

Health and Work Conversation

A 60-minute e-learning session for Work Coaches

Aim

The aim of this e-learning session is to give you an overview of the Health and Work Conversation (HWC) as well as to introduce you to two important tools that will help you deliver it: growth mindsets and My Values.

This e-learning session is therefore broken into 3 modules:

- 1. Policy context and overview of the HWC**
- 2. Growth mindsets**
- 3. My Values**

Objectives

At the end of this e-learning session you will be able to:

- Explain why we are introducing the Health and Work Conversation
- Explain the main principles and components of the Health and Work Conversation
- Explain what 'mindsets' are and how they can influence how we react to challenges
- Understand a couple of simple ways to encourage people to have a mindset that will help them achieve their goals
- Understand the My Values exercise, what it does, and the evidence behind it

The session will take about 60 minutes to complete.

Module 1:

Policy context and overview of the HWC

Introduction

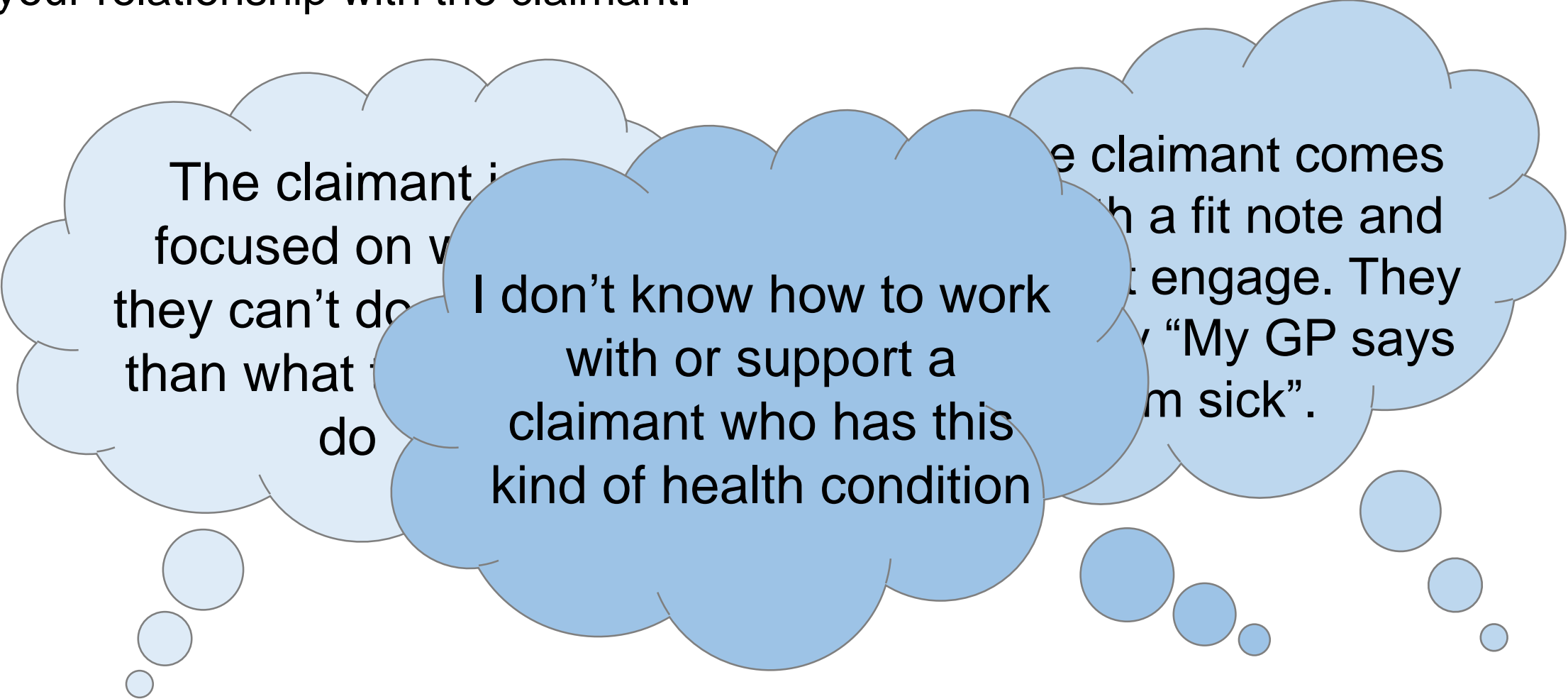
The Health and Work Conversation (HWC) has been developed to help you effectively work with and support claimants with a disability or a health condition.

New ESA claimants will be required to attend the HWC at about 4 weeks from starting their claim. Some claimants will be exempt.

Before we dive into what the HWC is, take a moment to reflect on the following question and write down your answer:

What challenges do you face in your relationship with claimants who have a disability or health condition? Write down some thoughts in the box below.

Here are some challenges voiced by work coaches who work with ESA claimants. The HWC will help you manage these situations and improve your relationship with the claimant.



The claimant is
focused on what
they can't do
than what they
do

I don't know how to work
with or support a
claimant who has this
kind of health condition

The claimant comes
with a fit note and
doesn't engage. They
say "My GP says
I'm sick".

Policy context

People who have developed a health condition or disability are likely to be facing a stressful and challenging period in their lives.

Falling out of work because of their health is an added stress.

Currently DWP does not engage with ESA claimants until after their Work Capability Assessment, which can be some months into the claim.

The HWC will ensure we can support more people sooner.

Main principles of the HWC

It's a conversation,
not an interview or an
assessment

It's claimant-led:
Claimants find their own
answers based on their
own goals and interests,
and what they think will
genuinely help them

It's holistic:
It looks at the
claimant as a whole,
including wishes and
aspirations that are
not work-related

It's calm:
The approaches
taken in the HWC
work best when the
claimant feels calm
and safe.

Overview of the HWC

In this section, we will briefly explain the four main parts of the HWC that you will go through with the claimant. They are:

HWC Part 1: **About Me**

HWC Part 2: **My Values**

HWC Part 3: **My 4 Steps**

HWC Part 4: **My Actions**

Overview of the HWC

This e-learning module (*Module 1: Policy context and overview of the HWC*) is just an overview of these 4 parts of the HWC.

Another module later on in this e-learning session will provide an introduction to My Values.

However, all 4 parts of the HWC will be primarily covered in the face-to-face training.

HWC Part 1: **About Me**

HWC Part 2: **My Values**

HWC Part 3: **My 4 Steps**

HWC Part 4: **My Actions**

Overview of the HWC

HWC Part 1: **About Me**

About Me is a short form which asks a range of questions about different areas of a claimant's life. It has been designed to give you an overview of the claimant as a whole, including things other than their health. It helps build rapport and allows you to focus the conversation on what they can do, rather than what they can't do.

Overview of the HWC

HWC Part 2: **My Values**

My Values is a short written exercise that asks the claimant to reflect on their values – things that are personally important to them. My Values is an evidence-based exercise that helps people to feel more capable of facing challenges. It achieves this by getting people to focus on other things in their lives that they value, which consequently puts the challenge in a broader context and makes it less daunting.

Overview of the HWC

HWC Part 3: My 4 Steps

My 4 Steps is the core part of the HWC. It involves 4 evidence-based steps that you go through with the claimant and that will help the claimant move towards goals that they want to achieve. You guide the claimant in finding their own answers to each question. These 4 steps have been shown to be a powerful tool to help people maintain motivation and achieve their wishes and goals.

Importantly, My 4 Steps gives people the power to overcome problems that other goal-setting approaches don't necessarily tackle: internal obstacles. These obstacles are beliefs, habits and feelings (such as self-doubt, not being able to get organised, or feeling afraid or overwhelmed) and can be serious challenges that hold people back.

Overview of the HWC

HWC Part 4: My Actions

My Actions is the last part of the HWC.

It is similar to Action Plans, as the claimant will note down any actions that they can take to move closer to goals that relate to work or health. This is where you can provide the claimant with guidance about what help and support is available to them and how they can access it.

In contrast to My 4 Steps (which focusses on *internal* obstacles), My Actions focusses on actions that help overcome *external* obstacles, such as training needs, housing, debt, or child care.

My Actions uses a specific evidence-based format to help people carry out their actions.

Module 1, Policy context and overview of the HWC: Summary

- ❖ The main principles of the HWC are that it's a conversation, it's claimant-led, it's holistic and it's calm.
- ❖ The HWC is made up of 4 parts:

About Me
My Values
My 4 Steps
My Actions

- ❖ You'll receive more information and guidance on all of this at the face-to-face training.

Module 2:

Growth mindsets

Positive mindsets that help people to realise their potential, gain new skills and abilities, and reach their goals

Here are some challenges that this module can help with...

The Health & Work Conversation feels like it will be challenging to because there's quite a lot of new information I deal with

A claimant I'm working with doesn't think they can get better at managing their health condition. They say it's too difficult.

Some of my claimants say they will never be able to return to their previous job – they've lost hope and given up.

What does the word “mindset” mean to you?



Some of us use the word “mindset” already in everyday conversations, and some of us don’t.

In a sentence or two, write what the word means to you, or what you think it means.

What is a mindset?

When people refer to a mindset, they usually mean a set of beliefs or attitudes that someone has.

This e-learning module focuses on two very specific types of mindset that have been the topic of much research over the course of several decades.

These two specific mindsets are the beliefs we have about our abilities to learn new things and deal with challenges.

They're called **fixed mindset** and **growth mindset**.

To start thinking about fixed and growth mindsets, read this scenario:

Tom had a packing job but had to stop working temporarily after he had a back injury.

He has been looking at other options for jobs and says it seems like a lot of job ads mention IT skills of some sort, but he doesn't have any experience with IT.

He has noticed that IT skills look like they're in demand, and he admits that they'd probably be useful in everyday life, for things like letting him help his daughter more with her schoolwork.

Here's one way Tom could react in that scenario:

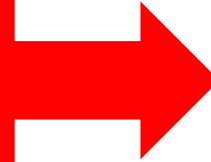
One one hand, Tom might:

- Reason that he's too old to learn new skills.
- Say that he's never been good with technology so any training would be a waste of time.
- Stop attending a training course because he felt he didn't get things right quickly enough.
- Avoid people who could help him, or not bother to ask them for help.

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- Say that he's never been good with technology so any training would be a waste of time.
- Stop attending a training course because he felt he didn't get things right quickly enough.
- Avoid people who could help him, or not bother to ask them for help.



Here, Tom has a “fixed” mindset. A fixed mindset is when a person believes their abilities are “fixed” and cannot be changed or improved. The person finds it difficult to imagine how they could learn new things, make it through challenges or set-backs, or how they could ever achieve their goals.

Here's a different way Tom could react in that scenario:

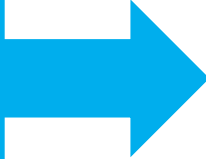
On the other hand, Tom might:

- Ask for guidance about what sort of IT skills are in demand and how to get trained in them.
- Persist with training courses even though he felt like he had no idea what was going on to start with.
- Identify people who have relevant skills and ask them for help.
- Listen to and act on feedback on how he can improve his skills.

Here's a different way Tom could react in that scenario:

On the other hand, Tom might:

- Ask for guidance about what sort of IT skills are in demand and how to get trained in them.
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- Identify people who have relevant skills and ask them for help.
- Listen to and act on feedback on how he can improve his skills.



Here, Tom has a “growth” mindset. A growth mindset is when a person believes they can “grow” their abilities – they can learn new skills, improve their abilities and achieve their goals, and they are motivated to persist through challenges and set-backs.



FIXED MINDSET



GROWTH MINDSET

These mindsets influence people's attitudes and actions regarding 4 key things:

- 1. Challenges and obstacles*
- 2. Effort*
- 3. Criticism*
- 4. Other people's achievements*

1. Challenges and obstacles

FIXED MINDSET

**People with a fixed mindset
avoid challenges, and may give
up easily when faced with
obstacles**

e.g. “I’m a failure.”

“I’m an idiot, there’s no point in trying.”

“You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.”

GROWTH MINDSET

**People with a growth mindset
embrace challenges, and persist
in the face of obstacles**

e.g. “I failed this time but that’s because I haven’t
had enough practice yet.”

“I’ll keep trying and then I’ll do better next time.”

2. *Effort*

FIXED MINDSET

People with a fixed mindset see effort as a waste of time

e.g. “Why bother? It’s not going to change anything.”

GROWTH MINDSET

People with a growth mindset see effort as a necessary part of getting better at something

e.g. “I failed this time, but I’ll keep trying.”

3. *Criticism*



FIXED MINDSET

**People with a fixed mindset
ignore useful criticism**

e.g. “I can’t get better at this.”
“The negative feedback just goes
to show how bad I am at this.”



GROWTH MINDSET

**People with a growth mindset
learn from criticism**

e.g. “How can I use this feedback to improve?”

4. *Other people's achievements*

FIXED MINDSET

People with a fixed mindset don't take the opportunity to learn from other people's positive achievements, and might feel negative about other people's success

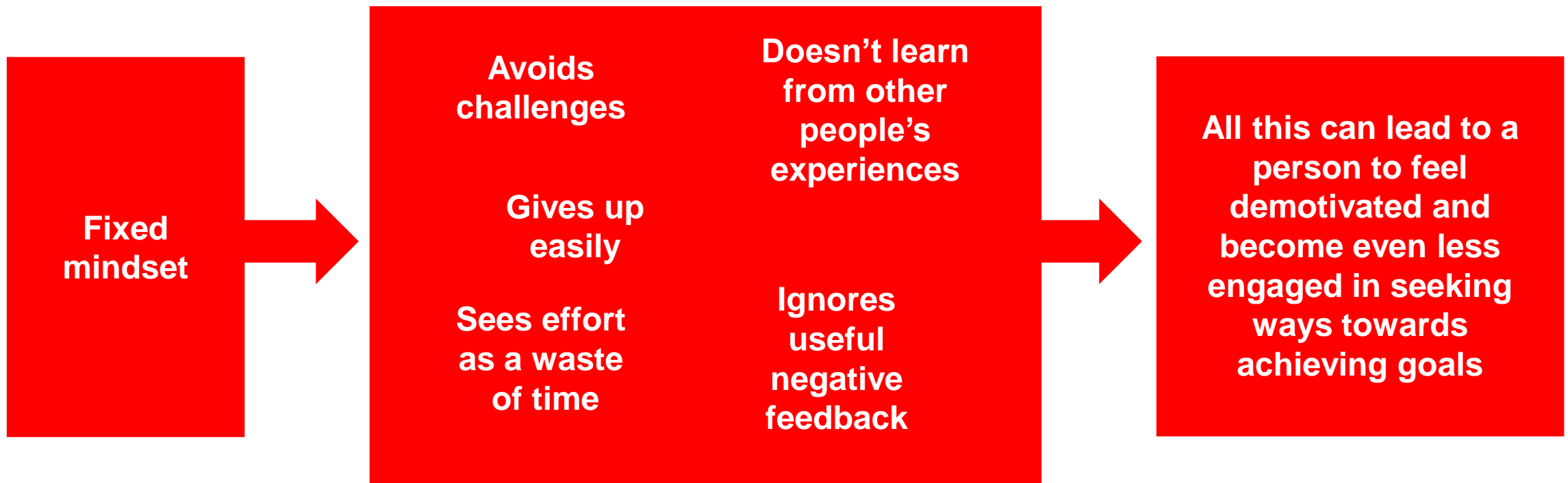
e.g. "I'll never be as good as them."
"They're only successful because they're naturally good at this, whereas I'm not."

GROWTH MINDSET

People with a growth mindset find lessons and inspiration from other people's success

e.g. "What did they do to get to where they are?
Is it something I could do as well?"

Mindsets influence people's attitudes and actions in many different ways, adding up to a big difference in what people believe they are capable of achieving.



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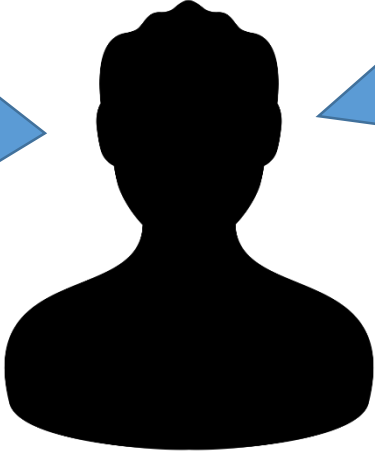


Quiz: Select the answers that are characteristic of a growth mindset.

- ☐ Avoids challenges, gives up easily when faced with obstacles
- ☐ Learns from criticism
- ☐ Ignores useful negative feedback
- ☐ Finds lessons and inspiration from other people's success
- ☐ Sees effort as a necessary part of getting better at something
- ☐ Doesn't take the opportunity to learn from other people's positive achievements
- ☐ Sees effort as a waste of time
- ☐ Embraces challenges, persists in the face of obstacles

There are a couple of important things to remember about mindsets...

Firstly, people don't only have one type of mindset about *everything*. It's normal for people to have a fixed mindset about one thing but a growth mindset about another.



I had to learn sign language because my grandson was born deaf. It was so hard to learn to start with, but I knew if I kept at it I'd get better over time. Now he's 6 years old and we have little conversations together.

I'm not a maths person! I've never been good at maths and I just know it's something that I'll never get, so there's no point in trying.

Secondly, having a growth mindset doesn't necessarily mean we all have completely unlimited potential and that, with the right mindset, we could all become Olympic athletes and Nobel Prize winners and world leaders...



We all have our strengths and weaknesses and we are naturally better at some things than others.

But we all have the potential to *improve our abilities*, no matter how difficult or challenging we think it might be. We might not become the best in the world at a particular thing, but we can definitely become better at it, no matter what it is.

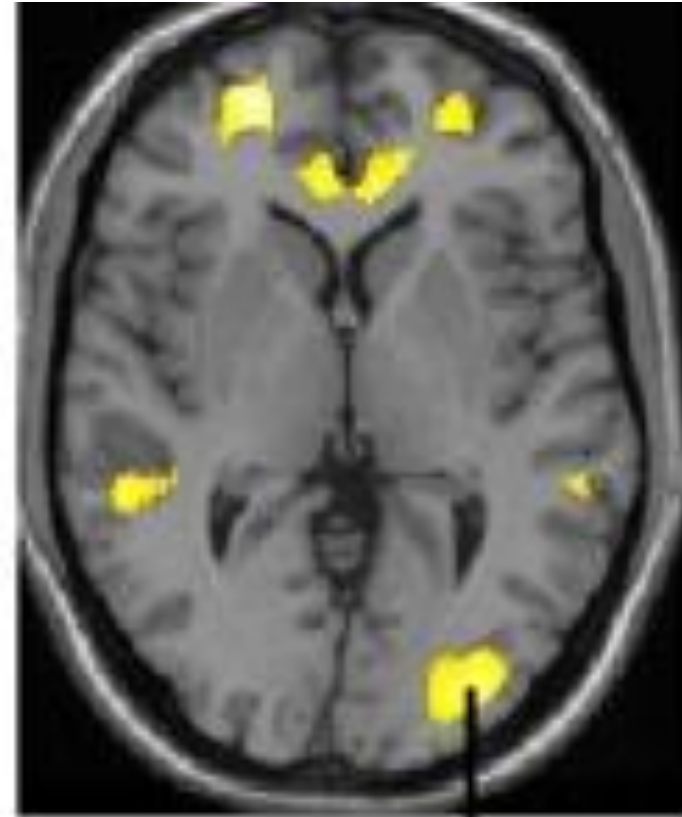
And brain research backs this up...

The brain science behind growth mindsets

Brain cells (neurons) make new connections with each other when we learn.

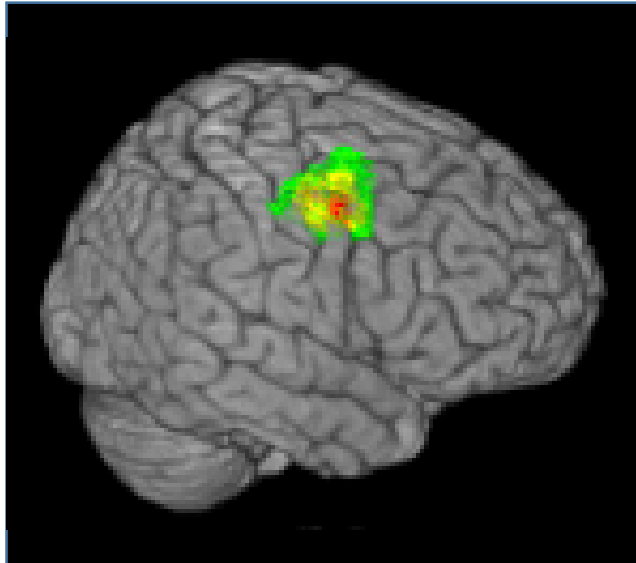
The better we get at something, the stronger the connections get.

The yellow blobs show the areas in the brain that had a lot of new connections after a person had spent 3 months learning how to juggle.



The brain science behind growth mindsets

The brain can learn and make new/stronger connections **at any age**. It might take a little more time than when a person was younger, but it still happens.



One research study showed that people aged 65+ can learn new tasks and improve their skills in a similar way to 20-year-olds. When learning a new computer-based task, people aged 65+ ended up performing just as well as the 20-year-olds.

This picture shows the area of the brain that changed after older adults completed that computer-based training. With time and effort, the connections became stronger and performance on the computer task became better.

Can mindsets be changed?

Yes!

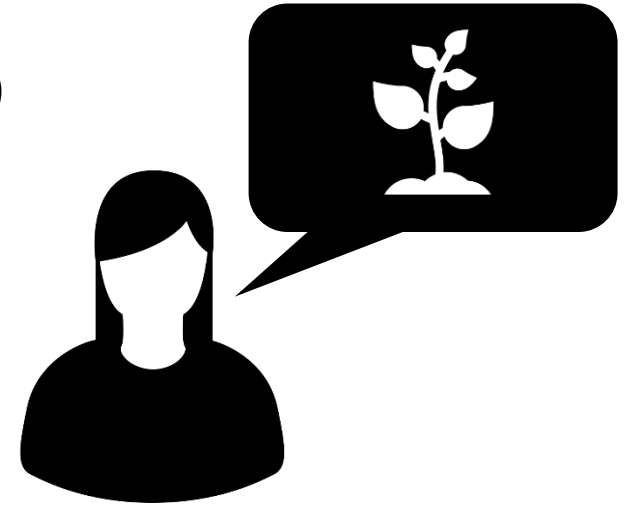
Just like learning a new skill, a person can learn how to have a growth mindset.

For example, one research study looked at more the 1500 secondary school students. Students who were taught about mindsets adopted more of a growth mindset, and those students' grades also subsequently improved.



How can you encourage people to have a growth mindset?

Two easy things you can do:

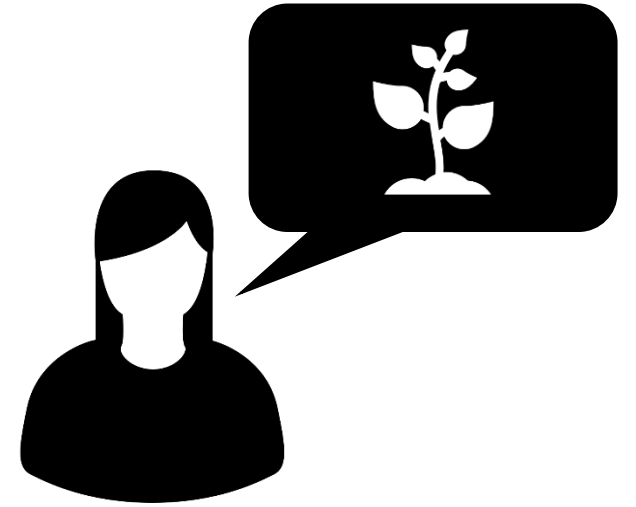


1. Focus on the **effort** they've put in and the steps they've taken
2. Use language that reinforces someone's **potential for change**

We will go through both of these now, and look at some specific examples of how to do these things.

Encouraging a growth mindset

1. Focus on the effort they've put in and the steps they've taken

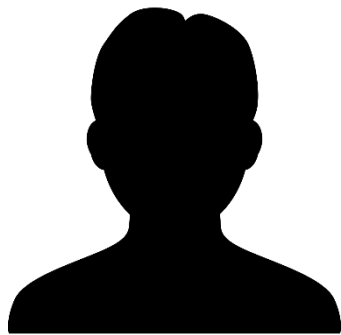


When giving feedback and support to someone, put emphasis on the *efforts they've made* and *their actions*, rather than commenting on them as a person.

This reinforces the importance and value of effort.

The next slide contains an example of how you could do this...

I've been trying to get better with my IT skills. I asked my daughter to help me so I could learn to use a few different things on the computer. But it's so frustrating. IT stuff and computers are just something I've never been good at.



Allan, age 55, new ESA claimant

Well, I think it's really great that you asked your daughter for help and that you've been making the effort to try to get better at using a computer, even though it's tough.



Sheila, Work Coach

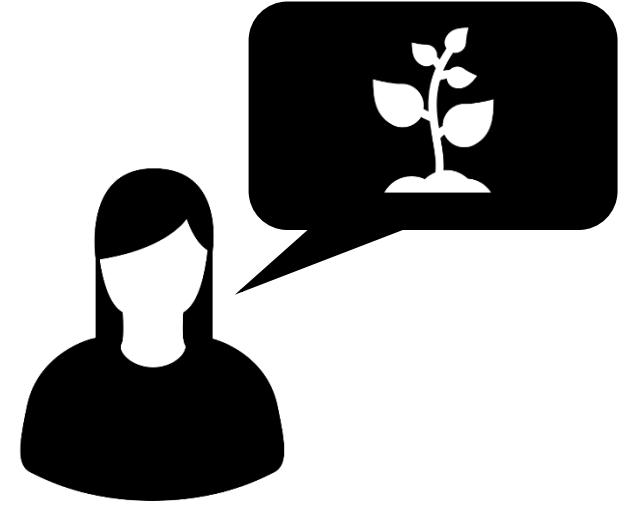
Encouraging a growth mindset

In the example on the previous slide, Allan had asked for help from his daughter and he had actively been trying to get better at using the computer. Sheila gave positive feedback on these efforts Allan had made, reinforcing that effort is valuable.

It's a simple thing to do, but it's effective in helping people to focus on the value of effort.

Encouraging a growth mindset

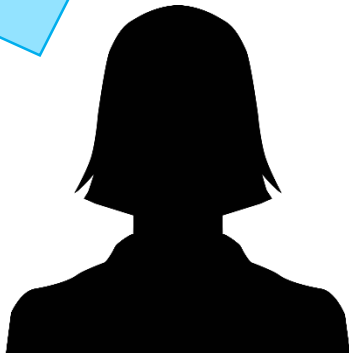
2. Use language that reinforces someone's potential for change



One of the easiest ways to do this is just by using one particular word: “yet”. “Yet” implies that something is achievable in the future, and it puts a person in charge of working towards their goals.

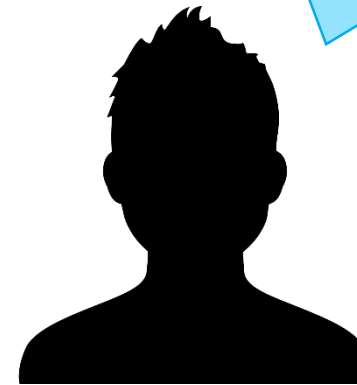
When someone has a fixed mindset about something, you can respond to them and use “yet” to indicate their potential for change. See the example on the next slide...

I honestly don't know how I'm going to manage my diabetes. I only got the diagnosis a few months ago, and since then I've just been swamped with all this information about what I have to do to be able to manage things. I feel like I actually just can't manage things at all.



Jane, age 45, new ESA claimant

Ok, so at the moment you feel like all the information is overwhelming and you feel like you can't manage things yet.



Hasan, Work Coach

Encouraging a growth mindset

Jane said she feels like she can't manage things, but Hasan replied with "you feel like you can't manage things yet". This acknowledges how things are at the moment, but gently reinforces that things could be different in the future.

Using "yet" might seem too simple, but it's easy to remember and it's effective.

Feel free to use whatever words or phrases feel appropriate to you – you just need to emphasise that the current situation can be temporary and that there's the possibility for change in the future.

Module 2, Growth mindsets: Summary

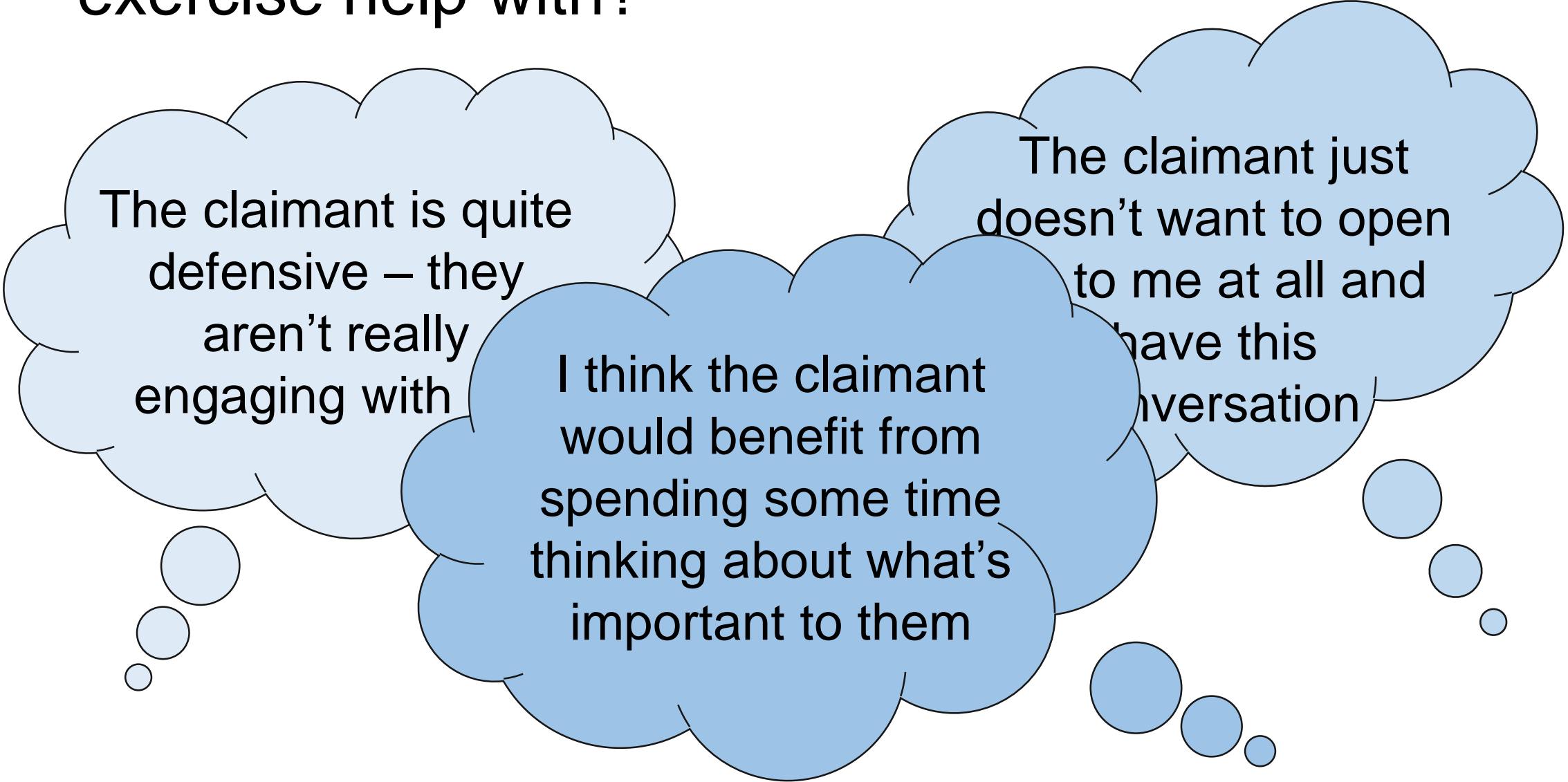
- ❖ Skills, abilities and beliefs are not fixed and they can change over time
- ❖ Your brain changes and develops all the time (and at any age!) and makes new connections as you learn
- ❖ People can learn how to develop a growth mindset
- ❖ You can encourage people to have a growth mindset by emphasising the efforts they've made when you're providing feedback and support, and by using words like “yet” to emphasise the potential for change.

Module 3:

My Values

A quick but effective way to help claimants
feel more open to challenges, during the HWC and beyond

What sort of challenges can the My Values exercise help with?



The claimant is quite defensive – they aren't really engaging with

I think the claimant would benefit from spending some time thinking about what's important to them

The claimant just doesn't want to open to me at all and have this conversation

Background to My Values

Challenges can feel threatening, which can lead people to withdraw from the challenge rather than facing it and working through it

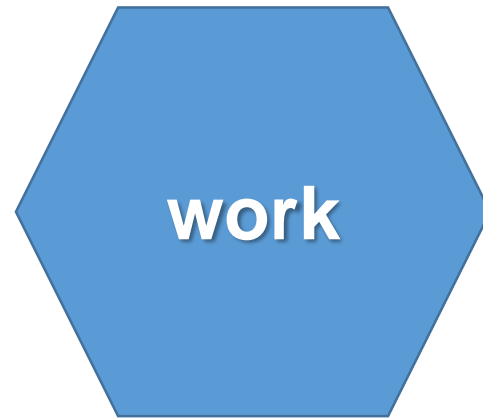


Thinking about work (or health) can feel daunting and challenging for ESA claimants.

Focusing on work (or health) can therefore sometimes be unhelpful, as it highlights the challenges and difficulties that the claimant might be facing.

Of course, it is important to face challenges and difficulties.

However, the My Values exercise can help people feel stronger and more capable of facing those challenges.



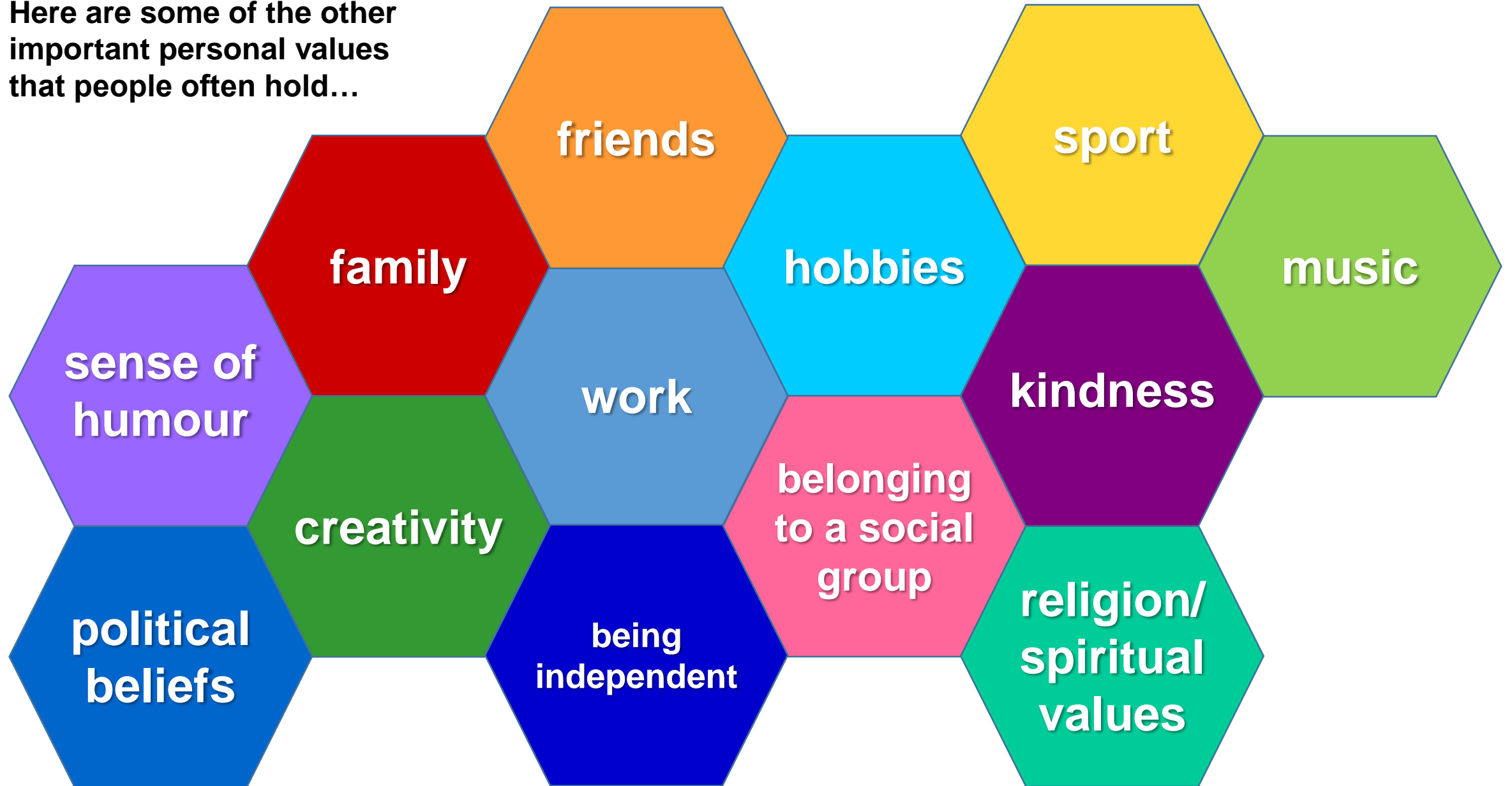
My Values can help a person feel more open to facing a challenge because it puts that challenge in the broader context of the other things that matter to that person.

If a person feels daunted when thinking about **work, then focusing on work by itself can feel overwhelming.**

However, we can put work in the context of other things in a person's life that matter to them...



Here are some of the other important personal values that people often hold...





family

kindness

**being
independent**

**religion/
spiritual
values**

hobbies

Thinking about the things that matter most to them in their lives can help people to put their challenges into a broader context, so that the challenges no longer feel so daunting.

For example, if a person currently feels daunted when thinking about work, then spending some time thinking about and focusing on other things that matter to them (for example, relationships with their friends and family) will reinforce the person's sense of identity and build their resilience, and then they will be more comfortable with facing their challenges.

friends

music

creativity

**belonging
to a social
group**

**sense of
humour**

sport

The evidence

It might seem like asking people to spend time focusing on their values is too simple a thing to have any special impact – *however*, 10 years of evidence has shown that it *can* have a big impact, and that it is an effective way of helping a wide range of people to face a wide range of challenges.

Here is some of the evidence...

The evidence

- Doing the exercise made smokers **60%** more likely to take a leaflet about how to quit smoking.
- The exercise made the smokers more open to taking on the challenge of quitting.



The evidence

- It improved the likelihood that people at risk of diabetes would choose to take a diabetes screening test.
- It helped people to deal with this challenge and be proactive about it, rather than ignoring the fact that they were at risk of diabetes.



The evidence

- People with high blood pressure were **17%** more likely to take their medication after doing this exercise.
- It helped people to acknowledge that they needed to be proactive in managing their high blood pressure, even if that seemed challenging.



The evidence

After doing the exercise, people with a heart condition were **49%** more likely to engage in physical activity in line with what their healthcare professionals had recommended.



The evidence

The exercise improved the quality of people's relationships, as it made them more open to others' opinions and to discussing problems.



Quiz

How does the My Values exercise work? Choose the correct answer below.

- It causes people to focus on the challenges they are facing and therefore to not be distracted by other issues.
- It causes people to put the challenges they are facing in a broader context, so the challenges seem less daunting.
- It causes people to think about the challenges they are facing and make plans for how to overcome those challenges.

During the face-to-face HWC training, you will learn about how to guide a claimant through the My Values exercise. Claimants will do a paper-based version of the exercise.

My Values

The conversation today will be focussed on your goals and the things that are important to you. One way of thinking about what goals you would like to work towards and achieve is to consider your personal values – the things that matter the most to you and give you a sense of meaning and satisfaction, or make you happy. We'd like to ask you to complete this personal values exercise. It will help you think about what things matter the most to you, and this will help you later in the conversation when coming up with goals that you want to achieve.

You will not be asked to show this sheet to anyone so you can be as open about your feelings as you'd like.

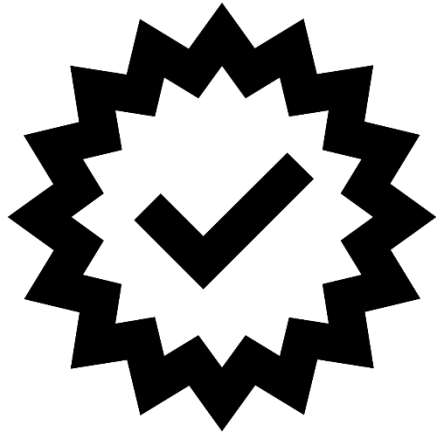
Please read the list of values below. Then choose the 2 or 3 values that are most important to you. Even if you feel that many of the values are important, please pick only 2 or 3 of them below.

- Being good at art
 - Being creative
 - Relationships with friends or family
 - Following government or politics
 - Being independent – having the freedom to do what I want
 - Learning new skills
 - Enjoying sports
- (such as your community, culture, or a club)

Module 3, My Values: Summary

- ❖ My Values is a brief, evidence-based exercise.
- ❖ It helps people feel more open to taking on challenges by placing those challenges in the broader context of the other things that matter to them in their lives.
- ❖ This e-learning module was just an introduction to My Values. You'll receive further information and guidance on it at the face-to-face training.

Thank you for completing this e-learning session



If you have any follow-up questions about the material you've covered on the Health & Work Conversation in general or on My Values, make sure to bring them along to the face-to-face HWC training with the Learning & Development Officers. They will be able to answer your questions.