

Explore



Reflection  
and  
Resilience



# Values Based Self Affirmation

A self-help tool

## Introduction

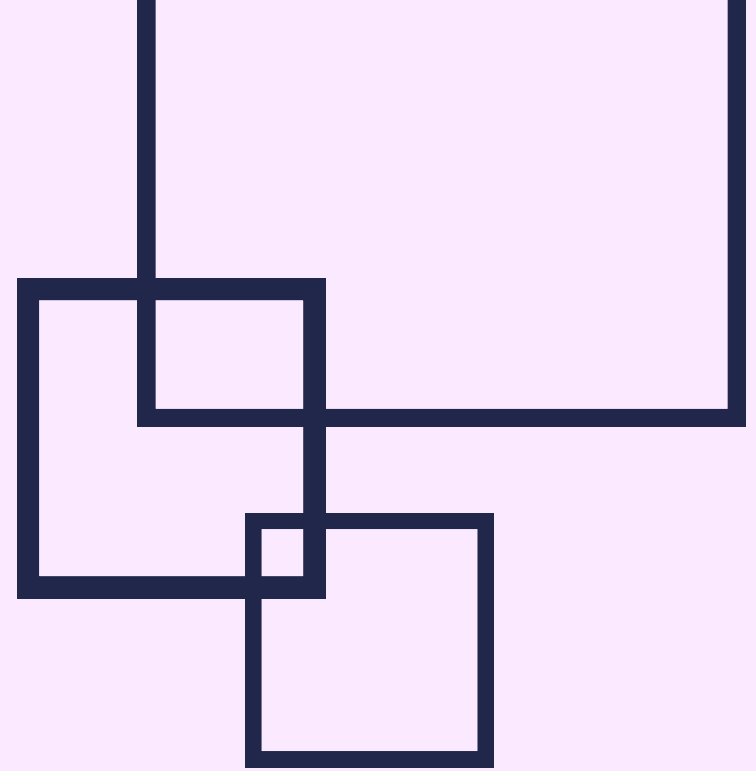
Values Based Self Affirmation (VBSA) is a widely used way of helping students get in touch with the things that they are important to them. You'll need to pick 3 or 4 items from a list and spend about 5 to 10 minutes writing about each. Studies have shown that this is an effective way to boost sense of self-worth and supports long-term positive change and achievement (Goyer et al., 2017; Jordt et al., 2017; Sherman et al., 2021).

## This tool is designed to...

- Boost your sense of self-worth.
- Increase your resilience to prejudice.
- Honour the good things we do which we take for granted.

## Consider using this tool if you...

- Feel bad about yourself for whatever reason.
- Feel that society undervalues you.
- Need to get back in touch with what matters to you.



# How to use this tool

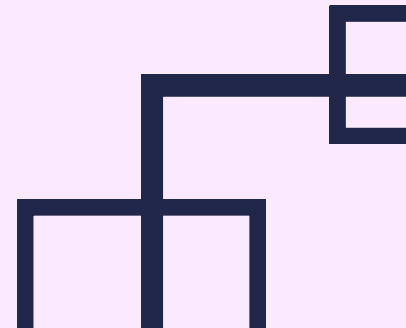
**First, identify the things you do that matter to you because they express your values.**

Look through the list of items on the next page and pick 3 or 4 that are important for you.

These should be things that you feel good about doing because they express your values and sense of who you are. How often you do them doesn't matter.

Importantly: while they should be things that you feel good about, they don't need to be things that you are especially 'good' at doing. Ability isn't a factor. The crucial thing is that these are things that you actually do.

If you can't see the things that are important for you there, just add yours to the list and use them.



<b>Nature and Environment</b>		<b>Charities</b>	
<b>Family</b>		<b>Political campaigns</b>	
<b>Friends</b>		<b>Independence</b>	
<b>Faith / Religion</b>		<b>Integrity</b>	
<b>Art and Culture</b>		<b>Courage</b>	
<b>Creativity</b>		<b>Compassion and Kindness</b>	
<b>Sports and Fitness</b>		<b>Committment</b>	
<b>Humour</b>		<b>Education</b>	

## **Second, write about the things you've chosen.**

For each thing you've picked take 5 – 10 minutes to write about them. This writing is for your eyes only. You don't need to show this to anyone, unless you want to. This means you can be as honest and personal as you like. And, as this isn't an academic essay, it doesn't matter how you express yourself.

It is completely up to you what you say about the things you've chosen. You might describe the activity, say when you do it and why you do and what it means to you. You might describe particular instances that stand out for you as being especially important. It's completely up to you.

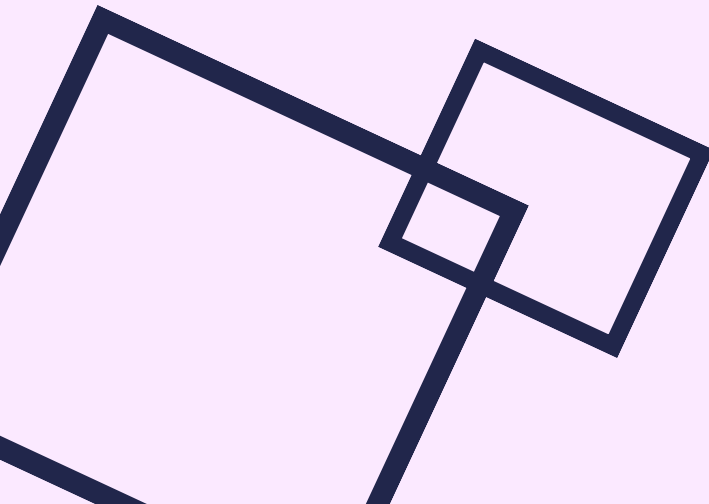


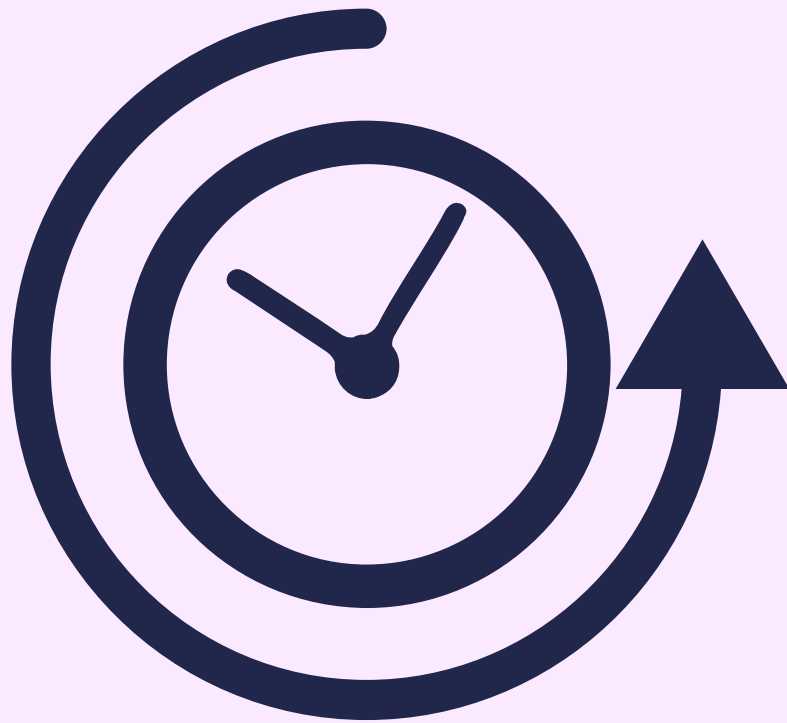
## Some aspects to consider:

- What do I do? (describe the activities and what is involved)
- Where do I do this?
- Who do I do this with?
- Why / how is this important to me?
- Who benefits and how?
- What is the higher purpose / value that this expresses?
- What can I imagine myself doing in the future in relation to this activity?

## Some sentence starters to get you going:

- X is an important part of my life because....
- I got involved in this through...
- Doing X / being X involves ...
- An occasion that really stands out for me was when ...
- Something that I'll always remember about what I did was...
- Something I did that makes me feel proud of myself was...
- I think I've grown through doing this by becoming / learning / developing ...
- The way that I bring my personality to this is by...
- The way that I do this shows that ... are strengths for me.
- X is a powerful part of my identity because...





### **Third, review and repeat.**

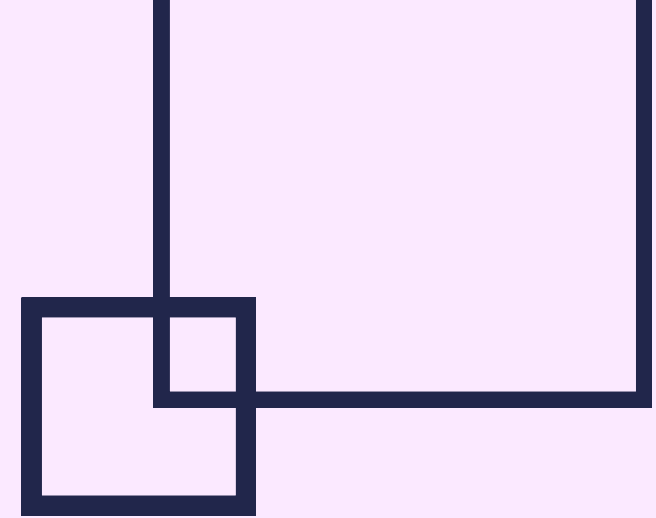
Ideally you should repeat the exercise a few times (say 3 or 4 times) a year. This is an opportunity to re-review what you've written and to expand upon it, drawing out new aspects and enriching the picture with more details. Of course, you can also add in new topics as well.

VBSA is a technique that can help buffer against stress, so you may want to use this exercise as part of your strategies to cope with challenging times in your life, for example University deadlines, or employability tasks.

# Pause, Reflect, Act

- What are the key insights you've taken from this self-help guide?
- What actions do you need to take now to build on this exercise?
- Who could help you with this?
- Are there other related self-help tools you'd like to use as well?

NB: Because everyone is different, no one solution is a magic bullet, so please also look at our other self-help tools and use the ones that work best for you.





# References and Resources

- Goyer, J. P., Garcia, J., Purdie-Vaughns, V., Binning, K. R., Cook, J. E., Reeves, S. L., Apfel, N., Taborsky-Barba, S., Sherman, D. K., & Cohen, G. L. (2017). Self-affirmation facilitates minority middle schoolers' progress along college trajectories. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences -PNAS*, 114(29), 7594-7599. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1617923114>
- Jordt, H., Eddy, S. L., Brazil, R., Lau, I., Mann, C., Brownell, S. E., King, K., & Freeman, S. (2017). Values affirmation intervention reduces achievement gap between underrepresented minority and white students in introductory biology classes. *CBE Life Sciences Education*, 16(3), ar41. <https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.16-12-0351>
- Sherman, D. K., Lokhande, M., Müller, T., & Cohen, G. L. (2021). Selfaffirmation interventions. In G. M. Walton & A. J. Crum (Eds.), *Handbook of wise interventions: How social psychology can help people change* (pp. 63–99). The Guilford Press.

If you are a member of staff from another educational organisation and want to use a limited number of our self-help tools with your students, we'd love to hear from you and share good practice. We'd ask that you retain references to University of Huddersfield as a matter of courtesy and acknowledge the other sources we've used. Thank you.