

Summary of Session 8: Using What You Have Learned

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The advantages of awareness, acceptance, and mindfully responding to situations, rather than immediately running off preprogrammed, “automatic” reactions, has been a recurring theme throughout this course.

Acceptance may often be the springboard to some form of skillful action directed at achieving change in participants’ inner or outer worlds. However, there are also situations and feelings that it may be very difficult, or actually impossible, to change. In this situation, there is the danger that, by carrying on, trying to solve an insoluble problem, or by refusing to accept the reality of the situation one is in, one may end up “banging one’s head on a brick wall,” exhausting oneself, and actually increasing one’s sense of helplessness and depression. In these situations, you can still retain some sense of dignity and control by making a conscious, mindful, decision not to attempt to exert control and to accept the situation as it is, if possible, with a kindly attitude to the situation and your reactions to it. Choosing not to act is much less likely to increase depression than being forced to give up attempts at control after repeated failures.

In the well-known “serenity prayer,” we ask for the grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, the courage to change the things that should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish one from the other.

Where do we find this grace, this courage, this wisdom? At some level, we already have all of these qualities - our task is to realize them (make them real), and our way is none other than moment-by-moment mindful awareness.

THE FUTURE

Remember Jon Kabat-Zinn’s advice to weave your parachute every day, rather than leave it to the time you have to jump from the plane!

Decide, right now, what your regular pattern of practice will be, and stick to it as best you can. Maintaining a personal mindfulness practice is a cornerstone of using what you’ve learned to stay well.

Remember that the regular breathing space practice provides a way of “checking in with yourself” a few times a day. Let it also be your first response in times of difficulty, stress, or unhappiness—KEEP BREATHING!

DAILY MINDFULNESS

- When you first wake up in the morning, before you get out of bed, bring your attention to your breathing. Observe five mindful breaths.
- Notice changes in your posture. Be aware of how your body and mind feel when you move from lying down to sitting, to standing, to walking. Notice each time you make a transition from one posture to the next.
- Whenever you hear a phone ring, a bird sing, a train pass by, laughter, a car horn, the wind, the sound of a door closing—use any sound as the bell of mindfulness. Really listen and be present and awake.

- Throughout the day, take a few moments to bring your attention to your breathing. Observe five mindful breaths.
- Whenever you eat or drink something, take a minute and breathe. Look at your food and realize that the food was connected to something that nourished its growth. Can you see the sunlight, the rain, the earth, the farmer, the trucker in your food? Pay attention as you eat, consciously consuming this food for your physical health. Bring awareness to seeing your food, smelling your food, tasting your food, chewing your food, and swallowing your food.
- Notice your body while you walk or stand. Take a moment to notice your posture. Pay attention to the contact of the ground under your feet. Feel the air on your face, arms, and legs as you walk. Are you rushing?
- Bring awareness to listening and talking. Can you listen without agreeing or disagreeing, liking or disliking, or planning what you will say when it is your turn? When talking, can you just say what you need to say without overstating or understating? Can you notice how your mind and body feel?
- Whenever you wait in a line, use this time to notice standing and breathing. Feel the contact of your feet on the floor and how your body feels. Bring attention to the rise and fall of your abdomen. Are you feeling impatient?
- Be aware of any points of tightness in your body throughout the day. See if you can breathe into them and, as you exhale, let go of excess tension. Is there tension stored anywhere on your daily activities such as brushing your teeth, washing up, brushing your hair, putting on your shoes, doing your job? Bring mindfulness to each activity.
- Before you go to sleep at night, take a few minutes and bring your attention to your breathing. Observe five mindful breaths.

Continuing to Use the Automatic Thought Record

You may wish to continue using the Automatic Thought Record from Session 4 as a part of your plan for taking care of yourself. You might try charting at least one thought per day for a few weeks to improve your ability to recognize and respond to automatic thoughts. The following steps and troubleshooting questions are intended as a guide to help you get the most out of using the Automatic Thought Record. Remember that this is a pen-and-paper exercise. Attempting to just “do it in your head” won’t lead to the same insights the charts are meant to help you discover.

STEP #1: RECORDING YOUR SITUATION, AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS, AND FEELINGS

Time, Date:

Be as specific as possible about the time and date. Sometimes, the actual time is key in understanding aspects of the situation.

Situation:

Write a brief statement, no more than a few sentences, that summarizes the situation. It is not uncommon for people to be tempted to describe their situations in great detail, as if they are making a case to justify their reactions. In doing this they tend to include thoughts and feelings, when those should be saved for their own columns. All you need to do here is write a simple description that helps you remember the situation later on.

Automatic Thought/s:

Choose “hot thoughts” to record on your chart. Hot thoughts are automatic thoughts that occur in combination with a change in emotion or mood. Hot thoughts are particularly poignant or strong thoughts that are often associated with dysfunctional core beliefs.

Writing your thoughts is actually a little trickier than it looks. It takes a little practice to write them in ways in which you can respond effectively to them later on. Consider the following suggestions:

Write one thought at a time.

Sometimes people put several thoughts together in the same statement. It will be easier to respond to them later if you break them up into single statements. This can also illustrate for you the fact that it's possible to have a multitude of thoughts all at the same time around a single event.

Don't write questions.

Reframe them as statements, even if the statement feels a little strong. For example, "Why does he do this to me?" should be written as something like "He doesn't respect me," or "He makes me angry," or "He shouldn't do this."

Stay away from exclamatory statements

...like, "Oh darn!" or "Oh great!" Instead, identify the underlying thought expressed by the exclamatory statement. It is better, for instance, to write something like "I can't handle this!" or "This always happens to me!" or "She doesn't like me anymore!"

Save feelings for the "Feeling/s" column.

Thoughts are not feelings and feelings are not thoughts. It is common for people to include emotional words in their thought statements. For instance, "Things are hopeless now," could be written as a thought like, "Things will never get better," and "hopelessness" could be entered into the "Feeling/s" column.

Automatic Thoughts can be images that come to mind.

Some people tend to think more in images than with words. For instance, instead of noticing a thought like, "My boss will yell at me," a visual person might vividly imagine his or her boss yelling, glaring and waving a finger. For the Automatic Thought/s column, you can go ahead and describe the image, but also try to write out what the image means to you in a thought or statement form.

Feeling/s:

Entries in this column will generally be one or two words at most. If you are not used to recognizing your feelings or putting words to them, you might find this challenging at first. Make sure you write down what feelings you experience for each separate thought. It may be only one feeling, or it could be several. Note the body sensations that accompany your emotions.

STEP #2: RATING YOUR FEELINGS, COMPARING THE FACTS, IDENTIFYING COGNITIVE ERRORS

On a scale from 0 to 100 percent, you should rate how the intensity of the mood associated with each automatic thought. 100% would be the most extreme experience of a feelings, 50% might be a moderate feeling, while 0% would be no feeling at all. It's not unusual to have a variety of feelings about any situation, but you'll likely find that some feelings are stronger than others.

Write down some of the evidence for and against the unhelpful Automatic Thought. Look at each Automatic Thought you recorded, then go to the Cognitive Errors list from Session 4 and try to identify which one describes each thought. Sometimes only one error characterizes a thought, while at other times two or even three cognitive errors seem appropriate. Go ahead and write each one that applies underneath each thought. People often find that simply recognizing the types of errors they are engaging in is helpful. This is a good first step to reducing a belief in a negative thought and the intensity of the distressing feelings it causes.

STEP #3: RESPONDING TO YOUR AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS

Refer to the questions from the Session 5 Thought Record handout. When you use your own Automatic Thought Record and try using these questions to create a more balanced response to your unhelpful thoughts, you should refrain from trying to move through them too quickly. It is best to sit with each one for several minutes until you truly exhaust all possibilities. It can be useful if you have someone who can help you brainstorm responses to your thoughts using these questions.

STEP #4: RE-RATE THE INTENSITY OF YOUR FEELINGS/EMOTIONS

As you do the work of responding to your Automatic Thoughts on your own Automatic Thought Record, you may notice your mood changing, if even slightly. For many people, just getting their thoughts down on paper and reading them back is a powerful experience. It makes a big difference to see our thoughts in a more objective manner.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If, when you start completing your own Automatic Thought Records, you find you are having trouble reducing the intensity of your mood consider the following questions:

Have you accurately identified and described the distressing situation?

Sometimes, being inaccurate or vague about the situation that initiated the distressing feelings makes it difficult to take the next steps. Try recording specific information about the event. If you have trouble identifying it exactly, think back to the time when your distress began. What had been going on around that time? Who had you been talking to? What were you doing? You might have to retrace your steps a bit until you can accurately identify the precipitating situation in detail.

Have you accurately identified, written, and rated your Automatic Thought/s?

Writing Automatic Thoughts in a way that lets you respond effectively takes some practice. We can be tempted to write them out at some length which makes them cumbersome to respond to. Try to boil your thought down to no more than a dozen words getting to the heart of it as best as you can. You may also need to refer again to the examples of automatic depressed and anxious thoughts from Session 4.

Are you responding to the Automatic Thought that generated the mood you wish to change?

Look again at the Automatic Thoughts you listed and determine whether another thought might have greater influence on your mood than was originally apparent. You may find you need to respond to a different thought in order to notice some change in your mood.

Do you need to respond to more Automatic Thoughts around the situation?

Each thought can lead to more than one mood, and the same mood may be caused by multiple thoughts. For these reasons you may need to re-evaluate whether your target mood is being caused by an additional thought. It may not be enough to respond to only one Automatic Thought in order to experience a shift in your mood. You may need to work on more thoughts, particularly if they are related to some of your more distressing feelings. Also, consider whether you may have overlooked some important Automatic Thoughts when you first identified them. It might be fruitful to spend some extra time reflecting back on the situation to determine whether additional ones should be recorded and responded to.

Have you accurately identified and rated your feelings?

Sometimes, people find it challenging to identify the mood they are experiencing. Refer again to the list of feelings provided with the examples of cognitive distortions in Session 3 and see if this helps you to accurately identify your feelings. Also, before you make your ratings, consider your frame of reference. Remember that 100 percent refers to the most intense quality of that mood you have ever experienced. Fifty percent is the mid-range. Think of examples of each so you can compare your current experience and provide an accurate rating.

Are your responses to your Automatic Thought/s valid, convincing, and complete? Have you moved too quickly through the process of questioning your thoughts?

A common stumbling block to changing our mood is following our temptation to have quick fixes. Becoming skilled at responding to Automatic Thoughts takes some patience and practice. Be careful about trying to move too quickly through the suggested questions from Session 5. Spend the time you need with each strategy until you exhaust all possibilities. Ask a person you trust and who knows you well to help you brainstorm responses to your thoughts using the strategies. Also consider that you may need to write another new response to your thought that seems more credible to you.

Are you invested in supporting your Automatic Thought/s and/or feelings?

We can often have mixed feelings about whether we wish to feel better. At times our distress may serve some purpose for us whether it seems logical or not. For instance, if we seem to gain something from

being sad or anxious, or we get our way by expressing anger, then it may be uncomfortable to think about getting our needs met in other ways. In such cases, it may be useful to create a list of advantages and disadvantages to feeling distressed.

Adapted from materials from: www.allaboutdepression.com.

Suggested Resources

BOOKS

The Mindful Way Workbook: An 8-Week Program to Free Yourself from Depression and Emotional Distress. Mark Williams, John Teasdale, Zindel Segal and Jon Kabat-Zinn. The Guilford Press, New York City, New York, 2014.

The Mindfulness Solution: Everyday Practices for Everyday Problems. Ronald D. Siegel. The Guilford Press, New York City, New York, 2010.

Wherever You Go There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life. Jon Kabat-Zinn. Hyperion, New York City, New York, 1994.

Walking Meditation. Nguyen Anh-Huong, Thich Nhat Hanh. Sounds True, Boulder, Colorado, 2006.

The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion: Freeing Yourself from Destructive Thoughts and Emotions. Christopher Germer. The Guilford Press, New York City, New York, 2009.

Transformation & Healing. Thich Nhat Hanh [Annabel Laity, Transl]. Parallax Press, Berkeley, California, 1990.

Buddhism without Beliefs: A Contemporary Guide to Awakening, Riverhead Books, New York, 1997.

Brantley, J., Calming Your Anxious Mind: How Mindfulness and Compassion Can Free You from Anxiety, Fear and Panic. New Harbinger Publications, Inc., Oakland California, 2003.

Brantley, J. & Milstine, W., Daily Meditations for Calming Your Anxious Mind. New Harbinger Publications, Inc., Oakland, California, 2003.

Kumar, S.M., The Mindful path through worry and rumination: Letting go of anxious and depressive thoughts. Sameet M. Kumar. New Harbinger Publications, Inc., Oakland, California, 2009.

Mind Over Mood: Change How You Feel by Changing the Way You Think. Dennis Greenberger, Christine A. Padesky. The Guilford Press, New York City, New York, 1995.

The Cognitive Behavioral Workbook for Depression: A Step-by-Step Program (2nd Ed).

William J Knaus, Albert Ellis. New Harbinger Publications, Inc., Oakland, California, 2012.

CDs

Breathing Space. Patricia Rockman, 2012.

Insight Meditation Kit. A Step-by-Step Course on How to Meditate. Sharon Salzberg, Joseph Goldstein, Sounds True (www.soundstrue.com), Boulder, Colorado, 2002.

Guided Mindfulness Meditation, Series 1, 2 & 3. Jon Kabat-Zinn, Sounds True, Boulder, Colorado

These are available through a variety of different sources including Sounds True (www.soundstrue.com) and www.mindfulnessstapes.com.

MEDITATION GROUPS/WORKSHOPS IN TORONTO

www.mindfulnessstudies.com

We offer a variety of programs and retreats, including a drop-in mindfulness group for graduates.

<http://torontobodymind.ca/>

Directory of Toronto yoga studios, meditation centres and wellness resources.

<http://springgrainsangha.com/>

Meditation Group

60 Lowther Avenue, Toronto

416-444-9292

Tuesday evenings, starting at 7:15 – 9. (no admittance after 7:15, donations appreciated)

toronto.shambhala.org

Shambhala Meditation Centre of Toronto

670 Bloor St. #300

416-588-6465

They offer many beginner programs with little to no Buddhist elements, silent retreats, group meditation sessions, etc.

<http://www.meetup.com/mindful-living-toronto/>

73 Harbord St. (just west of Spadina)

Monday to Friday from 9 AM-9:45 AM (Wednesday sittings will end at 9:30) \$30/month
\$5/drop-ins

<http://www.meetup.com/Mindful-Kids-Parents-Toronto/>

The purpose of this group is to create a safe and encouraging environment for both kids and parents to explore and practice mindfulness meditation and techniques for growth.

www.mindfulfamilies.ca

Workshops for families and children led by Sara Marlowe MSW.

<http://friendsoftheheart.com/>

A Meditation Teaching and Practice Centre. Meditation workshops from the Buddhist, Christian and Sufi traditions as well as movement studies, hatha yoga and the creative arts.

<http://www.centreofgravity.org/>

Centre of Gravity is a community of Buddhist practitioners and teachers integrating committed formal practice and modern urban life.

RETREATS

Ontario

www.truenorthinsight.org

www.insightmeditationretreats.ca

USA

www.spiritrock.org – Spirit Rock Meditation Center, California

www.dharma.org – Insight Meditation Society, Barre, Mass.

AUDIO DOWNLOADS

<http://tinyurl.com/yzjav76> – free guided meditations from UCLA

Insight Meditation Society (IMS) – <http://tinyurl.com/mcgh3sx> - click on guided meditations

<http://tinyurl.com/krf4nx9> – Mindfulness in Medicine, University of Wisconsin

<http://tinyurl.com/b3uf43r> – Downloadable self-compassion meditations.

<http://www.mindfulnessstudies.com/resources/> – Further resources.

OTHER WEBSITES

www.mindful.org – Mindful Magazine, digital products, events, and partnerships.

<http://drdansiegel.com/> – The Mindsight Institute serves as an educational hub.

www.inquiringmind.com – Inquiring Mind is highly regarded for its interviews of Buddhist teachers, philosophers, psychologists and artists, as well as for its presentation of art, poetry and articles.

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/mindfulness> – Articles and blog posts about mindfulness.

<http://www.investigatinghealthyminds.org/index.html> – The Center for Investigating Healthy Minds conducts scientific research on healthy qualities of mind such as kindness, compassion, altruism, forgiveness, mindfulness and well-being.

<http://tinyurl.com/smilingmind> – Free, downloadable mindfulness curriculum from Smiling Mind

<http://tinyurl.com/moodgym1> – Learn CBT skills using the free online MoodGym program.

<http://www.mindfulnessseveryday.com/resources.html> – Resources and links.

Activity Planning

Part of feeling good is about planning, and carrying out, activities that we enjoy. Try to plan an activity you enjoy for the morning, afternoon and evening over the next week. Record how you feel when you complete one of these. Try to include a mix of activities with other people as well as activities you do on your own.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							

Exercise Handout 1:

Pros and cons of exercise: Building motivation

See also Fact Sheet: Exercise and Depression

Regular exercise can be an effective way to reduce symptoms of depression.

However, when you are feeling depressed it can be difficult to motivate yourself to become active. Weighing up the costs and benefits of exercising regularly can help to boost your motivation.

Write down below each of the benefits that you would like to obtain from exercise in the short term, and also in the longer term. Information about the advantages of regular exercise is provided on the following page. Choose which of these benefits is important to you. Also fill in any costs of regular exercise in the short-term and long-term (e.g. will require effort, financial cost). Reading over this can help you to weigh up the 'pros' and 'cons' of exercising.

Often people find that the long-term benefits of regular exercise outweigh any costs involved.

SHORT-TERM COSTS	SHORT-TERM BENEFITS
LONG-TERM COSTS	LONG-TERM BENEFITS

Benefits of regular exercise

Tick the benefits of exercise below that are important to you.

- Lift in mood immediately after exercise
- Reduced depression
- Reduced anxiety and stress
- Distraction from worries and negative thoughts
- Improved sleep
- Increased energy
- Improved fitness
- Opportunities to meet new people and make new friends
- Weight loss or weight maintenance
- Improvement in back and joint stiffness
- Reduced risk of numerous chronic medical conditions, and risk factors to disease, including:
 - heart disease
 - type 2 diabetes
 - osteoporosis
 - strokes
 - some cancers
 - high blood pressure
 - high blood cholesterol

Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7-item (GAD-7) scale

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?	Not at all sure	Several days	Over half the days	Nearly every day
1. Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge	0	1	2	3
2. Not being able to stop or control worrying	0	1	2	3
3. Worrying too much about different things	0	1	2	3
4. Trouble relaxing	0	1	2	3
5. Being so restless that it's hard to sit still	0	1	2	3
6. Becoming easily annoyed or irritable	0	1	2	3
7. Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen	0	1	2	3
<i>Add the score for each column</i>	+	+	+	
Total Score (<i>add your column scores</i>) =				

If you checked off any problems, how difficult have these made it for you to do your work, take care of things at home, or get along with other people?

Not difficult at all _____

Somewhat difficult _____

Very difficult _____

Extremely difficult _____

Source: Spitzer RL, Kroenke K, Williams JBW, Lowe B. A brief measure for assessing generalized anxiety disorder. *Arch Intern Med.* 2006;166:1092-1097.

Perceived Stress Scale

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts **during the last month**. In each case, you will be asked to indicate by circling *how often* you felt or thought a certain way.

Name _____ Date _____

Age _____ Gender (Circle): **M** **F** Other _____

0 = Never 1 = Almost Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Fairly Often 4 = Very Often

- | | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?..... | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?.. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?..... | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

References

The PSS Scale is reprinted with permission of the American Sociological Association, from Cohen, S., Kamarck, T., and Mermelstein, R. (1983). A global measure of perceived stress. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 24, 386-396.
 Cohen, S. and Williamson, G. Perceived Stress in a Probability Sample of the United States. Spacapan, S. and Oskamp, S. (Eds.) *The Social Psychology of Health*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1988.

Patient Health Questionnaire—PHQ-9

Name: _____ Date of Birth : _____ Today's Date: _____

Fill in the boxes with pen or pencil to mark your answers.

A. Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?

	Not at all 0	Several days 1	More than half the days 2	Nearly every day 3
1. Little interest or pleasure in doing things	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Trouble falling/staying asleep, sleeping too much	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Feeling tired or having little energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Poor appetite or overeating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Feeling bad about yourself – or that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed. Or the opposite – being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Thoughts that you would be better off dead or of hurting yourself in some way.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total Score _____ = _____ + _____ + _____ + _____				

B. If you have been bothered by any of the 9 problems listed above, please answer the following:

How difficult have these problems made it for you to do your work, take care of things at home, or get along with other people?

Not difficult at all	Somewhat Difficult	Very Difficult	Extremely Difficult
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

This health survey was adapted from the PRIME-MD® Patient Health Questionnaire © 1999, Pfizer Inc. Reproduced with permission. For research information, contact Dr. Robert L. Spitzer at rls8@columbia.edu.

MB/CBT Course Evaluation

WHAT 3 ASPECTS OF THIS PROGRAM WERE PARTICULARLY HELPFUL TO YOU?

WHAT 3 THINGS WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT?

HOW IMPORTANT HAS THE PROGRAM BEEN FOR YOU?

- On a scale from 1 (not at all important) to 10 (extremely important)

Please explain why you gave it this rating.

HOW MIGHT YOU PLAN TO CONTINUE USING WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED?