

KEY HABITS OF THRIVING LEADERS



Stepping into the stance of thriving leadership can result in dramatic shifts in how you live and lead. However, more often it's about making small, positive changes that accumulate over time. This practical guide will support you in adopting habits that transform your vision of thriving leadership into reality.

A Brief Masterclass on the Science of Habits

Habits are formed by behaviors you do repeatedly, usually in a specific context. Take, for instance, flossing your teeth: If you're like most people, you floss at the same time and place each day, only forgetting when you're out of your typical circumstances or schedule, such as when you're on holiday.

Our habits are so deeply woven into our identity that we often perform them on autopilot. In fact, research suggests we spend up to 50% of our waking hours operating this way, shifting unconsciously from one action to the next.

While some habits are constructive, others can be less helpful or even toxic, gradually wearing away at your ability to perform, learn, and lead well. Becoming aware of the habits that enable you to thrive is critical for your development and performance, as is shifting habits that are hindering you and adopting new habits altogether.

Forming a new habit generally follows a four-stage cycle:



Based on Atomic Habits by James Clear

As an example, say you want to spend less time on your computer...

CUE: Create a cue by setting a reminder to take regular computer breaks, or remove the trigger to use the computer, for instance, by hiding it when you don't need it.

CRAVING: Understand the underlying reasons driving your computer use, such as the need to feel productive, escape boredom, or seek a sense of belonging through social media interactions.

RESPONSE: Step away from the computer. (Well done!)

REWARD: Rejuvenate your mind, body, and spirit by spending less time on your computer, and return to your computer more focused, energized, and productive.

Willpower Isn't All It's Cracked Up to Be

Past theories of change over-indexed on willpower as the key to making a new habit stick. Today, we know willpower isn't enough; willpower is a finite resource that can become depleted over time. (Think about the decision fatigue that often sets in by mid-afternoon, a big contrast to the clarity and energy you feel in the morning.)

Forming new habits in your life and leadership isn't just a psychological process—it's biological. The four-stage cycle activates a complex feedback loop involving deep brain structures while coordinating multiple bodily systems: nervous, endocrine, digestive, immune, musculoskeletal, and more.

Every choice you make shapes your wellbeing at an epigenetic level.

When you intentionally cultivate a new habit for thriving in life and work, you are leading a holistic transformation within yourself—a powerful act of self-leadership. And when this process happens within a group, such as a team or family, everyone contributes to the transformation, amplifying the impact and creating a collective momentum toward growth and sustainable success.



Dive deeper into the science of habits with these authors:

- *The Willpower Instinct* by Kelly McGonigal
- *Harnessing Habits: The Science of Lasting Change* by Calli Garner
- *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* by Carol Dweck
- *Tiny Habits: The Small Changes That Change Everything* by B.J. Fogg
- *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* by Angela Duckworth

How Can You Make the Science Work for You?

Keep these principles in mind to make your desired habits more obvious, effortless, and sustainable.

START SMALL: Smaller adjustments can build up over time to create a positive momentum. For instance, break down your desired behavior into a simple action that takes 2 minutes or less.

HABIT STACK: Link your new desired behavior, such as the desire to hydrate, to something you already do without fail. For example, drink a glass of water every time you take a work break. Pairing a new behavior with a well-established habit creates a powerful cue for action.

SEEK SUPPORT: Surround yourself with people who encourage and hold you accountable as you work towards your behavior change. Having someone to check in with can keep you motivated, provide valuable feedback, and make the process feel less isolating.

PAUSE & PAUSE AGAIN: Take frequent moments throughout your day to pause, perhaps also taking a mindful breath. This helps you regulate stress, conserve energy, and tap into a richer cognitive capacity for habit change. Pausing, especially when you find yourself triggered by a cue, can help you resist old habits and stay on track with new behaviors.

TRACK & REPEAT: Create a system to monitor your progress, such as a simple checklist or a habit-tracking app. Let it serve as a tool to reinforce repetition, a key to making your desired behavior a seamless part of who you are.

ANTICIPATE OBSTACLES: Challenges, such as time constraints, distractions, and waning motivation are bound to crop up as you focus your attention and energy on establishing a new habit. Bring a growth mindset to these obstacles to increase your chance of success.

CELEBRATE: Celebrate each step forward in engaging in a new habit, no matter how minor. This generates a positive feedback loop that strengthens your commitment to demonstrate habits for thriving in your leadership and life.

EMBRACE IDENTITY TRANSFORMATION: Changing your behavior often means reshaping how you perceive yourself. It's not just about adopting new habits—it's about becoming the kind of person who naturally seeks to thrive as a way of being and leading.



KEY HABITS OF **THRIVING** LEADERS

Thriving leaders believe it is their role to actively steward the conditions that enable all people to thrive, adapt, and be effective, including themselves. Wisdom Works has enabled many leaders, teams, and organizations to transform their challenges into opportunities for growth, capacity-building, and overall wellbeing. **Here are some of the habits these thriving leaders demonstrate.**

CULTIVATE RESILIENCY

Cultivating resilience is at the heart of **THRIVING** as a leader. We all face stress in our work, but how we respond to it makes the difference. Thriving leaders don't try to eliminate stress—they recognize that a certain amount of stress energizes teams and sparks growth. What sets these leaders apart is their ability to spot when healthy pressure tips into harmful territory. They've developed the habit of pausing before reacting to difficult situations, often using a simple breath or movement to create space for a more thoughtful response.

- See a healthy amount of stress as a positive force for meaningfully motivating people, igniting creativity, and nurturing growth
- Understand and effectively respond to the signs of too much stress in yourself and your team well before burnout sets in
- Practice pauses, such as with a mindful breath or movement, before responding to difficulties

MANAGE ENERGY

Managing energy effectively provides the **FUEL** that powers thriving leadership. Your physical and mental vitality are precious resources that determine what you can accomplish each day. Leaders who excel at energy management have stopped trying to power through fatigue. Instead, they've adopted specific habits that optimize their natural rhythms, like eating nutritious meals, incorporating regular movement, and ensuring restorative rest. By syncing their lifestyle and workstyle with their body's natural energy cycles, they're able to boost productivity, improve overall wellbeing, and sustain peak performance.

- Implement 90-minute focused work blocks followed by breaks
- Establish notification-free zones during peak performance hours
- Use power naps or guided non-sleep deep rest activities to reset your state of being and energy levels

FIND FLOW AT WORK

Remember that feeling when you're so absorbed in meaningful work that time seems to disappear? That's **FLOW**, and it's not just pleasant—it's when we do our best work. Thriving leaders deliberately create conditions for flow to happen. They match people with tasks that stretch their abilities without overwhelming them. They distinguish between deep and shallow work, setting aside dedicated time for each and build in strategic breaks to keep minds fresh. When you align tasks with people's natural interests, skills, and workstyles, engagement naturally follows.

- Design tasks that are challenging and stimulating, but not so difficult that they become frustrating
- Create designated periods for deep versus shallow work
- Align work with people's skills and interests, naturally boosting engagement

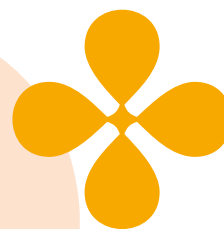
LEARN, GROW, & ADAPT

Thriving leaders approach each day with genuine curiosity and a sense of **WONDER**. They've developed the habit of seeing challenges as opportunities to learn something new. These leaders regularly push themselves beyond comfortable routines to try different approaches, maintaining a childlike wonder that keeps their perspective fresh and innovative. They create stretch assignments that help their people grow in similar ways. Importantly, they recognize that learning happens best when we're well-rested and healthy, so they prioritize wellbeing as part of the growth equation. This wonder-driven approach to learning and growth keeps them adaptable in an ever-changing world.

- Embrace a growth mindset, seeing challenges as opportunities to improve and pushing boundaries to try out new ways of operating
- Design stretch assignments to develop people
- Prioritize mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing, as learning is easier and more effective when people are healthy and rested

THRIVING

being internally well-resourced to meet our demands and evolve with a sense of flourishing, sustainable energy, and growth



ACTIVELY LISTEN

Listening well is surprisingly rare, yet it's one of the most powerful habits a leader can develop. Thriving leaders understand that listening is not just hearing words, but receiving meaning, intention, and emotion. By creating space for genuine dialogue and practicing present-moment awareness, these leaders forge authentic, transformational connections that transcend transactional relationships. Their commitment to listening before leading allows **WISDOM** to emerge not just from their own insights, but from the collective intelligence of those around them.

- Bring genuine curiosity to conversations by asking questions
- Eliminate digital distractions for greater presence and connection between people
- Schedule time for strategic reflection to reconnect with your priorities and values

SEEK SUSTAINABLE RESULTS

Thriving leaders achieve remarkable outcomes not by driving people to exhaustion, but by inspiring them toward excellence. They understand that truly sustainable results come when performance and wellbeing are integrated rather than opposing forces. These leaders recognize that the path to lasting impact requires creating conditions where people can contribute their best work while feeling valued and energized. By balancing achievement with human flourishing, they **AMPLIFY THRIVING** for everyone around them, building organizations that don't just succeed today but continue to thrive tomorrow.

- Achieve results in ways that also bring out the best in people—*how you get results will greatly impact the results you get*
- Provide constructive feedback to build a strong emotional reservoir in the team
- Encourage people to use their imagination, plus make their ideas productive

"The most profound leadership growth often happens through small, intentional habits practiced daily. When you identify and embrace practices that enable you to thrive, you create ripples that extend far beyond yourself."

— Renee Moorefield,
CEO, Wisdom Works Group





YOUR PARTNER IN THRIVING LEADERSHIP

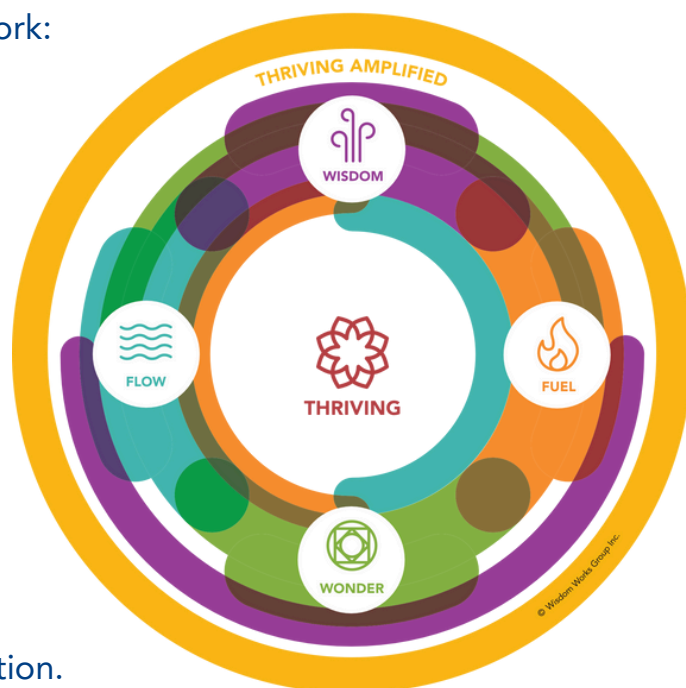
Creating a World Where Everyone Can Thrive—Together

At Wisdom Works, we understand that leadership today requires more than just strategic thinking—it demands a holistic approach to thriving as a person and professional. The six leadership habits outlined in this document are not random practices; they are intentionally aligned with our Framework of Thriving™, a science-based model that identifies the biological, psychological, social, and spiritual factors essential to human flourishing.

Each habit connects directly to our framework:

Cultivating resilience strengthens your capacity for **THRIVING** in challenging circumstances. Managing attention provides the **FUEL** you need for sustained leadership performance. Finding **FLOW** at work enables you to access states that balance challenge and capability. Learning, adapting, and growing nurtures the **WONDER** that keeps leadership fresh and innovative. Active listening deepens your leadership **WISDOM**. And getting sustainable results allows you to amplify thriving beyond yourself—what we call **THRIVING AMPLIFIED**—creating ripple effects throughout your team and organization.

For over 25 years, we've partnered with forward-thinking leaders and organizations to transform how they lead and work. By working with us, you'll gain access to our comprehensive assessment and platform chock-full of resources and additional practices to support your thriving leadership journey. **Because when we thrive, everything and everyone around us has the opportunity to thrive as well.**



CONTACT US

Kate McIver, COO,
kate@wisdom-works.com
www.wisdom-works.com