



Working Out Loud Circle Guide

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Week 7: Make it a habit

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What to expect this week

The steps you've been taking week after week are gradually helping you turn working out loud into a sustainable habit. This week you'll explore things that will further reinforce your new habit, make it even easier to practice, and provide you with a longer-term vision of what might be possible for you. For some people, the "Letter from your future self" exercise is particularly powerful.

Related reading from *Working Out Loud*

Chapter 13 - Making It a Habit

Chapter 17 - Your Greater Purpose

Suggested agenda

Don't feel constrained by the 15 minutes for writing your letter. Most people spend more time on it after the meeting. For this week, even a draft or outline will do. The discussion afterwards will almost certainly lead you to make changes later.

Thing to do	Approx. time
Check-in	10 mins
Exercise: The habit checklist	10
Discuss your adjustments	5
Exercise: A letter from your future self	15
Discuss your letters	15
Checkout for Week 7	5

Check-in (10 minutes)

Share how you're feeling about the process and your progress. Celebrate successes and help each other with challenges. Remember to shrink the change and "touch the treadmill" if you're stuck or feeling overwhelmed.

Exercise: The habit checklist (10 minutes)

When it comes to making some positive change in your life, much of the wisdom and research I discovered in a decade of reading self-help books was distilled into a simple, practical list in *Coach Yourself* by Anthony Grant and Jane Greene. The ten items in their list form a checklist for changing anything in your life:

1. Take small steps toward your goals.
2. Set some realistic, achievable goals.
3. Structure your life to help you attain your goals.
4. Chart your progress.
5. Look at the areas where you're successful.
6. Reward yourself for your successes.
7. Focus on your achievements.
8. Allow yourself to fail without turning it into a catastrophe.
9. Enlist the support of friends.
10. Picture the way you'd like life to be.

Look at each of the ten items in the above checklist and consider how they apply to you and your own approach. Circle the ones you think deserve the most attention, and pick one adjustment you might make this week.

Discuss your adjustments (5 minutes)

What did you pick? Taking smaller steps if you're struggling? Making a progress chart? Scheduling time in your calendar? Rewarding yourself when you make a contribution to someone on your list? Discuss what you chose and why.

Exercise: A letter from your future self (15 minutes)

The last item in the habits checklist is "picture the way you'd like life to be." In *Coach Yourself*, Anthony Grant and Jane Greene described a method to help you decide what's important to you and what to focus on: a letter from the future.

Choose a date some months or years ahead. Then imagine what happened during that time if your life had gone well and how you would feel if you were successful and fulfilled. Here's a quote from *Coach Yourself*:

For it to be real, for it to be useful, you need to engage your emotions. It seems that there is something quite special about writing it down that allows you to reach into your deepest self.

As an example, below is my own letter that I wrote six years before I published *Working Out Loud*. Choose whatever outline feels right for you. Write to your future self *for yourself*, and not to impress someone else.

My Dreams/Goals

To live in different countries for months at a time—Japan, France, Spain, Italy...(to name the top four)

I would like to write (publicly—beyond my weekly work blog, which was at least a start) and to connect with an audience.

I'd like to create! Books but also software and other projects. Things that people would use and love.

I'd like to do something genuinely helpful, particularly when it comes to education for kids who may not normally have access to it. (I benefitted from going to Regis High School, a free scholarship high school that changed my life.)

Oh, and financial independence...Actually, I don't mind the idea of having to work to earn a living. But the dream is more to be able to research/write/speak/present about ideas and connect with people. Perhaps ideal "jobs" are those of a Malcolm Gladwell, Clay Shirky or Seth Godin or Keith Ferrazzi.

Articulating my vision

I will become a champion of ideas. Who will write, speak, and connect. Within ten years. (But taking steps NOW!)

How will I know?

I will have authored a book or other notable content that more than twenty thousand people read. I will have been paid to speak. I can earn a living from writing, speaking, and (only some) consulting.

How will it feel if I don't try and if I do?

If I don't pursue my mission now, I will continue to live my status quo and...my sense of being special will fade. My frustration at not doing "more" will increase. My (constant) fear of having to earn enough for the next twenty-plus years will remain. My entire life will be colored by the two statements above.

If I do pursue my vision now, I will be increasingly happy and...my sense of peace and inner calm will be much, much greater. My energy and enthusiasm will be much higher—every day. My family will be happy because I'll be "present" and happy.

Discuss your letters (15 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.

Checkout for Week 7 (5 minutes)

1. Schedule the next meeting.
2. Remind each other to read the Week 8 circle guide and suggested reading.
3. Ask: “What will you do this week?”

Over the next week, daydream about the things you wrote in your letter.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I'm having trouble writing the letter. Is there another way?.

Some of you may prefer visualizing your future self instead of writing about it. If so, try a vision board. It's a collection of photos from magazines or other media that capture what your future self, your future life, will be like. Whatever medium you choose, remember: “For it to be real, for it to be useful, you need to engage your emotions.”

Bonus exercises

Easy: Something you can do in less than a minute

Look again at each of the ten items in the habit checklist and at the adjustment you picked. Take a moment now to “voice the intention” by writing down when and where you'll make that adjustment. That simple act will greatly improve the chances of you following through and doing it.

More challenging: Something you can do in less than 5 minutes

Reflect on times you've successfully developed a new habit or changed your behavior in some way. Why were you successful then? As you think about it, use the habits checklist as a guide.

What could you learn from that experience that could help you now?