

WORD REFLECTION: FUTURE

A small word. A big conversation.

Before you go any further, look at the letters below and notice the very first word, image, feeling or idea your mind supplies.



What came to your mind?

The intended word is: FUTURE

An incomplete word gives the mind room to predict, associate and make meaning. Your response may be influenced by mood, recent experiences, hopes, fears, memories or simply the pattern your brain recognised first. The useful part is not whether you guessed the intended word. It is noticing what your response opens up for reflection.

What possibility would you like to make space for?

A possibility does not need to be a major goal. It might be asking for support, resting differently, reconnecting with somebody, trying something new, setting a boundary, changing a routine, or simply allowing yourself to imagine that something could be different.

Notice the difference between 'I must make this happen' and 'I would like to make some room for this possibility.' The second leaves space for uncertainty, flexibility and self-understanding.

WHAT DOES 'FUTURE' BRING UP FOR YOU?

Thinking about the future can create hope, excitement, curiosity, pressure, uncertainty, grief or fear - sometimes several at once. Rather than judging your reaction, begin by noticing it.

When I think about my future, the strongest feeling I notice is...

The thought that keeps returning is...

Something I hope there will be more room for is...

Something I would like to carry less of is...

Hopes and fears can sit together

You do not have to force positive thinking. It can be more helpful to acknowledge both sides: I am worried about what might happen, and there is also something I want to move towards. This allows uncertainty to exist without asking it to make every decision for you.

What is within my influence?

Your actions, boundaries, requests, routines, preparation and choices may be within your influence. Other people's reactions, the past and many external events are not. Returning attention to influence can make the future feel less like one enormous problem that has to be solved all at once.

FROM POSSIBILITY TO ONE SMALL STEP

Choose one possibility from your reflections. The aim is not to create a perfect life plan. It is to identify a next step small enough to be realistic.

The possibility I want to make space for:

Why this matters to me:

One small action I could take:

What might get in the way?

What support, adjustment or resource could help?

A grounding pause

If future-focused thinking starts to feel too much, bring your attention back to now. Notice where your body is supported. Look for three things you can see, listen for two sounds and take one slower breath if that feels comfortable. You do not have to solve your whole future in this moment.

A MESSAGE FROM MAGGIE

The future can feel exciting, uncertain, frightening or completely out of reach. Sometimes we put so much pressure on ourselves to know what comes next that we miss what is happening in front of us.

This exercise is not about predicting your future or finding the 'right' answer. It is about becoming curious about what your mind brings forward, what matters to you and where you may want to create a little more space.

You do not need a ten-year plan. Sometimes meaningful movement begins with one honest thought, one conversation, one boundary or one manageable next step.

Use these pages in whatever way works for you. Come back later and see whether your answers have changed. They are allowed to change as you do.

Maggie Learoyd MNCPS - Space to Breathe Therapy

THERAPEUTIC NOTES & FURTHER READING

Person-centred reflection: this exercise encourages curiosity and personal meaning rather than imposing an interpretation. Carl Rogers' person-centred approach places value on empathy, acceptance and the person's capacity for growth.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT): values-based reflection can help people identify what matters and consider small actions in that direction while making room for difficult thoughts and feelings.

Suggested reading: Carl R. Rogers, *On Becoming a Person*; Russ Harris, *The Happiness Trap*; Steven C. Hayes, *A Liberated Mind*.

This resource is for reflection and psychoeducation. It is not a diagnostic tool and does not replace individual medical or mental-health care.