

### **Where do you do research?**

List 3-5 places where you do research

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

*For each of these, assess the following: does the environment (sounds, smells, motion, lighting) make you feel ready and excited to think? Note specific items you can recall which are either positive or negative. How long can you sustain work in that environment?*

### **Who do you talk to about your research?**

List the last 5 people or devices you used as a sounding board for ideas.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

*For each person, using feeling words, briefly assess how the most recent interaction left you feeling: excited? intimidated? focussed? scattered? happy? sad? disappointed? Rate from 1-5 how safe you feel disclosing with that person uncertainties or raw thoughts.*

### **How do you get your ideas?**

List the last five sources that got you thinking about an idea for your research (conversation, book, scholarly article, magazine, television programme, movie, graphic novel, instagram).

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

*For each source, assess what kind of thinking that particular source led you into: consolidation of existing ideas? new previously unexplored pathways? deep dive? shallow swim?*

### **How do you develop research and test out concepts?**

Once you've got an idea, or explored an initial concept, how do you deal with uncertainty and deepening research? How do you invite constructive criticism, isolate rabbit trails and focus?

### **How do you share your work and get feedback?**

What are the last 3 contexts in which you shared an idea (e.g. essay submission, leading teaching, submitted an abstract to a conference, draft to supervisor, late night talk with a peer)?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### **Stressors**

From your notes above, list sources of stress:

If you aren't able to isolate these in specific ways (this is pretty normal for traumatised people!), identify where you carry stress in your body and mind (tight shoulders, back problems, susceptibility to illness, insomnia, loss of appetite, avoidance behaviours, racing thoughts and ruminations):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

*Take this list with you as you go about your work during the week and identify any instance you can notice when these bodily experiences become more acute with some specific details (e.g. time, date, location, activity).*

## **Enablers**

Bear in mind that there are a lot of different kinds of work: brainstorming ideas, testing out those ideas for viability, doing a deep dive, running shallow scoping searches, consolidating ideas, revising your writing, testing with audiences, etc.

Reflecting on your notes above what seems to be some of the ingredients for successful work in each of these different kinds of thinking contexts?

Think about things like:

**Duration:** there are certain kinds of tasks that I do best when I have a long window to get in and stay thinking (e.g. 5+ hours). In other cases, I find other research activities have a shorter run by necessity (if I try to push past 2 hours I start

**Atmosphere:** what kind of ambiance is helpful? I know some people need absolute silence - I work best with some undemanding white noise, like in a coffee shop where people's individual conversations are muted by carpets and soft furnishings. I can't do large echoey spaces which preserve the "sparkle" of individual conversations. Equally, I do best with a lot of natural light. Nice smells in the background can help, as long as they aren't making me feel like I need constant snack breaks.

**Catalysts:** what kinds of things are you doing \*right before\* your thoughts really get started flowing? Sometimes a good argument with a non-human (e.g. mentally shouting at a newspaper article that makes the point in exactly the wrong way) can really help get

me started thinking. Or maybe it's finding someone who has stated things in exactly the right way! Sometimes it's about mood setting, a certain kind of music or even a specific song, the affective glow of the final episode of a television show.

Timing: what times of day do you find easiest to think in? It's possible that certain kinds of thinking map onto circadian rhythms, require a certain kind of liminal space that you only arrive at in the evening.

Company: what kinds of company helps open up your mind? This might be specific friends, a cat who knows just how to interrupt at the right moments to keep you going, or an AI chatbot you know you can trial ideas on without fear or shame or misunderstanding. Again, think in terms of specific styles of task: there might be a person you go to when you need constructive criticism, and you need to think about *\*when\** you share with that person. There may be others who are good at affirmation, but won't really tell you if ideas don't work.