Taking note
Rachel Crowther, producer at Street Wisdom

For most of us, walking in town is about getting from A to B, but in Rachel Crowther’s world, ‘reading’ the street can help people figure out their next life step
A Street Wisdom walkshop is usually three hours long and split into sections. Rachel explains: “The first is The Tune-Ups, a few short guided exercises in which you literally tune up your senses; these really heighten your awareness. Then The Quest – participants bring along a question or problem they are trying to solve and see what answers the street has to offer. Answers could be in any format: symbols, posters, nature or from the people on the street. The last part is sharing what happened in the group: what you saw, what that means and how you might then use what you’ve learned.”

For Rachel, one of the best things about Street Wisdom is that it encourages us to slow down in a city we’d normally rush around. “We only ever tend to do that on holiday. It’s really liberating wandering around and taking it all in,” she says. It’s led to some truly formative moments for some attendees, according to Rachel. “People have come up with solutions to problems they’ve been trying to figure out for years. A lot of people figure out what their next step is. It’s spurred people on to take action to leave their job or set up their own business.”

Some also experience moments of connection with others. “There are often crazy synchronicities like bumping into people you used to know,” continues Rachel. “Some profound results tend to come from participants speaking with strangers and asking their opinion on the question.”

The act of walking people and it’s the kind of tool I wish I’d had as a teenager, trying to navigate the world and making big decisions.”

Mindfulness isn’t about perfection and being in a Zen-like state all the time but being aware of how I’m feeling and why that might be. I struggled with meditating as I couldn’t sit still and calm my mind. Mindfulness has helped me to get out of my head and see the bigger picture. I’m better at handling challenges – missing a train isn’t the end of the world.

A change of scenery helps energise me. If I’m stuck in a rut, staying with the problem rarely helps. Instead, I’ll try to do something to take my mind off whatever I’m working on – getting outside for a walk, phoning a friend, or popping out for a coffee.

Rachel’s hope is that Street Wisdom will continue to grow and be a tool used in every city around the world. It’s currently in 40 countries, so it’s definitely getting there. I also think it has huge potential to help you around you, what we’re doing to the planet – by taking a walk on your lunch break. I also love that it’s accessible to anyone, anywhere.”

“Living in a city can be full-on. Street Wisdom encourages people to slow down and ask questions”

I use gratitude when I want to tap into my environment. One of the Tune-Up exercises in Street Wisdom is to ‘see the beauty in everything’. It’s hard to not be in a better state of mind after doing that.

It’s important to take time to consider a problem from different angles, whether that’s using the Street Wisdom process or speaking with someone and getting another opinion. I’ve recently started coaching and really see the benefit in having someone to listen and talking a problem through.

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I’ve learned not to try to cram in lots of plans. I’ve got better at setting aside time for not doing much. I love spending a Saturday wandering around North West London with my husband and finding new food places.

Having a strong sense of direction is important to me. Otherwise I feel a bit lost and get distracted too easily. I run a group with some friends called Girls with Goals, where we meet and chat about our goals and how we’re going to achieve them.

Finding out I was having a baby changed my perspective. I remember being absolutely over the moon but feeling instantly different,