

THE
BUSY
LEADER'S
HANDBOOK

HOW TO LEAD PEOPLE

AND PLACES

THAT THRIVE

QUINT STUDER

WILEY

Praise for *The Busy Leader's Handbook*

“When deciding which companies to invest in, we definitely take a long, hard look at the executive leadership team. However, it goes much deeper than that. How they develop their middle-management team is also crucial to the long-term success of a company. Sometimes, this transfer of knowledge is where companies struggle. This book is not only a great playbook for CEOs, but it would be a very effective tool for creating a strong leadership framework throughout their entire organization. It’s a simple, easy read, filled with tactics that could create a strong leadership foundation in any company.”

—Charles Dieveney
Managing Director
Juggernaut Capital Partners

“Quint is one of the most dynamic leaders on the planet. His new book covers all the bases on how to truly lead in a hyper-efficient world. It is an easy read that offers practical and actionable advice on how to handle almost any situation as a leader. This handbook is one that I will continue to reference and read over and over again in reflection of how I am performing as a leader. It is a book every leader should read, then go share it with their team!

“We brought Quint Studer to Springfield, Ohio, recently to help teach our leaders how to dream bigger. He humbly met with various stakeholder groups, pouring out many of the valuable nuggets shared in his new book. We are forever changed by those visits and thankful for his willingness to share with the world the tools that are now helping us build a vibrant community.”

—Michael McDorman
President and CEO
The Chamber of Greater Springfield, Ohio

“Quint has hit the bulls-eye for today’s busy leader! A treasure trove of fundamentals and best practices, this book goes way beyond ‘ideas’ and ‘motivation’ and delivers the ‘how-to’ that is so critical to every leader. This book will be a permanent resident in my briefcase for years to come.”

—Brad Phelps
Owner
State Farm Insurance Agency, Pensacola, Florida

“I have had the privilege of working with Quint in various capacities over the past 25 years and can personally attest that the evidence-based practices outlined in this book can *and do* lead to astonishing performance improvements! Quint has helped me lead not one, not two, but THREE remarkable health system transformations. First, he served as my COO when I was president and CEO at Holy Cross Hospital in Chicago, Illinois. Next, he acted as a friend and advisor supporting my efforts to lead a major system turnaround during my tenure as president and CEO at Rochester General Health System in Rochester, New York. And today, he serves as a board trustee guiding the transformation work I am again leading as president and CEO at TriHealth in Cincinnati, Ohio.

“The common denominator for success in all three cases was the consistent introduction, adoption, and hardwiring of leadership, employee engagement, and organizational development practices—all underpinned by a foundation of mission, vision, and values—as outlined in this handbook. Without fail, all three organizations experienced remarkable performance improvements across key metrics, including People/Culture, Customer Experience, Quality/Safety, Growth, and Finance. And in every case, these improvements led to national recognition for being a top industry performer, and a model and benchmark for getting healthcare right.

“*The Busy Leader’s Handbook* is a must-read for any leader who’s short on time, but long on commitment and desire to develop great teams and organizations that are built to excel.”

—Mark C. Clement
President and CEO
TriHealth

“Congrats to Quint Studer for giving it to us straight. *The Busy Leader’s Handbook* is a ‘must read’ for anyone with aspirations to lead people and ultimately an organization.

“I loved Quint’s plea for leaders to be more self-aware, to check the ego at the door, and to lead with humility. Over the years, I’ve seen many talented individuals sidelined by ego and/or their inability to listen.

“Successful leaders will also choose to follow Quint’s blueprint for recognizing superior work while also connecting people with purpose—thus creating a positive workplace culture. Simply put, it’s ALWAYS about the relationships. No matter if you are dealing with Baby Boomer, a Millennial, or someone from Gen Z—relationships will always pay.

“Lastly, I thoroughly enjoyed Quint’s vision for investing in the development of structure, process, and people. A successful leader is

an individual disciplined enough to set a vision and expectations while also understanding that people make the ultimate difference. It's pretty simple—great people can make great leaders.

“Again, I applaud Quint Studer for sharing his vast insights and leadership experiences. *The Busy Leader's Handbook* is a valuable tool on so many fronts.”

—Dave St. Peter
President and CEO
Minnesota Twins

“Quint has now done for communities and business what he did for the healthcare community. He's identified simple, high-impact foundational leadership behaviors that, when done correctly, pack a big punch. And he doesn't just tell you the what, he also tells you the how, as the book is filled with tactics to take any leader to the next level. I believe in developing a strong leadership team and empowering them to make decisions. It can be tricky to create a team that moves in unison. A tool like *The Busy Leader's Handbook* is a great resource for training and making sure everyone is on the same page.”

—Javier Hernandez-Lichtl
CEO and Chief Academic Officer
West Kendall Baptist Hospital, Baptist Health South Florida

“My life's work is to help every woman become the best version of herself. A huge part of that is focusing on the ‘big picture’ like passion and courage and finding your voice, but you *also* need a firm grasp of the practical side of leadership. That's what helps you connect with others in a meaningful way—and that's what *The Busy Leader's Handbook* provides. It's a practical toolkit that can help all women, including the vital group of Millennials I focus on, maximize their potential and power. I want to commend Quint's efforts and impactful work on this book, as with all his previous books. I love that he is driven to help each of us become the best we can be.”

—Tiffany Pham
Founder and CEO
Mogul

“Because a few years ago I wrote a book about leadership, mentoring, and the basic laws of success, people frequently ask me about the best path to becoming a successful leader. My favorite new answer is, ‘Hang around Quint Studer, and listen.’ Fortunately for everyone in the pursuit of a successful leadership career or personal life, you don't have to go find Quint. He has found you.

“In his new book, *The Busy Leader’s Handbook*, Quint shares a wealth of real-time, practical action steps for engaged leaders looking for answers, emerging leaders looking for an edge, and rising high achievers who want a head start. Quint addresses each of the three areas that are so very critical to a leader’s success: self-leadership and self-development, employee leadership to maximize employee performance, and organizational leadership for building, driving, and sustaining a successful organization.

“*The Busy Leader’s Handbook* is a reference goldmine for leaders at all levels, filled with actionable ‘how-to’ advice, ready to use right now and throughout a rising career.

“I wish Quint had written this book when I was 30. It would have accelerated my leadership curve dramatically and saved me a lot of scars.”

—Bert Thornton
Former President and COO
Vice Chairman Emeritus
Waffle House, Inc.

“I have read a lot of leadership books over the years and this one might be my favorite. It is a simple, easy, practical read. Quint Studer has taken complex topics and broken them down in a way that makes them feel doable. (This is Quint’s gift!) I also think he did a smart thing by not making this a cover-to-cover narrative—if you’re struggling in a certain area you can just go to the table of contents and then flip to the needed chapter. Whether you are new to leadership or need a gentle reminder of what ‘right’ looks like, this is a must-read handbook for everyone in your organization.”

—Ben Bates
Chairman, Coldwell Banker Ben Bates, Inc.
Chairman, Bates Hewett & Floyd Insurance Agency
Partner, Beck Chevrolet Buick GMC Dealership, Palatka, Florida

“For 15 years, my private practice as a psychotherapist concentrated on helping people work toward healthier relationships, so I naturally read *The Busy Leader’s Handbook* from that perspective. Quint Studer speaks to the heart of the person, and Quint obviously understands that the best leaders are good at forging authentic connections and building relationships. Since we live in an age when these are vital business skills—they’re key to creating cultures of innovation, collaboration, and engagement—this book is a must-read for anyone who leads or wants to lead. The bonus is it just might spur you on to become a better human being who doesn’t shy away from all that it takes to enjoy those authentic relationships.”

—Connie Bookman, LCSW
Founder and CEO
Pathways for Change

“The Busy Leader’s Handbook is a practical, easy-to-follow ‘how-to’ guide for bringing out the best in yourself, your team, and your organization—and best of all, *it works!* The wisdom and proven techniques shared by Quint Studer in this book have been honed over nearly three decades of experience helping leaders and organizations achieve major cultural and organizational transformations.

“I’m a big believer in providing training and development for all my employees. At World of Beer, everyone we hire gets 40 hours of training before they set foot on the floor. We immerse everyone in our mission, vision, values, and our leadership philosophy. When I read Quint’s book my first thought was ‘Wow, I wish I could have gotten my hands on this when we were starting out!’ I loved the simple, straightforward, practical advice. This is a blueprint for any company wanting to build a strong culture where everyone sings from the same choir book and strives to get better and better. It’s a compass that ensures everyone, top to bottom, gets consistent messages about the principles of great leadership. Finally, any young entrepreneur would love Quint’s insights on managing things that get in your way that you don’t even know to look for—by holding up the mirror, by being humble, by staying coachable so you can adapt and adjust. My favorite part? I know Quint personally and he truly walks the walk. Highly recommended!”

—Scott Zepp
Co-Founder

World of Beer Franchising, Inc.

“My company grew from 4 employees to over 70 very quickly. Multiple layers of management sprung up between me and my frontline employees, almost overnight. Making sure everyone was living the culture wasn’t easy. *The Busy Leader’s Handbook* is the perfect field guide for companies going through such rapid growth. It helps you put the right structures in place—structures that help you stay focused on excellence while preserving the relationships that keep people inspired and motivated. (Walking this tightrope can be a huge challenge.) Readers will unearth lots of golden nuggets they’ll want to pick up and put into practice at every stage of the journey.”

—Harold Griffin, Jr.
Director of Business Development
ITL Solutions

“Before I was a small business owner, I worked in HR, so I have always been extremely interested in anything that had to do with employees. I’ve spent my whole career studying culture and how to create a place where great employees want to be. This book nails it! It teaches you how to create an environment where employees feel valued and cared for! It also helps you develop the kind of leaders that inspire employees to do their best and that is the absolute key to any company’s success. If you can hardwire these behaviors in your organization, keeping talent in a tight labor market won’t be a problem. What a great book and training tool! I wish I had written it!”

—Sondra Eoff
CEO

Odessa Pumps

“When you need to build a solid culture, middle managers hold the keys to the kingdom. We have 200 employees in seven different offices so we see this truth in action every day. Studer’s book is a gold mine for this group. It’s the perfect vehicle for knowledge transfer on every aspect of leadership. I appreciate that it’s short and readable, almost like a streamlined encyclopedia that lets busy managers skip right to the topic they need. Like any service company, hiring the right people is huge for us and I know *The Busy Leader’s Handbook* will help. I look forward to using it to select and retain talent, onboard new employees, and promote consistency in every corner of our culture.”

—Drew Adams
COO

Engineered Cooling Services

“This book is a must read for everyone, especially ‘Busy Leaders.’ As an owner of a growing company, I encounter big and small challenges daily, and this book addressed all of them. It felt as if it had been written for me and was meant for me to read in this very moment. I also thought of every manager I work with and how the steps shared in the book are exactly what they need. Plus, the content is great and can be broken down into training segments, webinars, or seminars. *The Busy Leader’s Handbook* is a business staple with tips the reader can immediately implement. Finally, I appreciate Quint’s insight and how easy he makes it to apply the concepts in business. He’s been a guiding light to me and our company through all the books that he’s written, the seminars that he’s done, and his leadership in general.”

—Kristine Rushing, CIC, CPIA
COO, Risk Consultant, Beck Partners

“As a president of a Minority Chamber of Commerce, I see the *Busy Leader’s Handbook* as a road map that all leaders of diverse employees should follow. Each chapter will guide leaders at ALL levels to better themselves, leverage the unique traits of their team members, and build an environment where everyone is treated fairly. Leaders often feel they can’t block off long periods of time to read books, but this one is quick and easy. In fact, I could read it on my phone because it is so concise. The short chapters and repetition of key points allow leaders to quickly access the information that they need to turn today’s challenges into tomorrow’s opportunities. Finally, I loved Quint’s emphasis on being vulnerable: it’s refreshing to see a leader focus on admitting mistakes, apologizing when you are wrong, and slowing down when needed to produce desired outcomes.”

—Brian Wyer
President and CEO
Gulf Coast Minority Chamber of Commerce

“This is a phenomenal resource not just for leaders and business owners, but for any person seeking ways in which to better understand how to live and interact well with others. Quint has such a talent for filtering through mountains of research and information and to deftly help us apply those important lessons in our daily lives. He delivers another well-written, straight-to-the-point guidebook for those in the field.

“As professionals are wont to do, I find myself guilty of working in the business more than on it. Just in the time it took me to read this book, I was faced with issues related to how to best conduct an employee review (there is a chapter on that), how to break down an ‘us versus them’ culture (there is a chapter on that), and why I tend to avoid conflict (there is a chapter on that). For a practitioner working in the business, this is a quick and fast resource for addressing the important issues of the business.

—Andrew Foxworth
Partner
Foxworth, Shepard & Bruhl, P.A.

“Reading Quint’s new book, *The Busy Leader’s Handbook*, was very enlightening and refreshing as I have had the unique honor of working with Quint in many different aspects. Not only is Quint training our leadership team in these exact attributes, he and his team are also working with our City Council in guiding them on the right strategic path, along with getting more civic engagement for our city.

“It is easy to get complacent as a leader when things are going well, but dealing with conflict and negativity isn’t easy. This book provides great ideas and insight on making sure leaders stay focused and on the right track. A lot of the issues addressed in the book are issues the city is currently dealing with: change, employee engagement, performance reviews, and employee development and training. I will be able to take the ideas from this book and implement them to make the city of Fort Walton Beach a better place to live, work, and play, and I will be able to ensure I stay on the right track in growing as a leader along with my leadership team and all employees.

“Employees are the heartbeat of any organization. It is imperative that leaders nurture that relationship and develop employees as future leaders while making sure all employees and customers know the ‘why’ and the ‘what.’

“This is a must-read for any leader, future leader, employee, boss, etc., as the ideas addressed in this book apply to everyone in an organization.”

—Michael D. Beedie, P.E.

City Manager
City of Fort Walton Beach

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Busy
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HOW TO LEAD PEOPLE
AND PLACES
THAT THRIVE

QUINT STUDER

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*To all those people who each and every day strive to
help others become the very best they can be. Never
underestimate the difference you make.*

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How to Approach This Book

Thank you for reading *The Busy Leader's Handbook*. It's meant to be a quick and easy resource for leaders at all levels. Knowing how overloaded and overwhelmed leaders can be, we purposely kept chapters short and to the point. Each one features high-impact, granular, "how to" tactics that leaders can start using right away. These tactics work. I've seen them get outstanding results over and over throughout my career.

This book has three sections. **Section 1 delves into some key leader skills and behaviors.** Together, these chapters capture the mind-set, attitude, and capabilities the best leaders tend to possess. We put them first because they are the foundation for everything else. We all need to become the best leaders we can be before we'll be able to bring out the best in others.

Section 2 is about optimizing employee performance. It explores what exceptional leaders do (and don't do) to create a positive, productive, engaging workplace culture and inspire people to consistently put forth their best efforts. Great leaders create environments in which people grow, thrive, and find a powerful sense of meaning. They lead teams in a way that creates results far greater than the sum of the individual efforts. A leader who masters these practices will set up their people to truly shine.

Finally, Section 3 addresses strategic and foundational topics. These chapters focus on the structure, processes, and groundwork that need to be in place if you're to build a successful organization. Why do we cover these last? Simply because without the efforts of leaders and employees there would be no company to run!

While it would be terrific if people read cover to cover, it's not necessary. This is a reference book and chapters are designed to be self-contained. Feel free to read the topic (or topics) you need help with in the moment and save the rest for another day. (Also, don't be surprised if you notice some crossover. Leadership is organic and its components interconnected: topics don't fall neatly into categories!)

Whether you're a new leader or a more seasoned one, I hope you will benefit from this book. Feel free to share it with other leaders and managers inside your company. The more people who embrace the proven principles of great leadership, the stronger your business will be.

I wish you and those you lead much success and fulfillment on your journeys. Leadership is a noble calling and if this book can play a small role in helping you do it better, I will be so grateful.

Quint Studer

“Wait . . . Didn’t I Read This in Another Chapter?”

It would be great if you read this book straight through from beginning to end! But we know leaders are busy (it says so right in the title!) and don’t always do it that way. That’s why *The Busy Leader’s Handbook* is written the way it is. It’s set up so you can jump right to whichever chapter you need in the moment. As a result, cover-to-cover readers may find that certain tactics are repeated in more than one place.

What’s more, actions that strengthen one leader’s skill or behavior quite often strengthen others as well. It just works out that way. It’s a good thing that so many tactics function organically to improve your leadership in several different areas: they give you more bang for your leadership buck!

Thank you for reading this book. We wish you all the best on your journey to becoming the best leader you can be.



The Leader in You: Key Skills and Behaviors

These chapters are all about the mind-set, attitude, and capabilities the best leaders possess. We all need to become the best leaders we can be before we can bring out the best in others. When we master these skills and behaviors, we lay the groundwork for a thriving organization.

1

Strive to Be Self-Aware and Coachable

Recently in a conversation with a venture capitalist, we were talking about the qualities he looks for when he is thinking about buying a company. I suspected that he would focus on things like profitability and growth potential. But to my surprise he put *self-awareness* and *coachability* in leaders at the top of the list.

I've met and worked with hundreds of leaders over the years—in hospitals, on baseball fields, in government offices, and in hotels, stores, and restaurants—and have seen what self-awareness and coachability look like in action. Organizations that encourage and nurture these two qualities in their leaders (actually, in all employees) tend to be strong, innovative, and profitable.

This should come as no surprise. Today's business environment requires us to adapt quickly and relentlessly. That means leaders must not only be great at what they do, they also have to be great learners. "They must know what they don't know"—and be willing to work hard to learn it.

Self-awareness means knowing what you're good at and what you're not. It means you don't hide your flaws or cover up your mistakes. You don't pretend to know it all. It means you practice humility and embrace learning. Not only do transparency and vulnerability help people like and trust you, they set the right example for other leaders and employees. When everyone is willing to take risks, learn from mistakes, and seek out opportunities to learn and grow, organizations thrive.

Coachability just means you're open to feedback. You don't get bent out of shape by constructive criticism. You're actually grateful for it because you want to improve and grow, personally and professionally. You want to be a better leader, spouse, partner, parent, or friend (and you know that growth impacts all of these roles).

Self-awareness and coachability are connected. Each one leads naturally to the other. When we know what we need to improve on, we're more likely to seek the help of others who can coach us. Once we seek that help we become even more self-aware. It's a cycle that builds on itself. The hardest part is getting started, but it gets easier.

When these two qualities become part of your company's culture, you're on your way to becoming an unstoppable organization. It's easier to engage and motivate employees. High performers will be drawn to you (and will be more likely to stick around). Productivity will soar.

All of this can start with one leader. By improving your own performance and setting an example for others by working to become more self-aware and coachable, you will inspire others to do the same. In fact, if you want to help others improve, this is not optional. Here is a story to illustrate what I mean:

Years ago, I was working in an alcoholism and drug addiction treatment center. I met the daughter of one of our patients, a single mom with her child's father out of their lives. This daughter was struggling in many ways, even blaming herself for her mother's drinking. I happened to know a guidance counselor at this daughter's high school who had shared with me several months earlier that she herself had grown up in an alcoholic home. I thought the guidance counselor would be a perfect person to talk to the patient's daughter.

When I called her and asked, the guidance counselor paused. She apologized, saying she could not talk to this girl because she (the guidance counselor) had not yet even addressed her own issues. For close to 30 years, this story has stuck with me. It's hard to take another person further than you take yourself.

Here are a few tips for becoming more self-aware and coachable:

Know that getting better starts on the inside. It's not "them," it's you. When I was younger I lived in the world of "if only." *If only* I had gone to this school, majored in this, grown up rich, gotten the breaks, or been more appreciated then my life would be better. The problem was always *them*. Then, at 31, I crashed emotionally. I sought professional help and found other resources to learn from. I soon discovered the problem was not *them*; it was me and my expectations. I figured out that I will struggle until I am better on the inside.

Ask for feedback (and really listen). Talk to your boss, to other leaders, to employees, to friends and family members. Ask what they see as your strengths and weaknesses. How do they think you performed on a recent project? What might you have done better?

Don't shoot the messenger. When you receive negative feedback, practice listening without reacting. If you feel yourself getting upset, don't lash out. Process the information and sit with it a while before deciding whether it's valid. Often you'll have to admit it is. It's hard to hear negative truths about ourselves but, with practice, we can become more open to it.

Have a “beginners mind-set.” People who practice “beginners mind” rather than always thinking they are going to be a guru or expert tend to do better in teams. Always be ready and willing to participate, serve, and share your best insights. You will learn a lot more. For example, check your attitude before you go to a meeting. Always come into the group with the intention of learning something. Rather than having attitude of *This isn't relevant to me* or *This is not what I'm interested in*, ask yourself, *How could this apply to me? How could this be useful for me now—and if not now, later?*

Keep an accountability journal. Write down your goals and plans and regularly update what you're doing to move toward them. Track your progress over time. Are you doing what you set out to do? If not, what might be holding you back? Exploring these issues in writing can lead to startling insights on your strengths and weaknesses.

Seize every opportunity to develop yourself. While most entrepreneurs are great at the core “skill” their venture is built on—cooking, accounting, practicing law—they haven't typically mastered the skills it takes to run a business. They need training in basics like hiring, firing, creating revenue streams, etc. I find the most successful small business owners are those who are self-aware enough to know what they don't know and take advantage of resources that can help.

Hire people who are smarter than you. Make sure they're willing to challenge you (and that you're open to being challenged). Being surrounded by a bunch of “yes men” and “yes women” isn't going to help you grow.

Get a mentor, be a mentor (or do both). Jim Clifton, who is Gallup Chairman and CEO and author of *The Coming Jobs War*, writes about the need for what he calls “super mentors.” He says super

mentors are those who light fires under innovators and entrepreneurs and guide and advise small businesses. He calls them “the heroes America needs for this moment in history.”

It's true: mentoring is powerful. Whether you have a mentor or you mentor someone else, this relationship can spark tremendous growth in both parties. Great mentors know that they are not finished products and often they learn as much from the mentee as the mentee learns from them.

Don't be afraid to change your mind. We tend to think of strong leaders as being quick, decisive, and unwavering in their decision making. Most of the time they are praised for being consistent, and their conviction seen as a source of comfort and reassurance for their team. On the other hand, leaders who change their mind or embrace a new way of thinking about something are seen as “flip floppers,” and derided for being wishy-washy or inconsistent.

The reality is that leaders who are open to learning new information and adapting their thinking accordingly are ultimately more successful. Changing your mind is not a sign of weakness but a sign that you are able to learn and grow in real time. Never tie yourself too tightly to your first conclusion. Instead, have the courage to admit that you might have been wrong and the flexibility to course correct as new information becomes available. Good leaders know that new information that contradicts their current position is not a threat but an asset to be leveraged to make their plan stronger.

There is no finish line in learning. There are always things to learn. I guess I assumed at one time that someday, I would know enough. That's just not true. There is always more to learn, and teachers present themselves in many different ways. When the student is ready, the teacher appears. Remaining teachable is key.

Becoming self-aware and coachable doesn't mean striving for perfection. None of us will ever be perfect. It does mean identifying the worst flaws that hold us back and sincerely working to repair them. It means knowing which tasks to delegate, and when to seek the advice of experts. It means realizing more each day just how much we don't know.

This is a journey that we'll never finish. Our main job as a leader is to make sure that we're always headed in the right direction on the path.

2

Invite Feedback from Others and Don't Take It Personally; Instead, Take Ownership

“Don't take anything personally.” This is the second of the Four Agreements—from the book *The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom* by Don Miguel Ruiz—that I try hard to live by. Ruiz writes that we should not take what happens around us personally because the actions of others have nothing to do with you, but rather are about them.

Although I do believe this, I also believe it does not mean we shouldn't listen to and learn from others. I recall a time when a CEO said to me that one of the senior executives had taken the low employee satisfaction results in their area personally and that she advised him not to do so. My response was they *should* take the results personally for those areas they lead. This appears confusing when considered alongside Ruiz's words.

In thinking about this paradox, I have some thoughts and suggestions:

How can we interpret results or feedback in such a way that we don't take it personally but that we learn and grow from it? Our first thought must be that the sender of the message is not trying to be hurtful but helpful. As discussed in Chapter 1, the two most vital characteristics in personal growth are self-awareness and coachability. Feedback that creates self-awareness is meant to be helpful. Having an outside perspective is valuable; remember, an artist can draw someone else better than they can draw themselves.

When we take something personally in the way that Ruiz writes about it, it can lead to unhealthy emotions, such as anger and