're life-extending, with studies linking social connection to longevity.
- *Wonder:* Our innate curiosity, a shared trait by all young and old, drives lifelong learning and adaptability.
- *Humor:* Laughter? It's like a gym workout for the brain, releasing a cocktail of feel-good chemicals that boost mood and resilience.

Yes, the exhaustion, the feeling of being overworked, and the weight of being overwhelmed are all very real. But guess what? So are you. Playfulness isn't just an optional perk; it's fundamentally woven into the fabric of being human. While beating burnout requires more than just playfulness, it certainly doesn't require any less of it. You've got this; let's reshape our mindset together.

Shifting from Fixed to Mutual-Benefit: A Playful Journey

Dive into the chart below, a step-by-step guide showcasing the transformative journey from a static mindset to one that is interconnected and communal, all through the lens of playful attributes. We commence with an acknowledgment of a limiting belief, travel through self-growth, and ultimately land on a vision of collective elevation.

Attributes	From Fixed Mindset...	...to Growth Mindset	...to Mutual-Benefit Mindset
Enthusiasm	No more: Suppressing my feelings and joys.	I am: Passionate and excited about all I do. I will: Harness my energy for enthusiasm in every experience.	We will: Uplift each other, creating an atmosphere of collective enthusiasm.
Spontaneity	No more: Clinging to routine and avoiding surprises.	I am: Adaptable, embracing change. I will: Dive into new experiences.	We will: Embrace the unexpected, creating joyful moments together.
Imagination	No more: Stifling my creative thoughts.	I am: Full of creativity and innovation. I will: Dream beyond my current reality.	We will: Co-create, merging our imaginations for unique ideas.
Connection	No more: Isolating myself from others.	I am: Open-hearted, seeking meaningful connections. I will: Foster bonds that enrich my soul.	We will: Nurture an environment of trust and deep connections.
Wonder	No more: Accepting things at face value without curiosity.	I am: An explorer, in awe of the world. I will: Seek understanding.	We will: Share discoveries, celebrating wonder in every moment.
Humor	No more: Suppressing my laughter or avoiding humor.	I am: Joyful, finding humor in the world. I will: Laugh at life's quirks.	We will: Share laughter and find humor in our shared experiences.

Instructions for the Exercise:

Imagine the ambiance of a fireside chat: the gentle crackling, the warmth enveloping you, and the stars overhead. We're about to recreate that warmth here, with our Heartfelt Fireside Share.

Reflect: (5 minutes)

- As the embers glow, allow the chart to illuminate your current state of mind. Identify with any aspects in the "No more" column that resonate with your present self.

Declare & Pen It Down:

- As fires inspire stories, let this exercise inspire a commitment in you. Transition in thought from "No more" "I am" to "We will" and pen down your personal rendition in the space provided.
- Embrace Every Phase:
 - Begin by internalizing the "No more" sentiment. Reflect on past experiences and feelings.
 - Move to "I am," embracing your present self and the positivity it holds.
 - Conclude with "We will," envisioning the future you aspire to co-create with others.
- Make It Authentic: In the space below, select 1 attribute, you can either adapt these sentiments to echo your personal journey or if they already resonate deeply, hold onto them as they are verbatim.
- Below, you'll find a designated space to craft your personal adaptation. Make it authentically yours.

No more _____

I am _____

We will _____

Heartfelt Fireside Share: (5-10 minutes)

- Engage with your table peers as you would if sharing a profound story by the campfire. Narrate your journey from "No more" to "We will." If you feel the warmth and wish to, voice your transition aloud. This isn't about performance, it's about authenticity.

Affirm:


- After each narrative, let the table members stoke the flames of encouragement with heartfelt snaps, forging a pact to embrace a mutual-benefit mindset.

Carry Forward:

- As you would cherish memories of a fireside chat, keep this chart close. Let it be your compass, directing you from static patterns to dynamic mutual benefits.


Unburnt: A Playful Manifesto Against Burnout¹


In a world where rapid change is the only constant, burnout has silently, yet persistently, seeped into our personal, societal, and work lives. But knowledge is power. By understanding the intricate threads of burnout, by identifying the myths and heralding the truths, we find ourselves better equipped to weave a fabric that embraces every individual, nurturing and energizing rather than depleting. The manifesto on the following page is more than just words. It's a commitment, a promise, and a playful call-to-action that unifies us in purpose and spirit.


¹ **Warning:** While our tone might be playful, we're certainly not playing around when it comes to the gravity of burnout. Beneath the chuckles and cheeky remarks, our commitment to combating this epidemic is as solid as a rock. Remember, a spoonful of humor helps the medicine go down, but this isn't just sugar – we're rallying a genuine resistance. Tackling burnout with levity and laughter is serious business, so let's muster the joy, stay anchored in purpose, and form an unyielding front against it. Dive in and join the revolution! 


But first, let's get comfortable with the cues. These are collective responses, gestures of unity and solidarity. As we go through the manifesto, let them be a source of empowerment, engagement, and fun.


Practice Run for the Cues


 Inhale the Truth Cue: Take a deep, synchronized breath in. Feel the energy coursing within and around you. This is our collective commitment to truth. Hold it. Now, exhale slowly, letting go of preconceived notions.


 Shared Wonder Cue: Cast your gaze around the room. From person to person, acknowledge the wealth of experiences and perspectives. This is the marvel of diversity, the beauty of humanity.

 Embrace of Empathy Cue: Reach out to your neighbor, stretching your arm, and offer an enthusiastic "Air High-Five!" This symbolizes our bond, a testament to our shared humanity and compassion, all while staying health-conscious!

 Cheerful Cha-Cha Cue: Take a small step forward and back, reminiscent of the dance, symbolizing the playful steps we take in our journey of joy.

 United Lift Cue: Lifting our arms to the sky, reaching for the stars, we recognize that each star, like every voice, holds significance.

 Balanced Breath Cue: Once again, breathe in, but this time, imagine a scale. As you exhale, envision it balancing, signifying our quest for equilibrium in all aspects of life.


 Creative Clap Cue: Hands at the ready? We're going to clap once, a clap that resonates with our collective commitment to creativity and imagination. Let it be loud, let it be unified.

With these cues practiced, let's embark on our journey with the Anthem of Renewed Vitality.


Remember, this is more than just an activity; it's a declaration of our shared purpose and dedication to combating burnout with love, understanding, and, yes, a bit of playfulness.

Unburnt: A Playful Manifesto Against Burnout


Preamble: In this vast global theater, where stories of toil echo and burnout lurks, we rise – beacons of varied narratives, backgrounds, and strengths. Here, we don't just confront myths but dispel them with truths, binding ourselves in a **promise of renewal and unity**.

Together, Inhale the Truth:  Cue: A communal inhalation, grounding ourselves in the science of our being and our shared experiences.

Declaration I: The Beauty of Curiosity: The world teems with mysteries, and our hunger for understanding is what ties us together. Curiosity doesn't just ignite the mind; it rejuvenates the spirit, offering respite from the monotony that sometimes weighs us down.


Shared Wonder:  Cue: Eyes-wide, a collective look around, appreciating the diversity and marvel of our surroundings.

Declaration II: The Warmth of Compassion: Beyond the statistics and research lies the heart. A heart that understands, listens, and supports. **We vow to remember** that behind every account of burnout is a person seeking acknowledgment, fairness, and connection.

 Embrace of Empathy Cue: Reach out to your neighbor, stretching your arm, and offer an enthusiastic "Air High-Five!" This symbolizes our bond, a testament to our shared humanity and compassion


Declaration III: The Dance of Resilience

Challenged but undefeated, **we pivot, adapt, and grow**. Spontaneity isn't just a word; it's our armor, our playful defense against the rigidity that threatens our spirit.


 *Cheerful Cha-Cha Cue: Take a small step forward and back, reminiscent of the dance, symbolizing the playful steps we take in our journey of joy.*

Declaration IV: Inclusion, Our Guiding Star

We're more than our roles; we're a vibrant assembly of stories, dreams, and aspirations. Together, we craft a world where **every voice matters, and every story holds weight.**


 *United Lift Cue: Lifting our arms to the sky, reaching for the stars, we recognize that each star, like every voice, holds significance.*

Declaration V: Balance, Our Shared Quest: In the ebb and flow of life, **we seek harmony.** Recognizing that while our professions demand, they also need to nurture. We advocate for workplaces that respect both action and reflection.

Balanced Breath:  *Cue: A slow, communal exhale, finding shared equilibrium.*



Declaration VI: The Power of Playful Imagination A remedy to burnout's shadow, we unleash our collective creativity. Playfulness isn't an escape but a tool, a key to unlock renewed vigor, joy, and connection.



Creative Clap:  *Cue: A synchronized clap, embodying unity in action and intent.*



Bold Unison: From the depths of science to the heights of our shared dreams, we declare: No more to unchallenged myths, no more to silent suffering! With beauty in our sights, compassion in our hearts, and truth as our guide, we commit to renew, reimagine, and reignite. Let's forge forward, a beacon against burnout, together. 

My Playful Promise

Bouncing onto this page, I joyfully pledge to live out the playful rhythms of the Playful Manifesto Against Burnout. Let's dance away the doldrums!

Signature:  _____ Date:  _____

Witness 1 (My Cheering Squad!):  _____ Date:  _____

Witness 2(My Cheering Squad!):  _____ Date:  _____

Appendix 1: “I Know It’s Not Just You”: Tackling Real-World Barriers to Playfulness

Balancing Personal Growth with External Realities

While the journey to a playful mindset begins within, we recognize that external pressures and challenges may sometimes make it difficult to fully embrace the practices in this module. Here's a roadmap to help you bridge the gap between personal transformation and external constraints:

Acknowledge the Outside World: Understand and accept the existence of constraints, whether they stem from a demanding job, familial responsibilities, or societal norms.

Strengthen From Within: Use the practices in this module not just for personal joy but as a shield against external pressures. When faced with challenges, draw from your reservoir of playfulness and strength.

Find Your Tribe: Connect with like-minded individuals. Forming a support system can be empowering, creating a shared space for mutual encouragement and growth.

Incorporate Small Joys: Sometimes, grand gestures aren't feasible. But small, consistent acts of playfulness can subtly shift the atmosphere around you and have a lasting impact over time.

Establish Boundaries: Protect your well-being. While being adaptive is commendable, knowing when to say 'no' or to take a step back is equally crucial.

Expand Your Toolbox: Stay curious. Explore workshops, support groups, or counseling that resonates with your aspirations and offers additional strategies.

Engage in Constructive Conversations: Whenever possible, initiate or participate in dialogues that emphasize well-being and mindset growth. Change often begins with a conversation.

Know When to Pivot: Your well-being is paramount. If an environment is stifling despite your best efforts, consider if there are other paths or avenues worth exploring that align better with your values and well-being.

Concluding Note:

Remember, this journey is deeply personal, and while the roadmap provides guidance, the paths you take are uniquely yours. Prioritize your well-being, embrace playfulness in ways that resonate with you, and most importantly, trust your journey.

Appendix 2: The Science Behind Mindset Shifting

1. Growth vs. Fixed Mindsets

Recent Research: A decade's worth of studies have highlighted the profound influence of mindsets on achievements, motivation, and stress levels.

The Takeaway: Champion a growth mindset. Challenges? They're opportunities. Mistakes? Pure learning gold. A fixed mindset? That's just a leash that says you can't grow.

2. Vocalizing Positive Affirmations

Recent Research: Rooted in cognitive-behavioral therapy, research demonstrates that vocalizing or penning down affirmations boosts problem-solving skills when the heat is on.

The Takeaway: Talk the positivity walk. Speaking truths aloud wrestles down self-doubt, fortifying self-belief and drive.

3. Collective Affirmation and Mutual Benefit

Recent Research: Social psychology tells us that shared affirmations glue groups together, birthing an ambiance of trust and camaraderie.

The Takeaway: Affirm together, soar together. Sharing uplifting truths? That's the recipe for unshakable unity.

4. The Power of Playfulness

Recent Research: Infuse daily life with playfulness, and you're on track to push back burnout and boost well-being. Evidence? Professionals dipping their toes in playful endeavors flaunt amplified creativity and shrug off stress.

The Takeaway: Unleash the inner child. Play's not child's play. It's the secret sauce for resilience, innovation, and unabashed joy.

5. Neuroscience and Mindset

Recent Research: Thanks to neuroplasticity, our brains aren't rigid blocks but adaptive marvels. Mindset interventions and experiences don't just tweak outlooks; they morph the brain itself.

The Takeaway: Shape your brain. Mindsets mold. Literally. Delve into intentional practices, and watch the brain forge positive, resilient pathways.

In a Nutshell: Here's the unapologetic truth - we're built to grow, designed to speak power, destined to bond, wired for play, and primed to reshape our brains. Dive into these practices, bask in collective affirmation, and savor every playful moment. Why? Because science says so. And because our shared resilience against burnout demands it. Let's get to it, folks! 🙌🧠🧘

Appendix 3: Mini Moves, Mega Mindshifts: 48 Playful Pathways to Renewed Energy

In our relentless, always-on culture, burnout has become an all too familiar adversary. Amidst this, the art of playfulness is often lost, buried beneath mounting responsibilities and pressing deadlines. Yet, the path to reclaiming our energy might not be as monumental as it seems. Instead of grand transformations, what if the remedy lies in tiny, incremental shifts?

BJ Fogg's *Tiny Habits* emphasizes this exact point. Fogg posits that true change doesn't necessarily come from the grand gestures, but from the smaller, more manageable habits we introduce into our daily lives. These "tiny habits", as he dubs them, are much easier to establish and maintain, setting us up for long-term success rather than fleeting moments of change.

Drawing inspiration from both Fogg's research and James Clear's insights in *Atomic Habits*, "Mini Moves, Mega Mindshifts" presents a curated collection of 48 tiny tactics, each crafted to infuse playfulness into our lives. Think of these not as stringent rules, but as playful suggestions – little nudges aimed at reigniting your zest for life. Each of these tactics aligns with one of six key attributes, with eight tactics dedicated to each.

As you delve into these tactics, let curiosity be your compass. Choose an area that calls out to you, and play around with a tactic or two. The aim here is twofold: to experiment with small, playful changes and to rediscover joy in the process.

Remember, it's not about overhauling your entire life overnight; it's about making small, consistent changes that compound over time. As Fogg eloquently puts it, "If you plant a tiny seed in the right spot, it will grow without coaxing." So, here's to planting those seeds, nurturing them, and watching as they lead to a life brimming with energy, joy, and playfulness. Dive in and let the journey begin!

Enthusiasm Tiny Tactics:

- Morning Stretch & Affirmation: Upon waking, I'll stretch high and declare, "Today brims with possibilities!" (A positive morning gesture sets an upbeat day tone.)
- Dance Breaks: I'll dedicate 5 minutes daily to dance freely to an energizing song. (Dancing releases happiness-inducing endorphins.)
- Daily Pause: A mid-day alert will prompt me to briefly celebrate something exciting. (Acknowledging joys amplifies happiness.)
- Stretch and Celebrate: After each task, I'll stretch joyfully, celebrating my progress. (Such moments rejuvenate mind and body.)
- Share a Win: Every week, I'll relay a personal triumph or passion to a loved one. (Sharing joys magnifies their effect.)
- Music Memory: On breaks, I'll play a beloved song, letting memories wash over me. (Music stirs emotions and memories.)
- Energetic Walks: Each day includes a lively 10-minute walk, feeling each step's vigor. (Daily walks boost mood and circulation.)
- Visualization Start: Before tasks, I'll visualize 2 minutes of the joy upon completion. (Visualizing success enhances focus and drive.)
- Reflective Action: End of week, recall a time you dimmed your enthusiasm. Note it, then conclude:
"No more: _____. I vow to infuse every act with zeal. Next week, my energy will enliven _____. Together, we'll ignite passion and uplift by _____."

Spontaneity Tiny Tactics:

- Unexpected Moves: On each water or coffee pause, I'll surprise myself with a quirky dance or stretch. (Quick physical shifts combat monotony.)
- Route Variation: Weekly, I'll change my route to work or during strolls. (Novel routes refresh the mind.)
- Dress Surprise: Occasionally, I'll opt for an outfit outside my norm or add a fun accessory. (Minor changes can offer fresh outlooks.)
- Impulse Learning: During downtimes, I'll watch a random educational clip or delve into an unfamiliar topic. (Varied learning boosts adaptability.)
- Food Adventure: Each week, I'm tasting a new dish or snack. (Exploring flavors offers sensory excitement.)

- Random Act of Kindness: Without planning, I'll extend a kind gesture to someone. (Unanticipated kindness elevates spirits.)
- Switch Tasks: When stumped at work, I'll pivot to a different task momentarily. (Shifting focus can refresh the mind.)
- Impromptu Chat: Daily, I'll initiate an unplanned talk with someone. (Random conversations can lead to delightful revelations.)
- Reflective Action: As the week closes, I'll reflect on moments when monotony weighed me down. I'll note it down, then conclude:
"No more: _____. I'm weaving unpredictability into my daily life. This coming week, I'll sprinkle spontaneity by _____. Alongside others, we'll unearth joy in unforeseen moments by _____."

Imagination Tiny Tactics:

- Story Expansion: When I spot a random object, I'll concoct a quick story about it. (Boosts cognitive flexibility.)
- Music Visualization: Daily, I'll listen to a tune, visualizing a scene or tale around it. (Taps into emotional and imaginative brain centers.)
- Role Day: Monthly, I'll spend a day channeling another's perspective—be it real or fictional. (Fosters empathy and originality.)
- Dream Journal: I'll keep a bedside journal to note down dreams upon waking. (Accesses subconscious creativity.)
- Alternate Endings: After books or movies, I'll devise a different climax. (Encourages inventive thinking.)
- Artistic Doodles: While waiting anywhere, I'll spontaneously doodle. (Expresses subconscious ideas.)
- Building Worlds: Weekly, I'll set 10 minutes aside to craft a new fictional world. (Exercises comprehensive creative thinking.)
- Invent Solutions: Facing a daily inconvenience, I'll dream up a fictional solution. (Stimulates problem-solving imagination.)
- Reflective Action: Recall a time when you felt your thoughts were boxed in. Record it and then complete: *"No more: _____. I'm unlocking realms of imagination. Next week, I'll venture into creative realms by _____. Together, we'll co-create narratives and universes by _____."*

Connection Tiny Tactics:

- Message of Appreciation: Each dawn, I'll send an appreciation note to a dear one. (Gratitude deepens bonds.)
- Listen to Connect: On a break, I'll allocate 10 minutes to a podcast or article about relationships. (Learning about connections fosters deeper ties.)
- Community Compliment: Daily, I'll offer a heartfelt compliment to someone around me. (Compliments enhance mutual respect.)
- Gratitude Journaling: Nightly, I'll record a memorable connection from the day. (Recognizing such moments fortifies their significance.)
- Join a Group: Weekly, I'll engage in a group activity matching my passions. (Common interests nurture connections.)
- Mindful Breathing: In my routine, I'll dedicate a minute to breathe mindfully, contemplating universal interconnectedness. (Mindfulness promotes global connection.)

- Shared Experience: Every weekend, I'll cherish an activity with another. (Joint experiences create lasting memories.)
- Connect Beyond Words: Periodically, I'll bond non-verbally, through smiles or gestures. (Non-verbal signals create silent, strong connections.)
- Reflective Action: Concluding the week, I'll recollect a time of feeling isolated. I'll document and finish with:
"No more: _____. I'm building bridges and nurturing bonds. Next week, I aim to enhance connections through _____. In unity with others, we'll foster mutual trust, fortifying our collective bonds by _____."

Wonder Tiny Tactics:

- Nature Gaze: Daily, I'll spend 5 minutes observing nature, finding wonder in its details. (Nature has calming and inspiring effects.)
- Question Diary: I'll maintain a journal to note down intriguing questions that cross my mind. (Fosters curiosity and deeper understanding.)
- Tech-Free Hour: Once a week, I'll spend an hour without tech, soaking in my surroundings. (Reduces digital distractions, promoting mindfulness.)
- Star Staring: Occasionally, I'll gaze at the night sky, contemplating its vastness. (Expands perspective and evokes wonder.)
- Childlike Play: I'll periodically engage in playful activities, like blowing bubbles or playing with clay. (Reconnects with childlike wonder.)
- Read Fantasies: I'll immerse myself in a fantasy book or story, letting it spark my wonder. (Fantasies stimulate imagination and a sense of wonder.)
- Mindful Breathing: I'll practice 5-minute daily breathing exercises, focusing on the wonder of life. (Enhances mindfulness and appreciation of life.)
- Mystery Exploration: I'll delve into an unsolved mystery or phenomenon once a month. (Cultivates curiosity and a sense of wonder.)
- Reflective Action: Reflect on a time you felt disconnected from the wonder around you. Document it and then finish: *"No more: _____. I'm reigniting my sense of wonder. This coming week, I'll delve deeper into the world's marvels by _____. United, we'll uncover the world's mysteries and cherish its beauty by _____."*

Humor Tiny Tactics:

- Laugh Diary: Daily, I'll note something funny I witnessed or thought of. (Laughter enhances mood and overall well-being.)
- Comedy Snippets: I'll watch a short comic clip or read a joke during breaks. (Comic reliefs can be mood uplifters.)
- Silly Moments: I'll intentionally do something playful or goofy once a day. (Being silly can provide a fresh perspective and joy.)
- Playful Challenges: Once a week, I'll set a light-hearted challenge for myself or friends. (Engages in fun competition and laughter.)
- Comic Reads: I'll pick up a humorous book or comic to read periodically. (Reading humor stimulates cognitive joy centers.)
- Laughter Meditation: I'll practice 5 minutes of laughter meditation daily. (Laughter as a practice can elevate mood.)

- Funny Faces: In front of a mirror, I'll make funny faces, just for the fun of it. (Spontaneous goofiness can be liberating.)
- Share a Joke: I'll share a joke or funny story with someone every day. (Sharing humor can amplify its joy.)
- Reflective Action: Ponder on a moment when life felt too stern. Note it down and then complete: "No more: _____. I'm choosing to find joy and laughter in daily life. Next week, I will spread humor by _____. Collectively, we'll find reasons to laugh and uplift spirits by _____."

Appendix 4: Annotated Bibliography

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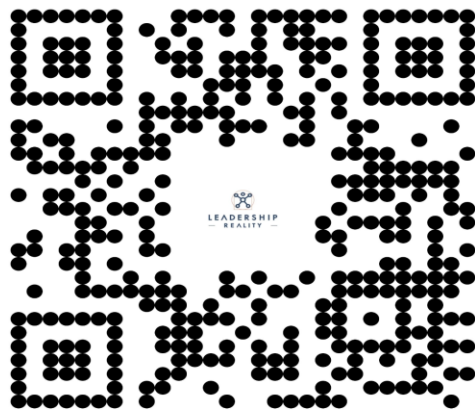
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More resources to bring play to work and work to play!



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Daniel Montgomery
Email daniel@leadershipreality.org
Mobile 502-767-7145