Hi everyone. My name is Shannon. And thank you for joining me in this presentation, "Explore New Horizons and Expand the Mind."

Some of our learning objectives: eh, learn the importance of stimulating the mind with new experiences, discover how to break the confines of the comfort zone, consider ways to instill a sense of outdoor adventure into daily routines, identify opportunities for increasing social activities, and overcome the obstacles associated with solo travel. Seeking the opportunities and expanding the mind is a powerful contributor to our mental health. Yet, it can be easy to get stuck into the same routine and limit ourselves to a familiar way of life. This empowering session will help you guys to discover the possibility and promise of seeking, exploring new horizons.

This is just a question to think about: Why do you think it is important to have new experiences in life?

Learning is often associated with children. In our younger years, much time is spent to discovering around the world, as well as ourselves. Daily opportunities are given to enable young minds to grow and stretch out of the comfort zone, going on a voyage of discovery. Children also have a natural curiosity around the world. It enables them to be open-minded and learn some situations and to use a beginner's mind to situations. This takes us away from using the same old habits and being stuck in what we currently know but seeks to create opportunities for learning and growth. As adults, it's important for us to create the same opportunities for our minds to remain open to growth and stimulation. When was the last time you learned something new? And how did that make you feel?

Learning and living are the same. When you stop learning, you start to die a little every day. There is scientific evidence revealing that brain cells regrow at any age if you give them some exercise. So, learning involves gaining new, new knowledge, developing skills, and having new experiences. It involves challenging ourselves to do something different or improve in some area and it can also include a new training course, trying a new pastime, discovering a new language [Inaudible 0:03:00]...the mind and gain some new insight.

So, what are the benefits? UK Mental Health Charity Mind lists the following benefits to learning. So, first, increases self-esteem, learning new skills, experiencing new things, and overcoming a challenge, however big or small, can, can help us feel better about
ourselves. Achieving what we set out to do or becoming wiser through our experiences can help us feel better equipped to take on life challenges and achieve our larger goals in life. With the knowledge that we've been able to deal with challenges, we feel more confident in ourselves, in our abilities and better able to take on new ones. The practice of setting goals which is related to learning in particular has been strongly associated with higher levels of wellbeing. It also encourages social interaction, connecting with others can provide us with a sense of belonging, the feeling of being valued and accepted, and can affirm our status and self-worth. Learning often involves being around other people whether it's attending an educational group, trying out a new hobby, taking on new responsibilities at work or in your local community. Although some learning happens while we're by ourselves, learning often involves, eh, learning from other people and spending time with others which is important for our mental health and wellbeing. Third, it gives us hope and purpose, studies and anecdotal evidence have shown how learning new skills and gaining new knowledge can contribute to us having a greater sense of hope and purpose in life. Through learning new things and having new experiences, we may begin to feel that there's more hope for the future at the direction we're going in. Setting goals which is linked to learning has been shown to increase a sense of wellbeing and, by setting goals for ourselves and working to achieve them, we gain a sense of purpose and the feeling that things are moving forward. And the last one is a better ability to cope with stress. People who carry on learning after childhood report higher wellbeing and a greater ability to cope with stress. They also report more feelings of self-esteem, hope, and purpose. When we're learning, we're often focusing our mind's attention on the here and now. Being in the present moment, we focus our minds away from past experiences or future worries which has been shown to reduce stress and promote mental wellbeing.

But many of us spend a lot of time in our comfort zone. Pers...[Inaudible 0:06:06] large mistakes when you're familiar with your surroundings. This could include people, your environment, or your emotions. However, your comfort zone may be hindering your personal progression and development. The visual by Wealth Graphic 2019 represents how breaking out of your comfort zone can be a step toward achieving things you never thought were possible. The four stages in this diagram include each zone represents progress towards achieving a new mindset. The majority of people are happy to be in the comfort zone, so, so, the pink red, eh, where they feel safe and in control of the situation. While in your comfort zone, you may be faced with a variety of challenges which have led you to the fear zone, so, the orange one. Once faced by the fear zone, you may have a lack of self-confidence and made an excuse to return back to your
comfort zone. This is the most common mindset to have and it is within our nature to want to feel comfortable. However, what you may not realize is that the fear zone is a temporary place that is going to lead you to an improved mindset if you can find the courage and self-belief to stop making excuses and overcome the effects of other people's opinions, you will soon find yourself in the learning zone, the yellow one. This is a place with experience, it is where you're out of your comfort zone but have found a new confidence to deal with challenges and problems head on. While doing this, you will be gaining new skills and experiences that will allow you to extend your comfort zone and begin achieving things you never thought were possible. And then, the final stage of this process, the green one, is the growth zone. This is where you're living with freedom and a sense of purpose. Not many people are brave enough to make it to this point, getting here is uncomfortable and takes a lot of resilience. As a human, we are built to stick to routine and the emotional fear often directs our actions. However, to achieve personal growth, it is imperative that we begin to make a change. A key sign that you made it to the growth zone is that you have a new mindset. At this stage, you will be thinking differently and beginning to live with freedom, In the growth zone, the sky really is the limit. You will have the motivation to set new goals and objectives that you are confident you will achieve. Alongside this, you will be attracting more people who are also experiencing the growth zone.

It is important that this process is reflected not only in you but the people around you. If you're surrounded by people who are happy to be in their comfort...[Inaudible 0:09:12] the best thing to do is to experience new environments and experiences. These new places will often help you to meet likeminded individuals who are on the same journey to the growth zone as you. Remember, your success is often influenced by the five people who you spend the most time with. Think about whether your friends and family members are hindering your growth and having an impact on your mindset. Do the people in your life embrace new environments and experiences? Do they encourage you to do the same? It's important that this process exists, not only in you but the people around you.

And so, boosting your curiosity. Curiosity gives people a fresh perspective that allows resilient people to find answers to problems that others might miss. Curiosity will ask a lot of questions to seek new answers. So, one, we should eliminate "I'm bored" from your vocabulary, the more you say you're bored, the less opportunity your mind has to grow. If you look at something and find it boring, you're not looking hard enough. Stuck in the waiting room and bored out of your mind? Then, grab a magazine you would
never read otherwise and read an article that peaks your interest. Strike up a conversation with a stranger and ask them to tell you an interesting story. Watch their mannerism so the people around you and be fascinated by their personal quirks. Two, search for the positive in all situations. Positive thinking will let you do everything better than negative thinking will, which this is a quote by Zig Ziglar. If you expect something to be dreadfully boring, it will be. If you tell yourself you'll have no fun then, you won't. Instead of agonizing during a traffic jam, take the opportunity to call a friend to catch up or listen to a few chapters of a good audio book. Expecting things to be fun and interesting will help you develop a positive mindset that is more open to new ideas. Three, question everything. Could you tell me why the sky is blue? Do you know what bugs are responsible for the insects [Inaudible 0:11:32] when the darkness falls? Have you ever wondered what your dog does at home while you're working during the day? Why does it take us longer to begin a chore than it takes us to actually complete it? Pay more attention, life is full of questions to ask. Live in the present moment and notice the things that fascinate you most. Solve the mysteries that you can't stop thinking about. And then, four, do something different. We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things because we're curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths and this is by Walt Disney. Do you usually listen to hard, hard rock while you work? Try to work while listening to smooth jazz, classical music or [Inaudible 0:12:16] romance novel or a book. Do you usually stick with mainstream movies? Find an independent theatre and watch a foreign film. You will never really know if you don't like something until you give it a fair chance. And then, five, conquer fear. Curiosity will conquer fear even more than bravery will, James, by James Stephens. So, most people stick with the same old, same old because they are afraid to try something different. Change can be a scary thing when we become so used to routine that we are, don't, that we don’t even have to think about it. The more curious you are the less afraid you will be. Focus on the positive outcomes when you try something new. For example, let's say you're interested in theatre acts, decide to audition for a play for the first time, got cast and now it is opening night. Don’t think about how embarrassed you would be if you forgot your lines. Instead, imagine booming applause and a standing ovation at the curtain call.

Have you ever noticed how often you say no? Not just to things that weren't useful but to fresh ideas, new possibilities, and the chance to make unexpected discoveries? These are missed opportunities to discover something new, to try something you haven't tried before, to learn and grow, to find some aspects of yourself or others that you've missed before. Think about how many times you have been invited to do something new. What
stood in the way? Fear, conscience about being judged, the risk of taking a chance in being no good. The first step is to help you break out of your comfort zone is always going to be the hardest and may be difficult in some circumstances but take the opportunity to say yes more.

We spend a lot of time in built-up cities and in front of screens, spending active time in the great outdoors is powerful for our mental health and physical health. Adventuring outdoors puts our bodies in motion and oxygenates us and puts us in touch with the elements helps us bring our attention to the present moment and share unforgettable experiences. It also helps us to push ourselves to achieve and accomplish challenges and often with new people.

Think about how you get outdoors more. Consider your working breaks, time after work, and time on the weekend. You may want to consider communities or clubs you could join to discover new outdoor pursuits or activities. If you're a parent, chat to children about activities they'd love to do. Think about local natural attractions and what adventures could be enjoyed. Encourage children to [Inaudible 0:15:20] meeting to catch everything on your phone or get distracted.

Paul Saunders from Lifehack provides the following tips for expanding your social circle. OK? So, one, connect with connectors, a great way to expand your social circle is to connect with someone through whom you'll meet many other people. Those connectors are the types of people who keep friends on Facebook by the thousands and host parties whenever they can and always seem to be a large group of people. Oftentimes, these are very open people and are easier to connect with than you think. They may not have the time to invest in a deep friendship with you, but they'll love to get to know more interesting people and active circles. And then, two, you can meet new people constantly so a great habit is this, to have always, eh, be meeting new people that you can add to your circles. In reality, not all the people you meet will become your friends and not all your current friends will be around forever. This is why I always say that if you're not making new friends, you're actually making fewer. I recommend that you go to places where you, where it's easy and appropriate to walk up to anyone and introduce yourself, ideally, you need to go to places where others are open to meet new people as well. So, examples, opening night galas, cultural, charitable events, seminars, and talks. These may be online virtual events but are still a great opportunity for meeting new people. Three, establish yourself as a giver of values. So, when meeting lots of people you have to hook, nothing hooks better than having a giver attitude. So,
first, listen really to what they say and imagine if you were them. See the world through their eyes. And second, be willing to share stories, contacts or quick advice on what people are talking about. When you meet new people, there are some psychological principles that determine whether or not they'll want to meet you again and this works on an unconscious level. One of the most important principle is the give or take attitude. If they sense that you only care about yourself, connection isn't going to happen. You can portray a giver attitude in two ways, the first is really listening about what they are saying, eh, and then the other one is sharing similar stories. Commit to a local community. One of the fastest ways to boost your social life is to get involved in a community that has a type of people, eh, that you want as friends. This community should be in your local area and should hold social get-togethers once a month or more even if virtually. What you do is find one that you like and offer your help. The people who run it will most likely accept and if they don't need that much help [Inaudible 0:18:25] you as a giver of value. Another one is reach out to people on a regular basis. Staying in touch is vital if you want to keep your social circles alive. You need to follow up with the people you just met and catch up with existing friends. The challenge here is that we tend to get distracted and forget about it and we regret later on. To solve this problem, you can create a weekly ritual where you spend only one hour calling, texting, and messaging people, just mark on your calendar at the same time and do it every week. A great time to do it is Tuesday or Wednesday as this gives the opportunity to make plans to people for the weekend. And then, know the kind of friends you want in advance. Do a little planning, try to figure out what kind of people you want to hang out with. List a few qualities, character traits, or interests that you like and don't hesitate to be a little more ambitious than usual. This is important because it allows your mind to quickly tell if a person you meet could be a great fit for you. And, some qualities you can start with giver, interesting, fun, ambitious, honest, loyal, curious, reliable. You can add others if you want and you can also make a list of the activities you want to be doing with your future friends. These lists won't be definitive but the clarity they bring will save you a lot of time and frustrations. And I also recommend that you invest a bit of time learning about friendship and how it works.

Reach out to others. Don't wait for others to come to you. Give someone a call and invite them to do something with you. Have some fun activities in mind and be flexible to their needs, availability. Say yes to invitations even if something doesn't sound like you'd enjoy it, you never know unless you try. Eliminate anxiety and fear of rejection. Often, there's a fear of being rejected and anxiety associated with meeting new people. Think of three positives of going and the best-case scenario. Focus on how many
amazing things could happen. Consider common interests when meeting new people, reach out to those who share common interests, a perspective of situations. Working parents, keen amateur artists, wireless photographers, eh, book enthusiasts, find your drive. Create a schedule, keep in touch with people and create a schedule to stay organized and avoid prolonged periods alone. Be a great guest. When attending functions, be a warm, attentive guest, make an effort with others. Be yourself. Avoid being artificial [Inaudible 0:21:15] or who you think people want you to be, just be yourself. Show interest and be interesting. So, ask genuine questions about other people and share interest, interesting facts about yourself.

[Inaudible 0:21:28] enable you to see different people and different lives. And take the opportunity to help others, volunteer, visit an elderly neighbor, prepare meals for a local shelter.

This is just a little quote [Inaudible 0:21:54]

After this session, when you have time, create a bucket list for the next six months. It should focus on creating new memories, saying yes more, and grasping opportunities. It will give you purpose and direction and help you start creating your strategy for making your life one of growth and potential. Starting today, share at least one thing you want to tick-off in the next six months. Eh, some ideas to get you started, stand under a waterfall, join a book club, toast marshmallows over an open fire, join an online community based on an existing interest, learn an instrument, learn the basics of a new language, go on a boat. These are just some ideas.

And, if you do need any additional assistance, please contact your Employee Assistance Program that are there all the time, 24/7, eh, in order for them to be able to help you if you need more assistance with this subject, or anything else.

Thank you for listening. Have a great day.