

Name: _____

Motivating Futures:

**Channelling your motivation to help
you thrive in a changing world of work**

Introducing the Motivating Futures Project

These materials have been developed as part of the **Motivating Futures Project**, a partnership between EY Foundation and the Institute for the Future of Work.

The world of work is changing fast, with new technologies and new demands for skills – and this means how people approach things changes too.

What their research has shown is that **how people are motivated is really key**.

What does this mean in practice for your future of work?

- **Creativity, initiative, collaboration and resilience** are becoming more important when AI and automation are changing work so quickly.
- **People show these traits when they are more ‘intrinsically’ or ‘internally’ motivated about their work.** Intrinsic and internal motivation is about doing stuff not because you get rewarded for it (or told off for not doing it!), but because you **really enjoy it**.
- Having these types of motivation helps develop the kinds of skills like creativity and collaboration that are becoming more important in an AI world - so will help you access **more rewarding work**.
- **Importantly – you can ‘learn’ to be motivated in this way.** That’s what this session is all about: digging into what really motivates you, and linking that to what you might want to do in the future.

Session Outline

There are three key parts to this session:

1. **Neuroplasticity and Growth Mindset**
Showing how our brains can grow – and why this is good news for feeling better about ourselves and our future
2. **Motivation mapping**
Looking at what really motivates you, and how that can be directed towards a better future
3. **Values reflection**
Reflecting on our core values, and why these are important as we think about what we want to do with our lives.

There’s then a further section looking at how to turn this into action.

Section 1: Neuroplasticity

Neuroplasticity might sound like a complex term reserved for scientists and researchers, but it's really about how our brains are able to grow and adapt.

Understanding neuroplasticity can empower us to take charge of our brain health, helping us to:

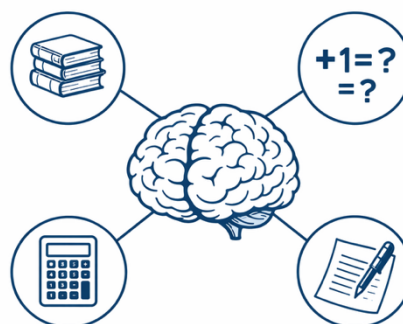
- Become more capable
- Feel better about ourselves
- Be more motivated about a wider range of things

Why do scientists say that the harder you work, the stronger your brain becomes?

1) Your brain is made up of billions of pathways. When we learn new things, we make these pathways stronger, a bit like building a muscle.



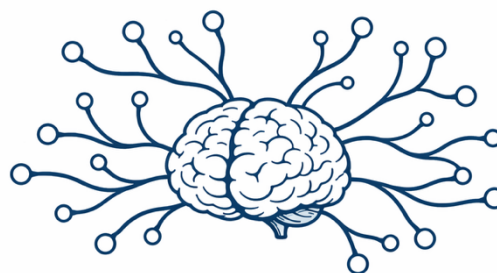
2) These pathways represent your habits, knowledge, and skills, which we can develop over time.



3) Stronger connections make our brain smarter. The more we travel a particular path, the more established it becomes. This is **neuroplasticity**.



4) When you use your brain, it grows healthier and gets smarter. It's not fixed. It can reorganise itself by forming new pathways.



Pause for a minute and think: If you had to draw a picture of your brain as a muscle, how would it look **now**, and how would you want it to look **in a year's time?**

Which pathways could do with clearing? Which are already really strong and healthy?

Again, this is about **habits, knowledge** and **skills**.

Maybe you're thinking, 'the pathways on problem-solving skills look great... but the ones on developing a habit of reflecting back on my work need a bit of attention.'

Imagine yourself in the future, doing a job that you love. What are some things that you think will really exercise your brain when you're doing this job?

Section 2: Motivation mapping

Getting our thinking habits, knowledge and skills in a good place is vital.

But we also need to reflect on our **motivations**. What do they look like now? How could they change?

What energises me when I think about my future career, and why...

Note: This is something related to your work in the future that gives leaves you feeling energetic and upbeat.

The things I *really* love doing, and get so into I forget everything else and lose track of time is, and why...

Note: What three things you would do without any payment or reward? Think of something where you get lost in the moment and lose track of time, or where you feel excited, or content.

The activity I love most of the world, and why...

Note: try to choose something *active* here – like ‘making music’, rather than something *passive* – like ‘listening to music’.

The top three things I love about this favourite activity are...

Note: For example, you might find it very peaceful, or pleasantly challenging, or enjoy the people you do it with. Or maybe you enjoy solving problems.

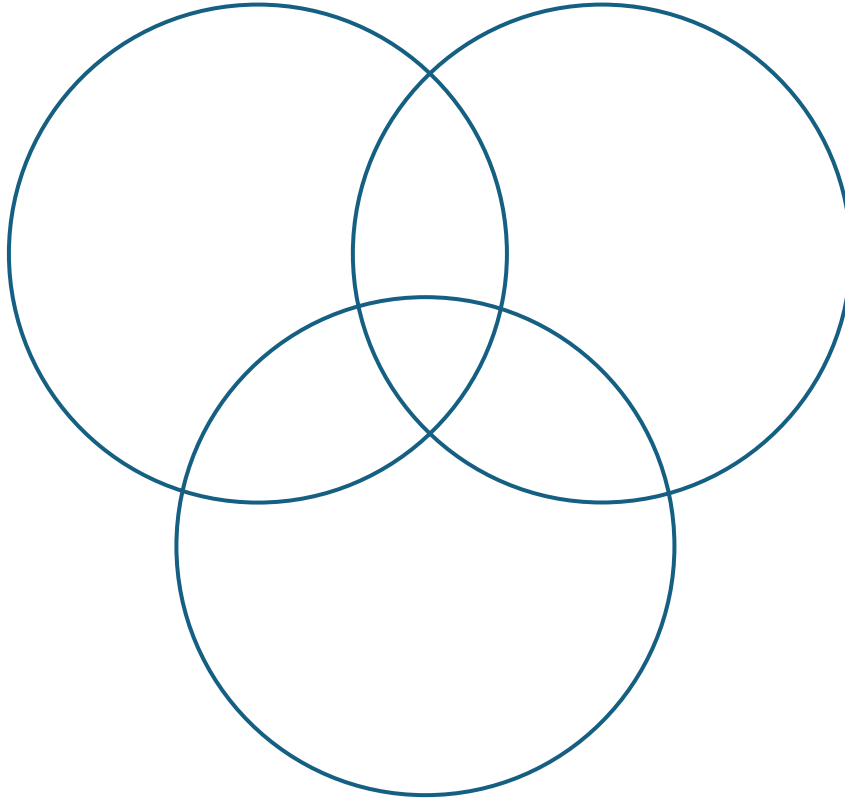
1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Connecting my motivations with my future work

Label each circle below with **one** of the things you included in the final square above – i.e. the **top three things** you liked about your **favourite activity**.



Now think: what job would match that sweet spot in the middle, covering all of your three top things? Would you consider any of them as a career? What about other jobs that hit the intersection of a couple of your top things?

List your options here.

This probably isn't something you can get in one go.

Ideally, you will come back to this over time as you reflect, and begin to home in on something that really does excite you for your future.

Section 3: Reflecting on our values

We've seen that understanding **neuroplasticity** helps us see that we can practice different ways of thinking.

We've also seen that **reflecting on what motivates us** can help us home in on what we'd *really* like to do in the future.

We are now going to connect this to our **values**.

If we can pull all these three things together, research has shown that we're much more likely to be happier, enjoy our work, be healthier and more resilient.

We'll explore values and motivation by thinking about the past, the present and the future.

Thinking about the past

In my life so far, I felt proudest of myself when...

In my life so far, I felt most content when...

In the last year, my happiest moment was...

Could you explain to someone what made these moments so special?

Thinking about the present

Below is a list of **values**. Values are like the code that we'd ideally want to live by, the things we'd like to see in ourselves, and the things we value in others.

If our **work matches our values, that is a great place to be**. But if we're to achieve that, we need to understand what our values are.

Circle the **3 most important** to you and write a few points underneath explaining why they are the most important.

**Authenticity Achievement Adventure Authority Autonomy Balance
Beauty Boldness Compassion Challenge Community Competency
Contribution Creativity Curiosity Determination Fairness Friendships
Fun Growth Happiness Honesty Humor Influence Justice Kindness
Knowledge Leadership Learning Love Loyalty Meaningful Work
Openness Optimism Peace Pleasure Recognition Reputation Respect
Responsibility Security Self-Respect Service Spirituality Stability
Success Trustworthiness Wealth Wisdom**

The most important values to me are...

1. _____ because:

2. _____ because:

3. _____ because:

Thinking about the present

Now that we've thought about what is important to us, can we link this to how we work?

Can you write down three ways that your work at school or college – whether that be in your subjects, or in extracurricular stuff - will help you move towards living out the values that are important to you and what you are motivated about?



Can you write down three ways this session could help you move towards living out the values that are important to you and what you are motivated about?



Thinking about the future

What we want to do now is think about how this will lead forwards to our future, to the work that we would love to be doing – work that aligns with our values and with what motivates us.

My future career will help me to live my values because...



Sidebar - Deliberate Practice

Just for a little breather – let's think about the idea of 'deliberate practice.'

We often think getting better at something just takes time.

But time alone isn't enough.

Groundbreaking research on expert performers – from musicians and footballers to doctors, nurses and mechanics – shows that **people improve most when they practice in a very specific way**. It's not about doing more. It's about doing it differently.

Scientists call this **deliberate practice**. You can think of it as a recipe for deep learning and getting better at doing something. Even short sessions (30-45 minutes) can make a huge difference if done right.

Mastery of a skill doesn't come from repetition – it comes from doing hard things, on purpose. To grow, you have to operate just outside your comfort zone - not so hard you panic, not so easy you coast. The sweet spot is: "This is a bit of a stretch... but I can do it with effort."

Practice with full focus - distraction kills deep learning. The state of being fully focused on an activity has been called 'flow'. Even 25 minutes of focused, undistracted work can outperform hours of multitasking.

Getting regular feedback is key to improvement. The best learners seek quick feedback, even if it stings—whether from a peer, a coach, or a self-check.

Section 4 – Putting this into action

My Career Story / Planfulness

Researchers tracked thousands of young people and found that spending just 30 minutes turning your **life story into a short, written plan** made them *more confident and proactive* about their next career steps. We can see this as a ‘career story,’ but also about developing a habit of ‘planfulness’ – where you spend time actively thinking about your future.

The two most important ingredients for success were:

- Writing the plan down
- Sharing it with a peer.

In the next 5 years, what is the number 1 thing you want to achieve?

If your lifetime, what is the number 1 thing you want to achieve?

‘Planfulness’ – career construction

Think about your values, and your motivations and your own future of work...

Can you write **one action** you could take that would help you move towards what is important to you?

Today

This week

This month

And finally...

Today we have seen that that **identifying with what we do, caring about it, aligning it with what we really care about**, matters a lot.

Hopefully this session has given you time to reflect and tune in to what matters to you.

These exercises have been shown to have powerful and long-lasting effects.

However, it's important to remember that **today's session is really just the beginning**. To maximise the positive impacts of this work, we need to check in with ourselves and what matters to us on a regular basis, not least because our values and identities change over time.

To aim for the best change, **set aside 15 minutes a week**, or an hour every month, to sit down, check in with yourself, return to these questions and prompts, and make sure you're moving towards the things you value. You may want to do this with your mentor, or someone else you trust.

Remember:

Your beliefs become your thoughts, your thoughts become your words, your words become your actions, your actions become your habits, your habits become your values, and your values become your destiny.

Mahatma Gandhi – leader, revolutionary and guru.