# Keeping Well After Living by Your Values

THE TALKING THERAPIES UK SELF-HELP SERIES



# Keeping Well After Living by Your Values

## Staying on track, protecting your progress, and maintaining a meaningful life

A self-help workbook · 6 modules · about 6 weeks

**TALKING THERAPIES UK**

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First edition, 2026.

This workbook accompanies the Keeping Well After Living by Your Values programme on the Talking Therapies UK self-help platform. Its text is drawn from the programme and is kept current with it: whenever the programme changes, the workbook is set again.

Revision 5. This printing was set on 9 November 2026 from the programme as it stood that day.

A note on using this workbook. It offers self-help based on established psychological approaches for difficulties of mild to moderate severity. It is not a substitute for assessment or treatment by a qualified professional and is not designed for use in a crisis. The examples in it are fictional; no real person appears in them. If you are worried about your safety, or your difficulties are getting worse, the page headed “When self-help is not enough” says where to turn.

Set in Poppins and Roboto, the Talking Therapies UK typefaces.

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# How to use this workbook

This guided self-help programme is designed to help you maintain and build upon the momentum you gained through values-based living. Drawing on evidence-based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) principles, it provides practical tools to navigate future setbacks, handle obstacles, and stay firmly anchored to what matters most to you. Across a structured series of modules, you will develop a personalised relapse prevention plan to support your long-term psychological wellbeing within the NHS step-2 care pathway.

This workbook is the written form of the Keeping Well After Living by Your Values programme on the Talking Therapies UK self-help platform. It follows the programme module by module: each part of the book is one module, and each chapter is one piece of the module's teaching, set in the order the programme presents it.

Read the chapters of a part in order, then turn to the worksheets that follow them. The worksheets are the part of the work that changes things, so give them the time they ask for and come back to them as the weeks go on. You may copy or print the worksheets for your own use, as often as you need.

Most people work through one module a week, which takes the whole programme about 6 weeks. Go at the pace that suits you: a module done properly is worth more than two done quickly.

The check-in questionnaires let you see how things are changing. Complete each one when you reach it, note the date and your total, and compare it with the last.

### When self-help is not enough

- If you are in danger now, or have seriously harmed yourself, call 999 or go to your nearest accident and emergency department.
- If you need help urgently but it is not an emergency, call NHS 111 or contact your GP surgery.
- Samaritans are there day and night, every day of the year: call 116 123 free from any phone.
- If you would rather not talk, text SHOUT to 85258 for free, confidential support at any hour.
- If your difficulties are getting worse as you work through this book, or you find yourself thinking about ending your life, stop and speak to your GP or a mental health professional. A workbook can be a good start, and some difficulties need more help than a book can give.

### What this workbook will help you to do

- This module helps you review your values-based actions and acknowledge personal achievements. You will identify key patterns of success and build confidence in your ability to sustain positive behavioural changes.
- You will learn to identify your unique physical, emotional, and behavioural early warning signs of stress or stagnation. This enables you to spot vulnerability windows early and intervene before unhelpful avoidance habits return.

- Using core CBT and ACT strategies, you will explore how to manage difficult thoughts, painful feelings, and challenging life circumstances without abandoning your values. You will practice psychological flexibility techniques to stay committed when things get tough.
- This module focuses on adjusting your goals to fit changing life circumstances and energy levels. You will learn how to balance big-picture values with manageable daily micro-actions to avoid burnout.
- You will examine your social connections, routines, and physical surroundings to ensure they actively support your chosen values. Strategies for communicating your needs to others and seeking encouragement will be explored.
- You will synthesize your learning into a clear, accessible, written relapse prevention plan detailing immediate coping steps, helpful reminders, and self-compassion practices. This empowers you to self-manage future challenges independently.

PART 1

# Reflecting on Your Journey and Progress

*Recognising how far you have come*

CHAPTER 1

# Welcome to Module 1 – Reflecting on Your Journey

You've already taken the first steps towards living in line with your values, and this first module is all about looking back to see how far you've come.

In the first few weeks of the programme you set up a personal values map, identified actions that felt authentic, and started to notice how those actions made you feel. You may have experienced small victories, like choosing to walk instead of drive, or larger ones, such as standing up for yourself at work. Whatever the scale, each step is evidence that you can change.

This module will help you:

- Review the values-based actions you've taken and the outcomes they produced.
- Identify patterns of success and the personal strengths that enabled those successes.
- Build confidence that you can sustain positive behavioural changes, even when life gets busy or stressful.

You'll also get a chance to celebrate your progress. Research shows that acknowledging achievements boosts motivation and reinforces the neural pathways that support new habits (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). So, as you read through this module, pause to give yourself credit for the effort you've already invested.

**A NOTE**

*Remember: progress is not linear. Some weeks will feel more successful than others, and that's perfectly normal. Treat setbacks as learning opportunities rather than failures.*

"I realised that every small win was a step towards the life I wanted." – Participant, 2023

By the end of this module you'll have a clearer picture of your growth and a stronger foundation for the next modules, where we'll build a personalised relapse-prevention plan and equip you with tools to navigate future challenges.

CHAPTER 2

# Welcome to Keeping Well: Orientation and Honouring Your Starting Point

Welcome to 'Keeping Well After Living by Your Values'. As you embark on this six-part guided self-help programme, it is helpful to pause and orient yourself to where you are right now. This programme has been designed within the NHS step-2 psychological therapy framework to help you maintain, consolidate, and build upon the vital momentum you have already gained through your earlier work. Over the coming weeks, we will draw on evidence-based principles from both Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). Together, these approaches provide a powerful toolkit: CBT helps us understand how our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours interact, while ACT encourages us to move towards what truly matters to us, even when difficult thoughts and feelings show up along the way. In this first module, titled 'Reflecting on Your Journey and Progress', our primary focus is on recognising how far you have come. Often, when we are busy working hard to improve our mental wellbeing, we rush from one goal to the next without pausing to look in the rearview mirror. We tend to focus heavily on what is left to achieve, or on the days when things feel difficult, while completely overlooking the significant shifts we have already made in our daily lives. This first block is dedicated to changing that pattern. By taking a deliberate, structured look back at your journey so far, you lay a solid foundation for long-term emotional resilience. Relapse prevention—or as we prefer to frame it in values-based work, 'staying well'—is not about achieving a state of permanent happiness or never experiencing a low day again. Rather, it is about cultivating a deep, experiential awareness of your own capacity for change. When you can clearly see the evidence of how you navigated past obstacles and aligned your daily actions with your core values, your confidence naturally grows. This confidence is not based on wishful thinking or forced positive affirmations; it is grounded in your own lived experience and genuine achievements. As you read through this module, we invite you to adopt an attitude of gentle curiosity and self-compassion. You do not need to judge your progress or compare your journey to anyone else's. Your path is entirely your own, shaped by your unique values, circumstances, and strengths.

To begin our reflection, let us explore why human beings so easily forget their own progress. Evolutionary psychology teaches us that our brains have a built-in 'negativity bias'. For our ancestors, scanning the environment for threats, mistakes, and problems was a matter of survival. Remembering where the predator hid was far more important for staying alive than remembering a pleasant sunset. While this ancient wiring kept us safe on the savannah, it can work against us in modern psychological recovery. Today, our brains automatically latch onto setbacks, frustrations, and remaining difficulties while filtering out moments of success, comfort, and value-aligned action. If you have ever reached the end of a week where you successfully engaged in several meaningful activities, only to fixate on the one moment you felt anxious or stayed in bed, you have experienced this negativity bias in action. In CBT, we call this process 'mental filtering' or 'disqualifying the positive'. We inadvertently discount our achievements by telling ourselves things like, 'Anyone could have done that,' or 'It doesn't count because I still felt nervous.' ACT adds another layer to this understanding: it teaches us that our minds are constantly generating stories,

evaluations, and commentaries. When the mind tells us, 'You haven't really made any progress; you're just back where you started,' it is offering a thought, not an objective medical fact. When we treat these passing mental narratives as absolute truths, we inadvertently rob ourselves of the nourishment that comes from acknowledging our hard work. Recognising how far you have come requires an intentional, conscious effort to override this default evolutionary setting. It means actively gathering the data of your own success—not to inflate your ego, but to provide your nervous system with accurate information about your resilience, capability, and growth. This process of intentional reflection helps to rewire our relationship with our own history, transforming past efforts into a reliable anchor for the future.

**A NOTE**

*Remember that noticing your progress is a skill, not a personality trait. If your mind immediately tries to dismiss your achievements, gently thank your mind for its input, and return your attention to the concrete facts of what you have done differently over recent weeks.*

Let us look at a practical, everyday example of how this intentional reflection unfolds in the life of someone moving through the step-2 guided self-help pathway.

Sarah had recently completed a series of guided self-help sessions focused on overcoming social anxiety to live more in line with her value of connection and community. At the start of her journey, answering a phone call or attending a brief team meeting at work felt terrifying, often resulting in days of avoidance. When asked in Module 1 to reflect on her progress, Sarah's initial thought was, 'I still get nervous before every meeting, so I haven't really changed.' However, when she paused to review her activity logs and values diary, a very different picture emerged. Over the past three months, Sarah had attended twelve team meetings, spoken up at least once in eight of them, and accepted an invitation to have coffee with a colleague—something she had not done in over two years. While the physiological anxiety was still occasionally present, her behavioural response to it had transformed completely. She was no longer letting anxiety dictate whether she lived out her value of authentic connection. By reviewing these specific, concrete milestones, Sarah shifted her perspective from 'I am still anxious' to 'I am learning to carry anxiety with me while doing what matters.' This recognition did not make the anxiety vanish overnight, but it fundamentally changed her relationship with her progress, giving her a renewed sense of agency and self-trust as she entered this maintenance phase of her journey.

As Sarah's experience illustrates, recognising progress is rarely about the complete absence of difficult thoughts or feelings. Instead, it is about noticing the subtle, profound shifts in how we respond to those experiences. When you look back at your own journey over the past weeks or months, you might notice changes in several key areas. You might see changes in your awareness—such as catching yourself when you are starting to slide back into old avoidance habits. You might see changes in your flexibility—such as noticing that even when a low mood visits, you no longer automatically cancel all your plans. Or you might see tangible changes in your actions—such as having difficult conversations, taking better care of your physical health, or dedicating time to hobbies and relationships that nourish your spirit. All of these shifts, no matter how small they may seem to your critical mind, are vital markers of psychological flexibility and values-based living. They represent real, physical changes in your behavioural repertoire, built through repetition, courage, and commitment. As you move forward through this introductory

block, take a moment to appreciate the courage it took to engage with psychological therapy in the first place. Showing up for yourself, week after week, confronting uncomfortable emotions, and experimenting with new ways of living is courageous work. Acknowledging this effort is not self-indulgence; it is an essential clinical step in reinforcing the neural pathways of adaptive, value-driven behaviour.