

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.

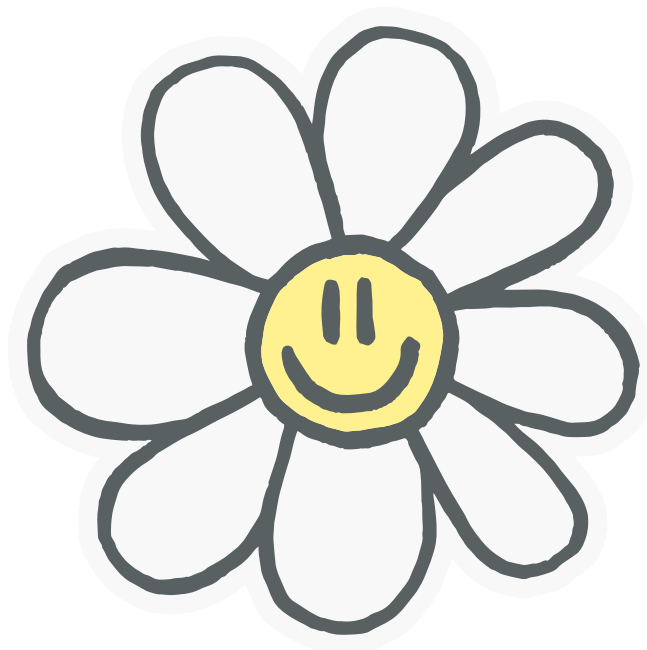
Values are like pizza toppings: there isn't a right or wrong one. You might like sausage, and I might like pineapple, but neither is better than the other. Values help you make decisions, set goals, and live a meaningful and fulfilling life.

Losing Touch with your Values

As life goes on we often lose touch with your values. Sometimes we may never have the opportunity to get to know our values. Some common reasons for this include:

Not having a chance to think about our values.

1. Outside pressures like what society expects, what your family wants, or what your job demands, that go against what you personally believe in.
2. Experiencing trauma, anxiety, or fear that makes you focus on protecting yourself instead of following your values.
3. Your stress response that can make it hard for you to act in line with your values when you're feeling overwhelmed or emotionally unstable.
4. Being influenced by culture or environment that don't match your values.
5. Acting in ways that go against your values because you don't have them at the forefront of your thoughts.



Self Awareness and Values



Today, in our group module, we will be practicing the skill of self-awareness. Becoming more self-aware of your values can have numerous benefits, especially for women with ADHD. These include:

1.Improved decision-making: Making choices based on your values helps you feel 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, giving you more energy and focus in your daily life.

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 the habit of comparing yourself to others and striving for perfection. This is particularly helpful for women with ADHD, who often struggle with feelings of inadequacy or not measuring up to others.

We will be exploring these topics and more in our group module today.

Stress and Values

Values are an important tool to add to your arsenal of techniques to stay emotionally regulated. We have discussed how when you pair self-awareness, self-accommodation, self-care, self-advocacy, and self-compassion with your strengths, you can better regulate your emotions and experience less stress and more happiness.

Values are another tool that can be added to this mix to help you make good choices that align with your authentic self.

Values are especially helpful for helping you make better choices in the moment, which can help you avoid long-term unhappiness and regret.

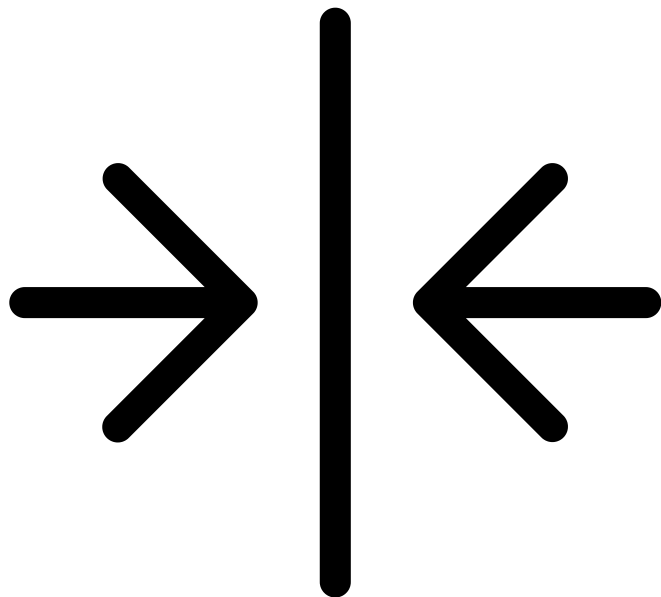
For example, if honesty is one of your values, you can use this value to guide you in having difficult conversations, even when it's uncomfortable.

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 primary goals of our group is to let go of unnecessary masking behaviors and embrace authenticity. By focusing on understanding your personal values and strengths, connecting with intrinsic motivation, and reducing masking, you can deepen your authenticity. People-pleasing, hiding, silencing, perfectionism, and masking are typically inauthentic behaviors.

Authenticity can be enhanced when you:

1. Understand false beliefs about happiness.
2. Decrease self-critical thoughts.
3. Decrease unrealistic expectations.
4. Reduce choices made out of fear, such as relying on old coping skills.

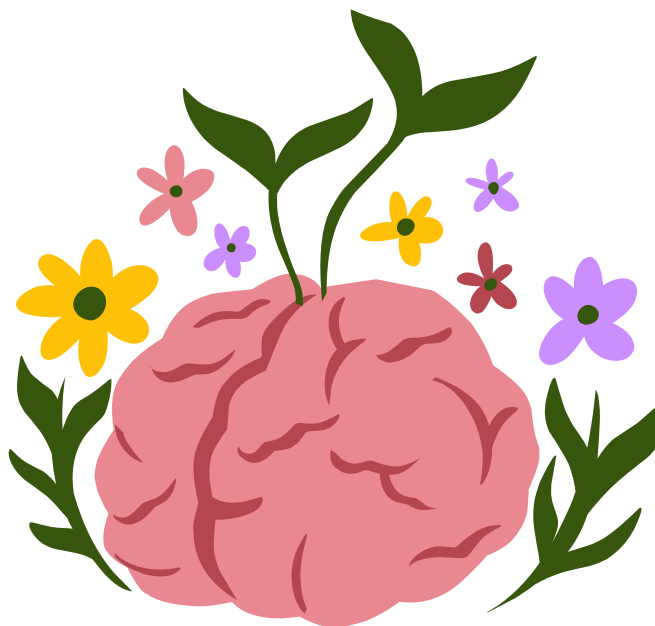


Values Living Improves EF

Research has shown us that ADHD waxes and wanes across a person's lifetime, at times disappearing almost completely.

This may be why some women don't even know they have ADHD until certain aspects of their lives become unmanageable. The goal then should be to create a life that minimizes your difficulties.

Creating a life that is more friendly to your neurodivergent brain and nervous system can result in increased energy, focus, and ease in your day-to-day activities. It can also lead to greater happiness and satisfaction, as you feel more in control of your environment and more aligned with your authentic self.



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 women with ADHD, 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

For women with ADHD, focusing on values-based living can offer a more fulfilling, purposeful, and grounded life. It emphasizes living in alignment with your core values, rather than merely pursuing specific goals.

Example:

Consider the goal of running a marathon. If solely focused on this goal, you may procrastinate or fear failure, thinking, "I could never do that." However, approaching running from a values-based perspective focuses on health, well-being, balance, and sustainability, silencing self-critical thoughts.

For women with ADHD, understanding values can be especially helpful when making choices or feeling overwhelmed. You can always be successful in living consistently with your values, even if you don't meet specific goals. This approach promotes a more authentic, fulfilling life.

Goals may change, but values endure as guiding principles to inform your decisions.



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

Values can help you set very meaningful and helpful goals in your life. It's like having the right compass. Let's say you have done some values work and determined that one of your values is to be loving. You can then begin to set goals by asking yourself the following questions:

- What is the smallest, simplest, easiest action/step you could take, in line with that value?
- What are larger actions/steps you could take?
- If that particular action is not possible, what else could you do that would still be living 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

.To demonstrate how values translate into goals, let's use the example of discovering "loving" as a value and applying the goal-setting process to different areas of your life. This 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

The ADHD brain is wired differently than the neurotypical brain, which can impact decision-making abilities. Several factors contribute to this difficulty in individuals with ADHD.

Factors Affecting Decision-Making in ADHD:

1. Working Memory Problems: People with ADHD may struggle to hold and manipulate information in their minds for short periods, making it challenging to compare and evaluate different options during decision-making.

2. Trouble Regulating Emotions: Managing emotions can be difficult for those with ADHD, which can in turn affect their decision-making process.

3. Difficulty Setting Priorities: Individuals with ADHD may have a unique perspective on what is important or relevant in a situation, complicating the prioritization of options and decision-making.

4. Analysis Paralysis: ADHD can make the decision-making process overwhelming, particularly when confronted with numerous options to choose from.

Understanding these challenges can help individuals with ADHD develop strategies to improve their decision-making abilities and navigate life more effectively.

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 there specific instances where you might feel pressured to act in accordance with values you were taught that differ from your own?

Reflect on the consequences of living out of alignment with your authentic values.



Individual Reflection

How has this impacted your mental and emotional well-being, relationships, or overall life satisfaction?

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.

Are there any steps you can take to help you prioritize your own values over external pressures?



Using Our Model to Support Yourself in Strengthening Values

You can use the handouts included in the workbook or our exercises in group to become more aware of your values.

Recognize the external pressures that are challenging your values. Is it work, family, or peers who don't align with your values? What can you do about these issues?

Evaluate the impact: Consider how each external pressure is affecting your ability to live according to your values. How badly are these factors impacting you?

Self Advocacy

Use self-advocacy to set boundaries with situations that are harmful: Establish limits to protect your values. For example, if friends or family have expectations of you that clash with your values, you may need to begin to set limits. Religion, childrearing, expectations of how you will work or lead your life all come to mind.

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Using Our Model to Support Yourself in Strengthening Values

Seek support: Surround yourself with people who share your values and who will support you in upholding them.

Practice self-care: Take care of yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Practice self-compassion: You are not alone, and you can be aware of the pressure and stress that comes with a values disconnect. Respond to yourself with kindness

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Self Compassion
Self Advocacy
Self Care
Self Awareness



Values to Reducing 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.

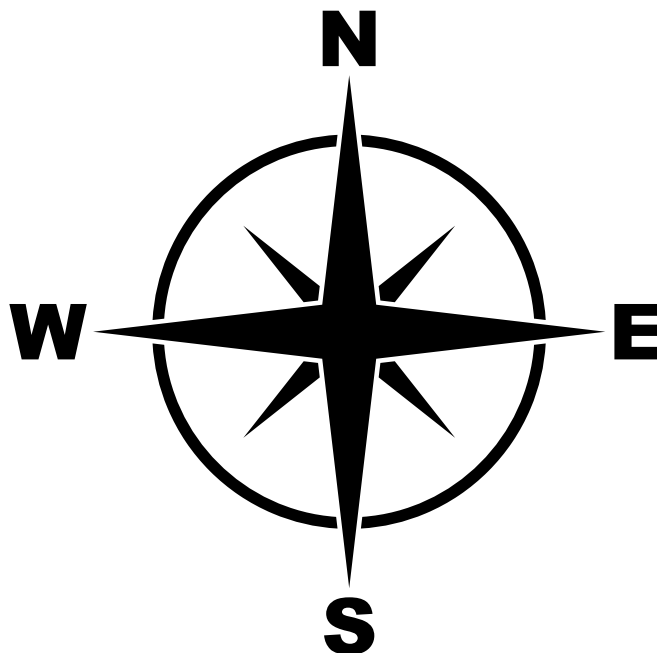
Neurotypical society often dictates a "right" and "wrong" way to be a human being through the imposition of "shoulds." In your case as an ADHD woman, these "shoulds" can lead to self-doubt, shame, and heightened self-consciousness.

Moreover, they significantly contribute to the development of old skills such as masking, perfectionism, hiding, and the experience of imposter 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 and reducing 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.



Group 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**



Group Exercises

Role Models Exercise: Think of people you admire or look up to, either in your personal life or from history. List their qualities and identify the values that resonate with you.

80th Birthday Exercise: Imagine it's your 80th birthday party, and your loved ones are giving speeches about your life. What would you like them to say? What values would you like to be remembered for?

Dissecting Discomfort: Reflect on situations that made you feel uncomfortable or upset. Identify the values that were potentially compromised in these scenarios, which can help you recognize what you hold dear.

The Tyranny of the Shoulds: Think about the concept of what you have internalized as ideas of what you should be doing and how that might have impacted you. Has that prevented you from living a life in line with your values?

What about your strengths?

Are there small ways you can start to live in a way that is more in line with your values and strengths now that you know this?

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 behaviour 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 or 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
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- 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 other's 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 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 wellbeing, 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
- Skilfulness: 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

List of Values

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