

Managing Energy, not just Time

Work with your rhythms, not against them

MARGARET COLLINS
Confidence | Clarity | Courage
visit MargaretCollins.com

Using the
Managing Energy
Worksheet

We are taught to manage our time by the clock.
But the truth is, not all hours are created equal.
At times your mind is sharp, focused, ready for complex work.
At other times, your attention dips and even simple tasks feel hard.

Managing energy is about recognising these natural rhythms
and the things that underpin them
- mentally and physically -
working with them instead of against them.

When you truly understand that meeting your needs is necessary more than a “would be nice”, you’re more likely to be healthy and successful.

It’s really easy to think “I couldn’t do that.”.
Challenge yourself to ask “What could I do?”

These are my reflections

.....

on ___ /___ /_____

1: Chronotype: Lark, Owl or Dove?

Our chronotype describes our natural sleep–wake preference.
Some people are 'larks' (early risers, more alert in the morning), others are 'owls' (late-night energy) or 'doves', more alert around midday.
Being aware of your preference for activity, focus or rest, helps you plan your day more effectively.



Chronotypes are linked to genetics, there is a strong pattern of heritability and many different genetic markers.
Social and environmental factors also play their part.

Naturally, are you a Lark, Dove or Owl?

At what times are you most alert?
eg 6.00 to 11.00am, 11.00 to 4.00pm, 7pm to midnight?

What activities do you currently schedule during these hours ?

What's one adjustment you could make to align your most important work with your optimal energy?

Dr Margaret Collins: info@MargaretCollins.com © 2025 All rights reserved Do not redistribute

2: Mapping your energy flow

We often experience natural energy flows, over a day, a week, a month.

- When do you typically experience higher levels of energy and focus?
- Do you notice slumps, times when focus feels harder?

Some of the highs and lows will be related to our chronotype. Other influences include how well we have slept, our general stress levels, patterns of activity and what we eat and drink during the day.



Pay more attention:
Do you arrive in work already exhausted?
Does a brisk walk start your day well?
Do you typically slump after lunch?
Always? Sometimes?

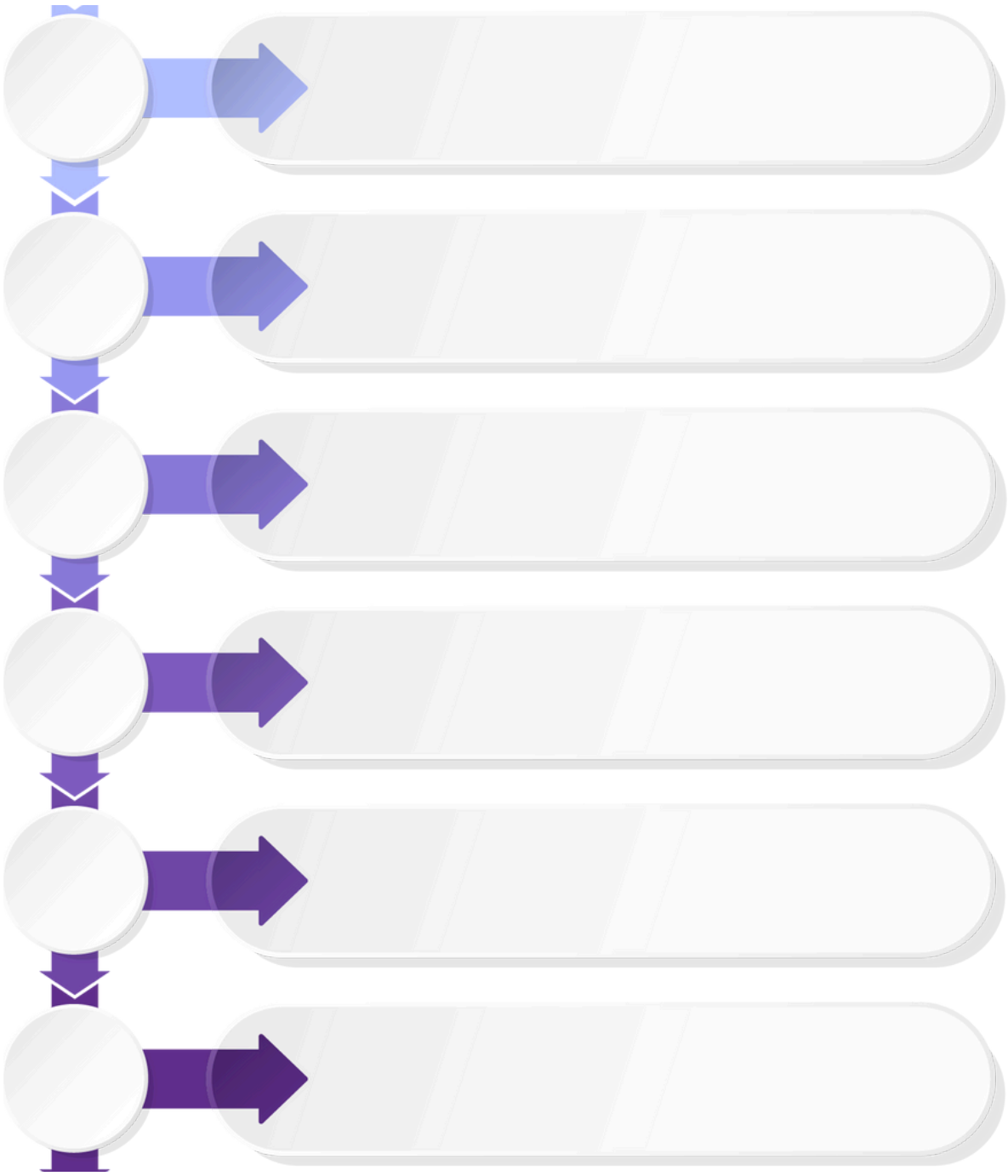
What patterns do you notice about your most productive hours?

- Time of day?
- Environment?
- Energy level?
- Type of task?

Dr Margaret Collins: info@MargaretCollins.com © 2025 All rights reserved Do not redistribute

Note your energy highs and lows in a typical day:

- When do you feel most alert?
- When do you slump?
- What are you doing at high- or low-energy times?



 © 2025 All rights reserved Do not redistribute

MARGARET COLLINS
CONFIDENCE | CLARITY | COURAGE

Align your activity to your energy:

Are you giving your best energy to your most important work? Where you have autonomy, what small shift would align your most important work with your focussed-energy hours?

Meetings in the morning?

- Are your "best hours" filled with less productive work?
- Can you have one day a week, meeting-free?
- Could you protect one day, free from interruptions?





Maximise your effectiveness.

- Protect time for Deep Work: cognitively demanding, focussed, without interruption
- Chunk together Shallow Work: get it done when your best focus or energy isn't available

Emails: they never stop, they never end, but are they your most important work?

When does your most important work get done?

 © 2025 All rights reserved Do not redistribute

MARGARET COLLINS
Confidence | Clarity | Courage

3: Managing your energy

Breakfast isn't always the most important meal

What we eat fuels our brain.
Diets high in refined carbohydrates can cause energy spikes and crashes that disrupt focus. A mixed diet rich in vegetables, protein, fibre and healthy fats helps stabilise energy levels.
Something as small as preparing a simple yet satisfying packed lunch can significantly improve productivity in an afternoon.

Notice what happens if you:

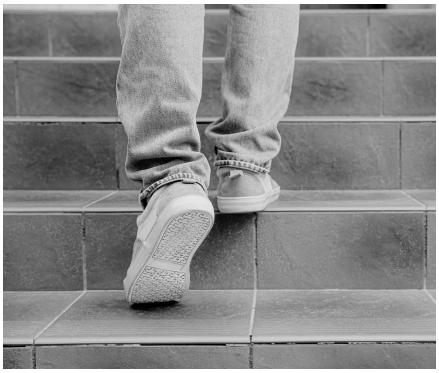


- choose yoghurt or eggs for breakfast instead of cereal or toast



- take hummus with veg sticks instead of a sandwich or pasta.

I know it feels like you don't have time to prepare lunch. The increased productivity from your afternoon will make it worthwhile!



- make the decision to get away from your desk for 10 minutes

Of course other foods or activities are also available.
Mix it up and notice what happens.

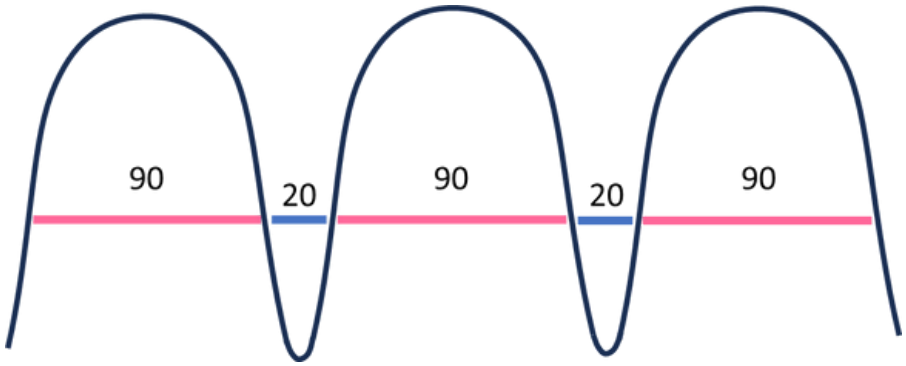
 © 2025 All rights reserved Do not redistribute

MARGARET COLLINS
CONFIDENCE | CLARITY | COURAGE

Your Basic Rest-Activity Cycle (BRAC).

Our brain naturally cycles - about 90 minutes of alertness, followed by a 15 to 20 min period of rest and recovery.

This is why many of us notice we are effective when we do focussed work for 60 to 90 minutes, why we benefit from a mid-morning break. The break isn't a sign of mental weakness, it allows our biology to bring it's best to work.



Build on what nature does already:

Activity:
- Work with focus for 60–90 minutes, then take a short restorative break (walk, stretch, breathe).
- Repeat, noticing how your focus resets.

Reflection:
- How did your focus change when you allowed a pause?

- How could you build these cycles into your week?

Some highs and lows are predictable

If you have a degree of autonomy in the way you schedule work over days, weeks or months, use your common sense.



After a night out with friends or a busy weekend it makes sense to plan for a more gentle day at work.

After working intensely to an important deadline, plan time to catch up on things you may have missed.






Many people have different energy phases

As a woman, if your energy is affected by your monthly hormone cycles, work with them, not against them.
A quieter week will be followed by one with a more intense energy focus.



If you recognise that you benefit from the hyperfocussed productivity that comes with some neurodivergent conditions, plan downtime to balance rather than work to burnout.

Alongside natural cycles, our energy is profoundly shaped by our most basic physical and psychological needs being met.
Before we plan our activity, we need to understand -

What do I need to be OK?

 © 2025 All rights reserved Do not redistribute

MARGARET COLLINS
CONFIDENCE | CLARITY | COURAGE

4: Meeting Your Needs - The Foundation of Your Energy

You can't boil an empty kettle - safely.
Much of the pressure, exhaustion or lack of focus we experience comes not from poor time management but from unmet needs.

When your basic physical, psychological and emotional needs aren't met, your body shifts towards stress physiology.
Focus becomes harder, patience shortens and everything feels more difficult to sustain.



Meeting your needs doesn't make life luxurious - it makes life workable.

It brings you from "grumpy, stretched and surviving" back to "OK, ready and resourced".

What Do We Mean by "Needs"?

- A need is something without which we are unwell, upset or simply not OK. Without it, we do not function properly.
- A desire is something that enhances life but isn't essential.

Dr Margaret Collins: info@MargaretCollins.com © 2025 All rights reserved Do not redistribute

Needs and energy depletion

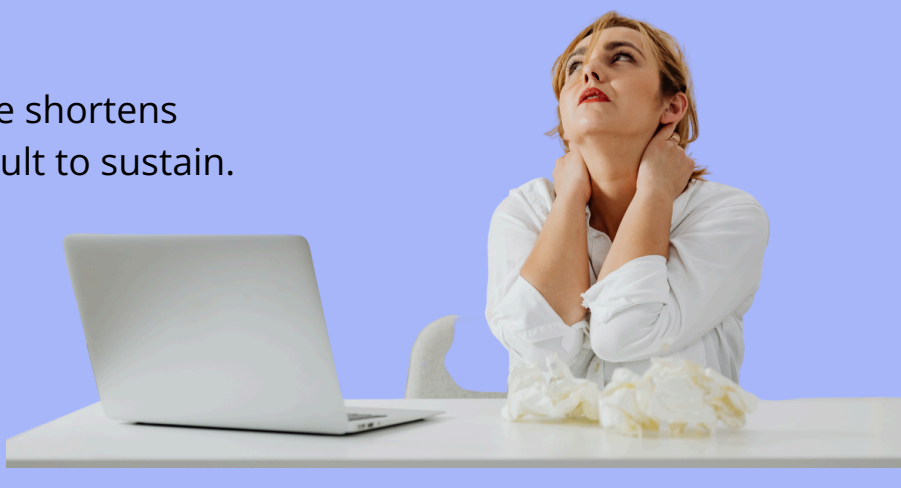
We often feel stress when our needs are not met

If a need isn't met, your energy drops faster.
Your stress response amplifies.
You become more distractible, more overwhelmed, less sharp.

If you try to "push through" this with discipline, there are consequences.
Your biology simply won't cooperate. You pay a price.

If your physical, psychological and emotional needs aren't met, your body shifts towards stress physiology.

Focus becomes harder, patience shortens
and everything feels more difficult to sustain.



When you meet your needs:

- Energy stabilises
- Focus improves
- Stress decreases
- Boundaries strengthen
- You regain choice instead of reaction

It's the quiet engine under everything else in this workbook.

Dr Margaret Collins: info@MargaretCollins.com © 2025 All rights reserved Do not redistribute

What do you need to function well?

We are all different but, being human we have some things in common.

You might want to include:

- Sleep (How long? 7.5 hours, screens off by 10pm?)
- Time alone (20 mins morning quiet)
- Connection (Lunch with colleagues, a weekly walk with a friend?)
- Movement (Regular breaks to stretch, a lunchtime walk 3× week?)
- Nature (30 mins outdoor time each weekend?)
- Nourishment (Protein-based breakfast?)
- Exercise session or hygge appointment?

What else can you include?
What do you need to function well?
Music, movies, song?
Maybe you have a hobby or passion, a learning opportunity or challenge?

Take some time. Add to your list as thoughts occur to you.

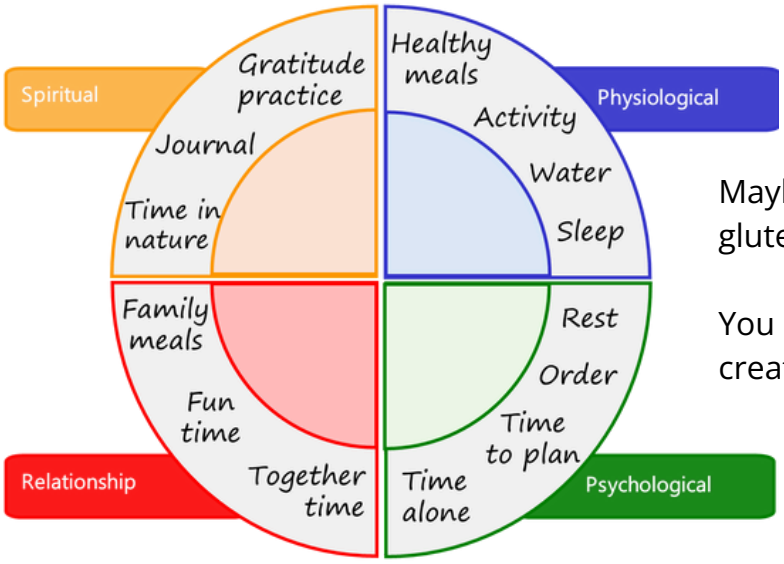
What do you need to feel and function as a human?
Without this/these, you feel off, under par, you know something's not right.

- What does "this need being met" look like in real life (specific behaviours)?
- How often do you need this - daily, weekly, monthly?
- Which needs are currently not being met consistently?
- Which unmet needs contribute most to your energy dips?

 © 2025 All rights reserved Do not redistribute

What do you need to function well on a regular, daily basis?

In the outer circle include the things you need regularly, on a daily or frequent basis. Be as specific as is helpful...



Maybe you need 3 meals each day, gluten-free food for example.

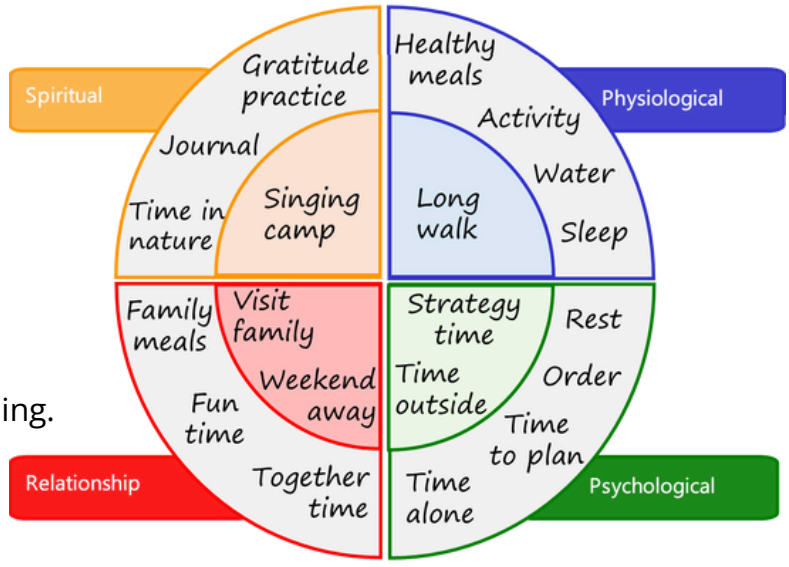
You might need time for fun or to create order out of chaos. You choose.

What do you need to function well weekly/monthly/yearly?

In the inner circle include the things you need weekly, monthly or occasionally but you still need them to function optimally.

We're all different.
A long walk at the weekend?
Regular work-planning sessions?
An annual yoga retreat?

This is your recipe for optimal being.



MARGARET COLLINS
CONFIDENCE | CLARITY | COURAGE

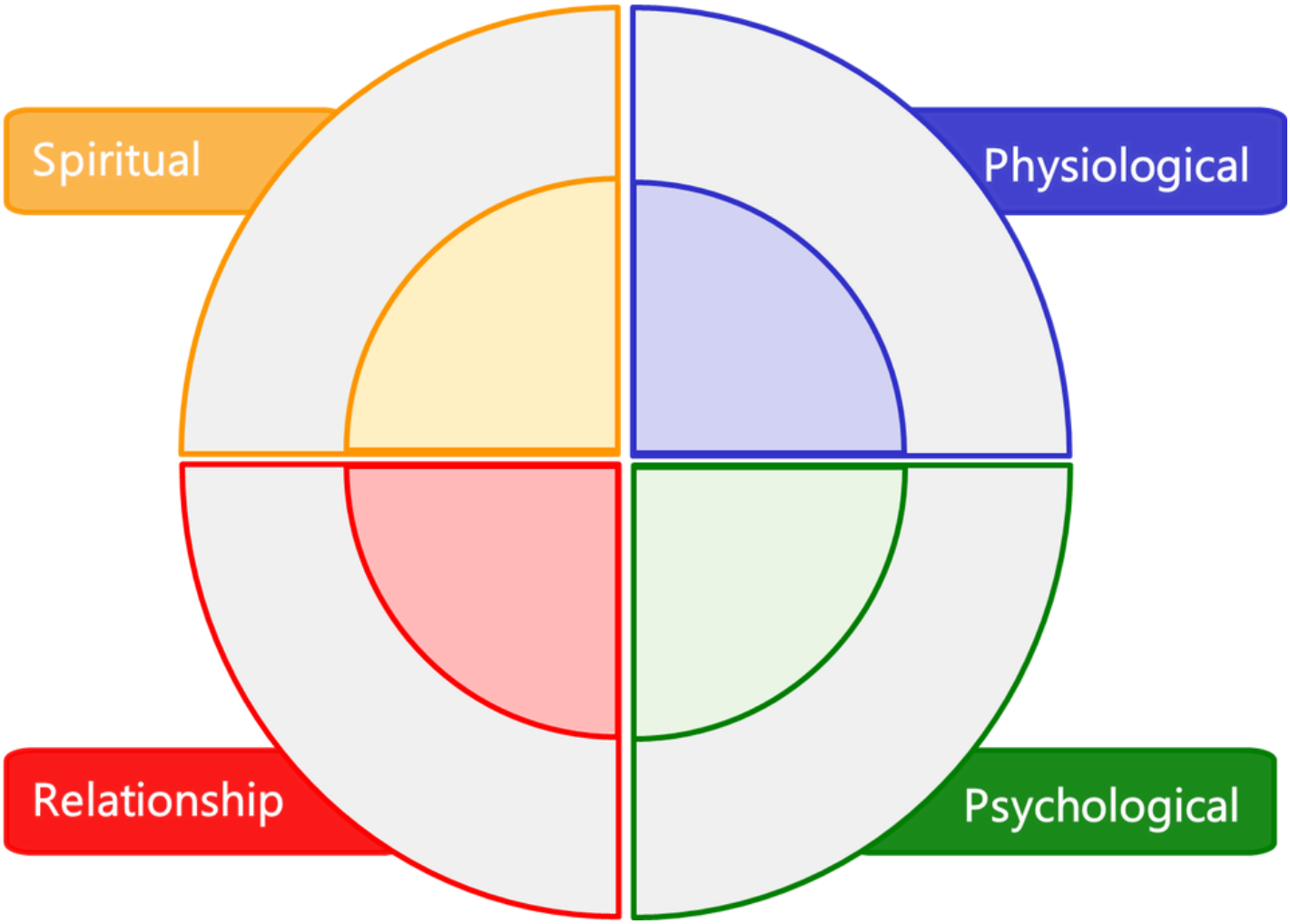
What are your specific needs?

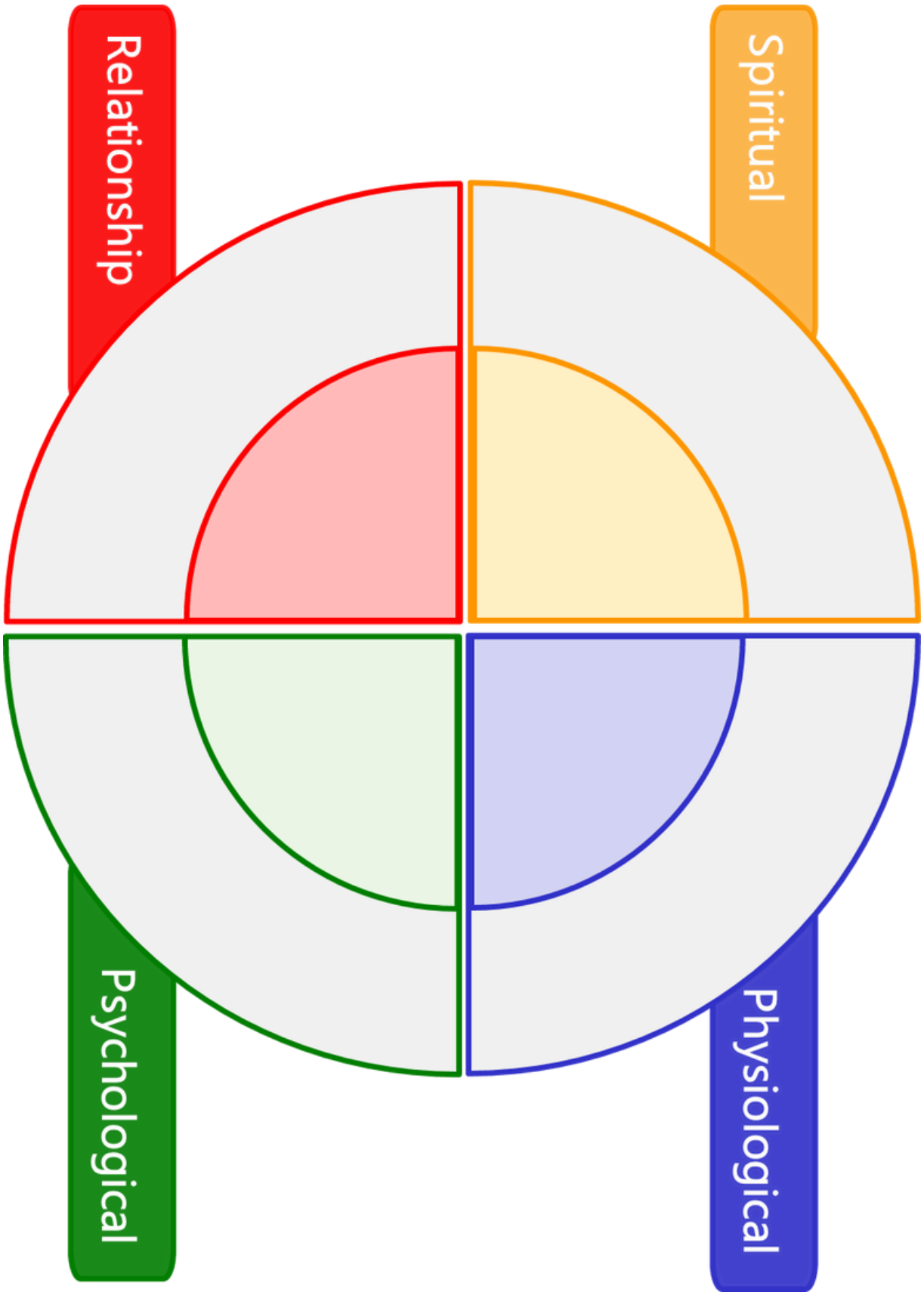
There are many ways to remind yourself to meet your needs.
The template below might be helpful.

You can identify general areas. Suggested titles include:

- Physiological
- Psychological
- Relationship
- Spiritual

Feel free to change names, add or remove sections. This is *your* template




Relationship
Spiritual
Psychological
Physiological

5: Managing Activity and Attention

Regular activity is about more than fitness, strength or health. Moving improves our alertness, our memory and recall.

Movement stimulates chemicals like BDNF (Brain-Derived Neurotrophic Factor) that help form and strengthen neural connections. Even short breaks to stand, stretch or walk improve focus and reset attention - going outdoors is even better.

- Use a 350ml bottle so you need to walk to the water cooler more often
- Stand and stretch when you've finished an email
- Walk a lap of the building after a deep work slot
- Choose to take the stairs in preference to taking the lift
- Walk with a friend while taking your tea/coffee break

What short, focussed activities can you introduce into your day?







Dr Margaret Collins: info@MargaretCollins.com © 2025 All rights reserved Do not redistribute

Remove obvious distractions.

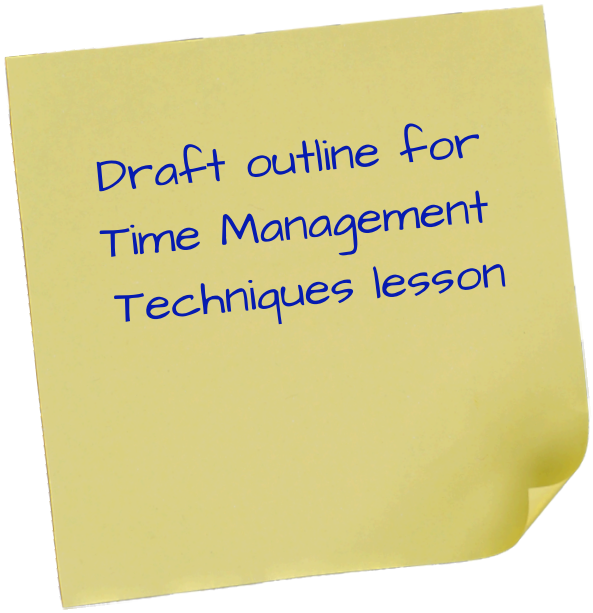
Clear your work area. Get resources you will need ready.
Close down any unneeded software or devices.
Turn off email, messaging, browsers and phones.

Begin each work session with a prioritised list.

This simple change will ensure you start with a clear focus.
You know your number one priority, what you plan to do, what you want to achieve.

Now, write your priority task on a Post-It note.

Stick this note somewhere prominently in your workspace.
This is the anchor.
When you get distracted, which you almost certainly will, this note will remind you what task you need to return to.



This helps you get back to focus quickly and reduces the risk that you'll waste time down unplanned "rabbit holes".

 © 2025 All rights reserved Do not redistribute

MARGARET COLLINS
CONFIDENCE | CLARITY | COURAGE

Managing Energy and Time: Summing it up

Success depend on energy, not just discipline.
Our bodies and brains run on rhythms, fuel and movement.
We need to work with these natural flows to sustain our success.

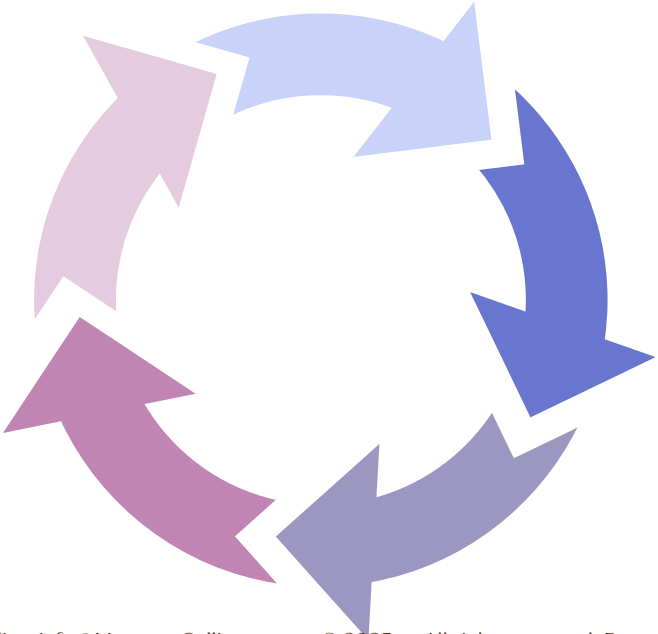
Notice and work with your natural peaks and dips in alertness.

Eat well, manage your energy and minimise spikes and crashes during the day. Even mild dehydration can reduce concentration.

Movement & time outdoors brings physical and mental benefits.

Sleep is the foundation of focus: keeping a consistent bedtime, reducing screens before sleep, and creating a dark, cool sleeping environment all help.

And yes, effective prioritisation, stopping time leaks, managing your attention and using appropriate time management techniques also matter.



 © 2025 All rights reserved Do not redistribute

MARGARET COLLINS
CONFIDENCE | CLARITY | COURAGE

REFLECTIONs

 © 2024 All rights reserved Do not redistribute

MARGARET COLLINS
CONFIDENCE | CLARITY | COURAGE

WANT MORE?



This workbook describes the most important elements of managing energy levels, your needs and physical time in order to sustain long term health and success.

Knowing how to use time well matters - but having time without the right energy to create the results you want will not bring you success.

This reflection invites you step back from simple instructions about what to do and consider why and how, bringing greater awareness to yourself and your energy.

I hope this content has been useful.
If you know you need more, do reach out to me.
I'd love to hear from you.

MargaretCollins.com/

Resources

You can always explore the other resources on my website.

Let me know how you get on!

Margaret

 © 2025 All rights reserved Do not redistribute

MARGARET COLLINS
CONFIDENCE | CLARITY | COURAGE