

## RED MINDSET SUPPLEMENT

### LEGENDARY RED

General George S. Patton has been called a military genius, a legend, “Old Blood and Guts,” and a son of a bitch. He is also considered to be the US Army General who epitomized the fighting soldier. His charismatic and flamboyant leadership inspired the ultimate effort from those under his command to fight and destroy the enemy. He took the crude effectiveness of the blitzkrieg (lightning war) and elevated it to an art form. Historians have described Patton as the personification of the offensive spirit because of his ruthless drive and will to conquer. A master of tactical combat, Patton occasionally used brutal methods his troops learned to accept after becoming battle-hardened to the demands of war, believing that if they were to return home alive, it would be only under Patton’s command. His legendary leadership style is epitomized by his famous 1944 speech to his troops:

“Men, this stuff that some sources sling around about America wanting out of this war, not wanting to fight, is a crock of bullshit. Traditionally, Americans love to fight. All real Americans love the sting and clash of battle. You are here today for three reasons. First, because you are here to defend your homes and your loved ones. Second, you are here for your own self-respect, because you would not want to be anywhere else. Third, you are here because you are real men and all real men like to fight. Americans love a winner. Americans will not tolerate a loser. Americans despise cowards. Americans play to win all of the time. I wouldn’t give a hoot in hell for a man who lost and laughed. That’s why Americans have never lost nor will ever lose a war; for the very idea of losing is hateful to an American. Battle is the most magnificent competition in which a human being can indulge. It brings out all that is best and it removes all that is base. Americans pride themselves on being He Men and they are He Men. Remember that the enemy is just as frightened as you are, and probably more so. They are not supermen. War is a bloody, killing business. You’ve got to spill their blood, or they will spill yours. Rip them up the belly. Shoot them in the guts. When shells are hitting all around you and you wipe the

dirt off your face and realize that instead of dirt it’s the blood and guts of what once was your best friend beside you, you’ll know what to do!”

—Speech to the Third Army 6th Armored Division in England, May 1944



Patton’s over-the-top bravado and persona became the focal point for what psychologists call “reinforcing factors”—the sights, sounds, and stimuli that keep adrenaline flowing so soldiers can act against the deepest instinctual drives for self-preservation under extremely frightening and senseless conditions that often entail relentless fear, disfigurement, pain, and death. Patton’s physical carriage and presentation served as the repository for these reinforcing factors in doses sufficient to create the necessary warrior psychology—the will to confront and destroy the enemy. Red thinkers fulfill a number of crucial roles in society, and the professions of defense—soldiers, body guards, etc.—are uniquely suited for this mindset.<sup>1</sup> The difficult circumstances of war draw out powerful and instinctual impulses in human beings in general, and the military draws its recruits from a demographic with a large concentration of Red thinkers.

## MINDSET

This supplement, which accompanies the Stagen Understanding People module, draws upon the multidisciplinary research referred to as “integral theory and methodology,” as presented by integral theorist Ken Wilber in more than two dozen books.<sup>2</sup> The Stagen Mindsets Model provides a summarized and simplified presentation of “meaning-making systems” designed for a corporate audience.<sup>3</sup> A summary of the leading researchers, whose work is reflected here, is provided in the endnotes section of this supplement.<sup>4</sup>

Patton’s greatest skill, in his own estimation, was his unique ability to “lead young men into battle.” He knew the impulsive, or Red, mindset extremely well—how to motivate it, organize it, and focus it. He knew that because the Red mode of thinking is foundationally focused on overcoming fear, he needed to appear bigger and more powerful than anything else his soldiers might encounter.

***When Red is a person’s primary mindset, their focus tends to be on pain-avoidance and pleasure-seeking behavior, which is why this mindset is sometimes referred to as “impulsive.”***

The color red is associated with this mindset as a signifier of its freedom-fighting strength and flamboyant character. The overwhelming majority of adults have experienced some version of this meaning-making framework. Young people who have recently achieved independence and left their family’s comfortable nest for the hazards of the outside world develop an intense need for emotional stability, and “living for the moment” becomes a means of coping with the difficulty of transition into full-fledged adulthood. Even in environments far less physically threatening than combat, the Red mode is power-oriented, expressive, spontaneous, and opportunistic.

To those with a different meaning-making system, the Red mindset can appear to be nothing more than self-gratifying and needlessly aggressive. In truth, a Red mindset is egocentric in that it is blind to the selfhood of others. The Red mindset manifests in nearly everyone at some point in

life, whether in the emotional immaturity of adolescence or young adulthood, or in the flash of aggression unleashed in moments of perceived peril. By suspending judgment about the Red perspective, most people can recognize in themselves the continued “activation” of this mindset in situations of high stress and when the mindset is triggered by difficult, challenging, or exciting circumstances. Moments of physical intensity, aggression, passion, or lust ignite Red tendencies in people. Going to a boxing match, seeing an action/adventure movie, or pushing one’s limits (in strength training or extreme sports) are all activities that appeal to Red capacities.

The key point to remember is, while we all activate our Red mindset from time to time, some people inhabit this mindset as their primary way of seeing and interacting with the world. That is the meaning of the descriptor “Red thinker.” For learning purposes, mindsets are presented here as if the person being described holds a singular mindset. In the real world, however, many people simultaneously activate two mindsets, such as Red and Blue or Blue and Orange. This additional complexity presents little difficulty for practitioners who take the time to deeply understand the unique qualities of each mindset. If the chief characteristics of each mindset are properly understood, it is not overly difficult to grasp the combination of them.

## COMMON RED PERCEPTIONS

The egocentric nature of people with a predominantly Red mindset can make it difficult for them to effectively consider other people’s perspectives, needs, concerns, or feelings. Consequently, Red thinkers may assume everyone else sees the world as they do. Some common Red perceptions include:

- It’s a jungle out there and every man, woman, and child is in it for themselves.
- The “Golden Rule” is “Whoever has the gold, rules.”
- Might really does make right. The “haves” deserve their status and privilege because they are powerful and dominant, and the “have not’s” deserve their status because of their weakness or incompetence.

- Power can be bought and sold, but payback is a bitch.
- If I say I didn't do it, that's all there is. Deny, deny, deny. (Know any teenagers like this?)
- Most people inherently dislike work, have little ambition, wish to avoid responsibility, and have to be forced, threatened, or coerced to do the job.

## BEHAVIOR

The only true test for determining what mode of thinking an individual primarily operates from is to ask questions that disclose the motivation belonging to a particular mindset. For example, if the question is asked, "What is freedom?" you will learn that the answers to this inquiry can vary dramatically based upon the mindset of the person responding.

In addition to questioning, many behavioral cues can provide a reasonably accurate assessment of a person's primary value system. Examples of impulsive, opportunistic behavior are not difficult to find. We celebrate Red behavior in action movies, professional wrestling, hard rock, and rap music. The sex industry is fueled by Red drives. Advertising appealing to the values of independence, physical prowess, and personal strength or adventure are often Red-driven. Ads for Gatorade, Mountain Dew, Nike, Budweiser (and most beer and liquor), Monday Night Football, and many blockbuster action movies appeal to Red tendencies. Army recruiting ads contain Red messages that target the Red drives found in many young people, especially young men from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds who have often served to cultivate Red thinking and behavior.

## CAPABILITIES

While mindset and capabilities are not one hundred percent correlated, some useful generalizations can be made to better understand people whose primary mindset is Red.<sup>5</sup> Red thinkers are motivated by immediacy and freedom. Those seeing the world in these terms are likely to concentrate on controlling the physical environment and tend to see unilateral power as the means to this end. Consequently, work that is primarily physical and produces observable results in a short time suits this mode quite well. Red workers tend to reactively fight "brush fires" as their workload management style; to do this requires a well-developed sense of self-reliant freedom.

Accomplishing physically demanding work is appealing to this mindset, and Red "suicide jocks" who haul dynamite or other hazardous loads are admired by Red companions as the cream of the crop.

With Red workers, piecework pay is more effective than a monthly salary. A sense of independence in the work environment is valued far more than time clocks and dress codes. Examples of Red professions include long-haul truckers, stevedores, track or line crews, and ranch hands. The boss's rules count, but the company's regulations are to be tested or even ignored. Red thinkers are more responsive to immediate and observable punishments and rewards; abstract ideas and incentives are of little use in motivating this mindset. Red capacities are especially valuable in times of uncertainty or crisis where decisive, charismatic, "damn-the-torpedoes" approaches are appropriate. The Red mindset



is also useful for breaking boundaries and pioneering new territories. Most people can act with these capacities when the occasion calls for it, while those who cannot access their inner Red are often sent to "assertiveness training" workshops.

Regardless, Red characteristics, in and of themselves, can prove potentially problematic. For those limited to a Red perspective, there are two essential keys to keep in mind. First, the impulsive thinker has no choice but to think impulsively in every situation. Red's approval of guerrilla tactics and the self-serving view of consequences ("That's your problem, not mine!") can lead to poor ethical choices or dangerous actions if left to his own devices. Second, Red operates in terms of egocentrism ("What's in it for me?") and immediate gratification. Success is framed in terms of "I win" rather than "we win," so teamwork must include acknowledgement of the individual's prowess. The leader who understands this is less likely to put those with a Red mindset in positions or circumstances where they would be asked to consider issues beyond their immediate surroundings and tasks, thus exceeding their ability to respond. In the proper environment,

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### **SOCIAL SYSTEMS AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES**

Sports are an excellent avenue for the expression of Red behavior in collective settings, especially those that celebrate intense physical competition and training, including weight lifting, football, and boxing. It is interesting to note how inside the boxing ring, Mike Tyson’s Red power was admired, but outside, his misuse of this capacity was reviled.

Other Red-friendly avenues include action movies and some forms of martial arts training. We cheer the iconoclastic heroes of films like *Dirty Harry*, *Hell Boy*, and *Gladiator*, while *The Hulk* illustrates some of Red’s typical problem-solving difficulties. Characters like the Terminator, with unrestrained physical strength, play on our enjoyment of fantasy and speak to real concerns about the danger of unchecked power. The action film *XXX* starring Vin Diesel is another excellent example of Red capacities—it highlights numerous Red-thinking characters and appeals strongly to the Red impulse in the movie-going audience.

Popular musicians such as Kidd Rock, Eminem, and Fred Durst (Limp Bizkit) epitomize—and appeal to—Red thinkers. Professional wrestling and some extreme sports

(skateboarding, extreme skiing, auto racing) are other home bases for Red. NASCAR thrives on the booming demand for Red entertainment.

***Red mindsets are common in environments such as reform schools, oil and gas refineries, heavy construction, and prisons. Red thinking is a part of every socioeconomic system, but may be more readily noticeable in inner cities and in isolated rural areas.***



## CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Red tends to view the world as a competitive jungle filled with self-centered people. This worldview is reflected by the work cultures that arise from it. Ethics are fairly simplistic and tend to be focused on ensuring that employees follow the rules. Compliance is the best one can expect from this group, and is optimally maintained by a necessary “trust but verify” attitude. For people with this mindset, trust is not necessarily considered a virtue; in fact, in some Red cultures, trust is for “chumps.”

Red thinkers are motivated by power and respect, not by people skills. They tend to view others as competitors for scarce resources and often interpret hesitation, softness, or even kindness, as signs of weakness. Above all, the Red mindset demands respect (i.e., the recognition that they are “someone to be reckoned with”), and responds favorably only to those able to convey this. Team members are useful allies in the ongoing quest for power, and when a common enemy is identified, the team can marshal its resources quite effectively.

## ETHICS AND “MORAL VALUES”

The difficulty individuals and organizations experience when insufficient ethical development is present has become a hot topic in recent years, and the term *moral values* has come into widespread use as reflecting the high priority mainstream business and corporate cultures place on ethical development and morality. Oddly, few people understand the nature of ethics, and the controversial topic of moral values is even more problematic. Ethics concerns itself with what a community or group considers to be good for the individual and the collective. Moral values are those principles, ideas, and behaviors a particular mindset deems “right” and “good” in relation to the whole. What proves particularly difficult is that those crying out for moral values rarely realize these values differ depending on one’s mindset; the values of one mindset are the vices of another. Without this understanding, people make the mistake of demanding that others adopt their values, or their limited version of what is right and good.

## UNDERSTANDING RED’S SENSE OF ETHICS AND MORALITY

The ethics of people whose primary mindset is Red are fairly straightforward: What is “right” and “good” is that which serves one’s own interests, and matters of fairness are generally perceived strictly in terms of concrete, rather than abstract, exchange. For the Red mindset, it is right to follow rules when it is to one’s own advantage or others’ immediate, concrete interest. Human relations are viewed in terms of tangible transactions as seen in the marketplace, and elements of reciprocity and sharing—if they are present at all—are interpreted in a physical, pragmatic way. For a Red thinker, reciprocity is not understood through abstractions like justice or equality but rather in the concrete terms of “you scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours.”

## Endnotes

1. As seen in Ken Wilber's seminal textbook, *Integral Psychology* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2011), professors Don Beck and Chris Cowan and associates, originally developed the color-coded scheme for integral theory and methodology. This convention has proven to be extremely useful and has seen widespread adoption among integral researchers, theorists, and practitioners, as the use of color-coding highlights the categorical similarities of different worldview models while deemphasizing the varying names and terminologies employed by each.
2. Research that has been incorporated into this supplement includes the work of Wilber, Robert Kegan, Susanne Cook-Greuter, William Torbert, Clare Graves, Jane Loevinger, Lawrence Kohlberg, Jenny Wade, Beck, Cowan, and Paul Ray. Within their respective fields, each investigator conducted independent research and analysis into the nature of varying mindsets and their correspondent values. The models these researchers created to map their discoveries exhibit startling similarities. Despite employing differing terminologies, these models point to an underlying commonality demonstrating the reality of categorical worldviews common to varying human groupings. These underlying, organizing similarities and the principles implicit to them are supported by extensive empirical data and peer-reviewed scientific evidence. A summary of these and nearly a hundred other models is provided in Wilber's book *Integral Psychology* and elaborated upon in many of his other academic works.
3. The Stagen Mindsets Model represents an intentionally simplified presentation—a teaching convention—designed to allow nonacademics, especially business professionals, to use some of the most practical and impactful insights of cognitive science, developmental psychology, and neurology without having to possess a working knowledge of these fields. Individuals interested in exploring what lies behind these mindsets can find a treasure trove of state-of-the-art research in the fields of constructivist developmental psychology, cognitive neuroscience, biopsychosocial systems theory, value theory, and consciousness studies. While the Mindsets Model is informed by developmental studies and supported by cross-cultural research demonstrating the complex interface between various systems of meaning-making, it is beyond the scope of our user-friendly model to delineate these nuances. The question of why a person constructs the world through a particular mindset, and how these constructions evolve over time, is a consideration reserved for in-depth, academic investigation and analysis. For practical purposes, it is sufficient to recognize that individuals exhibiting a wide range and great depth of personal and professional competencies have access to multiple—and often all—mindsets reviewed in this material. Versatility and competence—and therefore success—is directly proportional to the number of meaning-making systems an individual can recognize and embody.
4. Independent research of diverse methodologies and populations conducted by leading theorists Loevinger, Kohlberg, Graves, Kegan, Wade, and others resulted in conclusions that are remarkably consistent with regard to this mindset. Loevinger referred to this mindset as self-protective and described it as exhibiting “preoccupation with interpersonal advantage and control, which may be observed as opportunist by others ... [and] will seek immediate gratification and pleasures. ... Being wrong is getting caught or being punished. ... An ‘eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth’ is the ethic for all interpersonal relationships.” Loevinger also pointed out that people with this mindset regard others as merely a means to personal gratification as others are not recognized as existing in their own right as ultimately distinct from the impulses of the individual who organizes his or her experience through this mindset. Graves described a person with this mindset as “struggling to gain his own satisfaction, to hell with others—in terms of snaring, entrapping, and acting to avoid being caught while taking advantage of others. ... Coexistent in this person is the tendency to revel in hedonistic, pleasure-seeking pursuits to an orgiastic degree. He shows a generalized ‘you are with me or against me’ emotional response to others. ... The world is filled with aggression, hostility, anger, selfishness, and hedonism, and is dominated by power. The egocentric goal in life is to gain enough power to instantly gratify needs, impulses and desires through a willingness to fight against any kind of domination or threat (whether real or imagined).” Researchers Charles L. Hughes and Vincent S. Flowers, using the Gravesian model, concluded that “people with this mindset are fighting for survival in a hostile world where their needs and ego can be gratified and protected only by being stronger and tougher than other entities that inhabit it. People are not perceived to be equals or even similar in kind to the individual, but as potential threats to be overcome or exploited.” Some brain researchers, including Paul MacLean, believe the cognition illustrated by this mindset, referred to as conceptual dualism, arises from the influence of the limbic system, which is thought to create polar opposites. Researchers Richard D. Lane, Gary E Schwartz, Jason W. Brown, and J. Winston, similarly concluded that for this mindset, emotions are either agreeable or disagreeable, reinforcing self-preserving behaviors with pleasure and pain and that, without sufficient mitigation from more advanced neocortical overlays of conceptualization, the range of response afforded to this mindset lacks the differentiation, complexity, or tone of more mature emotional states. Motivational theory, including David McClelland's Power Orientation mindset, observes the need to preserve self through domination. His and others' research with military and employee populations suggests a prevalence of this mindset among males, particularly those who belong to lower socioeconomic classes, suggesting that a rather

opposites. Researchers Richard D. Lane, Gary E Schwartz, Jason W. Brown, and J. Winston, similarly concluded that for this mindset, emotions are either agreeable or disagreeable, reinforcing self-preserving behaviors with pleasure and pain and that, without sufficient mitigation from more advanced neocortical overlays of conceptualization, the range of response afforded to this mindset lacks the differentiation, complexity, or tone of more mature emotional states. Motivational theory, including David McClelland's Power Orientation mindset, observes the need to preserve self through domination. His and others' research with military and employee populations suggests a prevalence of this mindset among males, particularly those who belong to lower socioeconomic classes, suggesting that a rather substantial percentage of the adult population operates from this mindset. Hughes and Flowers believe the very traits reinforcing the Red mindset are highly adaptive for survival in hostile environments, such as violent inner-city neighborhoods, combat zones, and prisons. Hervey M. Cleckley and Robert J. Smith point out that many people using this mindset as their primary mode function quite well in modern society.

5. The subject of capabilities is addressed at length in the Stagen Human Performance module under the categories of cognitive capacity, emotional capacity, relational (interpersonal) capacity, ethical capacity, wisdom capacity, and wellness capacity. People's capacities in these areas are not strictly correlated to mindsets; however, there are some useful generalizations about what a person is likely to be capable of based upon their primary mindset