

Master the Art of Being your Unique Self

Supporting you to make better use of your unique strengths
and overcome challenges in the workplace



WORKBOOK

Important information

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Hello!

Thank you for downloading this workbook.

You have already taken an important first step.

You already know that something in your life needs to change. You may have been getting by at work; coping, doing what you need to do to make it through each day. But now feels like the right time to take action.

I share my experiences and suggest potential actions that may help you. And I ask a few questions to help you think more about your own situation.

I created this workbook using my own lived-experiences navigating various workplaces over a 25 year career. But we are all different. We all have lots of things going on in our lives that make our situation unique to us.

My intention is that this workbook will help guide you towards identifying the next steps that are most helpful for you right now.

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1 What brings you here?

Before going any further, take time to recognise what brought you here. Knowing what you need to do starts with knowing where you are now.



1.1 What is the main reason you decided to download this workbook?

1.2 What makes now a good time for you to do something about this?

2 What are you really good at?

We each possess innate strengths that make us unique.

Natural talents that we use at work and in our personal lives. But we may not realise that we possess these strengths. Completing tasks using our talents are easy for us to do, we perform them at a high level. We might even enjoy doing them. Colleagues may ask your advice or seek help from you. You are the go-to person. The expert.

Are you making the most of your natural talents? What can you do to strengthen them? How can you use them more in the workplace?



Workplace performance reviews can often focus on development opportunities. We might be able to list competencies that we wish we could do as well as someone else. Or feel that we need to learn to get better at in order to succeed.

You may have a feeling that you need to improve in some aspects to enable you to get the recognition you already deserve. Or before you can consider applying for a more senior role in your organisation.

But what would it look like if you turned this around?

How can you focus more on your strengths? What can you do to use them more? How can you get even better at them? How can you demonstrate the value you are adding to the organisation by making the most of this untapped potential you already have within you?

2 What are you really good at?

The first step is awareness. Take time to pause and consider what **your** strengths are.

Think about times at work when you are in a 'flow state'. When time seems to pass quickly for you. You are fully absorbed in the task. You are making good progress. Getting things done. And you feel a sense of personal achievement when you have completed the work.

2.1 What do you enjoy doing most at work?

2.2 How does it make you feel when are doing this?

2.2 What strengths are you using when you are doing this?

3 What might be holding you back?

It's natural for us to spend more time thinking about our perceived shortcomings. Things we want to get better at doing.

Some of these challenges may be traits that are common among people who are introverts, or among people with a neurodivergent condition. These are naturally occurring differences in a human population. Nothing is broken or needs fixing.

The focus is on making the most of our unique selves.

These challenges can feel like they are weighing us down. Holding us back from achieving our potential. Or from feeling happy at work. So they hold a lot of our attention and thoughts.



In this section I explore some common challenges that are experienced in the workplace. I invite you to consider if they are affecting you.

Make notes. Recognise if and when these things may be holding you back.

I suggest potential actions that can be taken to reduce the negative impact. But each one of us is unique. There is not one solution that can improve the situation for each individual person. Write down any other options or actions that come to your mind that might help you.

3 What might be holding you back?

3.1 Overwhelmed with workload

The feeling of overwhelm is personal. If **you** feel it, then no one can tell you that you can't be overwhelmed.

Overwhelm can lead to a feeling of anxiety. And if we are feeling anxious then we will not be able to think clearly and perform at our best.

Overwhelm has a habit of creeping up on us. We may not recognise it increasing until a tipping point has been reached and we need support.

You may attribute your feelings to having too much work on your plate. But it could be other aspects of your work that is causing anxiety. Perhaps an upcoming deadline or an important meeting. There may also be aspects of your personal life that are contributing to your feeling of being overwhelmed at work.

Use this space to make any notes or write down any occasions that have affected you relating to this topic.

3 potential actions:

- Talk to your line manager, HR or a trusted colleague. You don't need to share personal information, but making them aware of how events are impacting you can lead to them helping you to find a way forward,
- Write down what is on your mind. Consider what is most important that needs to be addressed first. And what can wait. It may not be tasks, but another worry that needs addressing.
- What small step can you take today? It might be arranging an appointment, or tidying the house, or listing the tasks you need to do. Taking one small step can help us to feel like we are making progress.

3 What might be holding you back?

3.2 Routines (and managing change)

Routines, structure and familiarity can be safe. Predictable. Knowing what we need to do next and what is expected from us can reduce cognitive load. We may not need to think through all the possible outcomes that might happen, because we already know.

I like routine. It enables me to be consistent, to ensure crucial work gets completed, it builds trust in others that I am reliable. I also like unpredictability. These situations can allow me to solve new problems, learn more and apply my skills in a different way. Situations that can bring about a different level of satisfaction.

When starting a new role or a new project, I apply my own ways of working where possible. Introducing systems, processes and routines that have worked for me in previous roles.

This can help with providing some degree of familiarity. Allowing me to have more capacity to process other information.

Use this space to make any notes or write down any occasions that have affected you relating to this topic.

3 potential actions:

- During a period of change, determine what you can control. And acknowledge there will be some aspects you cannot control.
- What can you control? If you are going to a new office, then you can make detailed plans for your journey and find out what the office looks like. This visualisation can give familiarity on your journey.
- Set aside regular time for self-regulation. This could be walking, exercise, breathing exercises, meditation, reading about your favourite interests. Whatever helps you to feel more relaxed.

3 What might be holding you back?

3.3 Sensory sensitivities in the office

There can be many benefits of working in the same physical space as colleagues. Collaborating may be easier and it can be quicker to get stuff done in person.

But the office may not always be the most productive environment for everyone all of the time. You may be oversensitive or undersensitive to one or more senses, and the environment can be more difficult to control in an office. These distractions make it difficult to concentrate, to perform at your best, to be productive. You're not alone.

Use this space to make any notes or write down any occasions that have affected you relating to this topic.

3 potential actions:

- If you are distracted by background noise, then noise-cancelling headphones really can help. You don't even need to listen to anything. Reducing the volume of your environment can improve focus.
- Painted walls and posters can brighten an office up. But if they are a distraction, then talk it through with your line manager or HR colleague. You may be able to position your screen in a different way or sit at a different desk. Or find another solution that helps with your productivity.
- Keeping an office at a consistent temperature seems near-impossible. If you are feeling too hot, too cold or in the line of the air conditioning units to the extent that you are uncomfortable, then take action. You may be able to find a satisfactory solution yourself by talking to colleagues. But if not, then speak to your line manager or HR colleague about the adjustments you need to help you perform at your best.

3 What might be holding you back?

3.4 Communication with colleagues

An open-plan office or a busy canteen can be a noisy and overwhelming environment. This can create an additional cognitive load which makes social conversation more difficult than usual. But, you are still keen to make connections and feel like part of the team.

It can take time to get to know work colleagues. And you'll probably hear more from the more extravert members of your team. Which may not be the colleagues that become good friendships. It can all take time to find people you naturally connect with.

Written communication can easily be misunderstood. I tend to keep emails and messages concise. I'm mindful that even if I mean well, any feedback or comments can be interpreted as criticism. You could ask a colleague to read your reply to sense-check it before you send it.

Use this space to make any notes or write down any occasions that have affected you relating to this topic.

3 potential actions:

- Create the environment that will help you to get to know your colleagues better and potentially form friendships. This could be to have a 1-to-1 catch-up in a quiet meeting room or online if you have a working-from-home day. Building relationships this way can help with conversations when you do meet in-person.
- Finding out what colleagues do in their spare time can uncover a shared interest. Something you can feel comfortable and confident talking about. Be patient, friendships form over time.
- If you have a regular team meeting or weekly connection, then plan in advance what you feel comfortable sharing about your weekend or personal life. Even if it's light on detail. Some people like to share everything. But don't feel the need to compare yourself to others or change anything about you in order to fit in.

3 What might be holding you back?

3.5 Organising your time

Making most effective use of the time available is a challenge for everyone in the workplace. The most valuable resource can be time. Choosing what not to do can be just as important as how you spend your time. So, this is a challenge for everyone to some degree.

You may need to gain greater awareness of what your specific challenges are first. Write down what is happening and how you are feeling can help get to the bottom of what you need to next.

How you keep track of what needs to be done, when it needs to be completed and the progress you are making is an individual preference. To-do lists in notebooks, calendars and online planners can all play their role. But they don't all work for everyone. It may be having accountability to someone that helps to get stuff done.

Use this space to make any notes or write down any occasions that have affected you relating to this topic.

3 potential actions:

- If you are consistently finding it a challenge to organise your time, then speak to your line manager. Their role should be to support you.
- Block time in your calendar to complete specific tasks. And keep to it. If you are asked to attend a meeting or to do something else, then you could ask your line manager to help you prioritise your time and keep you accountable to completing tasks.
- Create a plan at the start of the week and start of each day for the tasks you intend to complete. This might just take 15 minutes. And at the end of each day and week review whether you achieved your aims. If you are consistently not completing your plan, then note down the reasons blocking you. These can then be discussed with your line manager.

3 What might be holding you back?

3.6 Masking. And the toll it is taking.

There is a natural desire for humans to feel connected, to be a valuable member of a community. Many years ago, a protective community gave us greater physical safety from sabre-toothed tigers and access to shared knowledge about how to light fires or which toxic berries to avoid eating. Being a part of a community continues to support our happiness and wellbeing today. But it is now less about basic survival needs.

So we may be using masking behaviours at work for good reason. It's a natural human instinct to want to fit in and be part of a community.

But masking can be exhausting. You may feel comfortable discussing your masking behaviours with colleagues. If you prefer not to, then there may be relatively low-effort changes you can make to reduce the impact that masking is having on your energy levels.

If you feel that your masking behaviours is having a negative impact on yourself, then speak to your line manager or trusted colleague.

Use this space to make any notes or write down any occasions that have affected you relating to this topic.

3 potential actions:

- Small talk can be a regular part of the day at work. If you prefer to focus on your work than take part in chat throughout the day, then I find that using headphones at your desk can be an unofficial 'do not disturb' indicator to use when you need time to yourself.
- Spend time in the working day somewhere you can unmask. I found it useful to spend my lunch hour away from being contactable. Ideally outside. This gave me space to truly break from work.
- Regular eye contact during conversations is socially expected behaviour. But this can feel awkward and uncomfortable. I usually look away or close my eyes when I am concentrating on what I need to say. I then establish eye contact again when I finish speaking.

4 Potential next steps

We all have **strengths** that we could use more effectively in the workplace.

We may have **challenges** that are holding us back from achieving our potential.

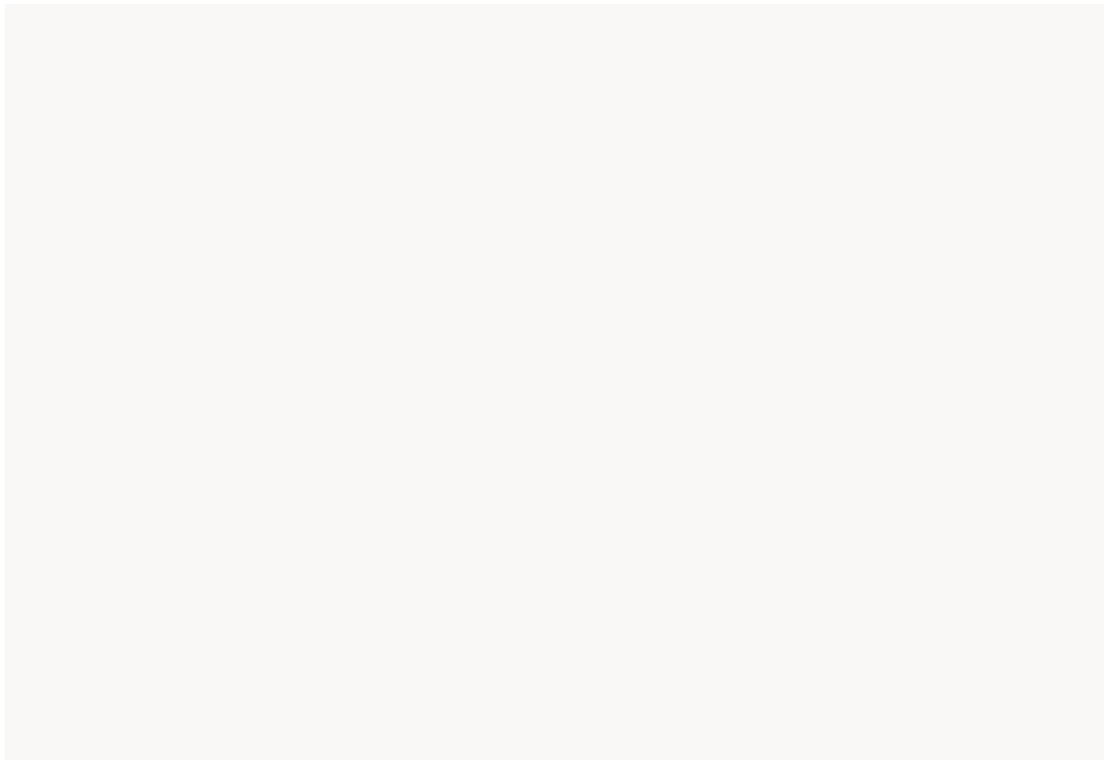
Gaining greater awareness of both our strengths and challenges is a great starting point.

Dedicating time to thinking about yourself and your experiences may have sparked a few thoughts, a few potential next steps you could take.

Only you know what the next best step is for yourself right now.

If you are not sure what to do, then I invite you to book a free call with me. We'll talk things through and figure things out. I'm not here to tell you what to do. But I will ask you questions to help you move forward.

4.1 What topics are on your mind right now?



This could be a good place to start our conversation.

5 Contact

Book a free introductory call.
Find out more about how coaching could support you.

[Book a free call →](#)

Email me if you would like to find out more about coaching.

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