

WORKING OUT LOUD

CIRCLE GUIDE

WEEK 12

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WEEK 12: Reflect and celebrate

What to expect this week

This final week marks the end of a process, and maybe a kind of beginning. You'll reflect on what has changed for you and what might come. In your last exercise, you'll make several additional contributions, including some for yourself. Hold this final meeting over lunch or dinner if you can - or come up with some other creative way to create an environment that's conducive to celebration.

SUGGESTED AGENDA FOR WEEK 12

1. Check-in	10 mins
2. Group exercise: Your one thing	15
3. Exercise: Time capsules	15
4. Group exercise: Pay it forward	15
5. Act on your intention	5

Check-in (10 minutes)

How are you feeling coming into this last week? Are you sad that it's coming to an end? Excited about what's next?

Group exercise: Your one thing (15 minutes)

Think back for a moment to your original idea for a goal in Week One, and your early attempts to describe it or visualize it in the later sessions. What has changed - about your goal and about you - since then? Think about your approach to making progress. Think about the relationships you've built, and about your habits and your mindset. What's different? How do you feel about those changes? More empowered? More hopeful? Something else?

Write down one thing that has changed for you already , one way you think or act differently as a result of your Circle. You might do this by finishing the sentence, "Since I joined my Circle, I..." Here are some examples:

- ...am more comfortable reaching out to people.
- ...am more confident about sharing my knowledge and work.
- ...discovered there's more out there related to my work/ideas than I thought.
- ...know that setbacks and failures are a natural part of learning.

Since I joined my Circle, I...

Now write down one thing you commit to do differently in the future. You might do this by finishing the sentence, "Next time, I will/won't..." This isn't meant to be a negative judgment but rather an opportunity for improvement, a way to build on what you've experienced. Here are some examples:

- ...will be more proactive about finding people related to my work.
- ...won't be so reluctant to ask a question or reach out to someone.
- ...will share more of my work, including ideas and work in progress.
- ...won't worry so much about a mistake or setback, but will simply learn from it and try not to repeat the same one!
- ...will practice making more contributions, including offering recognition and appreciation for other people's work.

Next time, I...

Share your answers to these two questions with your Circle. Try to give each person a full three to five minutes without interruption to talk about their experience, and use any remaining time for discussion.

Exercise: Time capsules (15 minutes)

A time capsule is "a container storing a selection of objects chosen as being typical of the present time, buried for discovery in the future." You can use what you just wrote as the basis for your own time capsule. The purpose is to capture what you're feeling and thinking now and deliver it later, when your future self may need a boost in motivation or a reminder of what you thought was important.

Pick a time in the not-too-distant future - somewhere between three and twelve months. What do you want your future self to be like then? What do you want to have accomplished? Try and write as if you're encouraging your future self to keep taking steps towards the vision you articulated.

Remember the advice when you wrote your Letter from Your Future Self in Week 7: "engage your emotions." Try to capture feelings in addition to activity or accomplishments. You can also include encouragements. Here's a letter that I wrote to my future self towards the end of 2017. (There are links to other sample letters at the end of this guide.)

SAMPLE LETTER TO MY FUTURE SELF

Dear FutureMe,

You said you wanted to "launch" a set of products in the first quarter.
How's it going?

I know you're daunted by how much work it is, and by the uncertainty of what to do or how to do it. All I can do from here is encourage you to keep trying, to keep channeling any energy related to doubts and worries into actions and shipping instead.

I know you can do this. Look at how far you've come already! How many people you have reached! How you have developed! It's incredible.

KEEP GOING. The world needs what you have to offer.

With love and respect.

Me

Group exercise: Pay it forward (15 minutes)

Working Out Loud is a practice, one that you get better at and more comfortable with over time, even as you discover new aspects of it. So although your Circle is ending, your practice is really just beginning.

Here are several simple ways to pay it forward, from the simplest to the most ambitious. Whatever you choose to do next, remember that any progress is good. By "paying yourself first," you're making an investment that's good for you and all the people connected to you.

Set aside time to invest in yourself

Take a look at your calendar and schedule appointments **over the next four weeks** for deepening relationships with people related to your goal. Even 30 minutes a week is more than what most people invest.

Send your time capsule to your future self via futureme.org

Simply go to futureme.org, copy your letter there, and pick a date at least 30 days in the future. (It's a free service, supported by ads and crowdsourced donations.) You'll be surprised and even amazed when you receive it.

Share a Circle selfie

Do you remember the additional exercise in Week 3 when you shared that you were in a Circle? ("*I'm in a Working Out Loud Circle! Hello @johnstepper*") You can do something similar with a group photo to celebrate your final week. In addition to creating a nice memory, sharing your photo may inspire others to take a step and form their own Circle.

Join another Circle

After a break of a few weeks or months, consider forming another WOL Circle with the same people or with new members. (New people tend to give you extra energy and even more diversity of perspectives and experiences.) The structure, shared accountability, and support of a Circle will help you make progress towards your goals and feel good while you do it. For some people, they feel their first Circle helped them better understand their goals and how this practice works, and now they're ready to go further.

Help someone else join a Circle

Just as you shared a useful resource in Week 4, you can let friends or colleagues know about your WOL Circle experience and encourage them to join one. One way they can find others to join them is to post a request in the WOL Community on Facebook or LinkedIn.¹

¹ The WOL Communities on LinkedIn and Facebook are at: facebook.com/groups/workingoutloud/ & linkedin.com/groups/4937010

Spread Circles at work

If you want to spread Working Out Loud across your organization, send me an email at john.stepper@workingoutloud.com and I'll help you.

Talk with your Circle about which one of these things you find interesting, and try to come up with your own ideas too. Write down the things you would like to do once your Circle ends.

Act on your intention (5 minutes)

Your Circle has ended, All that's left is to take one more step. Think of it not as the last step of your Circle, but as the first step of your new practice. Once you've done it, offer each other gratitude for the attention and support you received throughout this process.

For your final intention, do one of the things in your list above right now, before your meeting ends. It could be as simple as posting a selfie of your group, or blocking out some time to invest in yourself, or asking me how to get started spreading WOL at work. That one step will help you end on an empowering note.

FINAL THOUGHTS

"What's my *ikigai*?" ... As I entered my forties, I had no answer to that question. I just had a nagging sense that there should be more to life. But more what? Money? Achievement? The more I researched my own personal development, the more I gradually understood that what needed to change wasn't my life but my approach to life."

Working Out Loud: For a Better Career and Life

"The practice is making the connections. That's it. Making connections that are meaningful and appropriate for you. When you do that, that's when you grow, when you reach places that are more significant for you."

Mindy Bacharach, quoted in Working Out Loud: For a Better Career and Life

Thank you for persisting through the entire process, for giving yourself permission to try something new, to take a step, to invest in yourself.

Whatever you choose to do next, remember that any progress is good, that the steps you keep taking are good for you as well as for the people connected to you.

I wish you well.



Additional Resources: workingoutloud.com/resources