What are Values?



Values are beliefs and principles that guide your attitudes, behaviors, and decisions. They represent what you consider important in life and reflect your personal preferences and priorities.

They are subjective and can vary from person to person depending on factors such as culture, upbringing, and life experiences.

Values are like pizza toppings: there isn't a right or wrong one. You might like sausage, and I might like pineapple, but neither is better than the other. Values help you make decisions, set goals, and live a meaningful and fulfilling life.

Losing Touch with your Values

As life progresses, we often drift away from our values, and sometimes, we might not even fully discover what they are. This disconnection can occur for several reasons:

1. Limited Reflection: Not having the opportunity to reflect on what truly matters to us.

2. External Pressures: Facing societal, familial, or professional expectations that conflict with our personal beliefs.

3. Personal Challenges: Experiencing trauma, anxiety, or fear, which can shift our focus towards self-protection rather than value-driven actions.

4. Stress Responses: Feeling overwhelmed or emotionally unstable can make it difficult to act according to our values.

5. Cultural Influence*: Living in a culture or environment that does not align with our values.

6. Neglected Values: Failing to keep our values prominent in our thoughts, leading to actions that contradict them.



Understanding and reconnecting with our values requires conscious effort and reflection, especially when faced with these challenges.

Self Awareness and Values

Becoming more self-aware of your values can have numerous benefits including:

1. Improved decision-making: Making choices based on your values helps you feel more purposeful and fulfilled, which in turn increases self-trust and confidence.

2. Reduced stress: When your choices are aligned with your interests and desires, it works better for your ADHD brain and nervous system. You may find you have more energy and focus and can do things more easily.

3. Decreased comparison and perfectionism: Shifting the focus from societal norms or the "gold standard" of success towards what feels authentically right can help reduce comparison and perfectionism.

Stress and Values

Living by your values helps you manage your emotions better. When you make choices that align with your core beliefs, you feel more authentic and true to yourself. This is especially useful in moments of decision, helping you avoid choices that you might regret later. Staying true to your values can lead to greater long-term happiness and fulfillment.

For example, if honesty is one of your values, you can use this value to guide you in having difficult conversations, even when it's uncomfortable.

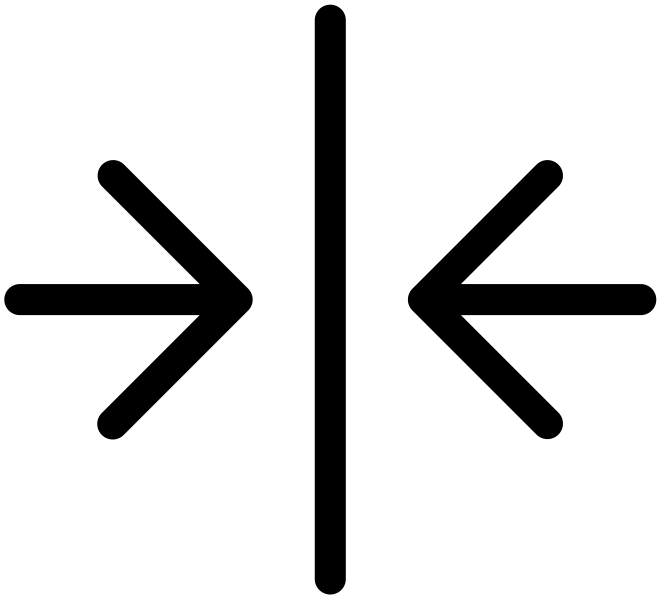
Similarly, if balance is one of your values, you can prioritize self-care over always being productive or staying up too late. By aligning your actions with your values, you can reduce overwhelm, stay regulated, and experience a greater sense of purpose and fulfillment in your life.

Stress and Values

This is important. Most of us are tempted in moments to make choices based on what provides the **most pleasure** or the **most relief from pain**, and this doesn't always bring the most happiness or satisfaction in the long term even if it does in the short term.

Knowing your own values, and getting intentional about reminding yourself of what they are on a regular basis can help you to be more prepared in those moments to **resist impulsive decisions that you might regret.** They can **serve as a motivation** for doing something different at those junctures.

When you understand your strengths and values, you can create a lifestyle that is more in alignment with your unique needs and preferences.



Values Help You Unmask

One of the best goals for women with ADHD is to stop hiding their true selves and embrace authenticity. Understanding your personal values can boost your inner motivation and reduce the need to please others or conceal your identity—behaviors often adopted in childhood for protection.

Being authentic becomes easier when you:

- Stop being overly critical of yourself.
- Release impossible standards.
- Choose actions not based on fear, avoiding outdated habits that no longer serve you.

This approach not only encourages authenticity but also helps you live a life that truly reflects who you are.

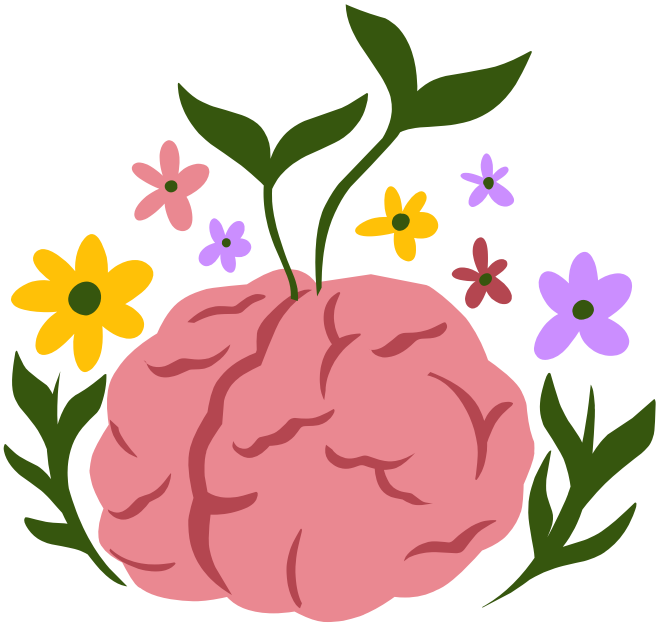


Values Living Improves EF

A Values-Based Life Improves Your Executive Functioning

ADHD symptoms can fluctuate throughout life, sometimes becoming less noticeable during certain periods and more intense during others. This unpredictability can explain why some women may not realize they have ADHD until they face overwhelming challenges that push their executive functions—like focus, organization, and emotional regulation—to the limit.

One effective way to manage these challenges is by building a life that aligns with your core values and supports your neurodivergent brain. When you design your environment and daily routines to reflect what truly matters to you, it becomes easier to reduce stress, improve focus, and maintain your energy. This approach not only enhances your control over daily tasks but also strengthens your executive functioning.



Other Reasons for Values Work

Values- based living offers numerous benefits for women with ADHD, as it fosters individuality and discourages comparison. It shifts the focus away from societal norms and the "gold standard" of success, encouraging self-acceptance and authenticity.

Promotes Individuality and Discourages Comparison

Focusing on personal values helps ADHD women, who often struggle with feelings of inadequacy or not measuring up to others, **by grounding decisions and actions in their values instead of constant comparison**. This cultivates self-acceptance, authenticity, and empowerment.

Decreases the Focus on Goals

Goals-based living emphasizes achieving specific goals or outcomes, which **can set you up for feeling like a failure if you fall short.** However, **values-based living focuses on aligning actions and decisions with your values, irrespective of achieving specific goals.**

Values represent your guiding principles that shape your identity and define your priorities. **You can always act in line with your values in the moment, without waiting for something to happen.**

UNIQUE

Values versus Goals

Focusing on values- based living can help create a life that feels more authentic and manageable, especially when navigating the complexities of ADHD. Instead of striving for specific outcomes that can feel overwhelming or unattainable, values-based living encourages you to align your actions with what truly matters to you.

Example: Imagine you have a goal to be more productive at work, but you often find yourself distracted, procrastinating, or feeling stuck. This can lead to frustration and a sense of failure, particularly if you're measuring success by how much you get done each day.

Now, consider shifting to a values-based approach. Instead of focusing solely on productivity, you focus on values like creativity, growth, or contribution. These values guide how you approach your work. You might decide that even if you're not checking off every item on your to-do list, you're successful when you spend time brainstorming new ideas, learning something new, or helping a coworker. By honoring these values, you can reframe your day in a way that feels meaningful, even if your productivity

It allows you to feel successful regardless of how many tasks you complete because you're focusing on the bigger picture—living out your values. While goals like "getting more done" might come and go, values like creativity, curiosity, or connection endure. They provide a stable foundation, helping you make choices that lead to a more fulfilling, balanced life.



Values versus Goals

Goals vs. Values:

Goal: Lose 10 pounds

Value: Have a healthy relationship with your body

Goal: Learn a new language

Value: Cultivate curiosity and wonder, exploring new cultures, trying new foods, and seeking out experiences that challenge assumptions and expand your worldview

Goal: Get married by 25

Value: Act in a loving way towards people you are in relationships with

By embracing values- based living, women with ADHD can navigate life with a more enduring and meaningful compass, leading to a more satisfying and authentic existence.

Values to Goals

Using Your Values to Set Meaningful Goals

Values can guide you in setting meaningful and helpful goals in your life, acting as a reliable compass. Once you've identified your core values, like being loving, you can begin setting goals that align with them by asking yourself the following questions:

☑ What is the smallest, simplest, easiest action you could take in line with that value?

☑ What are larger actions you could take?

☑ If that particular action is not possible, what else could you do that would still honor this value?

☑ What are short, medium, and long-term goals in line with this value?

For women with ADHD, this is extremely helpful because there are numerous small actions they can take in line with their overarching value, even if a particular goal is impossible, unlikely, or a long way off from being achieved. By focusing on values, there can be less pressure to achieve specific goals, leading to less procrastination and self- criticism.



Values to Goals

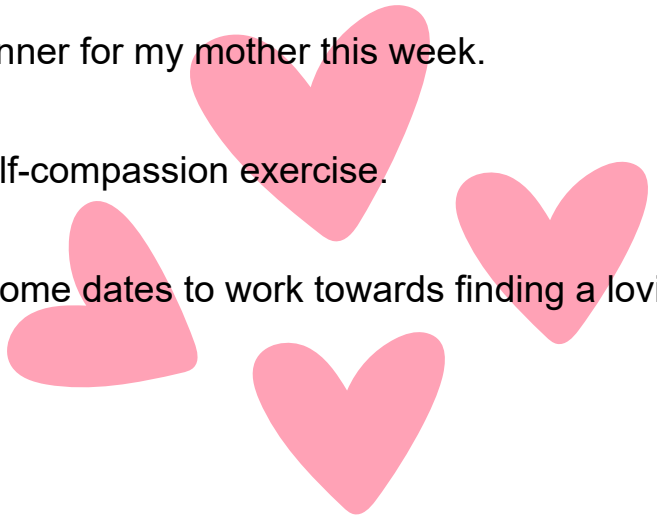
Translating Values into Goals

To demonstrate how values translate into goals, let’s use the example of discovering "loving" as a core value. Applying this value to different areas of your life could result in the following goals:

- ☑ I want to be more loving to myself.
- ☑ I want to be more loving to my mother.
- ☑ I want to be a loving partner (but I might need to go on some dates to find one).

For short-term goals, you could set the following:

- ☑ I will cook dinner for my mother this week.
- ☑ I will do a self-compassion exercise.
- ☑ I will go on some dates to work towards finding a loving partner.



Values to Help with Choices

Using Values to Improve Decision-Making

The ADHD brain works differently from the neurotypical brain, and this difference can make decision- making harder. If you have ADHD, you might feel overwhelmed or struggle to make choices. But understanding your core values can help simplify decisions and make them feel less stressful.

Here are some common challenges in decision- making for people with ADHD:

→ ☑ Working Memory Problems: It can be hard to keep all the details of a decision in your mind, which makes comparing options tricky.

→ ☑ Trouble Regulating Emotions: Emotions can feel big and hard to control, which might lead to impulsive or emotional decisions.

→ ☑ Difficulty Setting Priorities: People with ADHD often find it hard to figure out what's most important, making it tough to choose between options.

→ ☑ Analysis Paralysis: Too many choices can feel overwhelming, causing you to freeze up or avoid making a decision altogether.

Understanding these challenges is the first step. By focusing on your values—like kindness, honesty, or growth—you can make decisions that feel right for you, even when it's hard to prioritize or when emotions are running high. Your values give you a clear guide to follow, which helps reduce overwhelm and makes choices easier.

Individual Reflection

Reflect on the values you were taught to uphold by family, society, or our culture . Consider whether these values align with what you believe are your personal values or diverge from them.

Any areas where your personal values differ?_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Are their specific instances where you might feel pressured to act in accordance with values you were taught that differ from your own?_____
_____
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Reflect on the consequences of living out of alignment with your authentic values.

How has this impacted your mental and emotional well-being, relationships, or overall life satisfaction?_____
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Are there any steps you can take to help you prioritize your own values over external pressures?_____
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This reflection can promote self compassion and understanding for some of your struggles. How difficult it is to be out of alignment with society and your family when you have different things that matter to you.

Values to Reduce comparison

VALUES WORK HELPS REDUCE COMPARISON

The Tyranny of the Shoulds

The concept of "the tyranny of the shoulds" was introduced by psychoanalyst Karen Horney in the 1950s. It refers to the internal pressure women feel to conform to unrealistic expectations and social norms, leading to feelings of inadequacy and self-criticism.

Horney believed that this internalized set of rules and expectations can have a significant negative impact on an individual's mental health and self-esteem.

Neurotypical society often dictates a "right" and "wrong" way to be a human being through the imposition of "shoulds." In your case as an ADHD woman, these " shoulds" can lead to self-doubt, shame, and heightened self- consciousness.

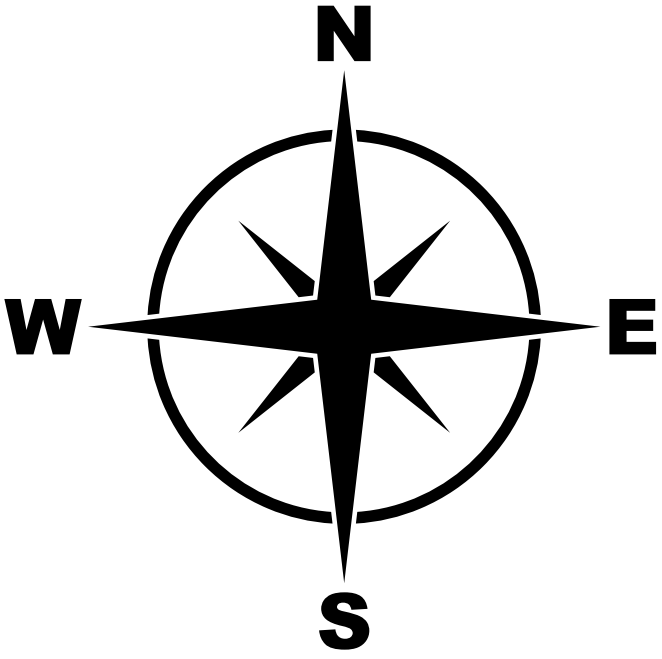
Moreover, they significantly contribute to the development of old skills such as masking, perfectionism, hiding, and the experience of impostor syndrome. Understanding yourself through a neurodivergent affirming framework will be helpful in decreasing the shoulds. The gold standard for women isn't real or attainable!

Embracing personal values can help alleviate the tyranny of the shoulds.

Values to Reduce Comparison

Values act as an internal compass, guiding decision-making based on your personal beliefs and priorities rather than external pressures.

This approach reduces the negative impact of societal norms, including feelings of inadequacy and self-criticism. By prioritizing your personal values, you can foster a healthier self-perception, promote self-esteem, and be authentic to yourself, resisting the pressure to conform to societal expectations.



Step-by-Step Guide to Choosing Personal Values

Initial Scan:

1. Read through the entire list of values.
As you read each value, notice your immediate reactions. Some values will naturally resonate more than others.

2. Marking Favorites:

3. Use a simple system to mark the values that strike a chord with you. You might mark them with a check mark, highlight them, or write them down separately. If you're using a digital document, you could change the font color or bold the terms that resonate.

4. Narrowing Down:

5. From your marked list, choose the top ten values that feel most significant. Don’t think too hard about it—trust your instincts.

6. You may do more work on refining your values as time goes on but for now this is a good starting point.

Exercises

Values are deeply personal and individualized. They guide you towards making life decisions, setting goals, and living meaningfully.

Neurodivergent women may sacrifice their personal values to conform to societal expectations, make other people happy, or do what' s habitual in the moment when overwhelmed, often resulting in decreased happiness and a diminished sense of authenticity.

This can result in anxiety, stress, burnout, or unhappiness.

You can use values to help you strengthen your authenticity, decrease masking behavior, and learn the new coping skills.

During the exercises, please use the self compassion. These are not meant to make you feel bad about not being true to yourself or not living your values. The exercises are meant to help you discover what's meaningful to you and how to possibly bring yourself into more alignment with those ideas if you so choose.

Be kind and curious towards yourself while thinking about these ideas.

Connection Kind Creative Contribution Curious Adventure



Worksheet 1: Role Models Exercise

Objective: Identify and reflect on the qualities of people you admire to uncover your personal values.

Instructions:

List Your Role Models: Write down the names of a person or two you admire. These can be personal acquaintances, historical figures, or public personalities.
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Qualities They Possess: For each role model, list the qualities you admire in them._____
_____
_____
_____

Associated Values: Next to each quality, write down the value you believe this quality represents (e.g., integrity, compassion, resilience)._____
_____
_____
__

Reflection: Reflect on how you can embody these values in your own life. Write down specific actions or changes you can make._____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Worksheet 2: 80th Birthday Exercise

Objective: Visualize what you want to be remembered for by envisioning your 80th birthday. (If you don't like this one don't do it)

Instructions:

Imagine the Scene: Picture your 80th birthday celebration with friends and family around.

Speech Content: Write what you imagine your loved ones saying about you. Focus on the postive traits they mention._____
_____
_____
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_____
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_____
Core Values: Identify the values these speeches highlight about your life._____
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_____
What might need to shift for you to be more closely living this way?
_____
_____
_____
_____

Worksheet 3: Dissecting Discomfort

Objective: Identify values by examining discomfort in past situations.

Instructions:

Recall Discomforting Situations: List a situation where you felt uncomfortable or upset_
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
.
Analyze the Cause: Describe why these situations were discomforting._____
_____
_____
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Values Compromised: Identify a value that were challenged or compromised in these scenarios._____
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Future Actions: Consider how you might handle similar situations in the future to stay true to your values._____
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_____
_____
__

Worksheet 4: The Tyranny of the Shoulds

Objective: Explore how internalized 'Shoulds' impact your life and values.

Instructions:

List Your 'Shoulds': Write down things you feel you should do, based on societal or personal pressures.

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Source Identification: Identify where these 'Shoulds' come from._____
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Value Conflict: Discuss whether these 'Shoulds' support or conflict with your personal values._____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Realigning Actions: Plan specific actions to realign your life according to your true values, not just your 'Shoulds'.

List of Values

☑ Acceptance: To be open to and accepting of myself, others, life, etc.

☑ Adventure: To be adventurous; to actively seek, create, or explore novel or stimulating experiences.

☑ Assertiveness: To respectfully stand up for my rights and request what I want.

☑ Authenticity: To be authentic, genuine, real; to be true to myself.

☑ Beauty: To appreciate, create, nurture, or cultivate beauty in myself, others, the environment, etc.

☑ Caring: To be caring towards myself, others, the environment, etc.

☑ Challenge: To keep challenging myself to grow, learn, improve.

☑ Compassion: To act with kindness towards those who are suffering.

☑ Connection: To engage fully in whatever I am doing, and be fully present with others.

☑ Contribution: To contribute, help, assist, or make a positive difference to myself or others.

☑ Conformity: To be respectful and obedient of rules and obligations.

☑ Cooperation: To be cooperative and collaborative with others.

☑ Courage: To be courageous or brave; to persist in the face of fear, threat, or difficulty.

List of Values

☑ Creativity: To be creative or innovative.

☑ Curiosity: To be curious, open-minded, and interested; to explore and discover.

☑ Encouragement: To encourage and reward behavior that I value in myself or others.

☑ Equality: To treat others as equal to myself, and vice-versa.

☑ Excitement: To seek, create, and engage in activities that are exciting, stimulating, or thrilling.

☑ Fairness: To be fair to myself and others.

☑ Fitness: To maintain or improve my fitness; to look after my physical and mental health and wellbeing.

☑ Flexibility: To adjust and adapt readily to changing circumstances.

☑ Freedom: To live freely; to choose how I live and behave, or help others do likewise.

☑ Friendliness: To be friendly, companionable, or agreeable towards others.

☑ Forgiveness: To be forgiving towards myself or others.

☑ Fun: To be fun-loving; to seek, create, and engage in fun-filled activities.

☑ Generosity: To be generous, sharing and giving, to myself or others.

☑ Gratitude: To be grateful for and appreciative of the positive aspects of myself, others, and life.

☑ Honesty: To be honest, truthful, and sincere with myself and others.

☑ Humour: To see and appreciate the humorous side of life.

☑ Humility: To be humble or modest; to let my achievements speak for themselves.

List of Values

☑ Industry: To be industrious, hard-working, dedicated.

☑ Independence: To be self-supportive and choose my own way of doing things.

☑ Intimacy: To open up, reveal, and share myself—emotionally or physically—in my close personal relationships.

☑ Justice: To uphold justice and fairness.

☑ Kindness: To be kind, compassionate, considerate, nurturing, or caring towards myself or others.

☑ Love: To act lovingly or affectionately towards myself or others.

☑ Mindfulness: To be conscious of, open to, and curious about my here-and-now experience.

☑ Open-mindedness: To think things through, see things from others' points of view, and weigh evidence fairly.

☑ Patience: To wait calmly for what I want.

☑ Persistence: To continue resolutely, despite problems or difficulties.

☑ Pleasure: To create and give pleasure to myself or others.

☑ Power: To strongly influence or wield authority over others, e.g., taking charge, leading, organizing.

☑ Reciprocity: To build relationships in which there is a fair balance of giving and taking.

☑ Respect: To be respectful towards myself or others; to be polite, considerate, and show positive regard.

☑ Responsibility: To be responsible and accountable for my actions.

☑ Romance: To be romantic; to display and express love or strong affection.

List of Values

☑ Safety: To secure, protect, or ensure the safety of myself or others.

☑ Self-awareness: To be aware of my own thoughts, feelings, and actions.

☑ Self-care: To look after my health and well being, and get my needs met.

☑ Self-development: To keep growing, advancing, or improving in knowledge , skills, character, or life experience.

☑ Self-control: To act in accordance with my own ideals.

☑ Sensuality: To create, explore, and enjoy experiences that stimulate the five senses.

☑ Sexuality: To explore or express my sexuality.

☑ Spirituality: To connect with things bigger than myself.

☑ Skillfulness: To continually practice and improve my skills, and apply myself fully when using them.

☑ Supportiveness: To be supportive, helpful, encouraging, and available to myself or others.

☑ Trust: To be trustworthy; to be loyal, faithful, sincere, and reliable.

Note on Personal Values

As you explore this checklist, remember that these values are personal choices. Focus on the values that resonate deeply with you and consider integrating them into your daily life. This is an opportunity to affirm what truly matters to you. Conversely, feel free to disregard or reject values that do not align with your personal beliefs or lifestyle. The goal is to foster a life that reflects your true self, enhancing personal growth and fulfillment.