



# Values-Based Micro-Planning (ACT)

*Tiny, values-aligned actions that restore direction without pressure*

**By Neal Glendenning**

**Contact: [info@theneuroinclusionproject.co.uk](mailto:info@theneuroinclusionproject.co.uk)**

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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.

Traditional planning assumes:

- stable motivation
- linear energy
- consistent executive function

ACT-informed micro-planning assumes none of that.

Instead of asking “*What should I do?*”

it asks “*What matters... and what’s the smallest way I can move toward it right now?*”

This shift reduces paralysis, shame, and burnout... while restoring a sense of agency.

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## What values-based micro-planning is (and isn’t)

It is:

- orientation, not optimisation
- meaning before motivation
- action without certainty
- flexible and revisable
- compatible with low energy days

It is not:

- long-term goal planning
- productivity pressure
- outcome-focused
- all-or-nothing
- dependent on feeling “ready”

You don’t plan because you feel capable.

You plan so you can *act gently even when you don’t*.

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## ACT foundation (plain language)

In Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT):

- **Values** = how you want to *be* (not what you want to achieve)
- **Actions** = small behaviours that express those values
- **Success** = showing up in alignment, not completing a list

Values give direction.

Micro-actions create movement.

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## Step 1. Identify the *active value* (30–60 seconds)

You don't need a life philosophy.

Choose **one value that matters today**, such as:

- care
- honesty
- steadiness
- connection
- curiosity
- responsibility
- kindness
- learning
- integrity
- rest

Helpful prompt:

“In this moment, what kind of person do I want to be... even a little?”

That's your anchor.

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## Step 2. Translate the value into *direction*, not outcome

Avoid outcomes like:

- “Finish the report”
- “Be productive”
- “Get everything done”

Instead, ask:

“If I were acting in line with this value, what direction would I move in?”

Examples:

- **Care** → reduce harm / increase gentleness
- **Responsibility** → take one step toward clarity
- **Connection** → signal presence
- **Integrity** → do the next honest thing
- **Learning** → engage with one question

Direction matters more than completion.

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### Step 3. Choose a *micro-action* (2 minutes or less)

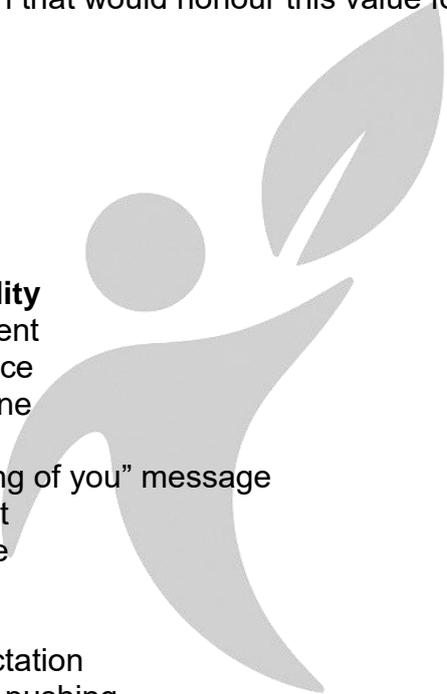
A micro-action is:

- small enough to do even if tired
- specific and concrete
- stoppable
- low-risk

Prompt:

“What is the smallest action that would honour this value for the next 5–10 minutes?”

Examples:

- **Value: Care**
    - Drink water
    - Lower the lights
    - Sit down
  - **Value: Responsibility**
    - Open the document
    - Write one sentence
    - Check the deadline
  - **Value: Connection**
    - Send one “thinking of you” message
    - Make eye contact
    - Sit near someone
  - **Value: Integrity**
    - Name a limit
    - Clarify one expectation
    - Pause instead of pushing
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If it feels “too small to count,” it’s probably the right size.

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### Step 4. Time-limit, don’t task-limit

Set a **short container**, not a completion goal.

Examples:

- “I’ll do this for 5 minutes.”
- “I’ll try one paragraph.”
- “I’ll stay with this until the timer ends.”

Stopping on time is a success.

ACT cares about **willingness**, not endurance.

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## Step 5. Redefine success (this matters)

Success is **not**:

- finishing
- feeling motivated
- doing it perfectly
- doing more than planned

Success **is**:

- showing up in alignment
- choosing direction over avoidance
- acting without waiting for certainty

Even if you stop early...  
you still acted as *the person you want to be*.

That counts.

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## When motivation is zero

Use this reframe:

“I don’t need motivation to take a values-aligned step.  
I need willingness.”

Willingness sounds like:

- “I don’t want to do this... and I can do one small part anyway.”
- “This feels uncomfortable... and it matters.”
- “I can carry discomfort for 5 minutes.”

ACT doesn’t remove discomfort.

It helps you **move with it instead of being ruled by it**.

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## When avoidance shows up (without judgement)

Avoidance is not failure.  
It's information.

Instead of "Why can't I do this?"  
try:

"What am I protecting myself from right now?"

Then choose a micro-action that **respects that protection**, rather than fighting it.

Example:

- If you're avoiding because of overwhelm → choose *containment*, not progress
- If you're avoiding because of fear → choose *exposure*, but tiny
- If you're avoiding because of exhaustion → choose *rest as a value-aligned action*

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## Values-based planning on low-capacity days

On hard days, values may look different.

- **Responsibility** → asking for help
- **Care** → stopping early
- **Integrity** → saying "I can't today"
- **Connection** → staying regulated, not engaging

ACT does not demand productivity.  
It supports **coherent self-respect**.

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## A simple daily micro-planning script

You can reuse this verbatim:

"Today, the value I want to act from is \_\_\_\_\_.  
The smallest action that reflects that is \_\_\_\_\_.  
I'll do it for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes.  
Whatever happens after that is okay."

That's the plan.

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## Common traps to avoid

- Turning values into pressure
- Using values to shame yourself
- Planning too far ahead
- Treating micro-actions as tests
- Escalating demands when energy returns

Values are **guides**, not weapons.

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## A final reminder

Values-based micro-planning is not about fixing yourself.

It's about **staying oriented when things are hard.**

You don't need clarity about the future.

You don't need consistent motivation.

You don't need to feel ready.

You just need:

- direction
- permission to go small
- willingness to act imperfectly

That's enough to keep moving... without losing yourself.

