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Mindset for Perseverance Workshop



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INTRODUCTION

This session is about staying on course when things get hard.

By this point in the year, most trainees aren't struggling because they don't care or aren't capable. They're struggling because the workload is relentless, the feedback keeps coming, and motivation starts to wobble. That's normal.

The challenge is that most people assume motivation is something you either have or don't. It isn't. Motivation is unreliable; it can come and go. If you wait to feel motivated before you act, you'll stall.



This session is about mindset for perseverance. Not positive thinking. Not pretending things are fine. It's about learning how to keep moving forward when confidence dips, mistakes stack up, and the job feels heavier than you expected.

In the first session, we focused on understanding stress, triggers, and boundaries, this session builds on that. We're looking at what happens after the initial coping strategies wear off. When you're tired, when self-doubt creeps in, when the 'bad voice' in your head gets louder.

You'll learn practical ways to:

- Reframe setbacks without lying to yourself
- Spot progress you're currently overlooking
- Stay anchored to why you chose teaching when the "why" feels distant

This isn't about becoming endlessly resilient or pushing through at all costs. It's about staying in the learning zone instead of slipping into "I can't do this and I'm not good enough" thinking.

The tools in this session are designed to work in real conditions. On placement, after a difficult observation, or on days when you're running on fumes.

You don't need to overhaul everything, just a few solid reference points you can return to when things wobble. That's what this session is for.

NEUROPLASTICITY

Your brain is not fixed.

That's not a motivational poster line, it's biology. Neuroplasticity is your brain's ability to change its structure and wiring based on what you repeatedly do, think, practise, and pay attention to. Every time you learn something new, recover from a mistake, or try a different response under pressure, your brain is literally rewiring itself. Not metaphorically, but physically.

This matters because most people still carry an outdated idea of themselves around.

- "I'm just not good at that"
- "I've always been like this"
- "This is how I cope under stress"

Those statements feel true because they're familiar. They're also often wrong.

Your brain is lazy/efficient, not loyal. It strengthens whatever you rehearse. If you practice avoidance, it gets good at avoidance. If you practise panic, it gets faster at panic. But if you practise pausing, reframing, or choosing a different response, those pathways strengthen too. Slowly at first, then more reliably.



Change doesn't require a personality transplant, it requires repetition in the right direction. This is why small actions matter more than big intentions. One calm response when you'd usually spiral, one boundary you hold instead of apologising, one piece of feedback you treat as information rather than a verdict. Each of those moments lays down new wiring.

Neuroplasticity also explains why change can feel uncomfortable. The brain prefers the familiar, even when it's unhelpful. New pathways feel effortful at first. That's not failure, that's learning.

So, if you're frustrated that change isn't instant...good! That's a sign your brain is working. You're not stuck, you're mid-rewire, and with enough practice, what once took effort becomes your default. Not because you forced yourself, but because your brain adapted. That's not blind optimism, that's how we humans work.

REMEMBER YOUR 'WHY'

Staying on Course When Motivation Dips

Motivation is unreliable. It fades when you're tired, it disappears under pressure, and it has a habit of vanishing just when you need it most. If perseverance depended on motivation alone, very few people would make it through the toughest parts of training.

The good news is this: sustained performance doesn't rely on motivation. It relies on meaning, habit, and systems.

Research in psychology and neuroscience shows that when people connect their actions to a deeper sense of purpose, they are more likely to persist during periods of stress and uncertainty. Purpose acts as a stabiliser; it doesn't remove pressure, but it helps people stay engaged when effort feels hard.

This is why the question "Why did I choose this?" matters more than "Do I feel like doing this today?"

Under stress, the brain narrows its focus to short-term survival. Decision-making becomes reactive. Simon Sinek often refers to his 'Start With Why', an anchor goal that helps to pull attention back to values rather than mood for motivation. It creates a reference point you can return to when confidence dips or the workload feels relentless.

This isn't about inspiration, it's about orientation. When things wobble, you don't necessarily need a pep talk, you need something steady to stand on.

Exercise: Start With Why – Creating Your Anchor Goal

Take a few minutes and write your answers to the following. Keep them somewhere handy and look at them when you need to.

Why did you choose teaching?

Not the interview answer. The real one. One or two sentences is enough

Who do you want to be for students on a hard day?

Not on your best day. On the day you're tired, stretched, and doubting yourself.

Finish this sentence: When motivation dips, I want to remember that...

There's no right answer here. The point is to create something you can return to when pressure rises.

A useful rule of thumb:

When motivation drops, don't ask yourself how you feel. Ask yourself what version of you needs to show up next. That's how people stay on course.

REFRAMING SETBACKS

Reframing setbacks is not about being positive, It's about being accurate.

When pressure is high, our brains go primal and default to threat mode; fight, flight, freeze, fawn, flop. Thinking narrows, mistakes feel personal, we lose perspective so much that one bad experience turns into "I'm not cut out for this." This isn't weakness, it's how the nervous system works under stress.

The problem isn't that setbacks happen, they're natural and part of the process. The problem is the meaning we attach to them that support the negative story we can tell ourselves. Effective reframing keeps the issue in the learning zone, rather than letting it slide into identity damage.

Skill One: The 'Not Yet' Reframe

There's a big difference between: "I can't do this" and "I can't do this...**yet**". That one word makes all the difference.

Research on learning and performance shows that when people interpret difficulty as part of the learning process rather than a personal flaw, they persist longer and adapt more effectively. The task stays a skill to be developed, not a verdict on competence.

This doesn't sugar-coat anything, it simply keeps the problem where it belongs.

Skill Two: De-Catastrophising in 60 Seconds

Under pressure, the brain is very good at jumping to worst-case conclusions. That response is fast, emotional, and usually unhelpful.

A quick way to interrupt it is to ask three questions, in order:

What's the worst realistic outcome? Not the dramatic one. The plausible one.

What's the most likely outcome? Based on evidence, not fear.

What's still in my control this week? One action. One conversation. One adjustment.

This process is based on the Socratic method and has been around for nearly 2500 years. It helps to move thinking out of threat mode and back into more objective, balanced, adult decision-making.

Skill Three: Feedback as Data

Feedback often feels personal, even when it isn't meant that way, that's quite a typical reaction. The skill is learning to separate **what actually happened** from **what it says about me**.

Criticism is not a verdict, it's information about a moment in time. If feedback felt personal, that's human. The work is learning how to strip the emotion off it so you can actually use what's useful and leave the rest.

QUICK REFRAMING SETBACKS EXERCISE

<p>What is the thought/worry/stressor?</p>			
<p>What's the worst realistic outcome?</p>			
<p>IF THIS IS TRUE, what's most likely outcome?</p>			
<p>Let's say it was true: What would I do if it happened? What's still in my control?</p>			
<p>If your worry becomes true, what are the chances I will be OK?</p>	<p>In a week? %</p>	<p>In a month? %</p>	<p>In a year? %</p>

FULL REFRAMING SETBACKS EXERCISE

<p>What is the thought /worry/ stressor?</p>			
<p>Am I basing this on facts or feelings?</p>			
<p>Is this thought black and white, when reality is more complicated?</p>			
<p>Am I taking this personally? Does this thought support a negative or pre-conceived thought about myself?</p>			
<p>Am I looking at all of the evidence or just what supports my thought?</p>			
<p>Could my thought be an exaggeration of what's true?</p>			
<p>Am I having this thought out of habit or do the facts support it? Do <i>all</i> of the facts support it?</p>			
<p>IF THIS IS TRUE, what's most likely to happen?</p>			
<p>If your worry becomes true, what are the chances I will be OK?</p>	<p>In a week? %</p>	<p>In a month? %</p>	<p>In a year? %</p>
<p>Let's say it was true: What <u>would I do</u> if it happened?</p>			

CELEBRATING PROGRESS

This isn't about praise, it's about accuracy.

We've established that under pressure, the brain does what it evolved to do: scan for threat and keep us safe. It notices what went wrong, what's still missing, and what could blow up next. That bias has kept our species alive for thousands of years, but it also means progress is often invisible while we're in the middle and living it.

Left unchecked, this creates a distorted picture: there's constant danger, nothing's improving, even when it is.

Research in cognitive psychology and neuroscience shows that deliberately noticing progress helps rebalance attention. It strengthens learning, improves motivation, and supports perseverance, not by making people feel good, but by giving the brain better data to work with.

This is about providing evidence, not massaging your ego.

The Micro-Wins Diary

Progress rarely looks dramatic. It shows up in small shifts that are easy to miss unless you deliberately look for them.

Once a week, write down:

- One thing that went slightly better than last time
- One thing you handled faster or calmer
- One thing you'd have panicked about six weeks ago that you now don't

This isn't self-congratulation, it's training your attention to notice learning instead of defaulting to danger scanning. Over time, this builds more accurate self-assessment and reduces unnecessary self-criticism.

Progress Ladders

Most people measure themselves against yesterday, that's a losing game. Neuroplasticity works over weeks, not hours. Instead, look back three weeks, not three days, and ask a question to make learning visible, turning vague effort into concrete evidence of change:

What would past-me have struggled with that present-me now handles?

Exercise: Making Progress Visible	
One micro-win from the past week	
One situation you handled better than you would have a few weeks ago	
One skill you're still developing, but with more confidence than before	



UK RESOURCES FOR MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

MIND

Provides information and support around mental health issues. Visit www.mind.org.uk or call 0300 123 3393.

Samaritans

24/7 confidential emotional support. Call 116 123 or visit www.samaritans.org

Shout

Free, confidential crisis text line. Text SHOUT to 85258 for support.

Hub of Hope

Mental health support database provided by national mental health charity, Chasing the Stigma. Visit www.hubofhope.co.uk

Creating a culture that prioritises mental health conversations is not just beneficial for individuals, but for the entire organisation. When people feel supported, they are more likely to stay engaged, productive, and resilient.

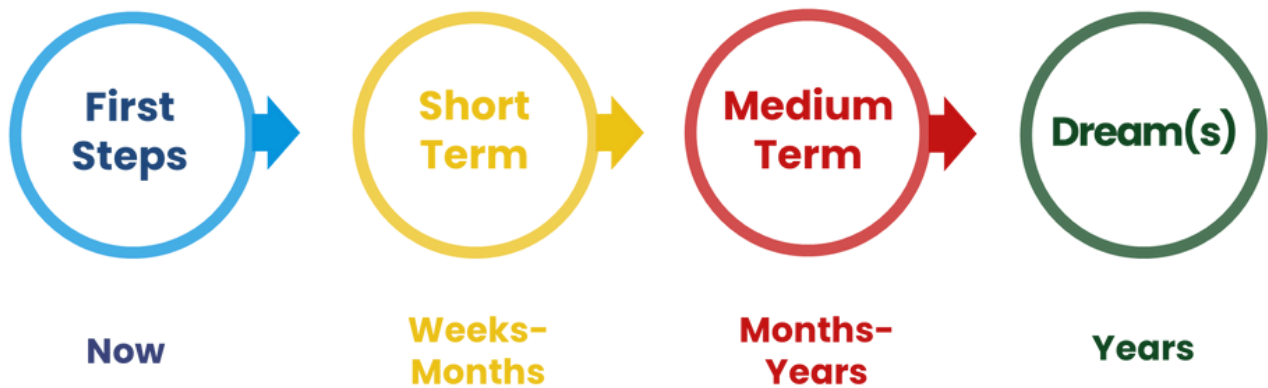
Are you ready to take the next step in supporting mental health in your organisation?

Let's talk about how Feel Good Works can help you create lasting change.



TURNING MINDSET INTO ACTION

Dr. Sean Young: 'Stick With It'



We've talked about perseverance, setbacks, and why motivation is unreliable. It comes and goes and that's normal. What carries you through a tough placement isn't a surge of inspiration, it's having simple systems you return to when things wobble.

Mindset work only matters if it shows up in behaviour, especially on the days you don't feel like it.

This is about choosing one small, sensible action that keeps you moving forward, even when confidence is low or the week has knocked you sideways.

Change doesn't happen through big overhauls. It happens through small steps, repeated consistently.

Which tool from today would 'future you' be annoyed you didn't use?

What will you start doing, stop doing, or do more of to help you stay on course?

1.

Final Reflection: What's Your First Step?

The goal is not to feel motivated, the goal is to keep going. Choose one small action you'll stick with this week. Nothing dramatic, just something realistic that nudges you forward. Progress beats perfection, every single time.

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