

EXERCISE: MY PEACEFUL SPACE VISION BOARD

This is YOUR space to dream about what you want your home to feel like someday. You don't need money or anything fancy—just your imagination and hope for the future. You may have heard of “vision boards.” Visualizing has been proven to activate the parts of your brain associated with success and achieving your goals, which can eventually rewire your brain in relation to goal-oriented habits. Studies have shown that consistent visualization practices can improve your chances of reaching your goals.

Time Needed

45 minutes



Energy Level

Medium



What You'll Need

- Paper (any kind: notebook paper, paper bags, old magazines)
- Something to write/draw with (pencil, pen, crayons, markers)
- Optional: Pictures from free magazines or newspapers, or digital

There is NO wrong way to do this. This is a fun exercise to be as creative as you like. Make notes on your phone, build a board online, or design an elaborate poster. This is about what YOU want, not what anyone else thinks you should want.

1 My Safe Space

Draw or describe ONE room that feels important to you:

- What room is it? (bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, living room)
- What does it smell like? (fresh air, clean sheets, cookies baking)
- What can you see when you look around? (clear floor, a window with light, your bed made, places for your friends to sit)
- How does it make you feel? (calm, safe, proud, peaceful)
- When you close your eyes and then open them, what's the first thing you see in this safe space?

Remember! You're not designing a magazine photo. You're imagining a space where YOU feel good.

2 Small Things Matter

Check the things that would make you happy (add your own too!):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being able to find my favorite things when I need them | <input type="checkbox"/> Being able to do homework at a table or desk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having a friend over without feeling embarrassed | <input type="checkbox"/> Not having to climb over things |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A clear path to walk through every room | <input type="checkbox"/> Windows I can see out of |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being able to open and close doors easily | <input type="checkbox"/> Being able to use the bathroom easily |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having a spot that's just mine and stays organized | <input type="checkbox"/> Not having to check the floor for bugs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean dishes to eat from | <input type="checkbox"/> A clean bed I can get into without moving stuff first |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Going barefoot on the floor in my room | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

3 How I Want to FEEL at Home

Check the feelings you want, or write your own:

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relaxed | <input type="checkbox"/> Free | <input type="checkbox"/> Not embarrassed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Safe | <input type="checkbox"/> Clean | <input type="checkbox"/> Not worried about bugs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Proud | <input type="checkbox"/> Comfortable | <input type="checkbox"/> Not scared |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calm | <input type="checkbox"/> Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Like I can breathe |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Not stressed | <input type="checkbox"/> Like I have space |

My feeling: _____

4 My First Small Goal

Pick ONE tiny thing you'd like to work toward (even if it seems impossible now):

Examples:

- "I want to be able to see my bedroom floor."
- "I want one drawer that's just for my things and stays neat."
- "I want to be able to sit at the table for meals."
- "I want to walk straight to my bed without stepping over things."

My small goal is: _____

Why this matters to me: _____

5 Things I Can Control (Right Now)

These are things YOU can do—now—even in hard situations:

- Keep my school stuff in one place (backpack, bag, box, in my closet)
- Put my dirty clothes in one spot (hamper, bag, suitcase)
- Throw away my own trash (out of the house, if necessary)
- Make my bed (even if stuff is on it, I can tidy it up)
- Keep one small space clear (a nightstand, a shelf, a corner)
- Ask for help from a trusted adult
- Keep my homework organized
- Take care of my own belongings
- Set boundaries on my room and not letting it become another storage area (even if this is hard to enforce)

Something else I can control: _____

This is related to the My Control Circle exercise. You can use these in your Circle 1.

6 Words That Give Me Strength

Write down or draw words/phrases that help you feel strong:

Examples:

- | | |
|--|--|
| • “I deserve a safe, clean space.” | • “I’m doing my best.” |
| • “Small steps count.” | • “I can’t control everything, but I can control some things.” |
| • “My future can be different.” | • “I’m doing everything I can to work toward independence.” |
| • “I don’t have to live here forever.” | • “I know this is not how I want to live.” |
| • “I am not alone in this situation.” | |
| • “It’s okay to want better.” | |

My words/phrases: _____

7 People Who Can Help

Who could you talk to if you need help?:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> School counselor | <input type="checkbox"/> School nurse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> Social worker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Older sibling | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious leader |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coach | <input type="checkbox"/> Hotline (See Resources on More Than Messy) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend's parent (or older sibling) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relative | |

Note: Some of these people listed above are mandated reporters, which means they're required by law to report if they believe you're in danger. This doesn't mean you shouldn't talk to them—it means help might come in ways you don't expect. If you're worried about this, you can start by asking general questions without sharing your address or identifying details. You can also ask up front if they will be able to keep your conversation confidential or not.

Remember! Asking for help is brave, not shameful.

Looking at My Vision Board

Put your vision board somewhere you can see it. Depending on your family, you may need to keep it hidden. If anyone questions it, you can explain it's a project about goal-setting or future planning. You don't have to explain that it's about wanting a different kind of home. Suggestions:

- On your phone
- Inside a notebook or folded in your backpack
- In a locked jewelry box or other secure container
- Under your pillow
- In a locker at school

When you look at it, remember:

- The state of your home is NOT your fault. You're not responsible for fixing everything.
- Change happens slowly, and that's okay. Small improvements matter.
- Your feelings and dreams are valid. You deserve a home where you feel safe and calm.

Accessibility Considerations

This exercise involves creating a vision board through writing or drawing. If these are difficult, you can: type it, use voice-to-text to describe what you want, collect images digitally on your phone, have someone help you create it while you describe your vision, or simply think through the questions mentally. The goal is imagining what you want—however you capture it is fine.

Important Reminders

- It's okay to love your family AND want things to be different.
- You're not being mean, selfish, or ungrateful by wanting a cleaner, safer home or by taking steps to protect your own space.
- Cleaning the hoarded home will not fix anything in the long-term, and it's not your job.
- You can't force other people to change, but you CAN make different choices about your own space and your own future.
- There are people in the world who want to help you be happy, healthy, and safe.
- Boundaries are your friends. The more you practice them, the better at them you'll get—even if they don't always work at first.
- When you're older and have your own place, you'll get to decide how it looks and feels.

You've got this. One day at a time, one small step at a time.

Real Talk

This is hard stuff. Living in a hoarded home isn't your fault, and it's not something you can fix alone or overnight. But dreaming about what you want for your future is powerful. It helps you remember what you're working toward, even on hard days.

Remember! You don't have to fix everything at once.