

**Session 12: Wrapping Up**

We have reached the last session in our journey and, like the old Mickey Mouse song said, it’s time to say goodbye to all our company. But of course, this isn’t good-bye, we will see you again in so many of our other programs and classes at WFLD.

The pace of change feels like it is increasing, creating a constant sense of ambiguity. Our brains don’t like ambiguity. We crave familiarity and predictability to feel safe. When familiar patterns are gone, we need to take time for ourselves. Now more than ever we need to give ourselves the gift of mindfulness.

As our last step, it would be good to review our journey and all that we have thought about and learned. In week one, we learned what mindfulness was and what it wasn’t. Most importantly, that you can choose to be mindful anytime and anywhere. It was just a matter of turning your attention to something in your environment, noticing when other thoughts entered your mind and then letting them go.

Week 2 we talked about attention and the way that your brain filters out about 50% of the information that is swirling around you at any given moment. We learned that our attention was a valuable resource and that we could manage it in ways that would enhance our quality of life by controlling our time traveling to the past and the future and being fully present in the moment.

In Week 3 we focused on willpower and learned that as a resource, it was finite. If we want to achieve a goal, we couldn’t do it by simply deciding, that we had to take steps to manage it by using it more judiciously and building in strategies for renewing it.

Week 4 was, in some ways, a continuation of our thinking about willpower. We talked about our energy and the importance of regular breaks and healthy rituals for the maintenance of our energy.

In Week 5 we turned our attention to visualization. We learned the way the brain doesn’t differentiate between a real event in the external world and the vivid pictures created by our imagination. While that can be a challenge, it can also be used to our advantage. By visualizing our desired outcomes, we can create the feelings and energy needed to help make it a reality.

In Week 6 we revisited some thinking around energy and looked at the importance of a growth mindset. We also talked about three important bounce-back behaviors, acceptance, purpose, and flexibility.

Week 7 challenged our thinking about stress and suggested that, if managed properly, stress could actually be our friend. The right level of stress would help us to achieve the goals that mattered most to us and, given that, we didn’t need to avoid stress but rather, work to keep it from tipping over into distress.

Week 8 examined healthy habits and the importance of establishing them so that behaviors that would support and energize could be put on automatic. By doing this, we would not only increase the probability of engaging in these important behaviors, being on automatic would free up energy to be devoted to other activities.

Week 9 was all about the steady chatter in our heads and the reality that most of this chatter was negative. Recognizing that negative self-talk was getting in our way of being our best selves, we looked at self-compassion, affirmations and gratitude as ways of deliberately adding more positivity to the stream of chatter.

In Week 10 we discussed the importance of life purpose and some strategies for adding a sense of purpose to our lives.

Finally, in week 11, we addressed the issue of forgiveness, even when it was hard. We reviewed the steps for forgiveness, stressing that it doesn’t necessarily mean reconciliation and it certainly does not mean forgetting, because we need to remember to protect ourselves. Forgiveness is just about letting go of the hurt and moving on.

So, now we are in week 12. Where do you go from here? First, I hope that you will continue to journal and to use the recordings. They are available for download and you have probably already downloaded many of them. Use them frequently. Some recordings will have resonated with your needs more than others – listen to these often. Occasionally, vary things up and listen to the other recordings. They may fit your life better in the future than they did when you first heard them. If you haven’t downloaded all of the recordings, not to worry, they will still be available to you long after we are done.

Throughout the program, you have been journaling. This is a good habit to continue. Ideally, a few sentences at the end of the day but at the very least, schedule some time once a week to reflect on your learnings and to focus on gratitude. This will contribute to a growth mindset, something we have already emphasized as so important.

Finally, continue your habit of regular, short breaks. Remember, the past is gone, the future is not here, all you have is the present and that, my friend is a present! Enjoy!