

contents



Features

34 All in the Same Boat
What do teenagers find when they leave behind the comforts of home (and their digital devices) to live together for five days and nights on a tiny sailboat? Themselves. **Carsten Knox** reports

Sidebar: A teenage sailor shares her diary **p 40**

42 She Wears It Well
Entering her 30th year of business, designer Eileen Fisher wears the mantle of leadership with the ease and flowing style of her clothing. Her company is not only doing well, **Barry Boyce** writes, it's doing good—for employees, young women, and the planet

Sidebar: Three things that matter to Eileen Fisher **p 45**

"I have a deep sense that I didn't create this business alone. I listened, I heard, and we worked together. Working in a collaborative way made it so much better."

Eileen Fisher

52 Focus!
Choosing what to focus on and what to leave in the background is one of our greatest gifts. And yet, says bestselling author **Daniel Goleman**, we squander this power by getting lost in a sea of distractions. Why not learn to train it instead?

Sidebar: Try this practice to sharpen your focus **p 56**

60 Luke, I'm Your Dad
Jeremy Adam Smith and his son find common ground in the land of light sabres and Jedi knights. The Force, it turns out, may be mindfulness

Sidebar: Yoda, Obi-Wan, and Qui-Gon Jinn share their words of wisdom **p 62**

Departments

4 Your Thoughts

6 Our Thoughts

8 Contributors

11 Now
A top scientist talks mindfulness • Teenagers learn to pause online • Panera Bread gets ahead in business by giving • Make work a place you love to go • Neuroscience gets graphic • Educators put mindfulness to good use • Inject some joy back into the holiday season • Research Roundup

20 Bookmark This
The writings, recordings, and apps that are capturing our attention now

22 Mindful/Mindless
Our take on who's paying attention and who's not

24 One Taste
A Taste of Home
Angela Mears finds joy in butternut squash. Recipes by **Béatrice Peltre**

28 Body/Mind
Always New
Rock climber **Steph Davis** likes to go back again and again to the same mountains. Every time, they're subtly different

30 Mind/Body
My Brain Made Me Do It
As scientists learn more about how the structure of our brains affects our behavior, **Sharon Begley** asks: are we responsible for our actions, or can we just blame our brains?

80 MindSpace
Maira Kalman tries a meditation retreat and gets inspired. Or is that annoyed?



65 In Practice
66 Techniques
Three steps to a better relationship with money

67 At Work
Set the Tone
How to negotiate a raise with more skill and grace, and the best ways to defuse office politics

68 Ask Ms. Mindful
Exploring marriage momentum, helping others without hurting yourself, and reconsidering old friends

70 Insight
Raising the Mindful Family
Family members are disconnected from each other as never before. Psychologists **Stefanie and Elisha Goldstein** show us ways to strengthen relationships, increase everyone's well-being, and bring the family back together.



On our cover
Eileen Fisher clothing is just one part of this businesswoman's story. From recycling materials to mentoring young women, there's more to Fisher design than meets the eye **page 42**

Photograph by Mark Mahaney

business

She Wears It Well

Entering her 30th year of business, designer Eileen Fisher wears the mantle of leadership with the ease and flowing style of her clothing. Her company is not only doing well, it's doing good—for employees, young women, and the planet.

By Barry Boyce
Photographs by Mark Mahaney

In 1992 Eileen Fisher moved her company from trendy Tribeca in Manhattan to suburban Irvington in Westchester County. She wanted her son, Zack, to have a backyard to play in.

“I could come home and start cooking while he was outside playing,” she tells me. Well, she didn’t exactly cook, she admits, but she was at home. Only recently has she had time to get into cooking. She’s been a little too busy creating the burgeoning clothing empire that bears her name—with more than 60 retail stores, distribution through department stores and boutiques in 90

countries, a thousand employees, and over \$350 million in annual revenues. But she’s overseen it all in the same spirit as getting that backyard for Zack. It’s domestic. It’s a family. It’s caring. Nobody lasts at Eileen Fisher, she says, if they aren’t kind.

The fashion industry has a hard reputation, conjuring images of NYC’s Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in 1911, undernourished, underaged models, and heavily marked-up products manufactured in Third World sweatshops →





"We're fortunate to have a sophisticated customer who understands the value of our clothes," says Fisher. "There's a price for lasting quality and sustainability. It should be industry standard, but it isn't by any means."

Eileen Fisher has been recognized as one of the 25 best small-to-medium-sized companies to work for.

(including the recent Bangladeshi factory that collapsed, killing more than a thousand people). Fashion is not always pretty. But Fisher is not in the fashion business. "We're in the clothing business," she says. "The word 'fashion' connotes fast-paced and planned obsolescence, the throwaway culture. That annoys me." She winces at the thought. We're sitting in the company's design center, three floors on Fifth Avenue in the Flatiron district. With high ceilings, open spaces, and lots of natural light, each floor brims with fabrics and clothing in various states, patterns, mannequins, pictures of clothing throughout the ages (for inspiration), glowing screens, and lots of people, mostly women. It's a hive of creative activity.

Fisher settles her lanky, flowing frame into a comfy seat. She sits upright, statuesque, if statues could breathe and laugh. The conference room is glass-walled, and we look out on a spacious kitchen-dining area where employees mill about.

A small chime and striker sit on a side table; they're for signaling the minute of silence that begins all meetings. Award plaques fill the wall outside the door. Eileen Fisher has been recognized as one of the top 500 women-owned businesses and, for nine years running, one of the 25 best small-to-medium-sized companies to work for.

Before we talk business, Fisher talks values. For her, the two are inseparable. "That minute of silence may be a small thing, but it creates a little spaciousness. It gives people a little taste of something, and that effect starts to ripple," she says. "People in all kinds of corporations have been doing it, and they credit us for giving them the idea, even if we never dealt with them directly. You don't know who might be meditating in a corporate office somewhere as a result of taking that little break."

"I don't go around saying I meditate, but in my life and work, I try to live those values. Mindfulness means slowing

business

down enough to be thoughtful about what you're doing. It helps you see the need to get other viewpoints in order to see the whole. It brings more self-awareness—of how you feel, how you speak, how you treat others. Over time, it starts to weave itself into everything you do."

Fisher didn't set out to create a company. "I started designing clothes that I would want to wear myself," she says. She grew up outside of Chicago in a Catholic family of modest means, the second oldest of six girls and one boy. Her mother needed to stretch a dollar, so she sewed her children's clothes. After graduating from the University of Illinois in 1972 with a degree in home economics—"what people in clothing or design or textiles did in those days"—Fisher moved to New York. After a stint in interior decorating, she ended up at a graphics design firm in SoHo. During that period she visited Japan and was taken with the kimonos and wide cropped pants. She loved the simple, earthy fabrics, and styles of dress that transcended fashion, that had been around for a millennium.

Fisher also disliked shopping for clothes. She recalled the ease of her school uniform and was miffed that men could put on a suit in the morning and look turned out, while she had to spend an hour deciding what to wear. In 1984, her idea for simple, timeless clothes that offered beauty and ease led to a business, almost by happenstance.

A sculptor friend had to give up a booth at a show, and he persuaded Fisher to use it for her yet-to-be-produced clothing. She was so new to business, she neglected to price the clothes. She had \$350 in the bank. Her first retail store, which still exists today, was a tiny space on 9th Street in the East Village that she filled with damaged and sample fabrics. "I love fabrics, and I hate to see them go to waste. The cutting rooms at the big houses, where mountains of material are thrown away, just make me sad."

As her business grew, these environmental values endured. Eileen Fisher pays attention to the entire life cycle of a garment, from cradle to grave. It's part of Fisher's "business as a movement." You can see that slogan displayed in her stores, which double as community gathering places to spread these values. She believes that "gross national happiness" is the responsibility of every person in business.

"We're looking at any way we can change ourselves, influence this industry, and effect positive social change," she says. "Operating with attention to all inputs and outputs at every stage makes the product a bit expensive, so we're fortunate to have a sophisticated customer who understands the value of our clothes. There's a price for lasting quality and sustainability. It should be industry standard, but it isn't by any means. We have a lot more work to do; we are on it every day."

"Business as a movement" is also about how people work with each other. Fisher is shy, yet she exudes boundless energy. It's a combination that makes her a perfect collaborator. She listens well and gives others room but will execute forcefully when the group has coalesced. That approach is built into the company's culture, resulting in a creative tension between getting things done and talking about them.

"It can be chaotic," she acknowledges, "but just the right amount of chaos is what breeds creativity. We insist on hearing voices from lots of different people. They're engaged, give their opinion, then move on. A small team hears it all and makes the decision. It's a balancing act. We often leave meetings with decisions unclear and just sit with them. We definitely err on the feminine side—more intuitive, less linear. We consciously work on the collaborative process. I have a deep sense that I didn't create this business alone. I listened, I heard, and we worked together. It would have been something different if I hadn't worked in a collaborative way. That made it so much better."

Irvington is less than an hour from the design center in Manhattan, yet it's a world away. You pass through the mad rush of Grand Central Station, and before too long, you're released from New York's high tension. Clickety-clacking along, you see the Hudson River out the window to the left. In 45 minutes you're in the village of Irvington. Crossing under the tracks, you're in the parking lot of the Eileen Fisher Lab Store, where retail ideas are played with and tested. Next door, at 2 Bridge Street, sits the headquarters.

I meet Cheryl Campbell, managing director of the Eileen Fisher →

3 Things That Matter to Eileen Fisher

1 Timeless Design

"I do love clothes," Eileen Fisher says. "I love the way clothes feel. I love fabric. I always have, since I was very young." Fisher began in 1984 designing a small line—jacket, skirt, trousers, top—inspired by her love of simplicity and her appreciation of timeless garments like the kimono. She created pieces she would like to wear, thinking there might be others who would want the same. There were. Many. A business was born.

Fisher didn't start out with a blueprint for the Eileen Fisher brand and culture, but "in order to pass this on to a new generation" of employees and customers, the company arrived at a list of core values: simple, sensual, beautiful, timeless, functional. "And to that, we've added 'ease,'" she recently said. "I always wanted things that took less time and hassle."

"Timeless" is probably the most significant and the trickiest of the core values. "We follow trends—color, fashion, texture—and we incorporate aspects of them into our way of doing things," she says. "The result is something that feels of the moment. Yet the customer may be surprised to discover that five, ten years down the road, it's still a good thing. Timeless doesn't mean stuck in the past. Good design stays relevant. Classic doesn't simply mean old." →



business

Fisher takes a stroll to a quiet retreat in the backyard of her home in Irvington in Westchester County.

The Eileen Fisher leadership program engages young women before they’re locked into conventional ways of seeing and being seen.

Community Foundation, whose main projects are a leadership institute, which operates a program to “foster leadership attributes” in teenage girls, and Green Eileen, a recycled-clothing initiative. Both are housed a few blocks uphill in a rundown building with three-story columns designed in 1895 by Stanford White as the headquarters for *Cosmopolitan*. First, Campbell shows me around the headquarters, which is loose and flowing, like the design center—and Eileen Fisher clothing. It has lots of open spaces where business can be done on the fly and eavesdropping is permitted. It’s where architects design the look and feel of the retail stores, where the highly successful web store is run, and where a miscellany of core functions and garment-industry specialties occur that are too arcane for my untrained eye to sort out. Glass-walled “duck-in” rooms with names like Delight and Creativity line the work areas. The large café space by the river is used by a local meditation group for weekly gatherings and special events. Wellness is central to the Eileen Fisher mission. Everyone has a wellness account they can use for massage, proper work wear, acupuncture, yoga, and so forth. We pass a yoga/meditation room, a lactation room, massage rooms, and a patio where you can sit and watch the river roll by. At the same time, it’s clear that people are working very hard. The sense of ease does not breed a lack of commitment. Over at the Stanford White building, Campbell and I visit the leadership institute, a warren of rooms where a 12-day training session for high-school girls is going on. In the first room, a dozen girls are intently working on creating a jour-

nal using digital publishing tools. I see topics like “how to let go of an unhealthy relationship” and “gratitude” on the pages they’re poring over. Nicole Pressly Wolf, a longtime publishing-industry professional, tells me it’s a delight to work with people whose ideas of life are still forming. That’s Fisher’s mission here: to catch young women before they’re locked into conventional ways of seeing and being seen. “Women have so much to contribute, yet often lack confidence,” she says. “When I created the program five years ago, I asked myself, ‘What do I wish someone had told me when I was young? What extra help do girls need to move into leadership roles?’ It’s different for women today than when I was coming up, but the world is still fast-paced, with lots of verbal stuff thrown around. If you want to move through it with feeling and intuition, you need to be empowered to feel that it’s fine to do things that way.” →



2 Slowing Down

“How do you bring yourself to work, how are you doing, how are you affecting others? These are important things,” Eileen Fisher says. “And meditation can make you more conscious of those. It slows you down enough to stop and see what’s going on. It’s a small thing, but it ripples out. If you want to change, you have to be able to slow down, stop, and shift. Otherwise, you may be efficient but you always do things the same, even if you need to consider changing.” →



Sales of recycled clothing through Green Eileen increased 50% this year, with the proceeds going to programs that improve the lives of women and girls.

In another room, three groups of five girls each are cutting images out of magazines and making collages. They're led by Leigh Thomas, who just finished her junior year at Brown and went through the program herself. The exercise is about stories, Thomas tells me. "They're paying attention to what stories they're told about themselves by the media. They'll also be looking at what expectations are put on them by stories their peers tell them, as well as what expectations they place on others. Finally, they'll consider what stories they want to tell the world about themselves and what steps forward they can take to make that happen." The irony that this exercise is happening in the former headquarters of *Cosmo* is not lost.

Snaking through hallways and up a rickety elevator, we come to a set of gray metal double doors. While we're walking, Campbell has been telling me about a talk she attended almost a decade ago by

William McDonough. He's the author of *Cradle to Cradle* and *The Upcycle*, which promote the principle of treating what we've already manufactured as a vital resource, rather than always looking to extract more from a depleted Earth. "What he was saying really turned me on," Campbell told me. "I came back and excitedly shared with Eileen how I thought an upcycling effort would be a good fit for Eileen Fisher." Eventually, Green Eileen was born. Loyal customers were asked to return garments they no longer used, with the knowledge that reselling them would support programs to "improve the lives of women and girls in our local and global communities."

As the doors open, the fruits of that effort nearly tumble out into the hallway. Thousands of pieces of returned clothing jam the room. Emerica Du Jesu and Janet Goyzueta, who heads up the collection operation, patiently sort through, evaluate, and classify the pieces. (Zack



Clockwise from far left: Employees enjoy a minute of silence before meetings; an idea board at the offices of Eileen Fisher; massages are made available to all employees during working hours; a map of the world made of cloth remnants; quiet is worked right into this office's design.

also works here—like mother, like son.) Many articles of clothing will be tagged and find their way to the Lab Store and two other outlets in Westchester. Some will be donated to shelters, and some are too threadbare for use. Their fate is under consideration. A second collection center in Seattle now supplies a Green Eileen store there, and more outlets are planned. "Sales increased almost 50% this year," Campbell tells me. "It took 33 months for Green Eileen to earn its first million, a year for the second million, and we just hit the third million after eight months. That's a lot of upcycling!"

Eileen Fisher has known hard times. Hurricane Sandy inundated the company's headquarters, which is still being restored, but Fisher is philosophical about what was lost in the flood. "It's just stuff," she said at the time. The company is not immune from the

harsh world of the marketplace either. While the designs are timeless, the core Eileen Fisher customer is aging, and that's challenging the company to find younger customers while still adhering to the "timeless design" principle. Fisher feels confident they can continue to "make design that belongs to this moment but transcends the moment" and appeal to a new generation of customers. There are early positive signs, but only time will tell. People who work at Eileen Fisher generally share the company's values and often apply to work there for that reason, but as the company grows, changes, and adds new employees, it's making a robust effort to foster the culture and help people work and live well. Yvette Jarreau, director of leadership, learning and development, described to me the recent evolution of Eileen Fisher. "About a decade ago, we had roughly 400 people who had grown embryonically around

Eileen. People were doing multiple roles—when you're small, you wear a lot of hats. Now there's more complexity to manage." As the company grew to a thousand employees, Susan Schor, the chief culture officer, started a program to create more organization while maintaining collaborative values and to help people develop the leadership skills they need to make that work. While the conventional manager takes pride in knowing the answers, Fisher advocates *not knowing*, which "makes it easier to learn from others." Leadership at Eileen Fisher is looser, more open to ambiguity and uncertainty. "It's always moving and changing," Jarreau tells me. "We say, 'We're in the river.'" "Managing ambiguity is a tough thing for many people, who tend to want things more black and white. We don't rely on a lot of policies and rules here, which is challenging. Our thrust is to help →

business

3 Inspiring Change

“We talk about ‘business as a movement,’” Eileen Fisher says. “This means we take responsibility for what we’re doing, and we look for all the possible ways we can change ourselves—and change this industry.” Fisher doesn’t see herself and the company “fighting for change.” Rather, she says, “We lead. We do what we do and hopefully that influences others.”

The company researches ways to make improvements in every stage of the life cycle of a product so that less energy, chemicals, and water are used, resulting in less effluent and a better environment for workers.

“We share that information with anyone who is interested, so others will be inspired to do similar things,” Fisher says. The cradle-to-grave philosophy also includes taking back and reselling garments to support charitable causes and advising customers on how to care for their garments better, which is the stage of the life cycle that results in the most pollution and energy use.

“Business as a movement” also extends to placing a strong focus on employee well-being, promoting collaboration and consensus in decision-making, employee ownership, and—through the Eileen Fisher foundation—supporting the empowerment of women to take leading roles in society. ●

people cultivate good judgment, so they don’t have to use rules.”

When the 2008 financial collapse hit, sales dropped precipitously, which tested the mettle of the tight-knit, family-style business. Some people took unpaid leave, while others’ jobs had to be eliminated. “One of the first things we had to do was help people over the loss and grief. The whole organization was saddened,” Jarreau says. The tough times occasioned a tightening-up and made leadership skills—from the practical level of setting agendas to the bigger level of fostering trust—even more important.

Fisher feels that difficult period created a healthy sense of renewal, and it set the stage for her current emphasis on “personal transformation.” That’s a new initiative, Jarreau says, based on the notion that “a culture of trust, good judgment, well-being, and purpose is central to people flourishing in their work and their life. Personal transformation is a deep dive,” says Jarreau. “It could involve a variety of experiences, depending on the person—a regular meditation practice, workshops to explore your personal history and how it affects you today, or looking at what you really value in life, at what it means to prosper. We don’t know the path forward exactly, but we’re sampling and exploring. In the end, we want to support people’s personal growth as part of their work life and try to measure how well we’re doing that.”

Amy Hall is director of social consciousness. How many companies have one of those? Her mission is to help Eileen Fisher become the most socially and environmentally responsible company possible. It’s a many-tentacled effort that includes initiatives such as the development of an organic cotton supply chain in Peru, helping a Chinese silk dyer use fewer chemicals and less water, and investing in two windmills in Iowa through Native Energy. Many of these efforts are chronicled through the Ampersand marketing project. When a customer sees the “&,” she knows she can go to a website and learn more about how Eileen Fisher products come into being and what the company is doing to be responsible and innovative by watching videos or reading interviews and journalistic-style reports from the front.

“We’ve been collecting these sto-

ries for quite a while,” Hall says, “but Eileen was reluctant to share them. She wants us doing good things for the right reasons, not to overstate our goodness in order to sell clothes. But now we see that many customers, particularly those age 40 and under, are value-driven and want to know the story behind the products they buy.”

Hall is focused now on two major projects. The first is to create a publicly available map of Eileen Fisher’s entire supply chain, an enormous undertaking. “Where we encounter social and environmental problems,” Hall says, “we will actively work with our suppliers to help rectify them—through relationship-building, investment, and partnership.” If a serious problem can’t be resolved, they’ll halt production until something can be worked out.

The other initiative is even more ambitious: a sustainable way to bring clothing manufacturing back to the U.S. It starts with a proposal to develop a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in the Bronx. It would rely on used fiber for its feedstock (including clothes from the Green Eileen collection project), employ and empower at-risk women, be employee-owned and led, and be housed in sustainable buildings.

“This would not be an Eileen Fisher facility alone,” Hall says. “We’re seeking industry partners to collaborate with us in a facility that would create raw fiber, spin it into yarn, weave it into fabric, and sew it into garments. We want to bring the garment-making arts back to the United States in a way that benefits local communities. If the prototype in the Bronx works, the idea can be replicated in communities across the country.”

Next year marks Fisher’s 30th year in the clothing business. She says she’s “in a letting-go phase. I give people my blessing. I feel like I work less, but I guess I’m still doing a lot in places I choose to put energy. I enjoy being on the periphery, gently holding something rather than being in the center of it all.”

She has also started to transfer ownership to her employees. The company has long shared at least 10% of its after-tax profits (and often much more) with all staff. In 2006 Fisher started an Employee Stock Ownership Plan that passed almost a third of the company to employees.



Fisher in her meditation room at home.

Some day, Fisher says, the plan may be used to turn over the entire company to its employees.

She also loves spending time with her children. She took both of them with her to China to visit factories and see how the workers there lived. Her 20-year-old daughter, Sasha, is a window into a younger world, and perhaps the next generation of loyal customers. “She goes through my closet and digs out old things and does new fun things with them I wouldn’t have thought of,” Fisher says.

As we leave the conference room, Fisher invites me to accompany her to a dinner with people from the meditation group that uses space in Irvington. As we’re walking out, there’s a lot of hub-bub. It’s market week, when buyers come to look at the new line. Fisher has seen it for the first time that day. She gives it her blessing. As we pass by dozens of women looking at the new clothes, she quietly slides by on the periphery, almost unnoticed. When she is spotted, warm hellos

are shouted. She stops briefly, smiles broadly, and moves on, not wanting to become the center of attention.

No entourage accompanies us as we leave the building. In the elevator, Fisher and a coworker share stories about their children. On the ride to the restaurant, her attention is on her companion, not her iPhone, even though she’s been out of touch for hours.

In the restaurant, someone mentions one of the latest fashion trends, something about T-shirts. Everyone looks to Fisher for comment. “I don’t know,” she says, setting off a shockwave of laughter. But it’s no surprise. Eileen Fisher has never been about the latest fad. Her fad is timelessness, and for many people, it couldn’t come at a better time. ●

Barry Boyce is Editor-in-Chief of Mindful.

“I’m in a letting-go phase. I enjoy being on the periphery, gently holding something rather than being in the center of it all.”