DARLENE:  Hi everybody, welcome. I just want to start by acknowledging that I am coming to you from luchiwita, Tasmanian Aboriginal land, sea and water ways. I acknowledge with deep respect the traditional custodians of the land, the palawa people. I would also like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the various lands on which you are all working from today and any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who are in this session. Today is on - Does Mindfulness Matter is the question?  After attending Wednesday's, I'm back again, cause I think mindfulness does play a huge part in ensuring our well-being and Debbie offers some really clear and practical tips that I have used between the two sessions. So, I am going to hand over to you, Deb, and thank you so much.

DEBBIE:  Thank you, Darlene, and thank you everyone for joining us for our last ever session. But, gee, if I can help someone who is organising a Pathways Conference next week, I'm on to a winner. Does mindfulness matter?  What is it?  It certainly seems to be the kind of cure all for everything at the moment. So is it just the latest fad?  Does it really make a difference?  And do we need to, kind of, sit on a meditation cushion for half an hour every day to get the benefits?  So they're the kind of things we're going to go through today. What I'm going to say is, no, we don't have to sit on a meditation cushion to get the benefits and I'm going to offer you some really practical small things that you can do all through your day to bring mindfulness into it. I'm going to start with just asking you to lower your eyes and put your hand on your abdomen, if you can, and take a deep breath. Just notice that breath go through your nose. Feel the sensation of your breath. Then out through your nostrils, slow as you can. Do one more. This time notice that the air is slightly cool when it goes in through your nostrils and just that bit warmer when it leaves. Now I'm going to ask you to set your attention for the next 12 minutes. Just the next 12 minutes your attention. How do you want to be?  As you think about that attention, breath in, hold it and breath out. Thank you. You can open your eyes and come to again now. That's mindfulness in practice. Congratulations. We could nearly finish the session there but I better go on. So it can be as simple as setting your attention and bringing it back because mindfulness in its essence is paying attention to the present moment. Paying attention to it with some openness, curiosity and some nonjudgmental acceptance. Around that nonjudgmental acceptance, it's easier to say than do sometimes but to know that mindfulness is a practice. It's a practice in something that you get better at each time. Another really easy definition of mindfulness, and this is taken from Ellen Langer, from the Harvard uni, and she talks about mindfulness as the art of noticing what's new. You can think about it if you're a tourist or in a country you haven't been to before, you're kind of pretty busy noticing everything because everything is new. Mindfulness can be like that. When you bring a mindful attitude you start noticing everything around you that you didn't notice before. I want you to slowly count from 1 to 10 and just focus on counting and every time you notice that your mind has wandered from the task of counting the numbers, start again at 1. So you start at 1. If you get distracted then instead of going to 2, go back to 1. Do that for a few seconds. Okay. How far did people get?  You can put it in the chat. How high up did you get?  How close to 10?  Well done, Kirsty. Three to four. Depending on what kind of day I'm having. I can sometimes get up there to 10. Sometimes it's just stuck at 2 or stuck at 3. So what happens with mindfulness?  It's actually paying attention to your attention and that's what you just did then. You really were watching your thoughts and then bringing them back when they strayed. So being mindful is having that meta-cognition. It's like watching your thoughts as if you are sitting in the back row of a cinema and your thoughts are on a big screen. Watching them and watching them come and go and if you can bring that nonjudgmental acceptance as you watch them come and go, that's what you're aiming for. To get there, mindfulness is focusing your attention on your attention and training the mind to be where you choose it to be and noticing when it has strayed. When some people start a mindfulness practice or meditation, they often think they're not good at it. I've got all these thoughts coming in my mind, I can't concentrate, I can't focus on my breath, because I'm thinking of dinner, I'm thinking about next week's session, I'm thinking about how I yelled at my partner last night, but actually what's happening is those thoughts are always there. They're always there chattering away in our brain and when you start a mindfulness practice, actually what you're doing is just bringing your attention to them. So it's worth keeping it ongoing. The idea of mindfulness is not to empty our brain of any thoughts. It's not only not possible but if it was it would probably be pretty dangerous, but it's just noticing your thoughts and then training your mind to where you choose it to be. That's why setting your attention at the beginning of the session was important. Why does it matter?  Because it changes our brain and it changes our brain in real ways. So it actually increases the matter around our pre-frontal cortex, that part at the front of our brain where we make decisions, that's part of the brain that helps us focus, to pay attention, it helps us solve problems, it helps our creativity, it helps us regulate our actions and builds our emotional awareness. So the matter, our brain matter around that area increases the more that we meditate. Also at the same time it decreases the area around the amygdala in the middle of the brain. That's where we react and often we react out of emotions and often out of our fear and our anxiety. So when that area decreases we can actually be more calmer and have a greater sense of well-being. Not only does it change our brain but it actually changes a whole lot of other things about how we respond and react and how others see us. So we're a better listener and because we're a better listener we actually come across as more credible, more trustworthy and others like us more. We're more open to other people's ideas. We're less judgmental. We're more compassionate. In fact, there's been some great stories around compassion training and mindfulness has been critical to those. We're kinder. When we do a task mindfully, we leave a mindfulness footprint and others rate our work better. So others notice. So what gets in the way of this great mindfulness?  As I mentioned before, we have a lot of chatter in our brain. Our brain just goes chatter, chatter, chatter, chatter and often those thoughts go around and around in our brain and most of them are repetitive. In fact, we have 60,000 thoughts a day and 90% of these tend to be repetitive. All of that can be taking a little bit of your energy, even when you don’t realise it and distracting you. We can run on auto pilot and some of us can spend up to 47% of our time each day running on auto pilot. You know that sensation when you're driving in your car and you get to your destination and you think, how did I get here?  It's that auto pilot feeling. The danger of that is we assume we know things. We might meet with a student or meet with our colleagues and we assume that we know things when they're telling us about it, rather than being curious and open. Remember Allan Langer, it’s the art of noticing what's new. We can get caught in a wandering mind. We can be rehashing the past or day dreaming of the future. Either or, it's keeping us out of the present and caught up in our mind and not noticing what's new in the here and now. We can be multi-tasking. We might think we're clever when we’re multi-tasking, but it doesn't actually help our brain work at its best. It can be even less effective for the task too. So I had to put cats and dogs in. I've been nine weeks doing 12@12 with no cats and dogs images, so we get them this week. When we're caught up with unease, anxiety, tension, stress and worry, these are all forms of fear and it means often we can get caught up in the future. Our minds are more in the future and not in the present. Or we can be full of regret, resentment, sadness, bitterness, non-forgiving stuff that's happened and that can mean or indicate that we're caught up in the past and not in the present. I've got an image of some feet there because one of my - a friend describes mindfulness, when your mind and feet are in the same place, which means when you're present. Often our feet might be in one place or my feet might be in this room but my mind is stuck in the past or caught in the future. So when I can bring my mind to where my feet is. So there's a few easy little ways just to bring some mindfulness practice in your day. One is just simple three deep breaths. First deep breath, focus on relaxing your body. Second, you can focus on what you're grateful for right now and the third is to focus on attention to your task. A little bit like the one we did at the beginning of the session. I like when I do those deep breaths to put my hand on my abdomen so I can really feel the breath go right down there. Stop is a popular one, the acronym STOP. Stop what you're doing. Take a breath. You observe how you're feeling, how you're feeling inside, you’re noticing any physical feelings, you’re noticing any emotions that you're feeling. Then you see what you can observe around you in your environment, what you can see, what you can hear, what you can smell or what you can feel and then you proceed with calmness. Sometimes we can be so agitated or so overwhelmed with things that even a simple stopping and breathing it's really hard to concentrate. So I find a really tactile meditation or mindfulness practice can work there, one is to rub your thumb and index finger together and do it as slowly as possible and you notice the ridges of your fingerprint when you're doing it really slowly. Just trying to do that for 10 seconds at a time. You can do one finger at a time. Start with your little finger. Go to your index and your pointer and your ring if I've got those around the right way. Slows you down, calms you down in an amazing way or you can focus on the sensation of your feet on the floor, how the carpet feels or how your socks feel, any pressures. Another way is to take an everyday experience, something that you do every morning or every evening, for example cleaning your teeth, and you do it slowly and you do it mindfully and you notice all those things, the sensation. So the taste of the toothpaste, the sensation of the toothbrush on your tooth or maybe you're in the shower and you notice the - try to notice the sensation of every drop of water as it falls on you. It makes it a very different experience or just take an everyday experience like going for a walk and noticing all the things that you haven't noticed before. It's pretty amazing what you see then and then you think, how often am I on auto pilot when I do this usually? This is a nice mindfulness thing because if you ever need to public speak, chances are you will be really into, kind of, worrying about the future. So to get your thoughts back into where your feet are and align them with where your feet are, do some tongue twisters. You can't really worry when you're doing some tongue twisters. Smiling mind offers some great mindfulness apps and greater good in action also has some mindfulness practice and that is it. Sorry, I think I rushed a little bit too much at the end. I just wanted to share all that with you. Thank you so much and those who have joined, not only today, thanks for being on this 12@12 journey with us.