



# Working Out Loud Circle Guide

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## Week 5: Broaden your range of contributions

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### What to expect this week

After four weeks, you may need a boost. For some of you, the demands on your time and your environment may be luring you away from investing in yourself. Some of you may feel uncomfortable with some of the new things you're trying to do. Remember, all you're really doing in your circle is working on a goal you care about in a way that's meaningful and fulfilling. You deserve the chance to do that.

### Related reading from *Working Out Loud*

*Chapter 14 - Deepening Relationships through Contribution*

Blog post: [johnstepper.com/2014/01/18/deepening-relationships-through-contribution/](http://johnstepper.com/2014/01/18/deepening-relationships-through-contribution/)

### Suggested agenda

Both the exercises this week require some time to think, so manage time carefully.

Thing to do	Approx. time
Check-in	10 mins
Exercise: The only way out is through	10
Discuss ways to address your biggest challenge	10
Exercise: So much to offer	15
Discuss your facts about you	10
Checkout for Week 5	5

### **Check-in (10 minutes)**

In this week's check-in, focus on how you're feeling. As you listen to the others, try your best to put yourselves in their shoes. You don't need to "fix" anything at this point. Simply paying attention and actively listening can be helpful.

### **Exercise: The only way out is through (10 minutes)**

When we're struggling or resisting something, it's at that precise point that we can learn the most about ourselves. Because that moment can feel uncomfortable, our instinct is to fight it or escape from it. But to learn, we have to do the opposite: slow down and examine it. Answering these few questions can help you.

When you think of your goal and taking steps towards it, how do you feel?

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Whatever the emotion is, allow yourself to feel it. Where is it in your body? What's happening to you physically?

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If you're anxious in some way, what might be reasons for you feeling that way?

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If you're consistently too busy to make progress towards your goal or are thinking of quitting altogether, why do you think that is? Is it about the goal, the time, or something else?

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if your biggest struggle is with time, think of other things you are doing instead of investing in yourself and a goal you care about. Are those choices in your best interest?

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### **Discuss ways to address your biggest challenge (10 minutes)**

When something you're trying to do is provoking a fight or flight reflex, one way to make progress towards it anyway is to make the change small enough so you don't trigger that reflex.

For example, imagine your goal is to run more but you can't go for a run 4 times a week for an hour. Try once a week. Still too much? Go for 5 minutes. Not working for you? Walk to the treadmill and touch it. Every day.

In this discussion, share your biggest challenge and how touching the treadmill might help you overcome it.

### **Exercise: So much to offer! (15 minutes)**

At the beginning of chapter 14, there's a quote from the author Murakami: "The fact that I'm me and no one else is one of my greatest assets." But most people think far too narrowly about what they have to offer. This exercise will help you think more broadly. Here are ten facts about you that could be the basis of yet more contributions:

1. You do or don't have children.
2. Places you've lived.
3. Where you grew up.
4. Your gender.
5. Places you've worked.
6. Vacations you've taken.
7. Physical challenges you had to deal with.
8. Career mistakes you've made.
9. Schools you attended.
10. Things you love doing.

Each of these can form the basis of a shared experience with someone, especially if it's framed as a contribution. Listing them can help you make the shift from offering universal gifts to making contributions that are personal and specific to you. Their personal nature increases their value both to you and to potential recipients.

Now look at the ten facts above and try to write *50* facts about you. When I first did this exercise, I struggled because I felt the things on my list had to be big accomplishments. Now I know that any part of my experience— became a vegetarian, had a mother with diabetes, went to Regis High School—might be interesting to *someone* else if I frame it as a contribution. For this exercise, don't worry about who the gift is for. Free yourself, and try to write down as many as you can.

### **Discuss your contributions (10 minutes)**

Discuss whether that was hard or easy for each of you. Help each other to see the wide range of gifts you have to offer and who might benefit from them. Others in your circle will likely see things about you that you've long taken for granted or overlooked.

## **Checkout for Week 5 (5 minutes)**

1. Schedule the next meeting.
2. Remind people to read the Week 6 circle guide and suggested reading.
3. Ask: "What will you do this week?"

Try to make at least one of the new contributions from your contribution list.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

*Q: I only got to twelve facts.*

That's OK. Simply doing the exercise and thinking about what you have to offer is a positive step. If you're struggling to think more broadly about yourself, try doing the exercise for a friend. Examining someone else's life tends to be more comfortable. Then, after you've written 50 facts about a friend, try the exercise again for yourself. For extra credit, contact your friend and tell her you've written 50 things about her that would be contributions for other people. That in itself would make a lovely gift.

## **Bonus exercises**

### **Easy: Something you can do in less than 10 minutes**

Search for people you find particularly interesting - people whose work you admire as opposed to celebrities. What's their online presence like? Look at their LinkedIn and Twitter profiles. What do you like and not like about them?

### **More challenging: Something you can do in about 30 minutes**

In the earlier weeks, you created or made minor changes to one of your profiles. Now here's a chance to do a more thorough update. The same simple guidelines apply to almost any profile, whether it's on LinkedIn, Twitter, or on a corporate platform used inside your organization. You can find tips in "[17 New Ways To Make Your LinkedIn Profile Irresistible To Employers](#)" by Julie Bort or "[Are You Making These 7 Mistakes with Your About Page?](#)" by Sonia Simone.

Once you've updated your profile, share a link to it with members of your circle and ask for their feedback.