TLEX INSTITUTE

TLEX INSTITUTE NORTH AMERICA FALL 2026

# Mind *Matters*

The skills of the future start inside.

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Why the way a leader holds pressure now shapes how a whole team thinks

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INSIDE THESE PAGES

# The skills of the future start inside.

Calm under pressure, trust across a team and clear thinking are skills people can build together. The pages ahead show how.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

# We spent this year listening.

Thank you for opening Mind Matters. This year we listened to the leaders on our Centered CXO panels, to teams during our retreats, and to the people who wrote to us afterward. One idea came up again and again. As AI speeds up the work, the way a leader handles pressure matters more than ever.

That idea shapes these pages. You will also find a few things to try, and we hope they are useful to you and the people you lead.

*Varsha Choudhary*
Head of Business Development, TLEX Institute North America
Let's connect: **excellence@tlexinstitute.com**

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THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

# A year of bringing leaders together

**200,000+**
people trained around the world

**500+**
organizations served

**30+**
countries

**35+**
years of practice behind our methods

## THIS YEAR IN NORTH AMERICA

**700+**
registrations for our virtual Centered CXO sessions

**250**
leaders in person at our Masterminds in California and Austin

**~9,000**
leaders receive each session recording

**18**
senior speakers and moderators

**1,000+**
leaders surveyed after our programs

**90%+**
of them reported impact on how they perform and lead

Program impact reflects leaders who rated impact on performance, leading under pressure, team connection, and vision and alignment.

WHO WE WORK WITH

# A few of the organizations we have worked with

A few examples from the more than 500 organizations TLEX has worked with. This year, ServiceNow and Western Digital brought the TLEX SKY Immersion Retreat to their teams for the first time.

Others include eBay, Audible, Hitachi Energy, Amneal Pharmaceuticals, GE, Citi, Messer, Cooper Investors and the Open Government Partnership.

> Beautifully organized, well conducted and truly had the WOW effect on all the participants.
>
> **Rathi Murthy**, SVP and CTO, American Express

> Our team was engaged, open and excited. We all felt deeply rejuvenated and at peace with each other. And that ultimately built trust, the key ingredient to teamwork.
>
> **Louis Gagnon**, Former CPO and CMO, Audible (an Amazon company)

THE LEAD ESSAY

# Where does your pressure go?

*AI is making work faster. It is also raising the cost of a rushed decision. This year, the leaders we heard from kept coming back to one skill that sits under all the others.*

Pressure always goes somewhere. It comes from a board, a client, a deadline or a new AI target. Then it lands on a leader's desk. What happens next shapes how the whole team works that week.

Some leaders pass it straight down. The email gets forwarded with one line added. The meeting gets moved up. The tone gets sharper. This is normal, and most of us have done it. But the team feels it right away, and they start making decisions from the same tight place.

Other leaders take the pressure in first. They make sense of it, and then they pass down something different: a clear priority and a calm voice. The pressure is the same. What reaches the team is not.

> *"Let it end at my level, and I will make it a lot better for the rest of the team."*
>
> Dr. Ilyas Iyoob, Global Head of Research, Kyndryl · Centered CXO, September 2026

THE LEAD ESSAY · 2 OF 4

# Why this matters more now

AI has changed the speed of work. A draft that took a day now takes a minute. A report that took a week now takes an hour. This is real progress. It also means more decisions reach a leader faster, with less time between them.

At our June Centered CXO session, the panel named the risk plainly. When leaders accept AI recommendations out of habit, their own judgment gets weaker, and it becomes harder to say who is accountable. The leaders who do well will be the ones who stay clear enough to decide what should stay with a person.

In September, Dr. Ilyas Iyoob gave three questions to ask before acting on what AI suggests.

1. **How big is the impact?** The more a decision touches health, safety or money, the closer it should be reviewed.
2. **Can it be undone?** Decisions you cannot take back deserve a closer look.
3. **How fast will it take effect?** A trade or a release can go live in seconds, which leaves little time to catch a mistake.

These questions only work if the person asking them has room to think. A mind under strain does not weigh impact. It looks for the fastest way to make the discomfort stop.

> *"At the end of the day, the decision is on the person that clicked the button."*
>
> Dr. Ilyas Iyoob

THE LEAD ESSAY · 3 OF 4

# The skill no one taught us

Dr. Emma Seppälä of the Yale School of Management made a point in September that stayed with many people in the room. Most leaders have years of training in strategy, finance and their own field. Very few were ever taught how to handle their own stress.

> *"You probably have as much knowledge about how to handle your negative emotions, your stresses, like a five-year-old's... which is none."*
>
> Dr. Emma Seppälä, author of The Happiness Track and Sovereign

This is the gap. We expect leaders to stay clear under pressure, but we rarely give them a way to do it. So they rely on willpower, and willpower runs out by Thursday afternoon.

The answer is not to remove pressure. Pressure comes with any role that matters. The answer is to build the capacity to hold it. That capacity can be trained, in the same way strength can be trained.

Breath is the fastest place to start. You cannot think your way out of a stress response, because the response moves faster than thought. Breath works on the body first, and a clearer mind follows. That is why every TLEX program starts with breath.

**"Slowing down to speed up."** That is how one technology leader described three days of SKY practice in September. More field notes are on page 14.

THE LEAD ESSAY · 4 OF 4

# From one leader to a whole team

Capacity starts with one person, but it does not stay there. Dr. Seppälä shared research by Dr. Kim Cameron at the University of Michigan. Highly productive groups often had one person at the center who gave energy to everyone around them. That person made others feel "safe, seen, heard, valued, appreciated."

Ruchika Sikri saw the same pattern at Google, where she led learning programs. People had great food, gyms and doctors on site. What wore them down was not knowing how their work connected to the bigger picture. Google's own research on its teams found that trust between people mattered most.

> *"If the team can trust each other, and they know they have each other's back, they will outperform any other team."*
>
> Ruchika Sikri, Co-Founder, Wisdom Ventures and Mandala Ventures

1. **Leading Self.** Hold the pressure and give your team a clear direction.
2. **Leading with Others.** Build the trust that lets people speak up and ask questions.
3. **Leading for Impact.** Build a team that performs well when you are not in the room.

**Try this now.** Think of the last time pressure landed on your desk. Where did it go?

Straight to my team | I held it first | I am not sure

THE CENTERED CXO SERIES

# Leadership in the Age of AI

Our September panel brought together Dr. Emma Seppälä, Dr. Ilyas Iyoob and Ruchika Sikri, moderated by TLEX faculty member Josette Aggarwal.

THE CENTERED CXO SERIES

# Five honest conversations about leading people through change

Centered CXO is our virtual executive panel series. Each session brings senior leaders from technology, finance, science and the public sector into one open conversation.

JUL 2025

### Leading with Purpose in the Age of Transformation

Preethy Padmanabhan with Sherri Douville, Arun K. Subramaniyan (Articul8) and Bhaskar Maddala

*Putting people first is what unlocks innovation and collaboration.*

NOV 2025

### Agile Learning for Growth and Impact Watch

Jennifer Stevenson with Patricia Hargil (Messer) and Mike Williams (Kyndryl)

*Leaders need more than knowledge. They need learning agility.*

FEB 2026

### Organizational Culture and Well-Being Watch

Natalie Kaharick with Ishita Aggarwal (Siemens) and Arnulfo Valdivia Machuca (State of Mexico)

*Culture is the strongest predictor of sustained performance.*

JUN 2026

### Who Is in Charge, AI or You? Watch

Dr. Vinitha Subbhuraam with Rajneesh Gupta (AlixPartners), Daniel Sloan (RealSplit) and Vidhya Subramanian (Vistara)

*Judgment needs practice. Leaders who accept AI's answers out of habit slowly lose their own.*

SEP 2026

### Leadership in the Age of AI

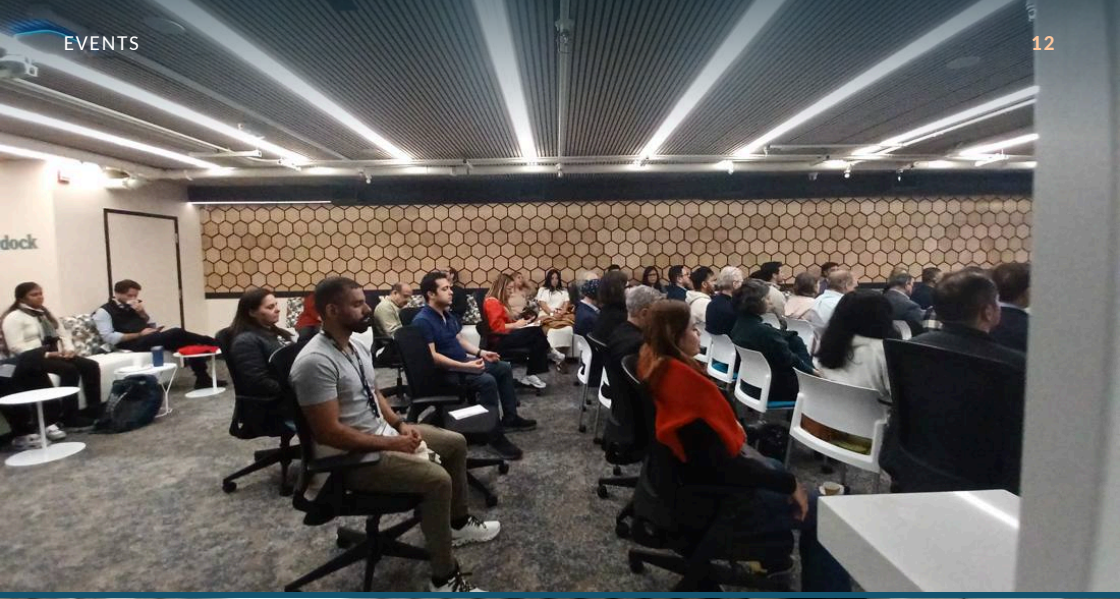
Josette Aggarwal with Dr. Emma Seppälä (Yale), Dr. Ilyas Iyoob (Kyndryl) and Ruchika Sikri (Wisdom Ventures)

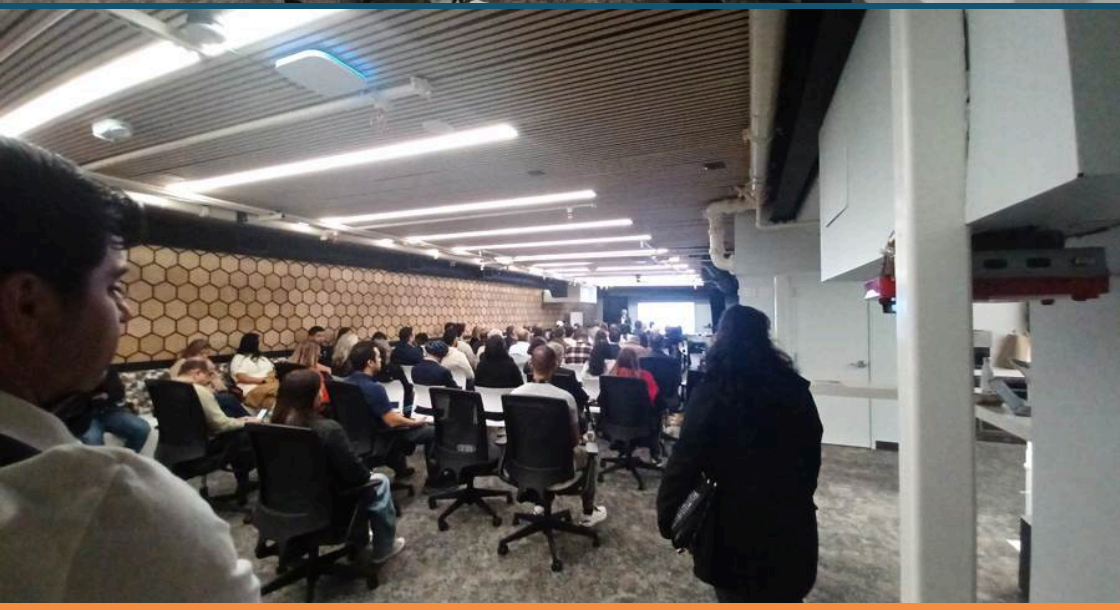
*How a leader holds pressure shapes how the whole team thinks. Their ideas run through our lead essay on page 6.*

DEC 2026

### Session 6, in person in Austin

A small, invitation-only evening on how attention shapes every decision. Ask us for a seat.





IN THE ROOM

# Mastermind California: The Human Operating System

Founders and leaders gathered for an evening of practice and honest conversation about leading well under pressure.

ONLINE, ON STAGE AND IN PRINT

# Where leaders came together with us this year

ONLINE · FIVE SESSIONS

### The Centered CXO series

Senior leaders joined our virtual panels from across North America.

MASTERMIND · CALIFORNIA

### The Human Operating System

MASTERMIND · AUSTIN

### Human + AI: The New Intelligence for a VUCA World

UPCOMING · OCTOBER 27 TO 30, 2026 · GRACE HOPPER CELEBRATION, ANAHEIM

### TLEX takes the stage: "Inner Workshop: Lead the Moment by Leading Yourself"

An experiential session for women leaders in tech, led by Jennifer Stevenson, Josette Aggarwal and Pooja Vaswani.

Global HR Summit 2026 · Türkiye

### Filiz Odabas-Geldiay on rewiring leadership for sustainable performance

Filiz, TLEX Executive Advisor, represented TLEX in conversation with Ümran Beba. Filiz has spoken at the United Nations and the U.S. Department of State, and she has been recognized among the Nation's Top 90 Women Mentoring Leaders. Watch on LinkedIn

IN PRINT · AJAY TEJASVI, TLEX PRESIDENT

"AI Won't Replace Leaders, It Will Expose Them" in Entrepreneur, and "The Next Leadership Advantage in AI Is Breath."

ON STAGE AND ON AIR · RAGHU SAPURAM, TLEX CEO

A talk at AIMed 25, and a conversation on resilience and purpose at work on the Outcomes Rocket podcast.

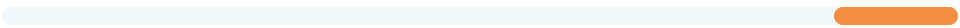
FIELD NOTES · WHAT CHANGED THIS YEAR

# What changes when a team practices together

This year, new teams in enterprise software and data storage brought the TLEX SKY Immersion Retreat in house for the first time. After every retreat, we ask people what changed for them. The same three shifts came up again and again.

### Calmer under pressure

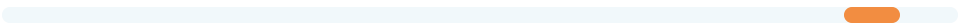
87% to 100%



said they manage stress better

### Clearer thinking

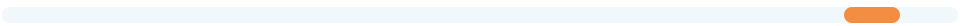
88% to 94%



reported a clearer mind and better focus

### Closer teams

88% to 94%



said they listen better and consider other perspectives. In one retreat, every participant said they feel more connected to their colleagues.

Ranges show the lowest and highest result across this year's retreats. The scale runs from 0% to 100%.

**32%** to **6%**

At one pharmaceutical company, the share of people reporting high stress fell this much within a month.

WRITTEN ON THEIR FLIP CHARTS

- *Chaos to calm*
- *Person behind the persona*
- *Rest to perform better*
- *Coworker connection*

> *"Great investment of time to improve personal and group energy. Slowing down to speed up."*
>
> A technology leader, after a TLEX SKY Immersion Retreat, September 2026

WHAT WE BUILD

# The 5Cs we build in every leader

Our programs unlock people's highest potential by expanding personal energy and building awareness grounded in five qualities. Each one gets harder under pressure, and each one can be trained.

### Clarity
Seeing what matters and making the call, even when pressure rises.

### Connection
Building trust so people speak up, ask questions and work as one team.

### Commitment
Owning the outcome and following through when the work gets hard.

### Creativity
Giving the mind enough room to find new and better answers.

### Courage
Speaking up, taking on new challenges and having the hard conversation.

**Where they grow.** Clarity starts in Leading Self. Connection deepens in Leading with Others. Commitment, Courage and Creativity come together in Leading for Impact. All five rest on the same foundation, which is a settled, clear mind.

WE MEET YOU WHERE YOU ARE

# Pathways with TLEX

Experiential, science-backed trainings for leaders and teams. Each program delivers value on its own. Together, they go deeper. **Your choice:** pick any one or more pathways, or choose Lead at Full Potential, our complete 8 to 10 week package.

**SKY Immersion Retreat** FLAGSHIP + **Inner Workshop Sessions** SCALABLE + **Leadership Development** TAILORED = **Lead at Full Potential** ALL THREE TOGETHER

## SKY Immersion Retreat

THREE 3-HOUR SESSIONS. Participants learn SKY Breath Meditation and leave able to self-regulate on their own, with stronger relationships and centered leadership.

## Inner Workshop Sessions

1 TO 4 HOURS. Live workshops on trust, communication and leading through change. Easy to scale across teams. See the topics on page 17.

## Leadership Development

Leading Self, Leading with Others and Leading for Impact, built on our Awareness, Belonging and Commitment approach and decades of practice.

OUR RECOMMENDED JOURNEY

## Lead at Full Potential

An 8 to 10 week journey for executives, leaders and teams. It starts with the retreat and continues with weekly sessions that link the practice to real work, so it becomes a habit and grows into lasting leadership skill.

| BEFORE | WEEK 1 | WEEK 2 | WEEKS 3 TO 8 | DAY 60 TO 90 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Discovery and alignment | Pre-assessment | SKY Immersion Retreat | Inner Workshop Sessions | Impact report |

**Ongoing support with SKY:** one year of the TLEX Flow app and a biweekly newsletter that keeps the learning going.

WAYS TO WORK WITH US · ADD-ONS

# Add-ons that keep the practice going

Each add-on works alongside any program. Choose what fits your team.

### TLEX Flow app
Guided breathing, SKY practice, micro moments, desk stretches and mindful meetings, with offline access. Included for a year with the retreat.

### Digital library
100+ guided breathing, movement and meditation sessions and short Insights videos, ready to share across your organization.

### Biweekly newsletter
A newsletter for all staff, built around themes that match your goals.

### Follow-up SKY sessions
Group practice after the retreat, so the habit sticks.

### Introductory Experience
A 60-minute guided session for 30 to 40 people who want a first taste.

### Mastermind event
A two to four hour gathering with a fireside chat, a workshop and a keynote.

### Assessment
We measure stress, energy, focus and connection with a pre-assessment, a post-assessment, and again after 90 days of practice integration.

INTERACTIVE · BUILD YOUR INNER WORKSHOP SERIES

| | |
|---|---|
| Restorative Practices for Managing Stress | Observing the Mind in Chaos |
| Tendencies of the Mind in Fear | Digital Detox with Subtle Chair Yoga |
| Leadership Agility in Times of Change | Keys to Cultivating Mental Hygiene |
| Managing Your Emotions in Times of Challenge | Belonging at the Workplace |
| Broadening Perspectives through Awareness | Increasing Productivity at the Workplace |
| Enhancing Mental Resilience | Purpose in Life and Work |

Tap the topics your team needs most.

CORE TECHNIQUE · SKY BREATH MEDITATION

# Clarity under pressure

Every leadership skill that matters, such as judgment, listening and creativity, gets harder under stress. So TLEX starts there. SKY is a guided breathing technique that calms the body's stress response. It is not a one-time event. It is a skill people keep.

**44%**
lower anxiety, with the benefit lasting six months

**45%**
drop in depression

**100+**
peer-reviewed studies on SKY

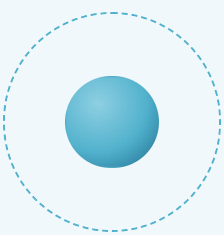
A Yale-led randomized trial found SKY improved six outcomes, including stress and social connection. Most people feel the shift in the first session. After three sessions, they can reset on their own, anytime. People use it to calm down and refocus before a hard conversation, a deadline or a client call.

### *Inner peace, outer dynamism.*

You cannot think your way out of a stress response. Breath settles the body first, and a clear mind follows. That calm on the inside is what lets a leader act with energy and focus on the outside.

Sources and full citations: tlexmindmatters.com/research-on-sky

INTERACTIVE · TRY IT NOW



### A one-minute reset

Breathe in as the circle grows. Breathe out slowly as it shrinks. A longer out-breath helps the body settle.

### Ready when you are

6 breaths · about one minute

Start

This is a simple paced breath for daily use. The full SKY practice is different, and certified TLEX faculty teach it live.

INTERACTIVE · TWO MINUTES

# Where does your team stand?

Answer each statement for your team as it is today. Your answers stay on this page.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| When pressure rises, our leaders stay clear and make good calls. | Yes | Not yet |
| Pressure from above reaches the team as clear direction, not as stress. | Yes | Not yet |
| People ask questions before they assume. | Yes | Not yet |
| People feel safe to speak up, even with bad news. | Yes | Not yet |
| The team performs well when the leader is away. | Yes | Not yet |
| Good results hold for longer than one quarter. | Yes | Not yet |

YOUR RESULT

## Answer all six to see your focus

You have answered **0** of 6.

THE HUMAN PERFORMANCE JOURNEY

# Simple habits. Lasting results.

Six simple habits, practiced together, are what turn a good session into change that holds. Turn the page to try them.

INTERACTIVE · TAP A HABIT

# Six habits that turn effort into lasting results

At TLEX, we believe human performance extends beyond productivity. Lasting performance comes from six connected habits. Each one builds on the last, and together they turn scattered effort into intentional, high-impact results. Tap each habit to see how to try it today.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Purpose** | Attention | Transition |
| Alignment | Presence | Performance |

HABIT 1 OF 6

## Purpose

Start with clarity of intent.

Purpose is the answer to a simple question: why does this work matter? It does not need to be grand. It needs to be clear enough that, on a hard day, you can still answer why you showed up.

TRY THIS TODAY

Before you open your inbox, write one sentence: "Today matters if I..." Keep it where you can see it.

**What makes all six possible.** You cannot direct your attention if your mind is racing, and you cannot move smoothly between hard conversations if your body is stuck in stress. A settled, clear mind is the foundation for all six habits. Simple breathing and short moments of meditation build it.

TLEX INSTITUTE

## BRINGING IT HOME

1. Pressure always goes somewhere. Leaders who hold it first give their teams room to think.
2. AI makes work faster, so a clear mind matters more than ever. Every important decision still rests with a person.
3. Capacity can be trained. Breath is the fastest place to start, and people feel the shift in the first session.
4. Change lasts when a team practices together and keeps practicing, and we measure it along the way.

> *Think of the most important decision your team will make this quarter. What state of mind do you want them to be in when they make it?*

Book a free 30-minute call. We will listen first, then suggest a pathway that fits your goals.

**Book your call**


| | |
|---|---|
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Mind Matters, Fall 2026. TLEX Institute helps organizations build leaders and teams that stay clear, connected and high-performing under pressure.