



Meaning-Based Motivation Map

A gentle, ACT-informed tool for finding direction when motivation feels blocked.

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Important note

This resource is intended to support understanding and good practice in neuro-inclusive workplace design. It provides general guidance and does not constitute legal, medical, or clinical advice. Organisations should apply the principles in line with their own policies, regulatory obligations, and professional judgement.

A calm orientation

This is not a motivation hack.
It's not a discipline tool.
It's not here to push you into action.

This map exists for moments when:

- motivation has gone quiet
- energy is inconsistent
- pressure makes things worse
- "just try harder" isn't working

It's designed to help you **re-orient**, not optimise.

You can use this slowly.
You can use only one part.
You can stop as soon as something feels heavy.

Direction matters more than drive.

1. A reframe before we start

(this part matters)

Blocked motivation is often framed as:

- avoidance
- procrastination
- lack of discipline

But very often, it's actually:

- **low nervous system safety**
- **unclear meaning**
- **values without capacity**
- **too many "shoulds" crowding out choice**

This tool assumes:

You are not lazy.
Your system is conserving energy until something feels *worth* the cost.

2. Motivation vs orientation

A useful distinction:

- **Motivation** = energy to act
- **Orientation** = knowing what matters *enough* to act toward

Many ND people don't lack motivation.

They lack a **north star** that feels real, personal, and safe to approach.

This map focuses on **orientation first**.

3. Start where you are (no fixing)

Before looking forward, gently notice:

Right now, do you feel more:

- overwhelmed
- shut down
- numb
- scattered
- tired but restless

You don't need to change this.

This is not a barrier... it's **context**.

Any direction that ignores state will feel unreachable.

4. What still matters... even a little?

Instead of asking:

"What should I care about?"

Try asking:

"What still matters to me, even when I'm exhausted?"

This might be:

- being kind (to yourself or others)
- honesty
- stability
- creativity
- learning
- contribution

- rest
- fairness
- care
- integrity

You don't need a long list.
One word is enough.

If nothing comes up... that's allowed too.
Sometimes meaning is temporarily offline.

5. Meaning ≠ goals

Meaning is not:

- achievement
- productivity
- success metrics

Meaning is more like:

- a **direction you'd recognise**
- a **way of moving**, not an outcome

For example:

- “Connection” instead of “answer all messages”
- “Care” instead of “finish everything”
- “Stability” instead of “push through”

You're not aiming to *arrive*.
You're choosing a **heading**.

6. One tiny, low-cost expression

(only if it feels possible)

If a value or direction is present, you might ask:

“What is the smallest, least expensive way this could show up today?”

Examples:

- If the value is **care** → drink water, not solve everything
- If the value is **honesty** → admit you're tired

- If the value is **connection** → sit near someone, not engage deeply
- If the value is **learning** → read one paragraph, not a chapter

If nothing feels affordable... that's information, not failure.

7. When motivation feels completely blocked

Sometimes the honest answer is:

"I don't have capacity for meaning right now."

That doesn't mean you've lost your values.

It usually means:

- your nervous system is prioritising safety or recovery
- energy is being conserved
- rest *is* the value being enacted

Choosing containment over action can be a values-aligned choice.

8. What often kills motivation (quietly)

You might notice motivation disappears when:

- everything is framed as obligation
- there's no choice in *how* something is done
- outcomes matter more than experience
- effort isn't acknowledged
- rest is conditional

This isn't a mindset problem.

It's a **design problem**.

9. You can revisit this map anytime

This is not a one-time exercise.

Meaning shifts with:

- health
- burnout

- life phase
- safety
- context

Coming back to this map doesn't mean you failed before.

It means you're listening.

A closing permission

You don't need to feel motivated to be worthy.
You don't need to force momentum to be valid.

Sometimes the most regulated, self-respecting move is:

- slowing down
- re-orienting
- choosing meaning over pressure

This map isn't here to get you moving fast.

It's here to help you move **true...**
or to rest until that becomes possible again.

Use what fits.
Leave the rest.

