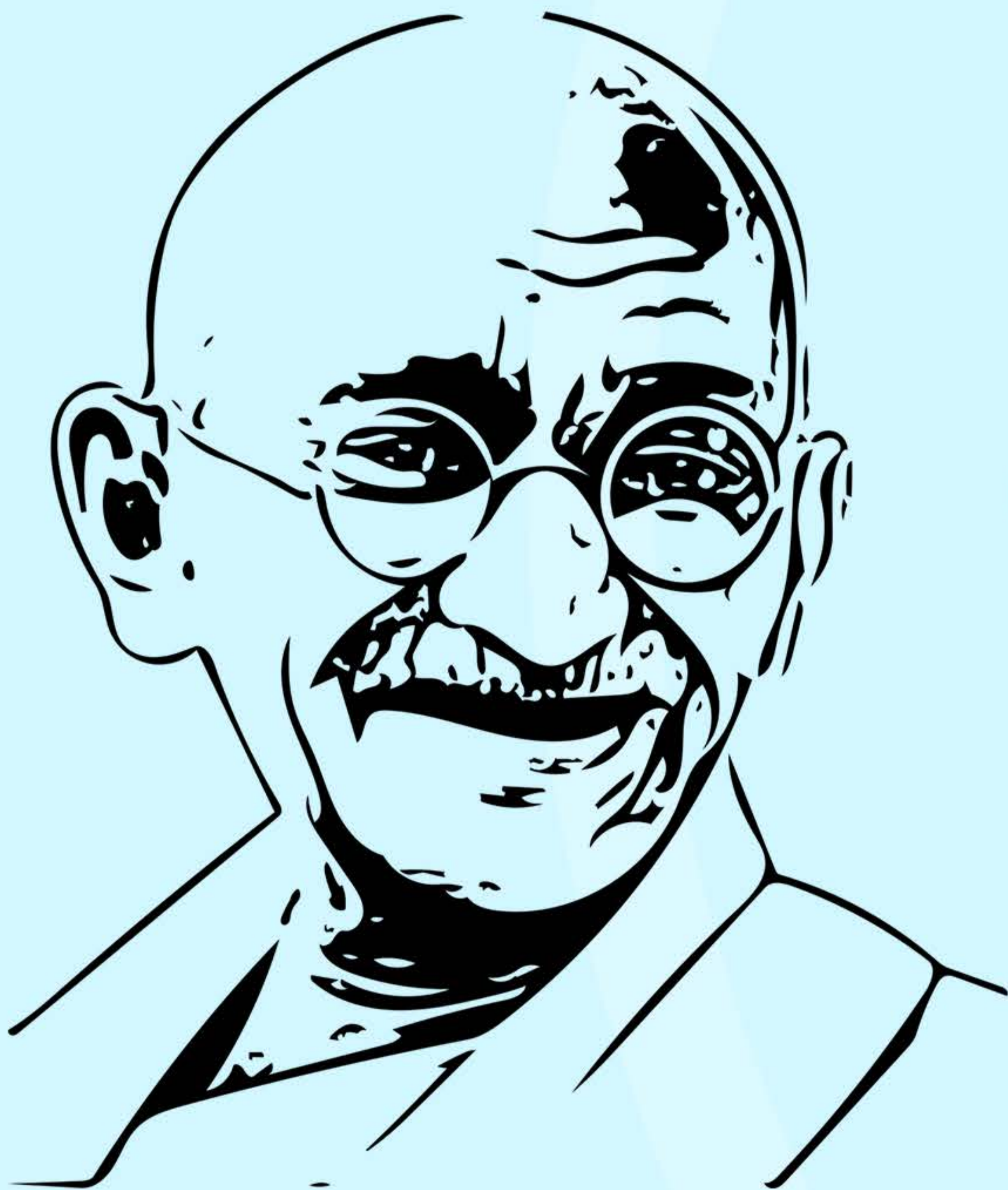


Happy talk: how to get better at living your values

Why being clear on your values is key to getting happy



“Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.”

Mahatma Gandhi

If you want to be happy, getting clear on your values is pretty fundamental. Even if we don't realise it, most of us are guided by a really clear set of values - beliefs, ways of being or behaving that we hold close and that are important to us. Getting clear on **your values – what's important to you – is essential to finding happiness because your values are your internal compass; they help you find your way, keep you on the right path and tell you when you're headed in the wrong direction.**

When we make choices that are in line with our values, we experience harmony, a feeling that leads to satisfaction and happiness. Yay! Conversely, when we make choices that aren't aligned to what we hold close to us, we experience dis-harmony, which ultimately sets us on a path to frustration, emptiness or unhappiness. Boo! When we're clearer about our values, we're less likely to make poor choices, and more likely to achieve happiness and what psychologists call 'congruency'.

How to get clearer on your values – now it's your turn!

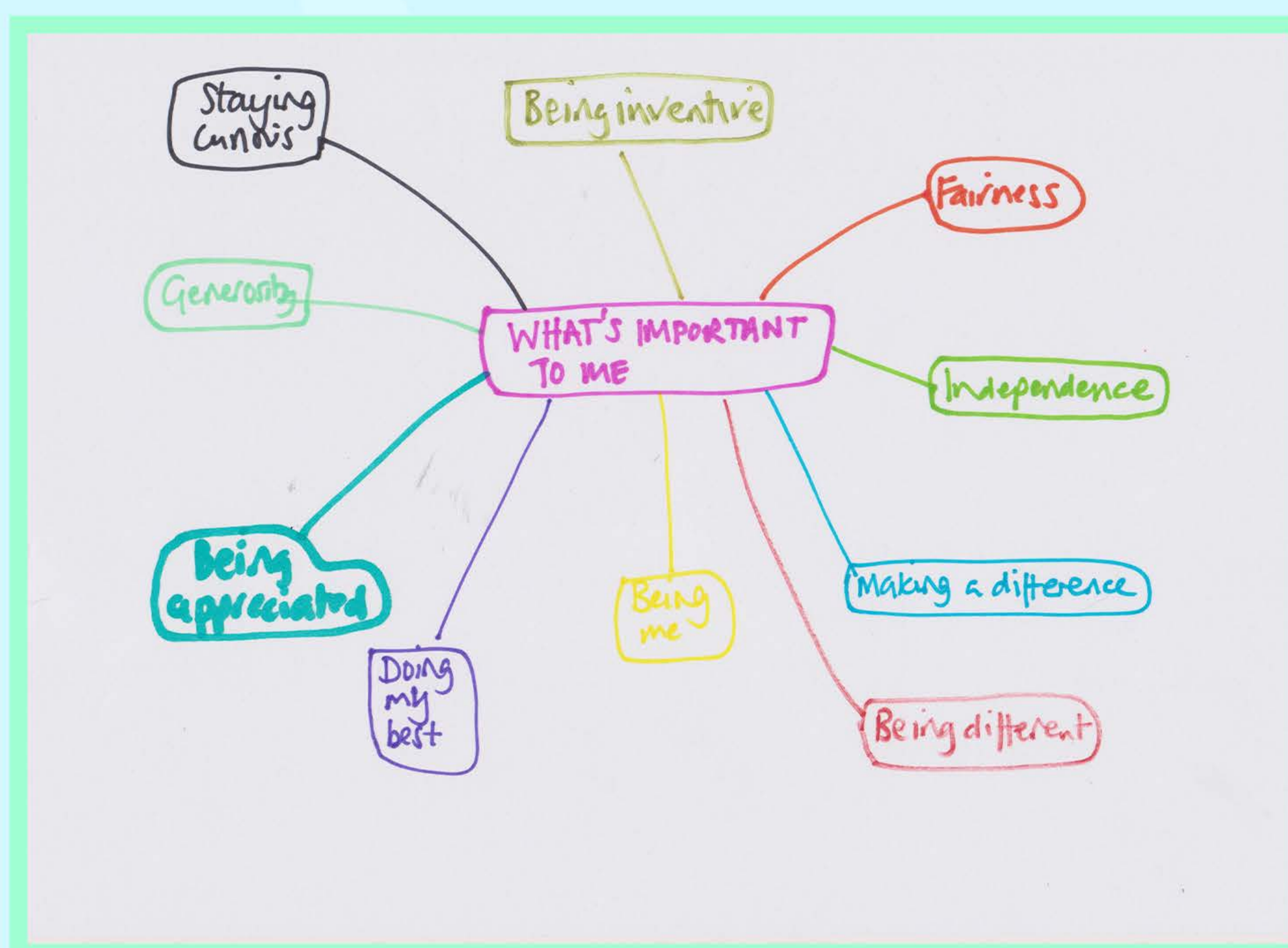
So now it's your turn to get creative and a whole lot clearer on your values! It's time to grab a cuppa, a handful of Sharpies and a big sheet of paper. This is quite a task so you'll want to set aside a good couple of hours for it.

Step 1: Creating your values mindmap

We love a mindmap, and hope you do too! Your first task, in the middle of your sheet of paper is to write 'What is Important To Me In My Life', and then to answer the question, mindmap style. It's a big question, worthy of proper reflection, and it can be hard to articulate your values, but here are some questions you might find it useful to ask:

- When were you on top of your world?
- What are you most proud of?
- What is your passion?
- Why do you do what you do?
- What makes you angry?
- What are your no compromises?

Having thought about that, if you can, try to distil your answers into one word (even if you have an explanation underneath).



Step 2: Making your top 10

Your next task is to go back over your incredible mindmap and pull from it a list of your Top 10 values, the ones that really stir your emotions, resonate with you and have you saying to yourself ‘Yes, that’s an absolute for me!’.

Step 3: Time to get ruthless and reduce your Top 10 to your Fave 5

Now this can be really hard to do, so you might want to group values together where there’s a synergy (e.g. justice and fairness, making a difference and generosity). If in doubt, ask your gut.

Step 4: Ask yourself why

Taking each of your Fave 5s in turn, scribble a few sentences about why that value in particular is important to you, and what it looks like when you’re truly living it.

Step 5: Explore how much these values show up in your life right now

Again taking each of your Fave 5s in turn, score each on a scale of 1-10, based on how much this value shows up in your life, how much you’re living this value on a daily basis. (1=not much at all, and 10=I’m knocking it out of the park.)

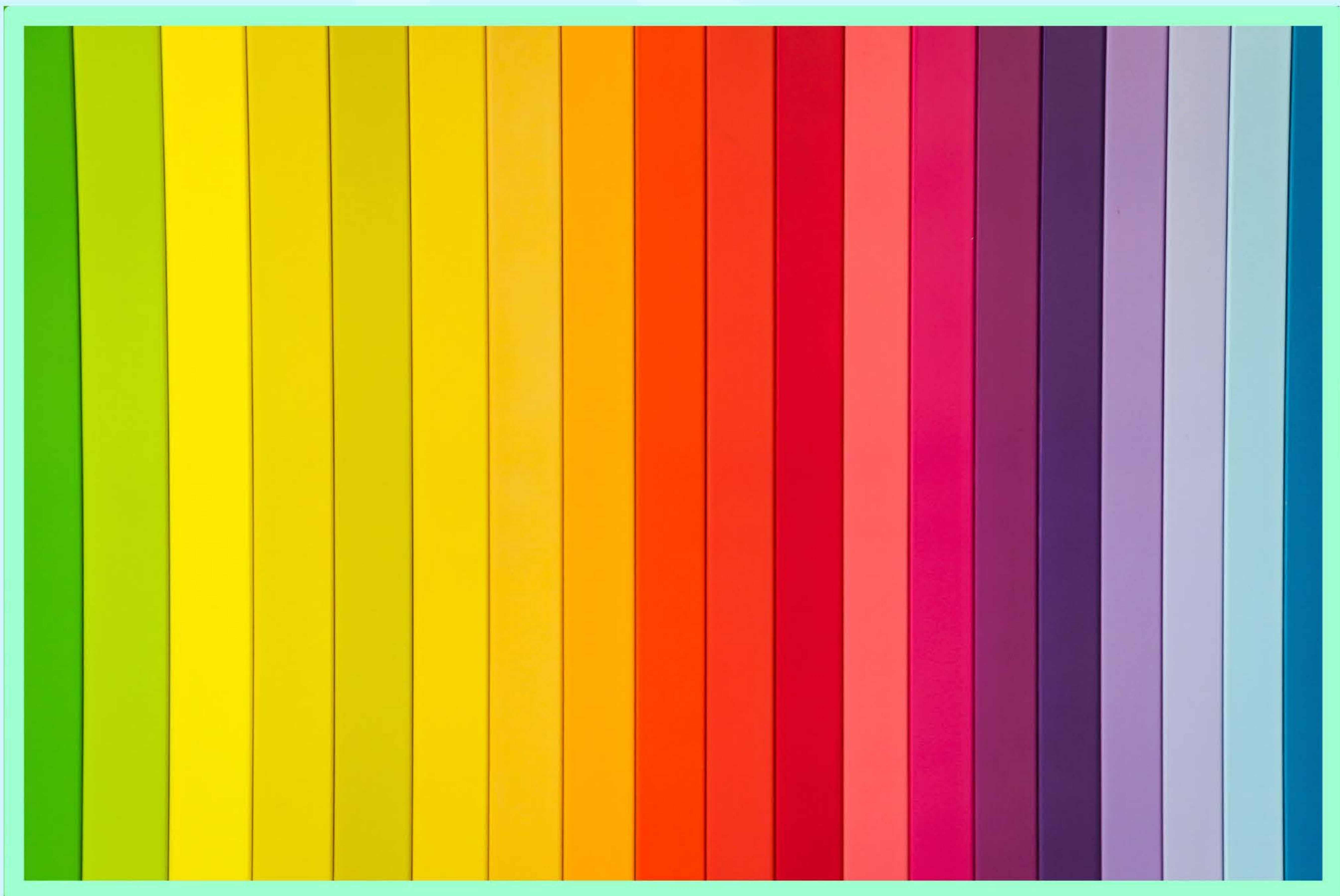
Step 6: Reflecting on what could be different, and how

One value at a time, spend some time reflecting on how you could live this value more frequently. As an example, if you value making a difference, the answer might be to volunteer for a charity, or to mentor a younger artist. Do this for all 5 of these values, coming up with as many ideas as you can. Have some fun with how you might ‘make them stick’. You might make a collage about them, or a poster. Maybe you create a manifesto (we love a manifesto!)? There are no rules here. Just think about how you could keep your values front and centre at all times.



Step 7: It's time to take action dial up your happiness

OK, so now it's time to do some prioritising. Pick the 1 or 2 goals that you think would most increase your happiness if you were to take steps towards achieving them. You're not abandoning the others, just putting them on hold for now. You've got to be realistic about what's achievable, right?



And with that done it's time to look at all the ideas you came up with in Step 6, and create yourself an action plan. You're off...!

If you're interested in thinking more about values, do check out our [Finding What Matters video](#) in the Happiness section of our Balance toolkit, and also the [V is for Values exercise](#) in the [It's All About You](#) section.