



Wake Up Recovery

with Sherry Gaba, LCSW



Module Eight:

Learning to Live in Appreciation, Forgiveness & Compassion

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This module will help you learn to live in appreciation by not only going inside yourself to discover what is important to you, but also looking outside yourself to discover what will benefit others. When you live in appreciation, you can handle anything with compassion and grace, no matter what is going on around you. Appreciation, forgiveness, and compassion are interrelated concepts. To live in appreciation means living so that you fully appreciate your life so you bring more into your life to appreciate.

Activity #1:

In our last Wake Up Recovery module, we focused on where you are. We dug deep, and some uncomfortable thoughts may have come into our minds. We've looked in the mirror. Let's make sure we cleaned off the residue on our mirror.

Finding a Way to Forgive

It's not easy to forgive past hurts. When you forgive someone, although you are sending the thoughts outward, the process is also internal. The process of forgiving allows you to forgive yourself as you forgive others. This exercise will help you work through the forgiveness process.

Close your eyes and we'll start with three deep breaths. With each breath we are breathing in forgiveness and breathing out resentment. Remind yourself that you are right here, right in this moment. Forgiveness is very personal and very powerful. There is no right or wrong way to forgive. If you find that it is too difficult to push past anger or resentment into forgiveness, that is okay. That simply means it is not the right time. Remind yourself that the time will come and what you are starting to do today will create a lifelong habit. If at any time you don't feel comfortable, you can open your eyes and try this exercise at a later time.

Let's begin...

Begin to breathe in someone you have been feeling resentment toward and who you need to forgive. Say to yourself (in your mind), "The person or situation I send forgiveness to is _____."

(Examples might be, "I send forgiveness to my boss who fired me" or "I send forgiveness to my ex-boyfriend.")

Think about the feelings that brought you pain about the person or situation you are forgiving. (Examples might be, "I felt betrayed and angry when my boss fired me" or "I felt scared and insecure when my ex-boyfriend verbally abused me.")

Now breathe in and breathe out, letting go of the person or situation that caused you pain. Take a moment and cup your hands over your heart to feel compassion in your heart center for whatever it was that caused you to suffer.



Embrace the truth that whatever caused you pain was an experience brought to you for a purpose. Remind yourself that the universe always offers us the opportunity to heal through the process of forgiveness.

Now let's take one big deep breath. In (hold for 2 seconds) and then out. Please open your eyes. Take a moment to stand up or move around a bit if you are able. Shake off any negative energy that may still be residing on the surface and smile. Even if you don't feel like smiling... smile and look towards the sky. That was a HUGE thing that you just did! Congratulations!!!! Forgiveness is never easy, but it will get easier as you continue to practice these tools.

Studies show that forgiveness offers "both emotional and physical benefits, from decreased feelings of hurt, depression, and stress, to increased feelings of optimism and willingness to forgive others." Forgiveness also makes room for vital energy that can be used for creative endeavors. How exciting is that? When we remove the negative emotions from resentments we've harbored, we open up space to plant a seed for creativity and transformation to emerge. While we've learned to forgive, we must also replace the negative energy that has had a tight hold on us with a new emotion that will bring us closer to positivity. We do this through compassion.



My Notes:



Activity #2:

We are going to create a Fellowship Tree. You may be asking yourself, what is a Fellowship Tree and why would I want to create one? Remember what we're talking about is compassion. It is about who we can be compassionate towards and how this results in having more positive and kind energy returned to us. Your Fellowship Tree will be a list of individuals that you can invite to "fellowship;" in whatever way you define "fellowship." Imagine that you are about to plan a dinner party or a get together. For some of us, thinking of people to invite can be a nightmare. The key is to start with one.

Take out a piece of paper. Who do you know that has a dog? Write down that person's name and draw a circle around it. Who else do you know that has a dog? Write down their names and draw lines connecting their names and the names above them? Great! Now look at the third name you wrote down and draw a circle around it. What's one thing you can say about that person? (Do they golf, do they canoe, are they involved in any charities, do they have red hair, do they like to read, do they have kids, do they have grandkids?) Great! Now write down that trait and draw a circle around it and draw a line between that person's name and the word/trait used to describe them or what they like to do. Who else do you know that shares that trait? Look at the second name you wrote down and draw a circle around it. What's one thing you can say about that person? Draw a circle around what you can say about them and a line to their name. Who do you know that shares that same trait?

Let's take a moment to look at the names that you wrote down. In the span of a few minutes, how many names did you come up with? Just think that if you sat for 5 minutes each week and did this exercise, your Fellowship Tree would be HUGE! What's awesome about this exercise is you are creating not just a list of names, but a list of similarities between the people that you know. These similar interests are key. If you look at your list, I am sure that you will see names in the same list or names that share traits that you wouldn't normally have lumped together as people who would share anything in common (other than the fact that they know you).

You can use your Fellowship Tree in so many different ways. Invite a few of the people on your list to have coffee. If there are a few people that all like to do the same thing, like golf or read, then you have a reason to invite them to do something that everyone will enjoy. The gift of a Fellowship Tree is that you now have a visual representation of who you can share the gift of compassion and connection with. You can also use this as a tool of appreciation. Appreciation is the third element that we will discuss during this module.



My Notes:



Activity #3:

Showing appreciation does not have to be a huge grand gesture. One of the best ways to show appreciation is to acknowledge someone we care about. Take out your Fellowship Tree. Pick out one person from the list of names. Write down three amazing things about that person. Try to move past generalized statements such as (they are nice, they are pretty, they are sweet) and think of how you can really acknowledge them. Are they passionate? Are they generous? Are they kind? How do you “see” his or her greatness? The next step is to make a note to let this person know that they are appreciated. As soon as you’re done reading this activity, take action and let this person know that you appreciate them. You can write it in a card, send a quick text, give them a phone call, post something on their Facebook wall or even send them flowers. A small gesture to remind them that you see their greatness and that they are appreciated!



My Notes:



Module Eight Affirmations & Meditation:

Affirmation:

- Affirmation: I appreciate the lessons I am learning during my journey towards my ultimate goal.

Meditation:

Find a quiet place to sit and be. A place that will be free of interruption for at least 15 minutes. Take the first 5 minutes to read the following Gratitude Meditation. Take the remaining 10 minutes to breathe, reflect, and “be.”

This mediation will help you focus on what is around you and develop a new appreciation for it.

Take a few moments to begin breathing deeply. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Take a few more breaths. Thoughts of what you have or don't have may come up as you practice this gratitude meditation. Just notice the thoughts that come and go. Don't judge them or follow them. Begin to focus on something you are thankful for. It could be as simple as the fact that you are still breathing. Take a moment to notice what is good in your life. Don't get caught up in the feeling that you should be grateful about anything in particular. Just be curious; if something comes up that you do appreciate, be open to it. Give yourself permission to not feel guilty if a feeling of gratitude doesn't arise. Let that be okay. Let gratitude come up naturally and effortlessly. Notice how appreciation feels in your body, where your energy is flowing smoothly or is blocked. Allow whatever comes up to spread throughout your body. Notice what brings you contentment and ease. Now take a moment to consciously think about a person, place, or situation you appreciate. Ask yourself the following question:

Who and what do I appreciate at this very moment?