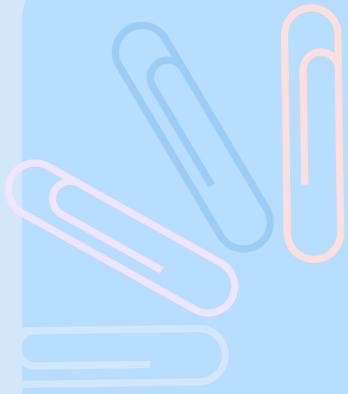


Getting Started: My Core Values

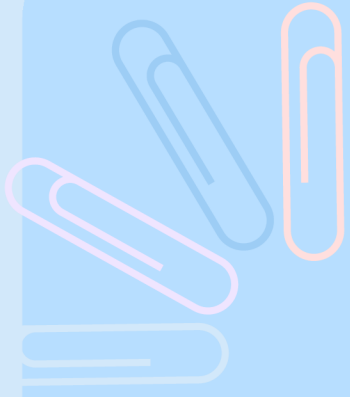


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About

Making changes to support our wellbeing can feel overwhelming, especially when the world has not always made space for our needs. Even when we know something would help, actually shifting our habits and mindset can bring up emotions like fear, frustration, or guilt.

Values can guide us in making these changes. When we align our choices with what we care about, we can start to build more rich, full and meaningful lives.

(If you already know the changes you want to make in line with your values and are looking for more practical guidance, you can skip to Page 10 – Changing Behaviour)

We recommend starting with this workbook to make changes in line with your values, and aid you in your journey of accommodating and advocating for yourself.

Exploring my Values

As neurodivergent people, we experience the world differently. These differences can bring strengths like unique perspectives and special interests.



Sometimes, our differences cause challenges. We might tire more easily or struggle looking after our basic needs, leading to coping strategies such as avoidance, substance use or withdrawing from social situations.

Values are a **life direction** (like an internal compass) that point to what we find most important. By reminding ourselves of values, we can start to shift our focus from avoidance of pain and symptoms to engagement with life.



Example Values

| | | |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Authenticity | Adventure | Self-care |
| Spirituality | Family | Compassion |
| Honesty | Respect | Education |
| Freedom | Acceptance | Community |
| | | Independence |
| | | Self-growth |

Values vs Goals

The problem with goals

Society tells us that to be happy, we have to achieve goals like getting in shape, buying a house, or going on holiday. But how long does this happiness last before you're chasing the next goal, and the next?



If you feel constantly exhausted working towards one goal after another, then it may be worth asking yourself: are you living life in line with your goals or values?

Core Values

Ask Yourself:

Who do I want to be?

What do I believe in?

What gives my life meaning and purpose?

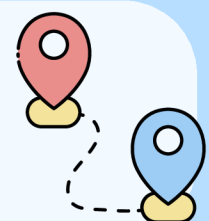
How do I want to behave each day?

How do I want to treat myself, others, and the world around me?



Remember, values are not:

A destination or a goal that has an end-point. Values are about how you are living your life right now.



Core Values: Example

Acting in alignment with values does not always feel good in the moment, but can help to live more meaningfully in the long-term.

Fatima's Core Values



Family

Fatima prioritises time with her family and tries to be present despite the demands of life.



Education

Fatima finds joy in learning and chooses to read books over watching most film or television programs.



Spirituality

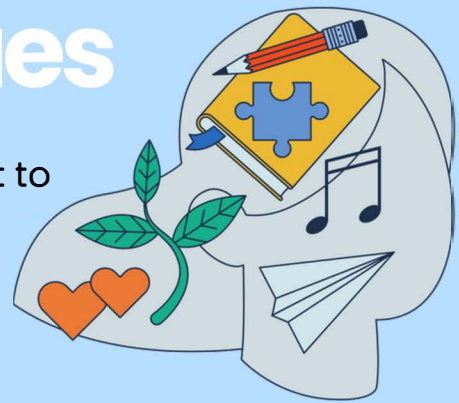
Fatima wakes up early to pray because it brings a sense of peace and connection to her.

Tip: Check in

Take a moment to check in with yourself — What really matters to you? As you read through this workbook, what comes to your mind as important? It's easy to internalize what others expect or what we feel we should aim for. Think about what genuinely matters to *you*.

Ranking My Values

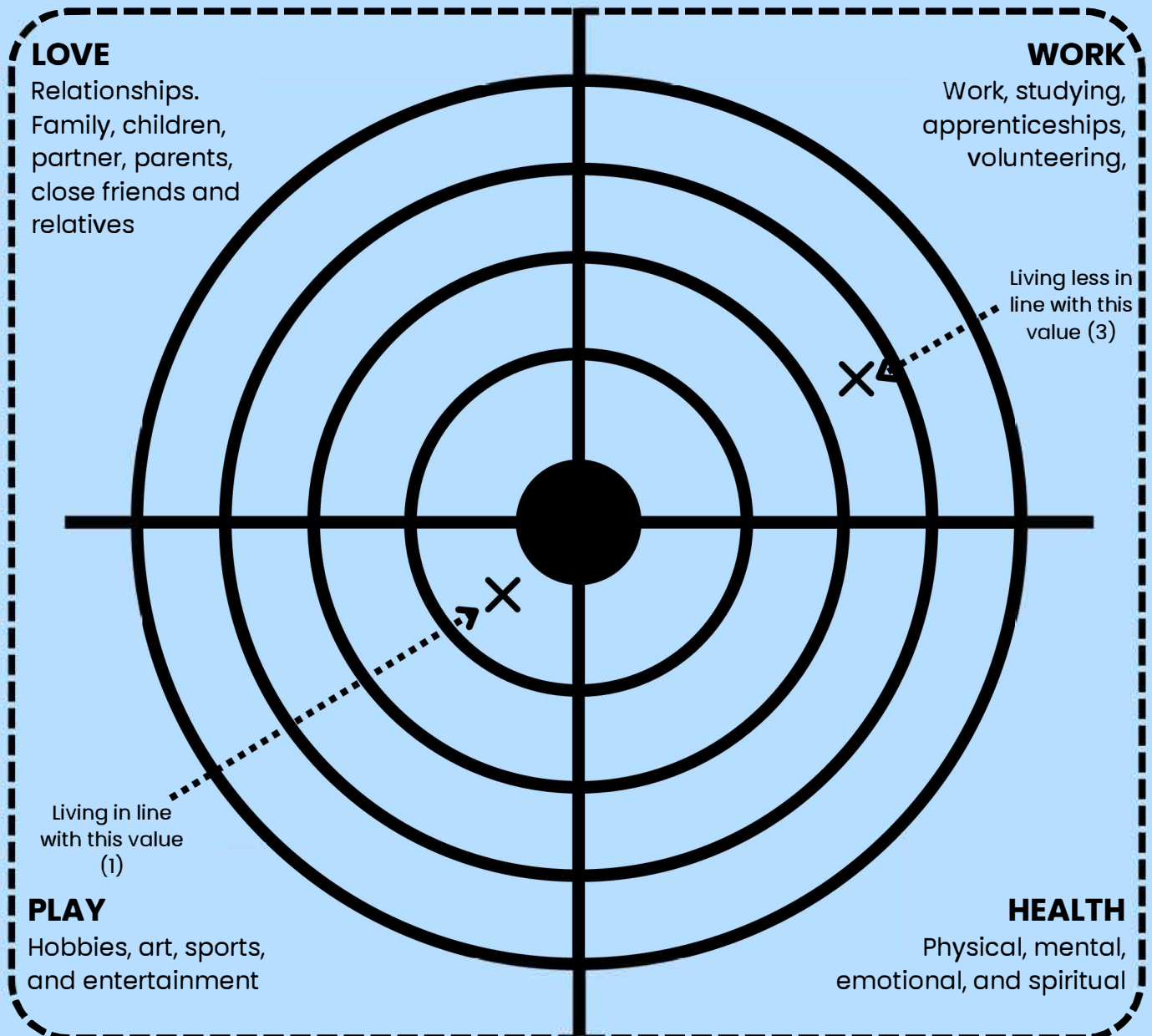
Let's explore what values are most important to you. Below are some examples – try ranking them from 1 (less important) to 10 (most important). Feel free to add your own!



| Core Values | Importance (1-10) |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Personal Development | |
| Family | |
| Friendships | |
| Spirituality | |
| Learning | |
| Career | |
| Mental Health | |
| Physical Health | |
| | |
| | |

Values Compass

Where do you stand today in your values? Take a moment to think about your values and write the top four in each quarter of the bullseye (we've given you 4 to start with). Score these values from 1-4 or mark an X on the bullseye – closer to the centre means you are living in line with that value, while further out means you are acting inconsistently with that value in your daily life.



Adapted from Harris, R. (2014). The happiness trap: complete worksheets

Tip: The Life Compass

Ask yourself: deep down, who am I? What personal strengths and qualities are important to me? What actions do I want to take? How do I ideally wish to conduct myself? Take a look at your answers. What do they reveal about:
a) What truly matters to you? b) What areas of your life you may be neglecting?

Translating Values Into Actions

Now, let's look at how we can turn values into actions. This activity will help us to start setting goals and identify what values-based living looks like for you.

| Value | Potential actions in line with this value: |
|--------------------------|---|
| <i>Eg, Mental Health</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Exploring what sensory accommodations you can make for yourself</i>• <i>Balancing your energy</i>• <i>Reaching out for support from services</i> |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Changing Behaviour

As neurodivergent individuals, we may have a lot of awareness into ourselves. We might not need someone to tell us what is wrong, but what to do.

Why is it so hard to adopt new coping strategies?

Research suggest there's a few criteria that need to be met before someone can change their behaviour.

Capability

- Do I have the knowledge and skills to start?
- Am I in the right place physically and emotionally, to make this change?



Opportunity

- Do I have the time and resources?
- Can I realistically prioritise it?



Motivation

- Do I want to make this change?
- Do I know why it matters to me?



Working towards goals requires capability, opportunity and motivation. But also time. Making changes to old coping strategies (often conditioned over many years) is difficult, so it's important to be realistic with our expectations.

Tip: Going at my own Pace

Now may not be the right time for a life-changing goal and that's okay. Change happens when we have the capacity for it, and that's different for everyone. Consider: If you're overwhelmed right now, would a smaller step feel more manageable?

Setting a Goal

Hopefully, you now have a clearer sense of whether this is the right time to start making changes. The next step is choosing a focus. Let's explore what the evidence suggests about making goals.

Specific: Be as specific as possible. Ask myself 'what is the smallest step I could take right now towards my goal?'

Meaningful: Goals should be guided by core values. Why is this important to me? Who do I want to be?

Achievable: Consider Capability, Opportunity and Motivation. Is this goal realistic for me right now?

Reviewed: How will I know when I've made progress towards my goal?

Time-bound: Set a timeframe. When will I complete this by?

My Goals

Use this sheet to fill in your SMART goals. If you get stuck, it may be helpful to ask yourself: 'what is the smallest step I can take?' Whatever you can manage right now is okay.

Immediate: over the
next 24 hours?

Short-term: over the
next few days to a
week?

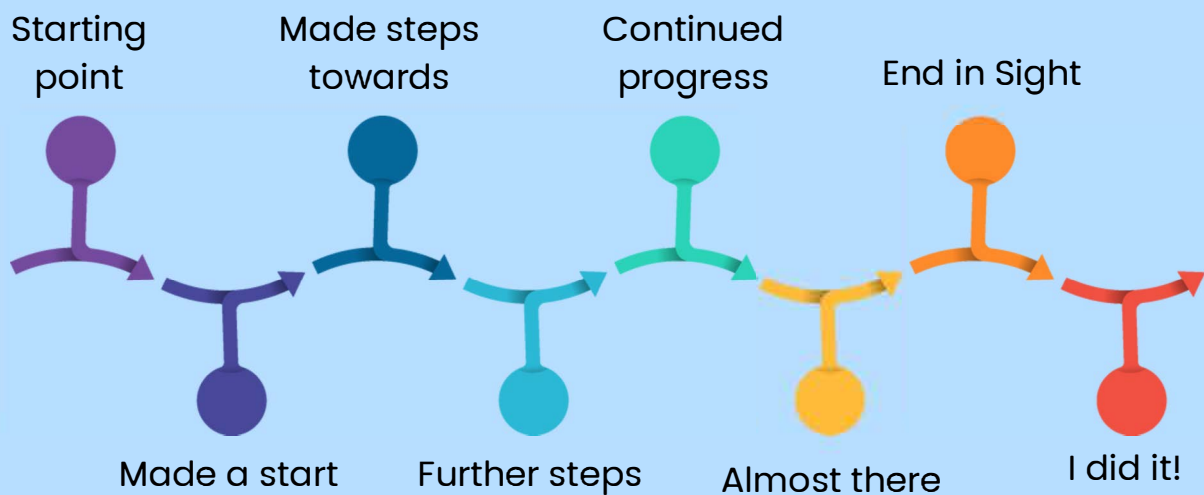
Medium-term: the
next few weeks to
months?

Long-term: the next
few months to a year?

Progress Record

It's important to check in on goals regularly and see how things are going. Use this sheet to keep track of progress.

Goal progress this week



Have you made any progress towards meeting your goal this week?

Are there any challenges or barriers you've identified when trying to complete your goals?

Have your needs or priorities shifted since you set your goal?

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Informed by approaches from Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

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