



value-aligned

2021

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Are you ready to make 2021 your most value-aligned year?

Are you ready to make real changes in your life that will make a lasting impact?

Are you ready to start living a life that is drive by the things most important to you?

This year long journal will help you identify the things most important to you, guide you in making small changes that will make a big impact, and utilize principles and strategies from evidence-based therapeutic interventions to optimize your growth and happiness.

When committing to this journal, you are committing to change and growth. You are digging deep and reflecting on the most important aspects of your life. You are challenging yourself to take small steps which will move you forward on your pursuit of living a value-aligned life.

This journal is not all butterflies and rainbows. Each month you will be reflecting on your past month, how your thoughts and behaviors aligned with the person you are and want to be, where you succeeded and where you may need to tweak your approach, where your focus was and where it may need to shift.

Life isn't perfect. You aren't either. We are human, we fall short, we change directions.

This journal is about recognizing what is most important to you at your core. Recognizing that you do not need to make massive changes to succeed at living a life in alignment with your values. Recognizing shortcomings not as failures, but as opportunities to change your approach and focus.

When we do things that align with our values, we are more likely to succeed because we are doing things that are important to us. If you are finding yourself failing over and over at something you believe you want, it does not mean you are a failure. It is an opportunity for reflection to determine what about your goal or behavior you need to change to set yourself up for future success.

You have the power within you to live a value-driven life. This journal is just one tool to help you unleash that potential.

Are you ready to live a value-aligned life?



The first step to working through this journal is understanding values and why they are important. We all have a general sense of what a value is, although it can take on many different meanings. For example, the value of a material item may refer to how much that item costs or is worth. In contrast, when we think about our personal values, we are referring to what are the most important things in our life – what gives our life meaning and purpose.

By living a life that aligns with our values, we have an internal compass that guides us. We have clarity in where we want to go in life, goals we want to progress towards, and how to behave and react in different situations.

Talking about and reflecting on our values can be a challenge. Values tend to be abstract and span across specific objects, behaviors, goals, and states. They also often do not have an end point nor can be reached, which makes it difficult to guide behavior unless we are intentional about it. For example, if you value friendship, you may send a friend who lives in another state a care package to let them know you are thinking of them. This one action is aligned with your core value of friendship but doing that one behavior does not “complete” the value. You consistently have to engage in other behaviors (big or small) that align with your value of friendship.

In contrast, goals are more apt to influence behavior as we tend to be more aware of our goals, and our goals are more concrete, imminent, and context-specific. Although our values may be the driving force behind a specific goal, we are more likely to live in alignment with that value in that moment because we are aiming to reach a goal. Take the friendship example yet again. You value friendship so you decide to throw a surprise party for your friend’s birthday. In the months leading up you are sending out invites, planning the food, buying decorations; you are living in alignment with your values because you have a specific goal in mind – the party. Once the party is over, so is all that intentional focus on planning and, thus, you must find other ways to live in alignment with your values.

Now, living in alignment with your values is not necessarily hard to do, you just have to be intentional about doing so. It also does not require big gestures and often should not. To live a truly value-driven life means to live a life where your every day, small actions align with the things most important to you.

And this journal is going to teach you exactly how to do that.

identifying your values

The first step in living a value-driven life is to identify what your values are. The purpose of this exercise is to help clarify purpose and meaning in your life. By taking time to determine what your core values are, you will have more clarity moving forward when setting goals and action planning for how you want to live in alignment with those values.

This exercise is a modification of the Personal Values Card Sort activity developed by Miller and colleagues (2001). For this exercise, you will need three different color pens or highlighters. Each one will represent one of the following: Very Important to Me, Important to Me, Not Important to Me. For simplification, identify your colors below:

VERY IMPORTANT TO ME _____

IMPORTANT TO ME _____

NOT IMPORTANT TO ME _____

On the next pages, you will see a list of values. Read each value and the brief description next to it. With your different color pens, highlight, check, or somehow indicate if that value is very important to you, important to you, or not important to you. Take your time to read each value carefully, but do not spend too much time mulling over its importance. Go through all the words, indicating their importance, before moving on to the next step. There is also space to write down additional values that are not included in the list.

helpful tips: If you are wavering back and forth over if something is important to you, it likely is not; go with your gut. There are no right or wrong answers. This is what is important to YOU not what you think should be important. For example, if you do not value the environment, make sure you mark it “NOT IMPORTANT TO ME”, rather than feeling pressured into saying it is because you feel you are “supposed” to care about the environment. This activity is for YOU and nobody else.



identifying your values

- ACCEPTANCE – to be accepted as I am
- ACCURACY – to be accurate in my opinions and beliefs
- ACHIEVEMENT – to have important accomplishments
- ADVENTURE – to have new and exciting experiences
- ATTRACTIVENESS – to be physically attractive
- AUTHORITY – to be in charge or and responsible for others
- AUTONOMY – to be self-determined and independent
- BEAUTY – to appreciate beauty around me
- CARING – to take care of others
- CHALLENGE – to take on difficult tasks and problems
- CHANGE – to have a life full of change and variety
- COMFORT – to have a pleasant and comfortable life
- COMMITMENT – to make enduring, meaningful commitments
- COMPASSION – to feel and act on concern for others
- CONTRIBUTION – to make a lasting contribution in the world
- COOPERATION – to work collaboratively with others
- COURTESY – to be considerate and polite towards others
- CREATIVITY – to have new and original ideas
- DEPENDABILITY – to be reliable and trustworthy
- DUTY – to carry out my duties and obligations
- ECOLOGY – to live in harmony with the environment
- EXCITEMENT – to have a life full of thrills and stimulation
- FAITHFULNESS – to be loyal and true in relationships
- FAME – to be known and recognized
- FAMILY – to have a happy, loving family
- FITNESS – to be physically fit and strong
- FLEXIBILITY – to adjust to new circumstances easily
- FORGIVENESS – to be forgiving of others
- FRIENDSHIP – to have close, supportive friends
- FUN – to play and have fun
- GENEROSITY – to give what I have to others
- GENUINENESS – to act in a manner that is true to who I am
- GOD’S WILL – to seek and obey the will of God
- GROWTH – to keep changing and growing
- HEALTH – to be physically well and healthy

HELPFULNESS – to be helpful to others
HONESTY – to be honest and truthful
HOPE – to maintain a positive and optimistic outlook
HUMILITY – to be modest and unassuming
HUMOR – to see the humorous side of myself and the world
INDEPENDENCE – to be free from dependence on others
INDUSTRY – to work hard and well at my life tasks
INNER PEACE – to experience personal peace
INTIMACY – to share my innermost experiences with others
JUSTICE – to promote fair and equal treatment for all
KNOWLEDGE – to learn and contribute valuable knowledge
LEISURE – to take time to relax and enjoy
LOVED – to be loved by those close to me
LOVING – to give love to others
MASTERY – to be competent in my everyday actions
MINDFULNESS – to live conscious and mindful in the present moment
MODERATION – to avoid excesses and find a middle ground
MONOGAMY – to have one close, loving relationship
NON-CONFORMITY – to question and challenge authority and norms
NURTURANCE – to take care of and nurture others
OPENNESS – to be open to new experiences, ideas, and options
ORDER – to have a life that is well-ordered and organized
PASSION – to have deep feelings about ideas, activities, or people
PLEASURE – to feel good
POPULARITY – to be well-liked by many people
POWER – to have control over others
PURPOSE – to have meaning and direction in my life
RATIONALITY – to be guided by reason and logic
REALISM – to see and act realistically and practically
RESPONSIBILITY – to make and carry out responsible decisions
RISK – to take risks and chances
ROMANCE – to have intense, exciting love in my life
SAFETY – to be safe and secure
SELF-ACCEPTANCE – to accept myself as I am
SELF-CONTROL – to be disciplined in my own actions
SELF-ESTEEM – to feel good about myself
SELF-KNOWLEDGE – to have a deep and honest understanding of myself
SERVICE – to be of service to others
SEXUALITY – to have an active and satisfying sex life
SIMPLICITY – to live life simply, with minimal needs
SOLITUDE – to have time and space where I can be apart from others

SPIRITUALITY – to grow and mature spiritually

STABILITY – to have a life that stays fairly consistent

TOLERANCE – to accept and respect those who differ from me

TRADITION – to follow respected patterns of the past

VIRTUE – to live a morally pure and excellent life

WEALTH – to have plenty of money

WORLD PEACE – to work to promote peace in the world

OTHER VALUE: _____

OTHER VALUE: _____

OTHER VALUE: _____

Now that you have sorted your values into the categories of VERY IMPORTANT TO ME, IMPORTANT TO ME, AND NOT IMPORTANT TO ME, take time and use the space below to write down all the values which you deemed very important.

my very important values:



Now that you have written down your VERY IMPORTANT values, I want you to narrow those values down to the 10 values that are most important to you. You can do this by going through them in a similar manner as the exercise, where you re-assign if something is VERY IMPORTANT TO ME or IMPORTANT TO ME, picking out the ones you know are “must haves” and then sorting through the rest, listening to your gut; whatever works for you. Scratch out values you no longer want, put check marks next to ones you want to keep, or start numbering them from 1 to 10. This is your time to really hone in on what is most important to you. When you have narrowed down your values to your top 10, list them below.

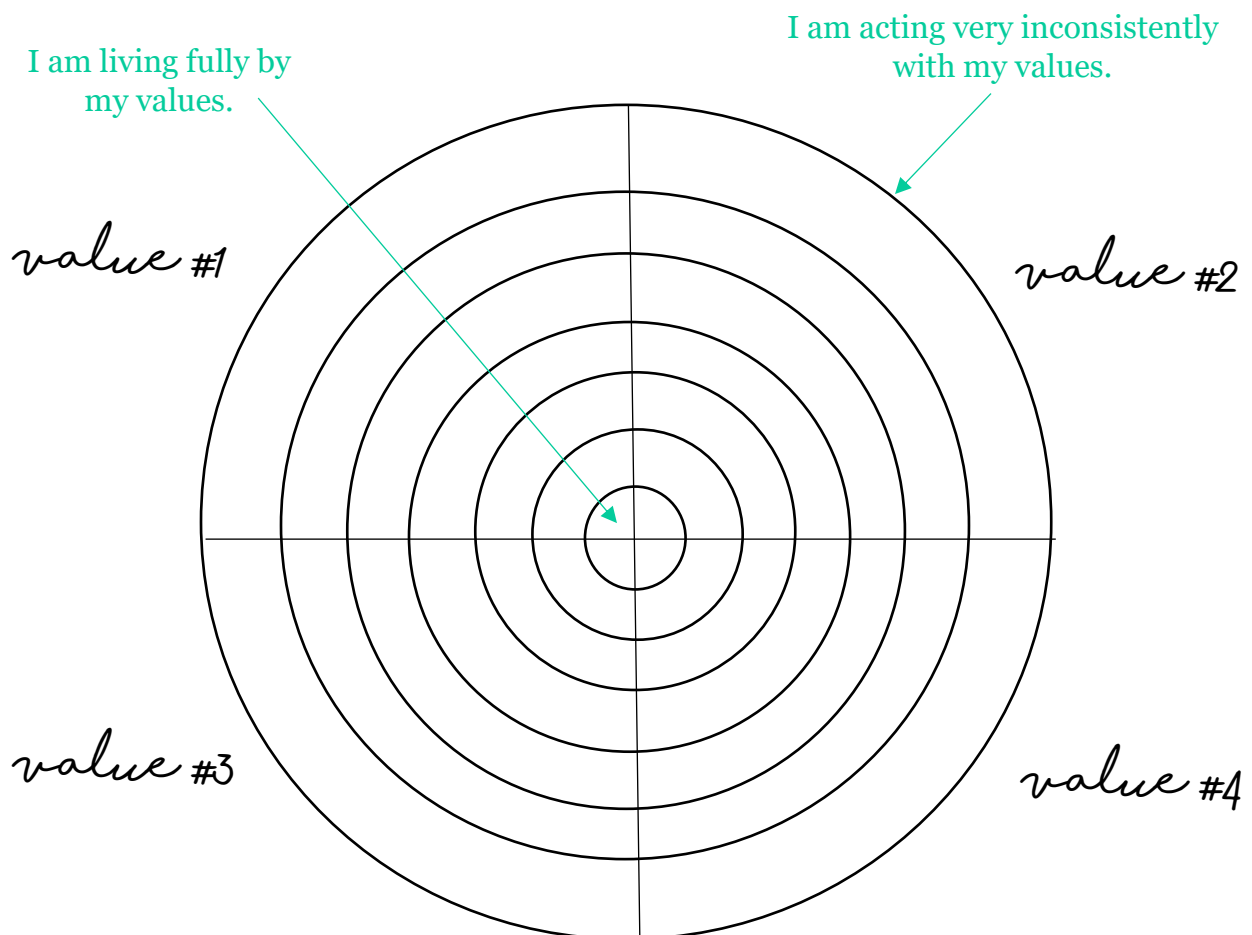
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

the bull's eye

Now that you have identified your top 10 values, we are going to engage in an exercise designed to clarify your values and how aligned you currently are with them. This values-clarification exercise was designed by Tobias Lundgren, a Swedish Acceptance and Commitment (ACT) therapist, and is useful in having a visual representation of how close you are to living in alignment in your values.

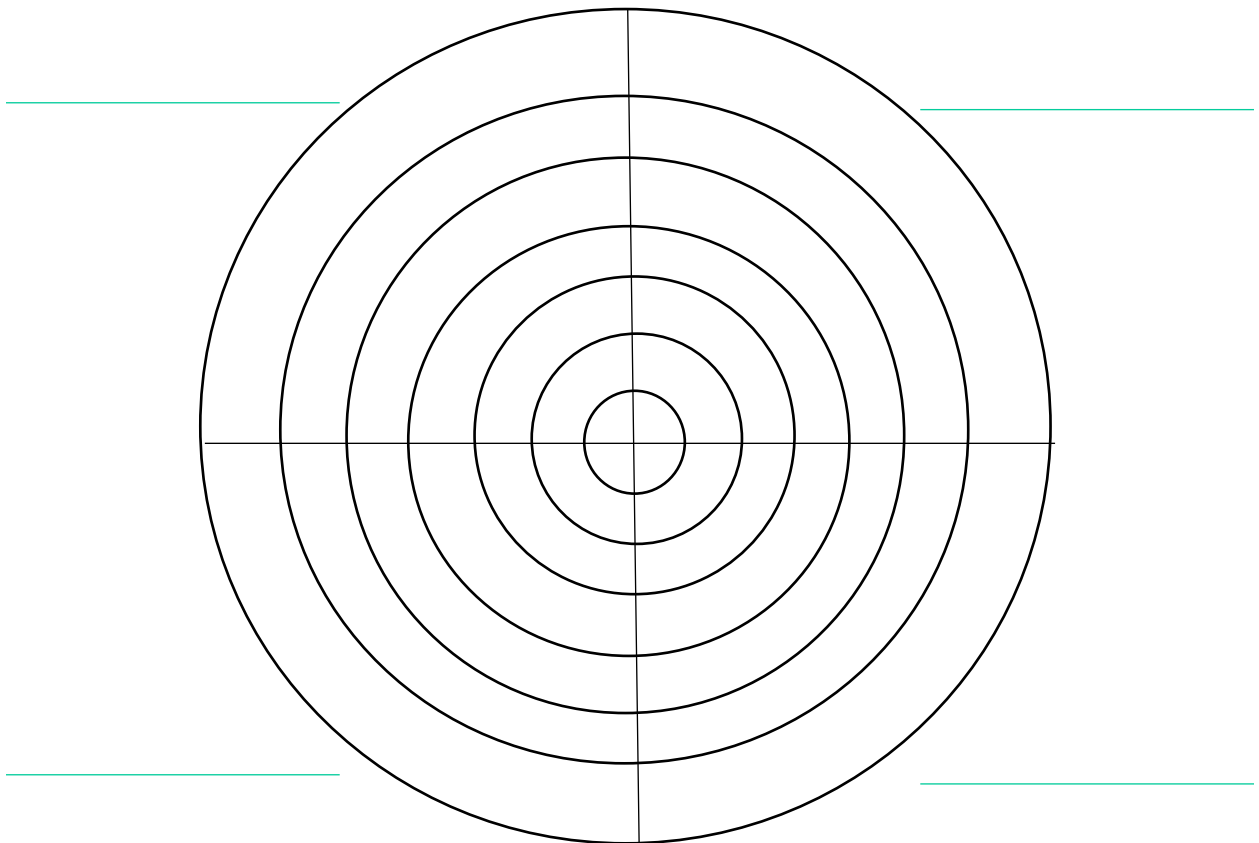
Looking back on the 10 values you identified on the previous page, I want you to pick 4 of those values to focus on. These can be the 4 values you feel are most important to you; the 4 values you feel that you need to work on the most; or 4 values you simply just want to focus in on this year.

note: There will be opportunities each month to re-evaluate how well you are living in alignment with your values and change the values you want to work on for the next month. This is simply a way for you to become familiar with this exercise.





Write down the 4 values you chose to focus on in the blank spaces below. Then make an X in each area of the dart board associated with that value to represent where you stand today. An X in the Bull's Eye (the center of the board) means that you are living fully by that particular value. An X far from the Bull's eye means that you are far away in terms of living by that value.



What was that like for you? Are you living in alignment with most of your values or do you feel there is room for growth towards living a more value-driven life? In the next section you are going to learn how to set small, tangible goals to get you closer to living in alignment with your values.

setting smart goals

Many times people fail at reaching their goals because they are too broad, too idealistic, do not want to put the effort in to attaining those goals, or do not have a real way to measure progress towards those goals.

When thinking of the steps you are going to take to live in alignment with your values I want you to think **small**. We so often are told to think big, but when we think big without considering all the small steps along the way, we set ourselves up for failure. By focusing on the small steps, by making small goals, you are more likely to achieve these goals. In turn, you continue to build upon your previously mastered steps because you feel a sense of accomplishment and see progress towards your ultimate goals.

To help you determine the first steps you want to take towards living a more value-driven life, you are going to learn how to set S.M.A.R.T. Goals.

specific

measurable

attainable

realistic

timely

specific – A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. To set a specific goal you must answer the six “W” questions.

- Who is involved?
- What do I want to accomplish?
- Where – identify a location
- When – establish a time frame
- Which – identify requirements and constraints
- Why – specific reasons, purpose, or benefits of accomplishing the goal

measurable – Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each goal you set. When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target dates, and experience a sense of achievement that prompts continued effort to reach your goals. To determine if your goal is measurable, ask questions such as:

- How much?
- How many?
- How will I know when it is accomplished?

attainable – When you identify goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways to reach them. You develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and resources to reach them and begin to see previously overlooked opportunities to bring yourself closer to the achievement of your goals. To successfully attain a goal, you need to plan your steps wisely and establish a time frame that allows you to carry out your steps.

realistic – To be realistic, a goal must represent an objective toward which you are both *willing* and *able* to work. A goal can be high and realistic, but only if you are willing to put in the effort that is necessary to reach that high goal. When determining if your goal is realistic, consider if there would be other goals that you would meet along the way. If there are, it is likely those smaller goals are more realistic for *now*, and mastery of those goals will set you up for *future*, realistic goals. For example, if you have never run before but your goal is to run a marathon, you can set that initial goal if you are willing and able to put in the effort. However, an initial, more realistic goal may be to run a 5K. Once you accomplish that goal, your next goal may be a 10K, then a half marathon, and finally a marathon.

timely - A goal should be grounded within a time frame. With no time frame there is no sense of urgency; however, by setting a time frame there is unconscious motivation to work on the goal.

note: T can also stand for *tangible*. A tangible goal is one where you can experience it with one of your five senses – taste, touch, smell, sight, or hearing.

setting smart goals

Now it is time to practice. As this is just a practice exercise to get you in the habit of setting S.M.A.R.T. goals, it can be related to one of your identified values or an unrelated goal. In general, our goals are broad (e.g. "I want to get healthy.") and that is a great starting point; however, broad goals without a plan often set us up for failure. So take some time to write down ways you can make that broad goal of yours S.M.A.R.T.

goal: _____

how can i make this goal more specific?

how am i going to measure this goal?

is my goal attainable? how do i know?

is my goal realistic or are there other goals i should aim for first?

what time frame do i want to accomplish my goal within?



how to use this journal

You have now identified your values, learned how to use the bull's eye to determine how in alignment you are with living out the values most important to you, and have learned how to set S.M.A.R.T. goals. This knowledge is going to be key in creating a life driven by your values.

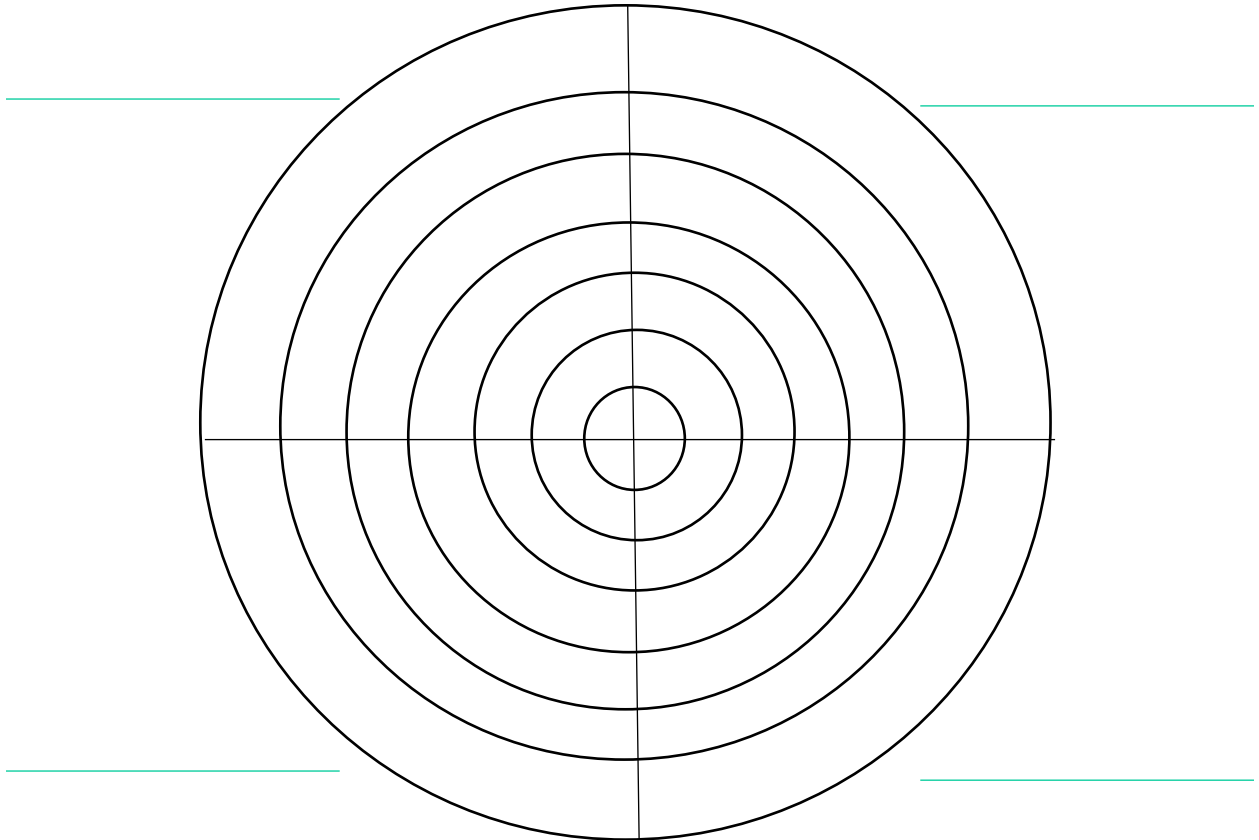
Each month you will choose **up to 4** of your important values to focus on; these do not have to be the same values as the previous month. You will complete the bull's eye at the beginning of the month, including how close you are to living in alignment with that particular value. Then, for each value you will set **one S.M.A.R.T. goal** for that month. You do not have to think big; I want these to be things you can incorporate in your life on a daily/weekly/monthly basis. The more small things you can do that equate to living a value-driven life, the more purpose and meaning you will find in your life. For example, if you value time with your family, your S.M.A.R.T. goal may be to have a family game night one night per week.

Each week, you will have a weekly check in. There will be questions prompting you to reflect on your past week and the week ahead. Take time to truly reflect on your week – how you felt, what went well, and what may need some tweaking. If you did not meet your goals for the week, do not see it as a failure; see it as an opportunity to adjust your goals or habits. **Remember, we are more likely to complete things that we truly want or align with what we value.** Sometimes we may think we want something, but in reality, the idea is better than the actuality.

At the end of the month, you will have a monthly reflection. Similar to the weekly check in, there will be questions prompting you to reflect on the past month. You will also re-do the bull's eye; this time incorporating both where you felt your alignment was at the beginning of the month and where you feel it is at the end of the month. This gives you visual representation of the progress you have made. Also, it is fine if you feel less aligned at the end of the month – life happens – and it is important to recognize and reflect on that. Use this journaling time to really reflect on how you believe your month went, what went well, what needs adjusting, and what lessons you have learned.



This month I am going to focus on the following values:



One S.M.A.R.T. goal I can set for each value is:

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

week 1 check in

How many of my S.M.A.R.T. goals did I incorporate into my life this week?

How did it feel incorporating these new habits into my life?

What barriers did I face with regard to meeting my goals?

What do I want to continue doing this week?

What do I need to do differently this upcoming week?

week 2 check in

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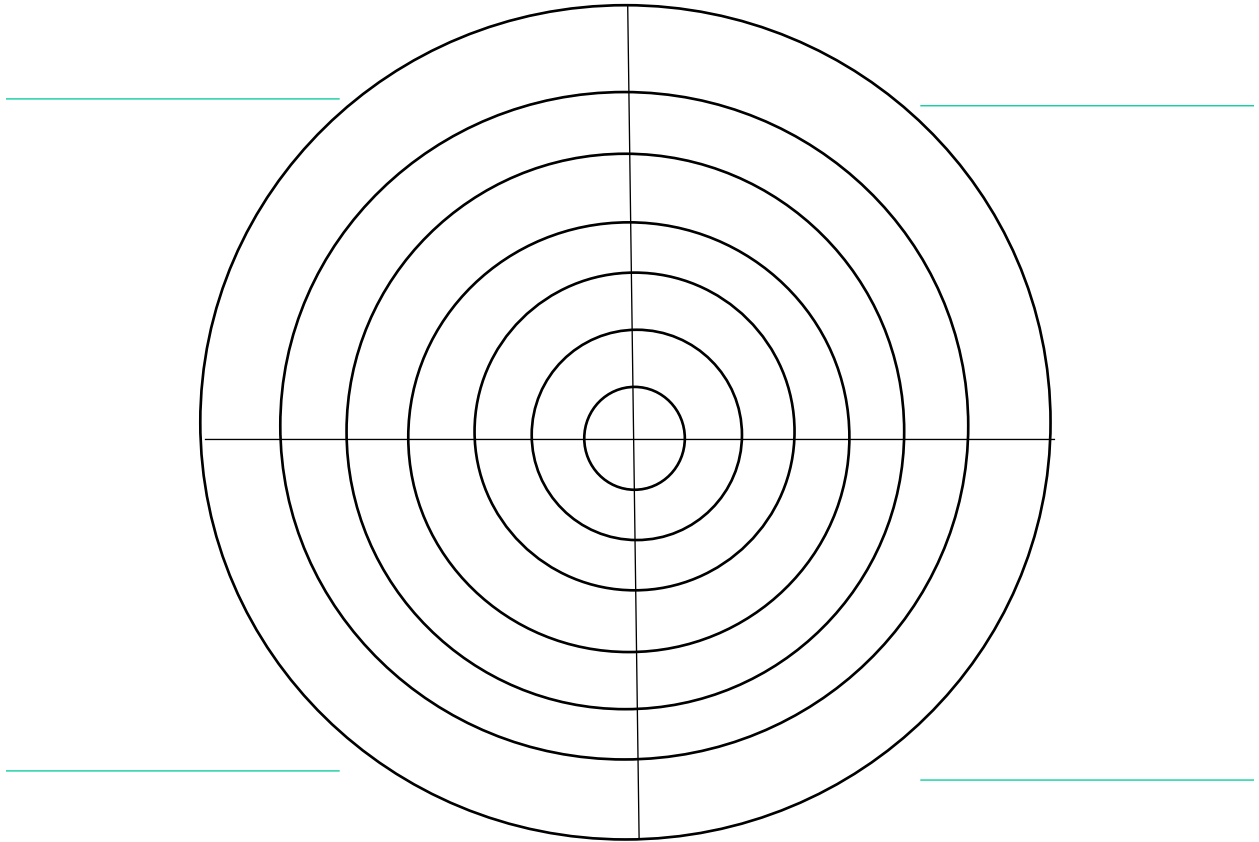
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end of the month check in

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Reflecting on the past month, how did it feel to incorporate these value-driven goals?

Was it challenging? Have I built up new habits? Did I find some things were easier to incorporate than others? Be honest and vulnerable; that is where change comes from.

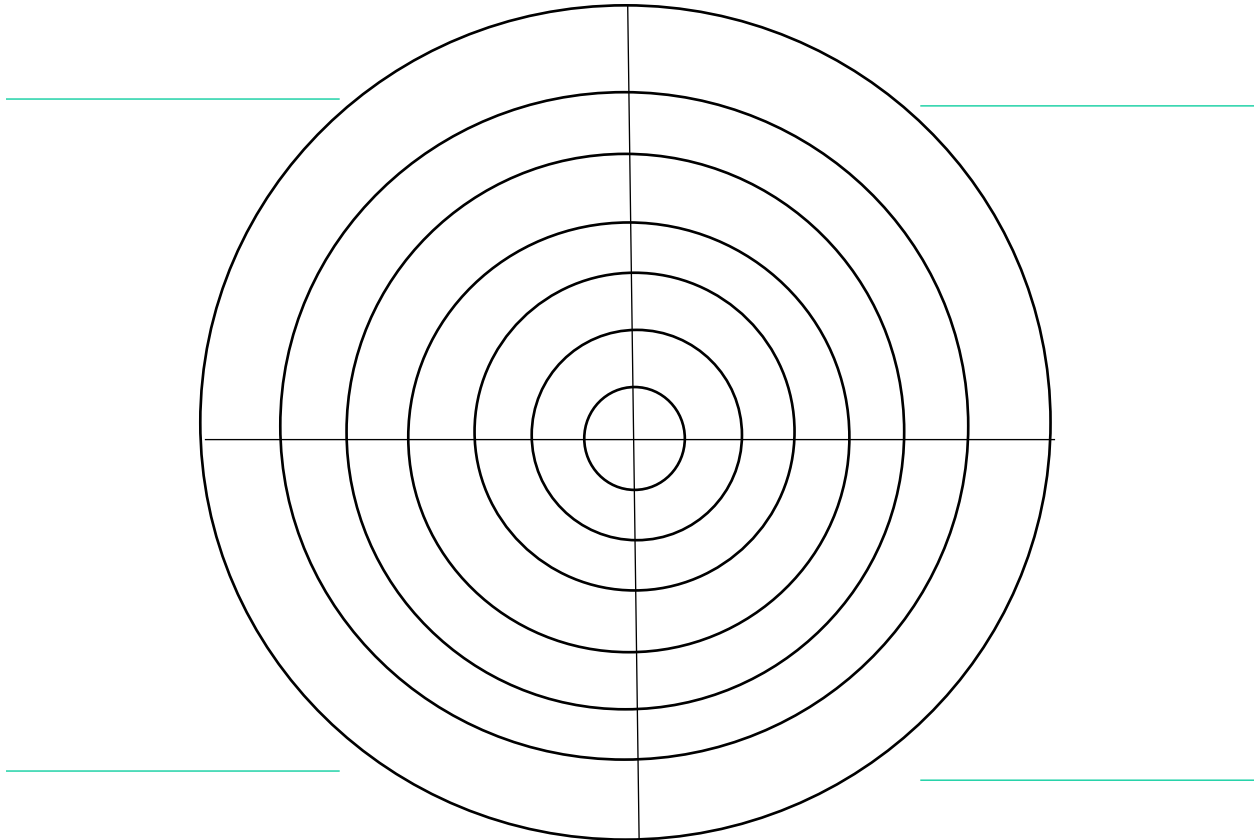
What barriers did I face this month and what do I plan to change next month?

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What have I learned about myself or my values this month? How will these lessons impact me moving forward?



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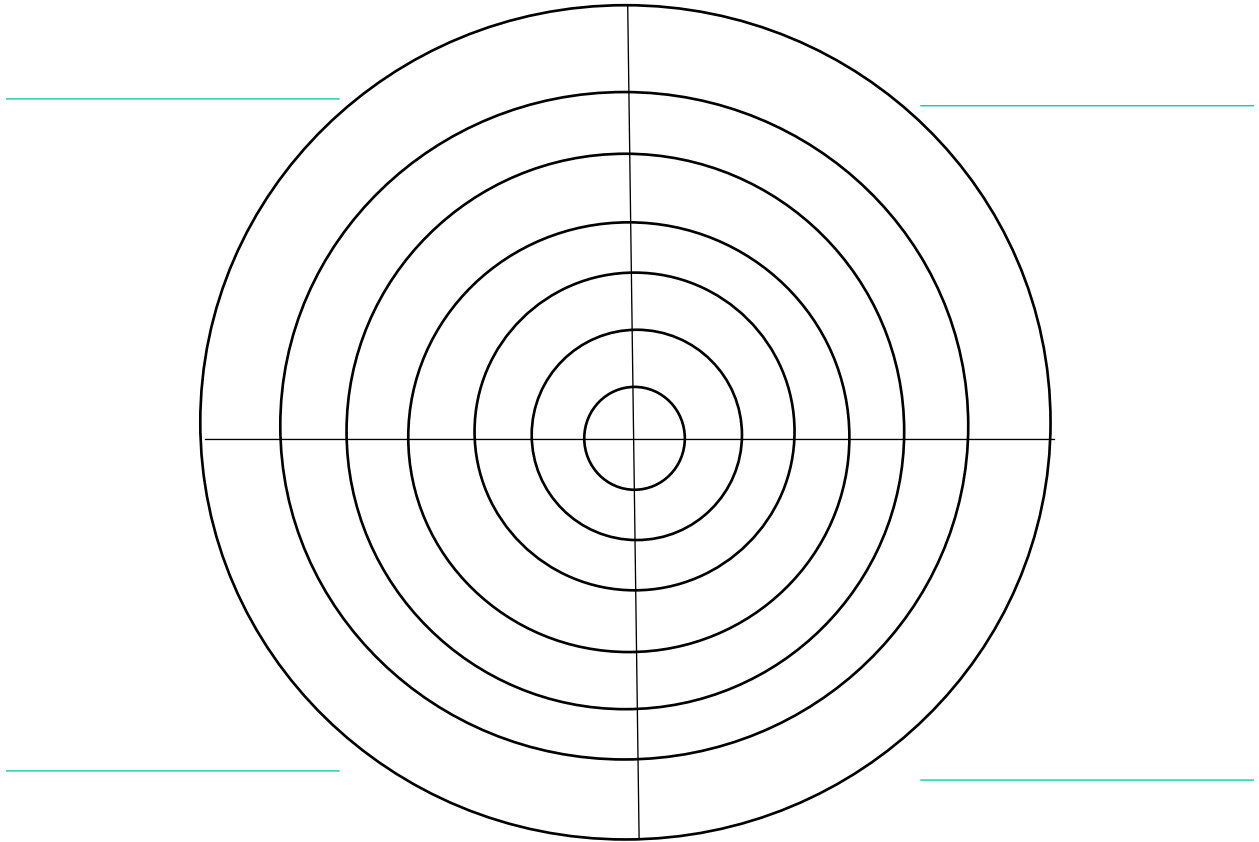
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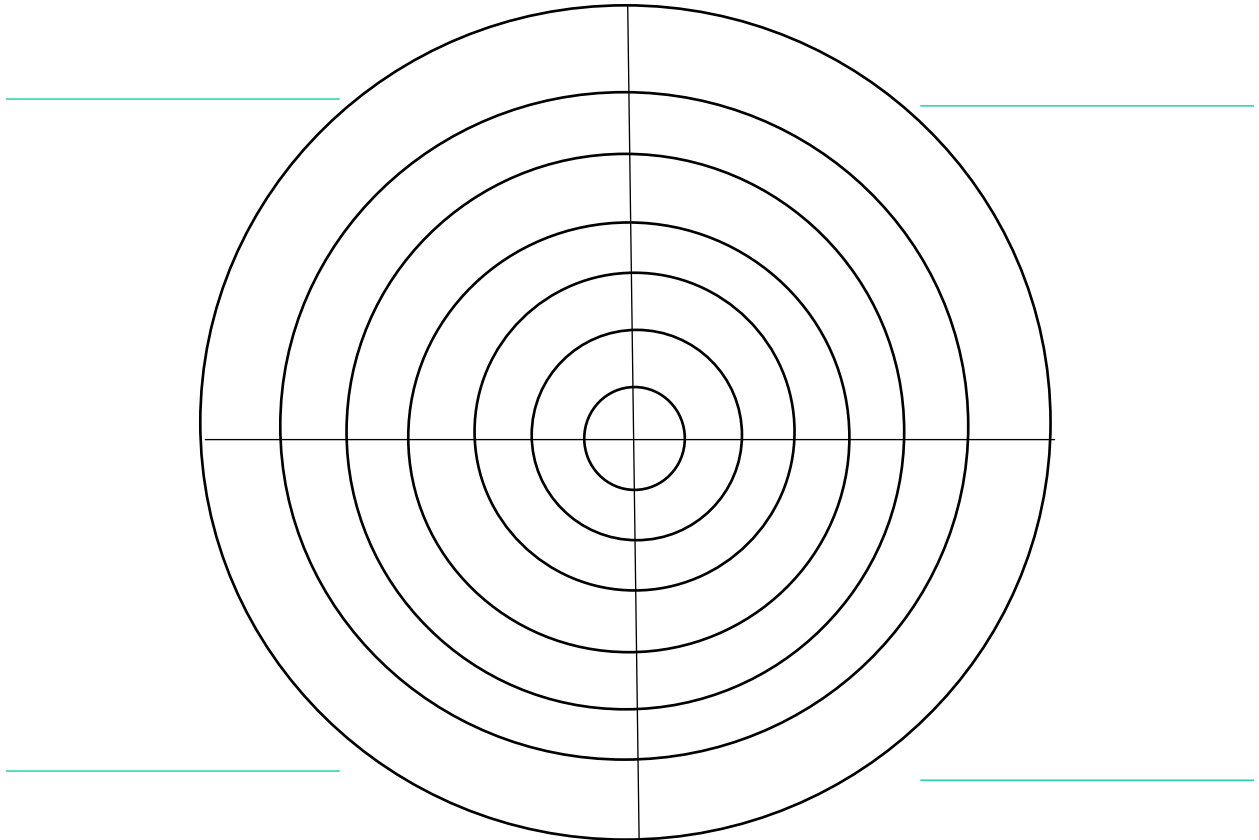
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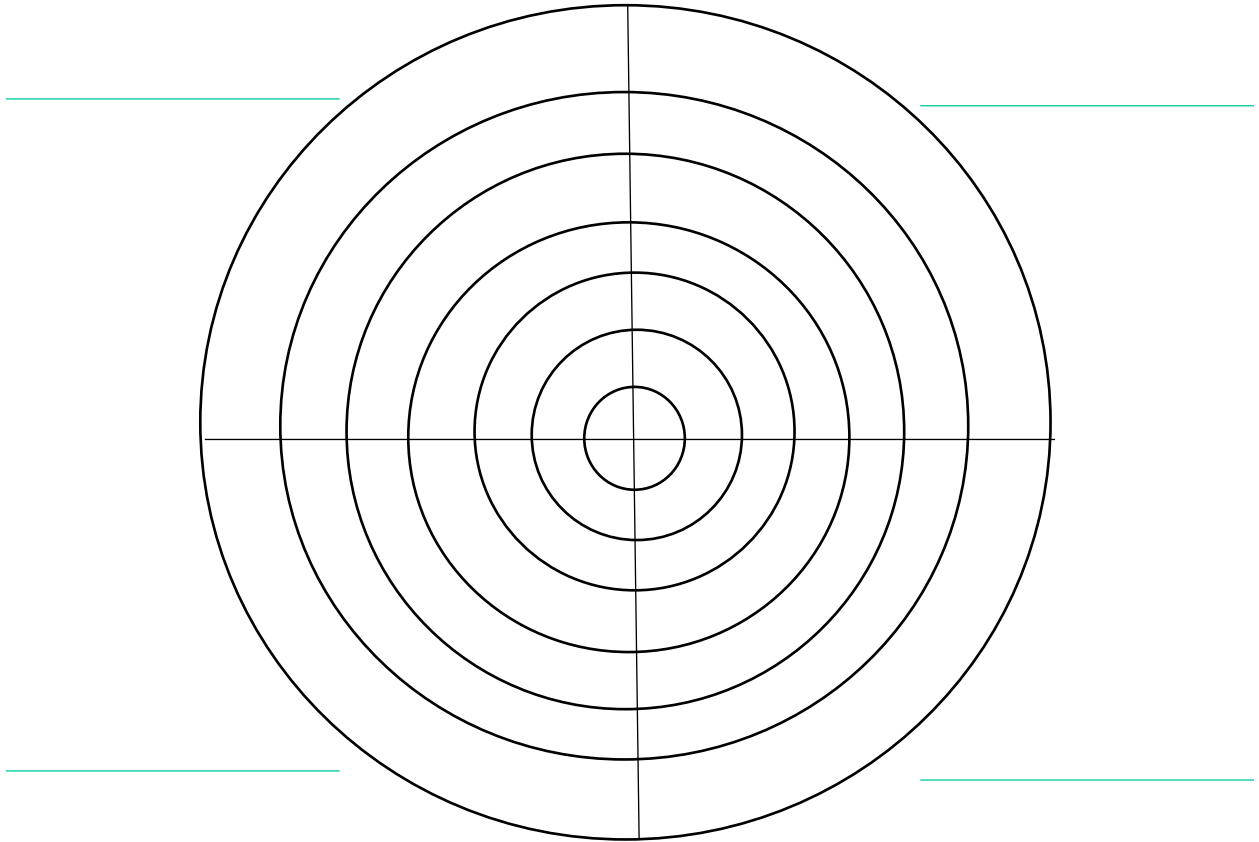
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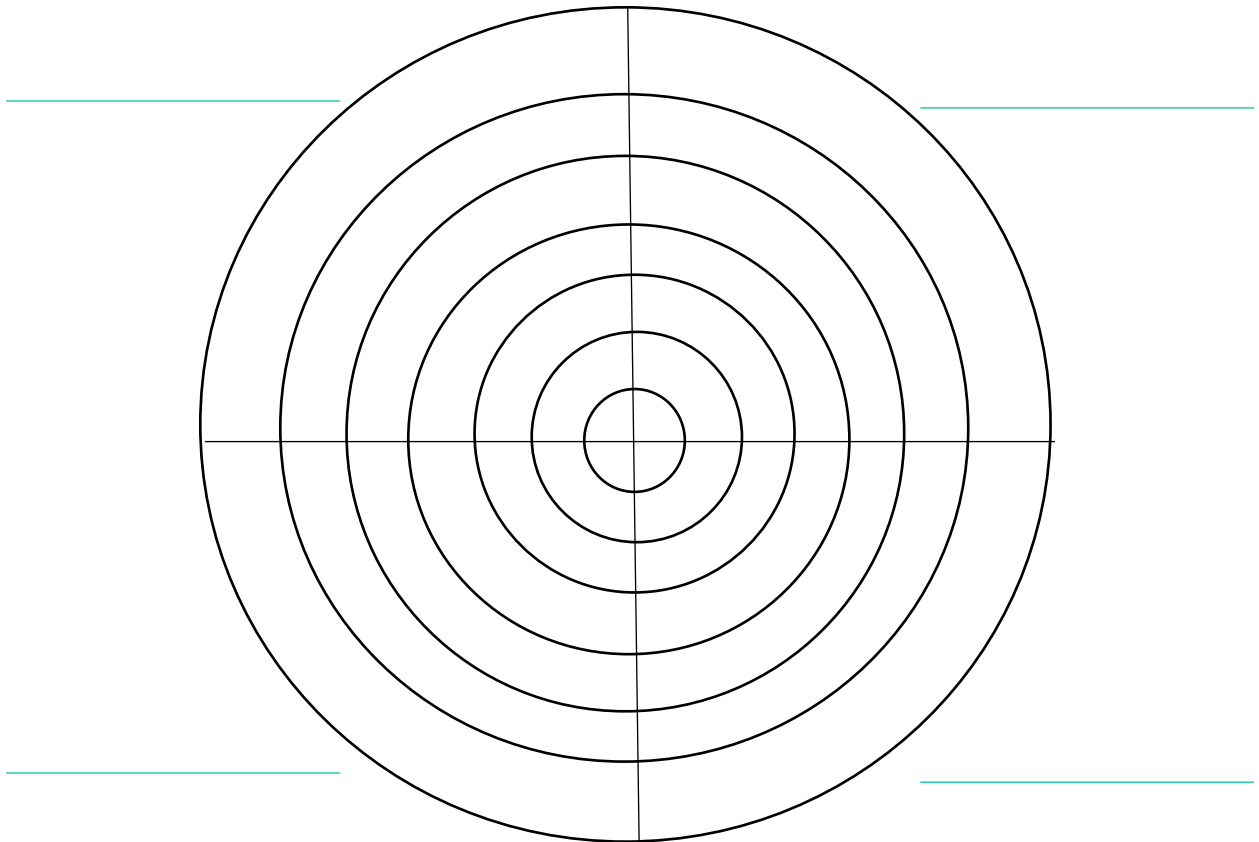
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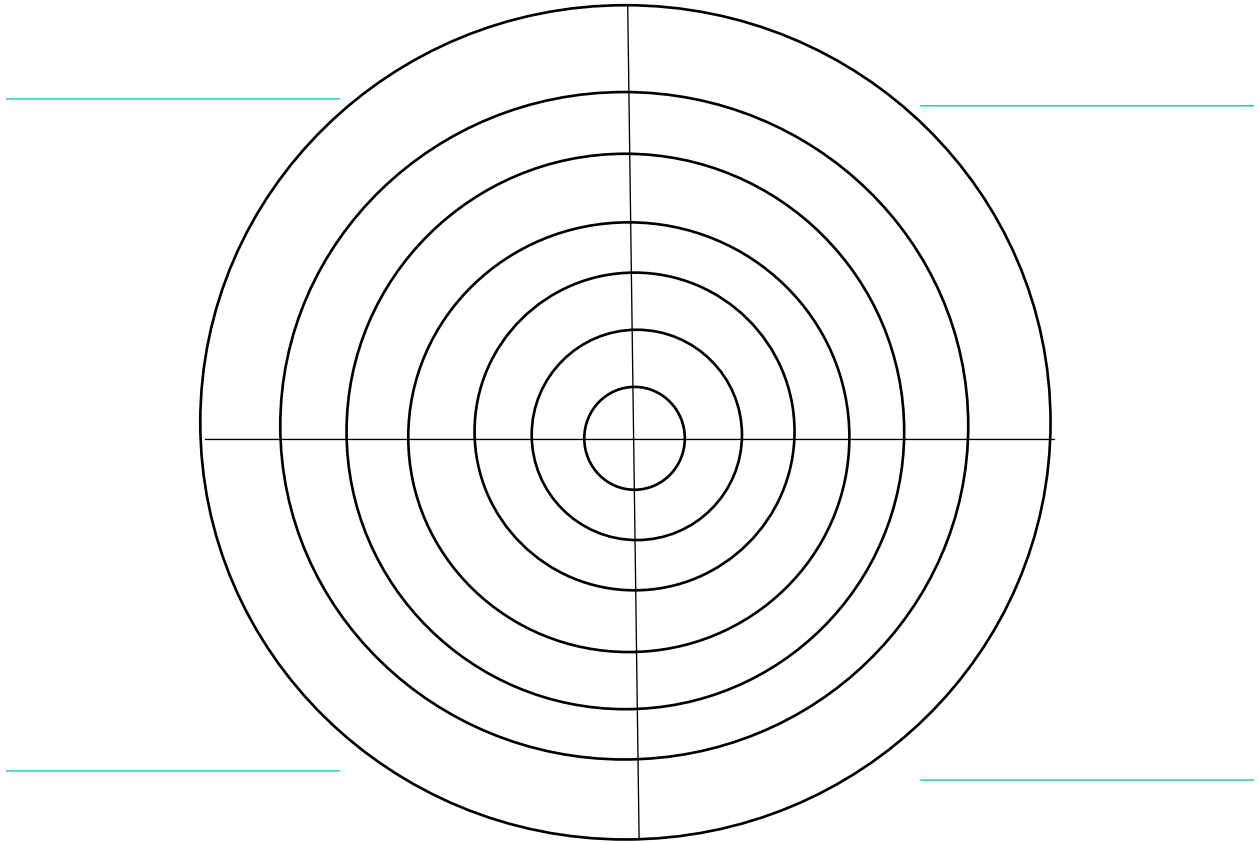
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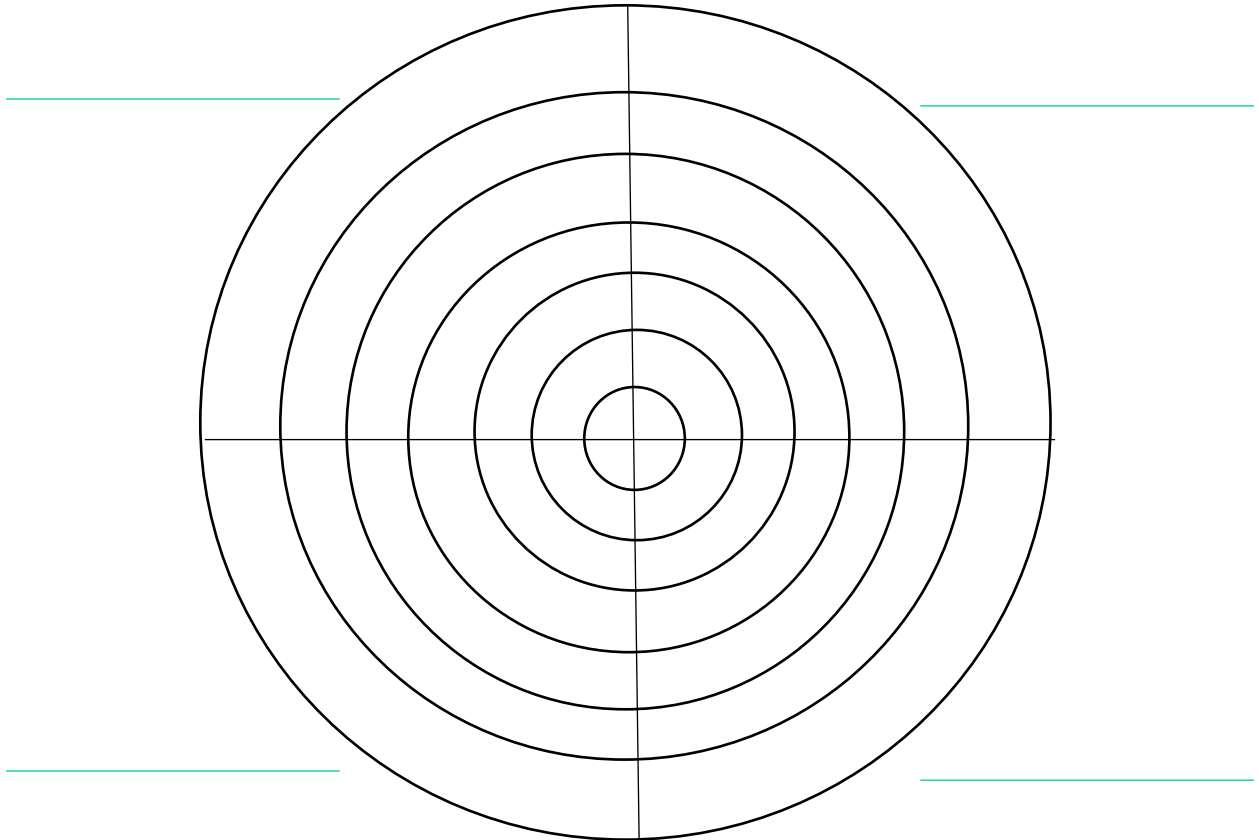
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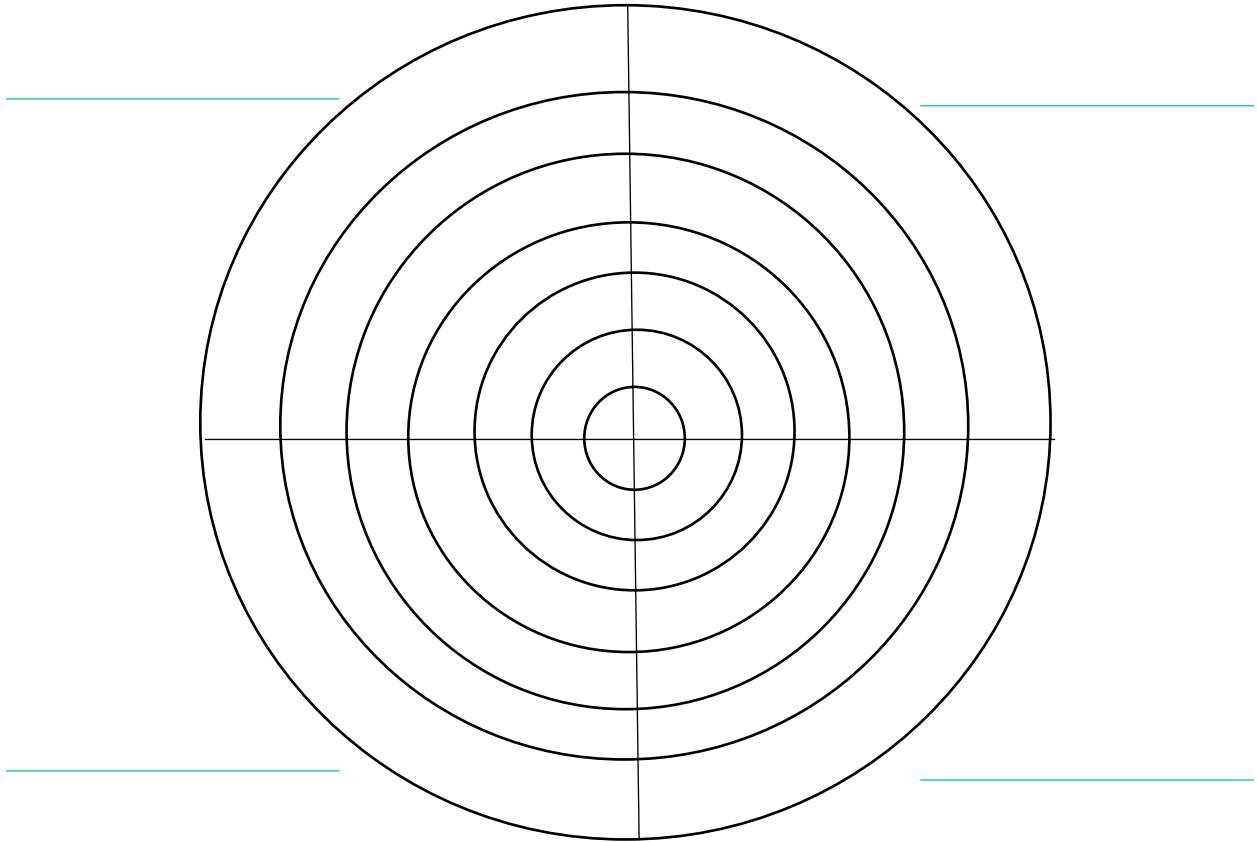
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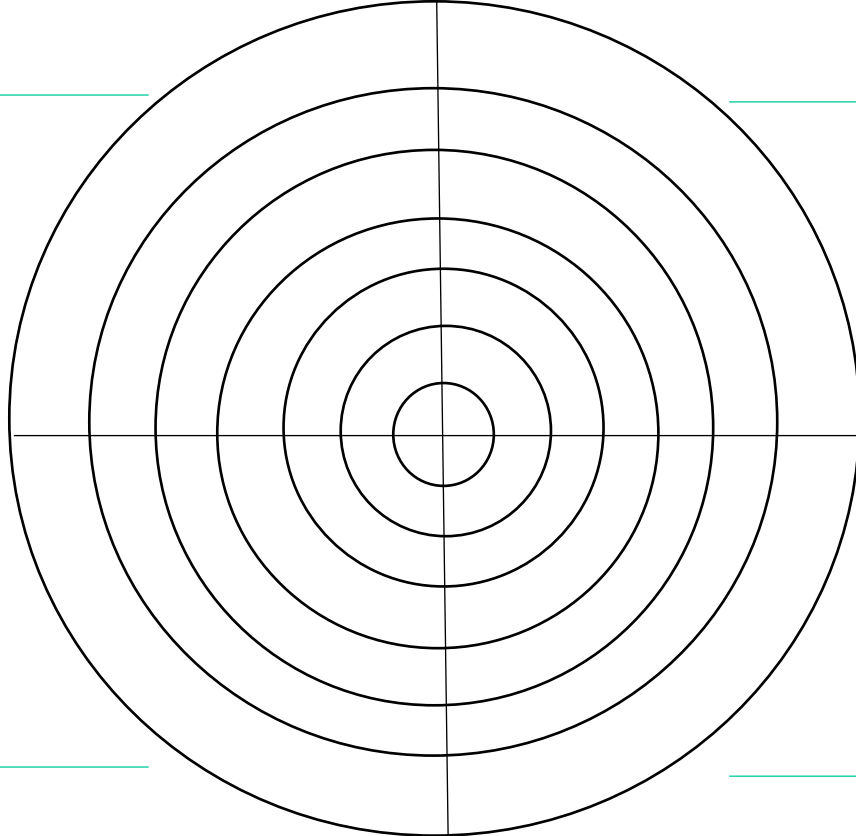
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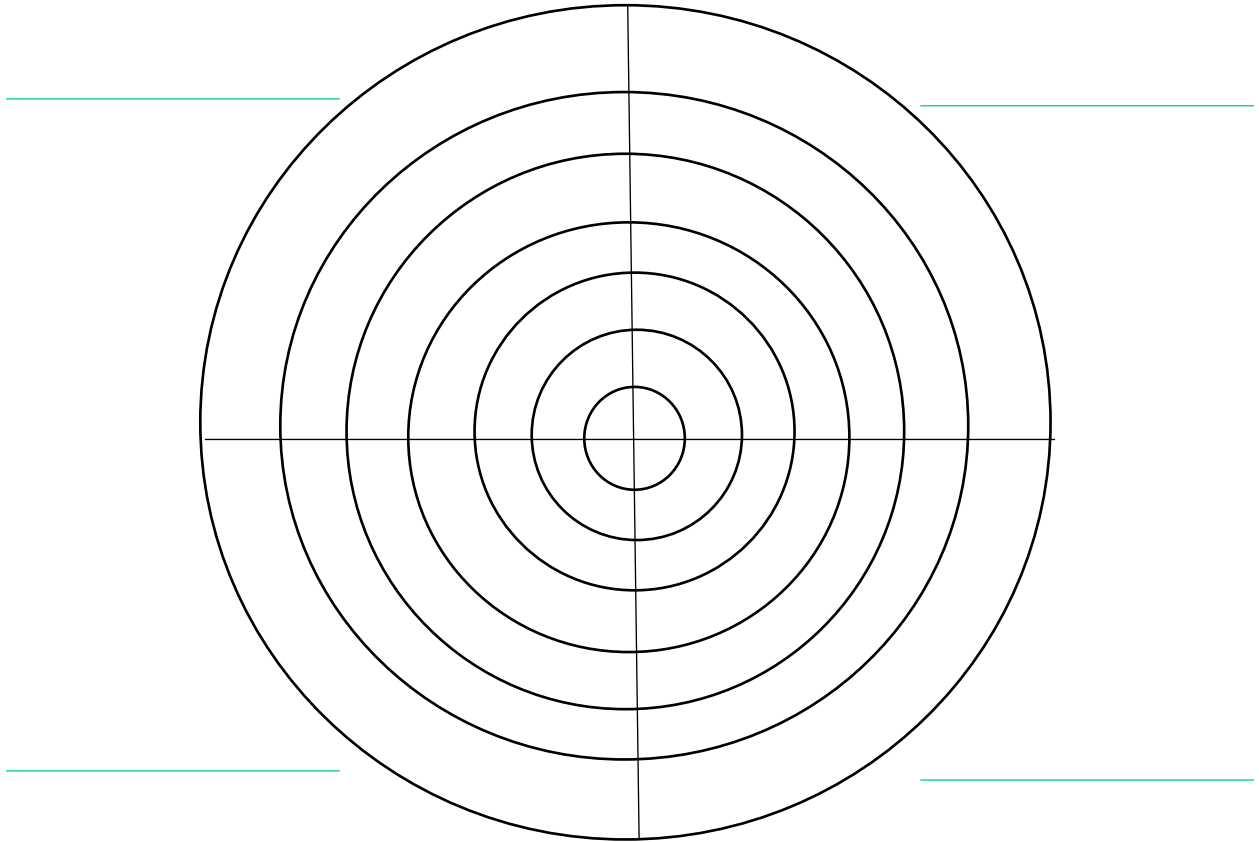
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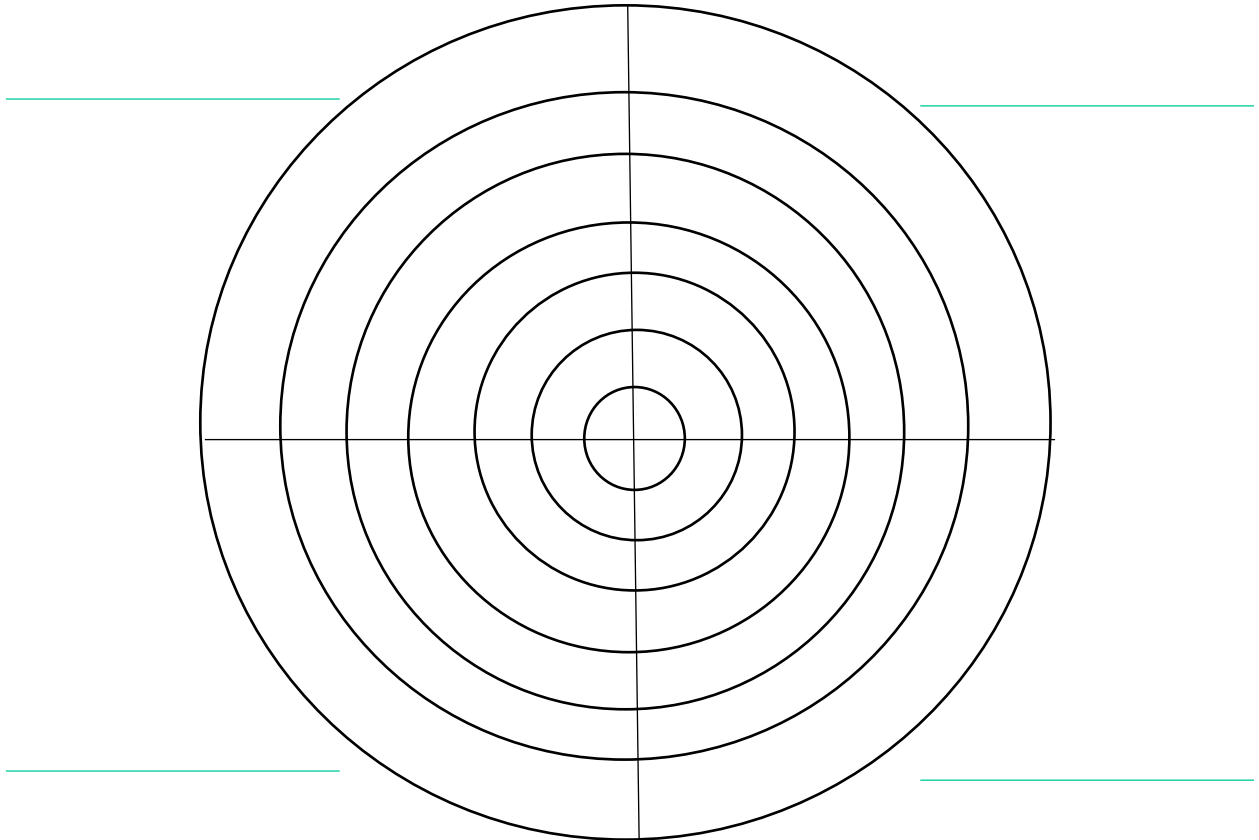
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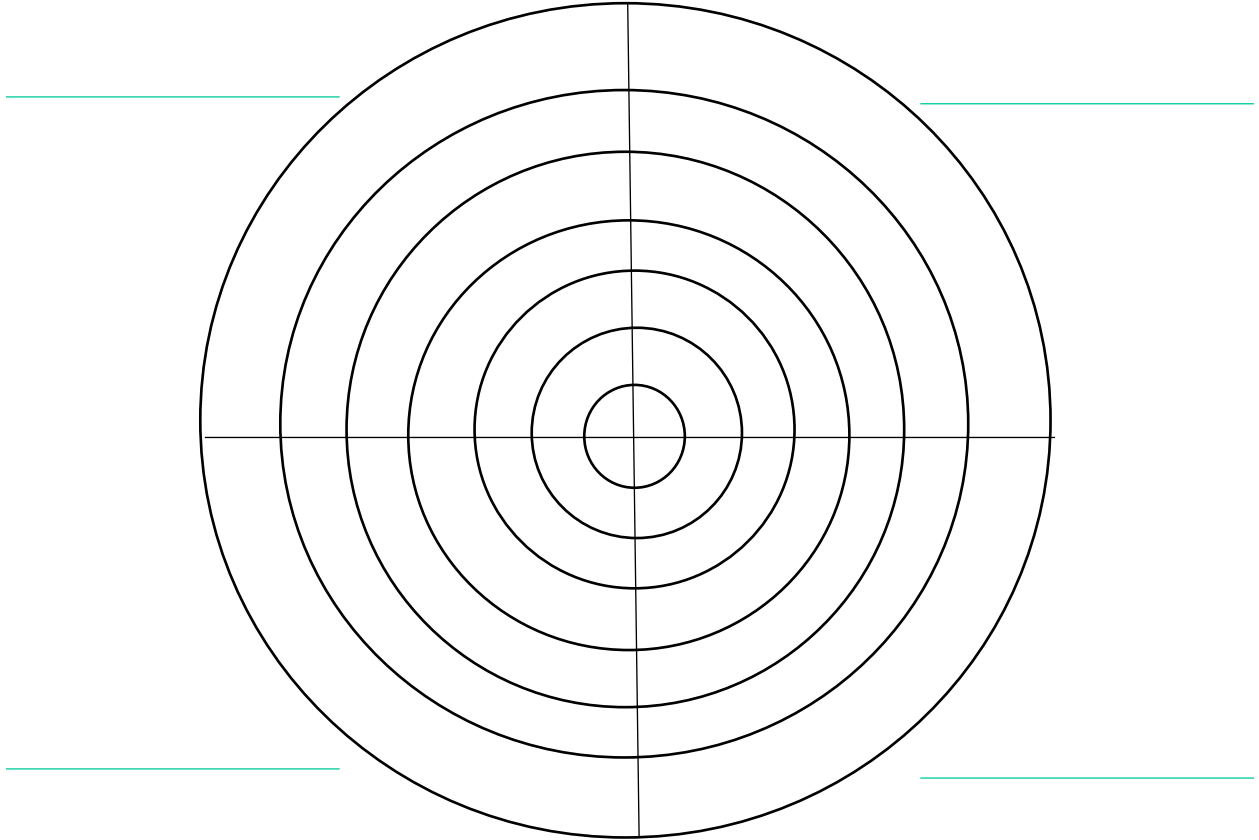
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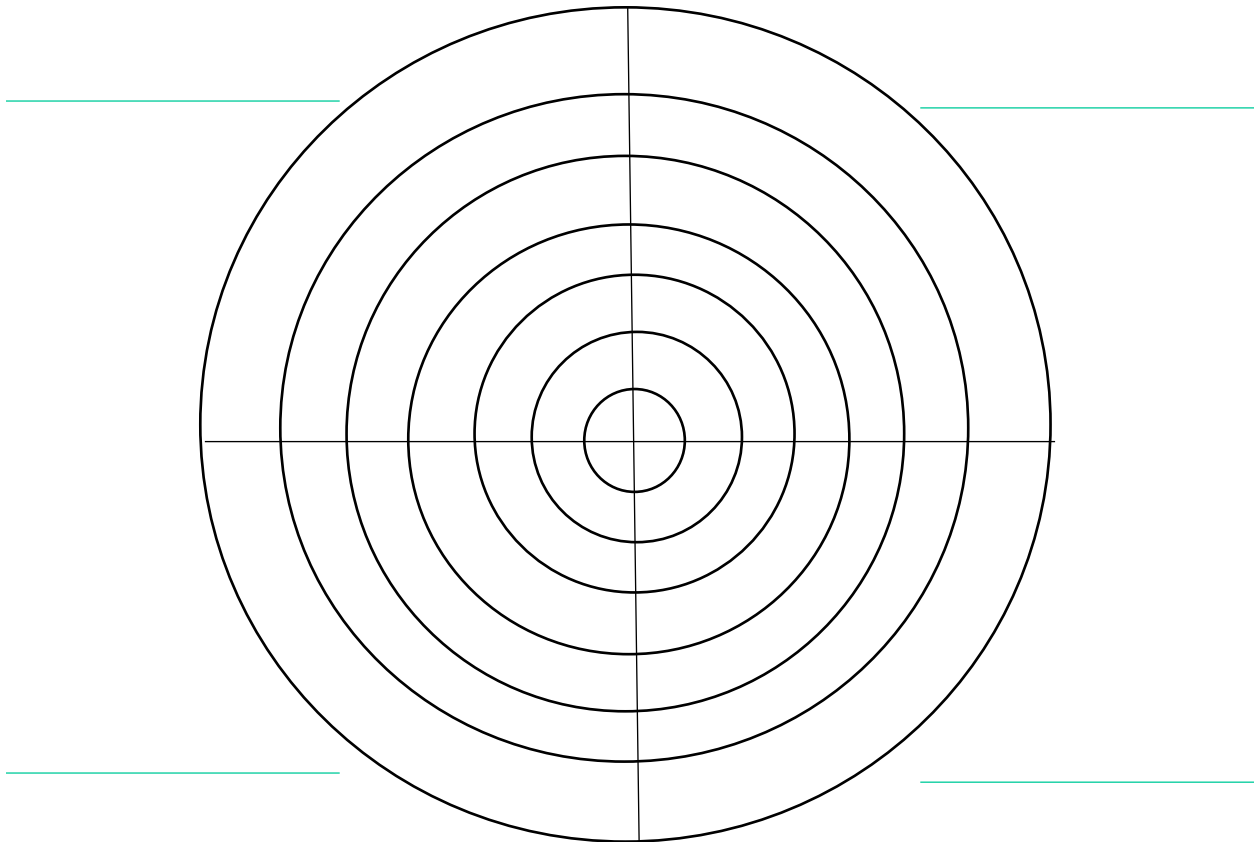
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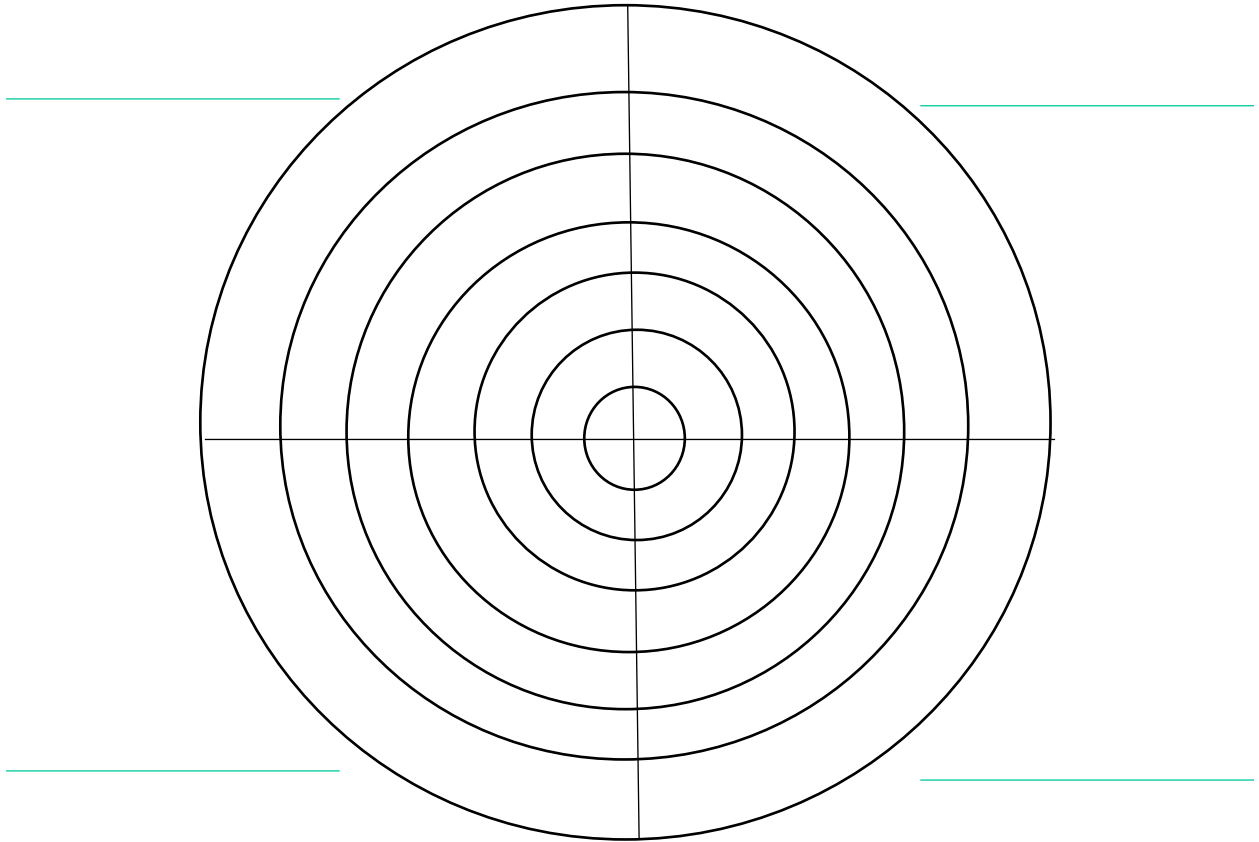
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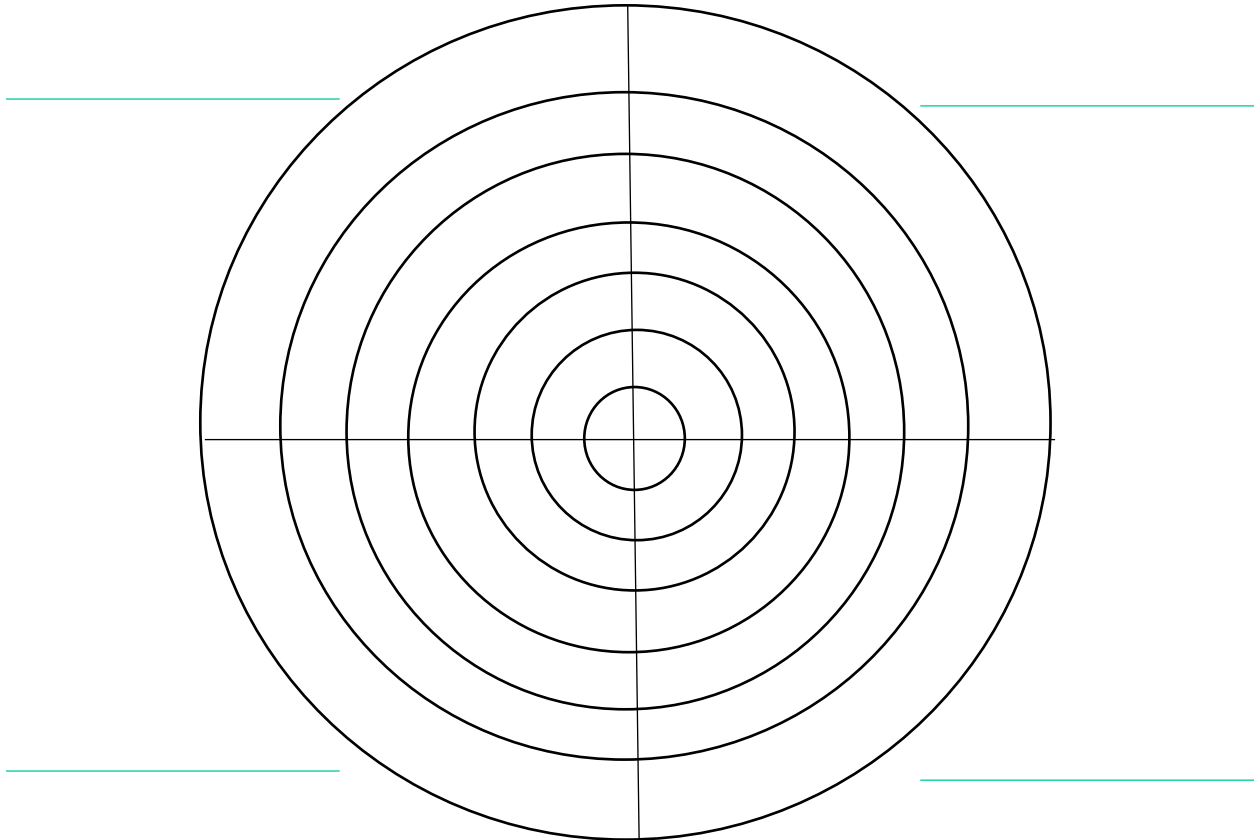
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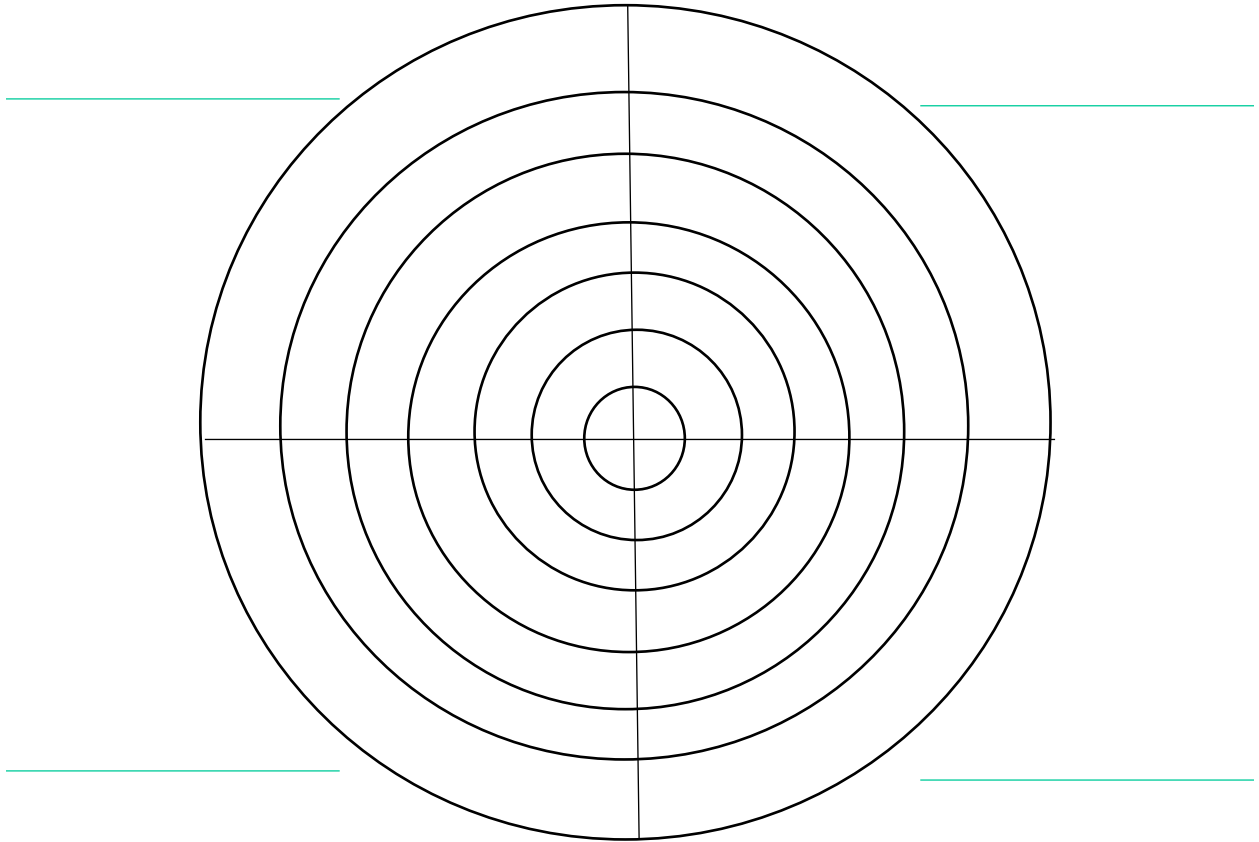
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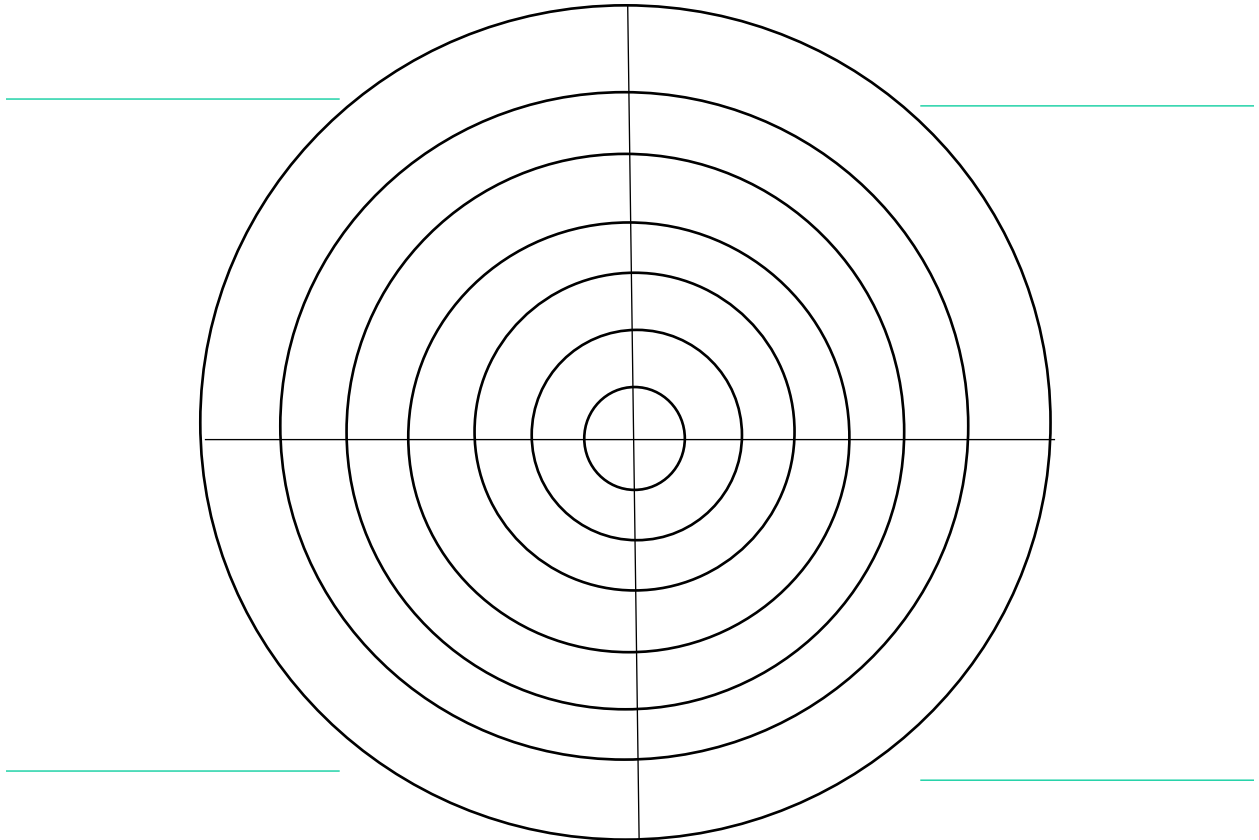
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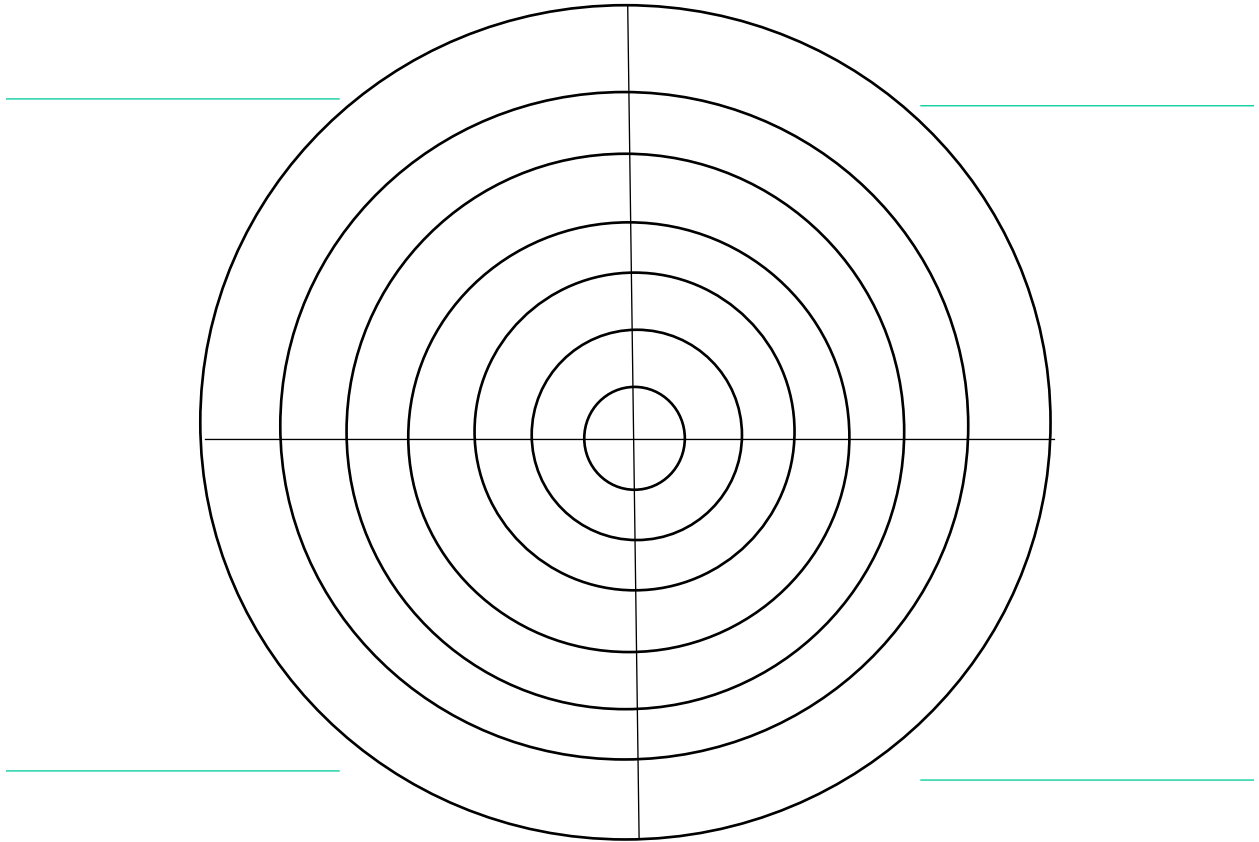
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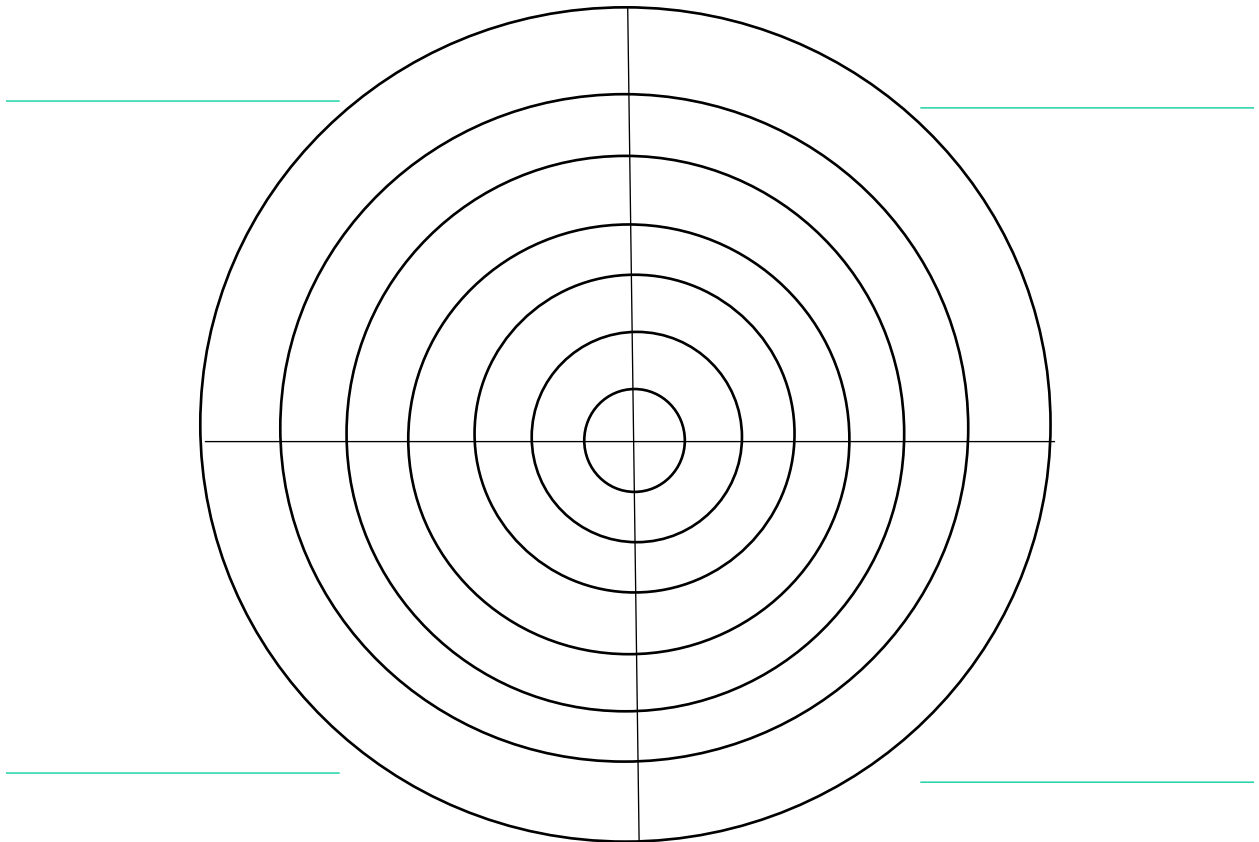
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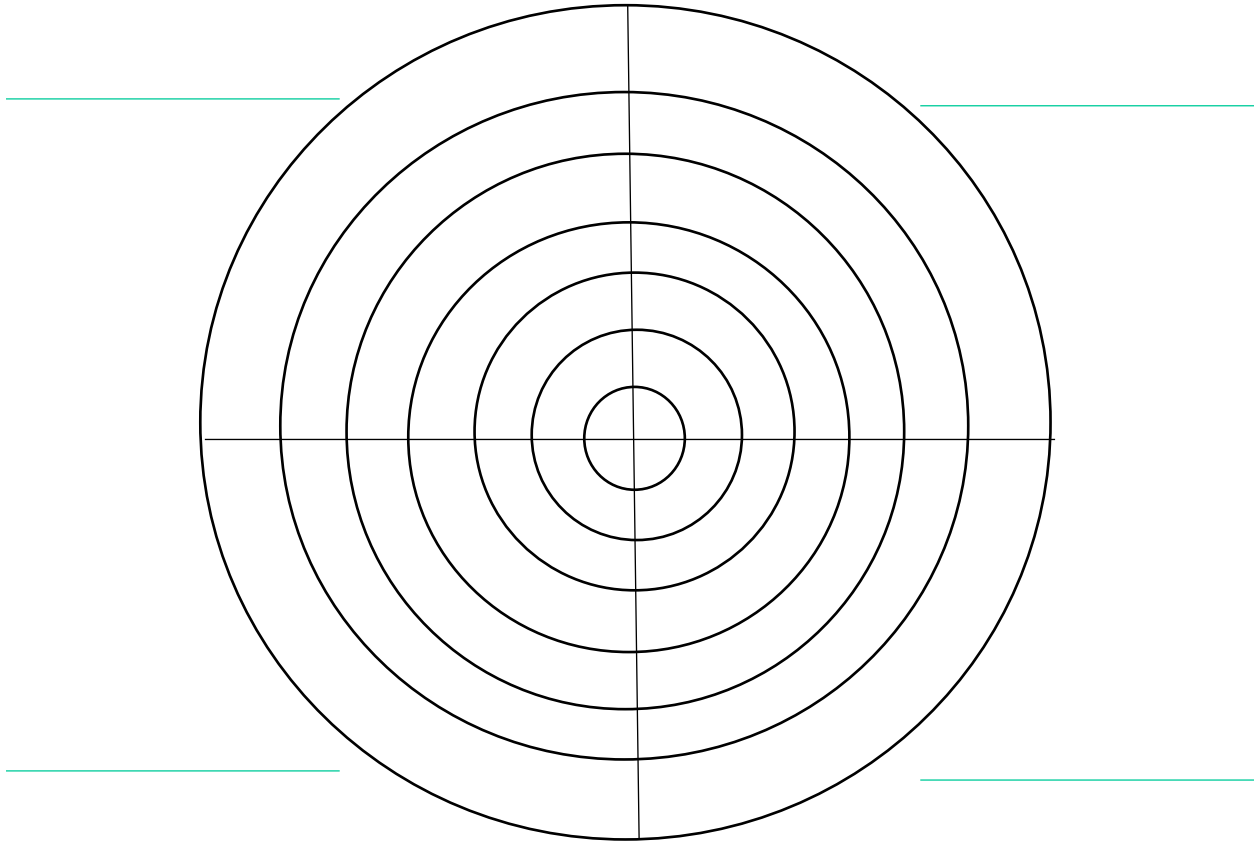
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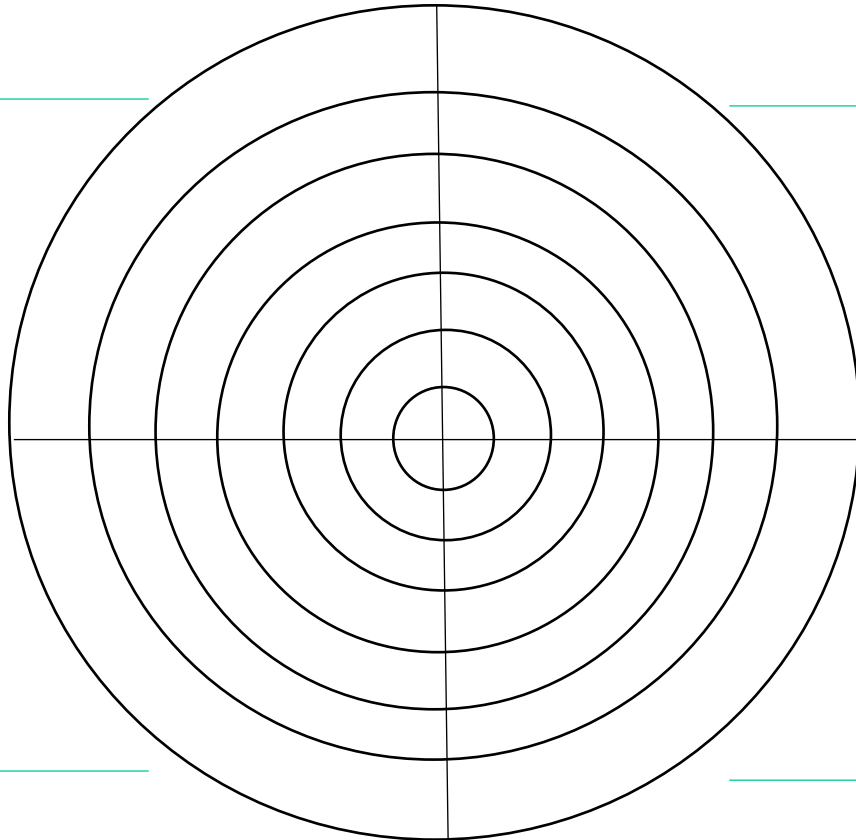
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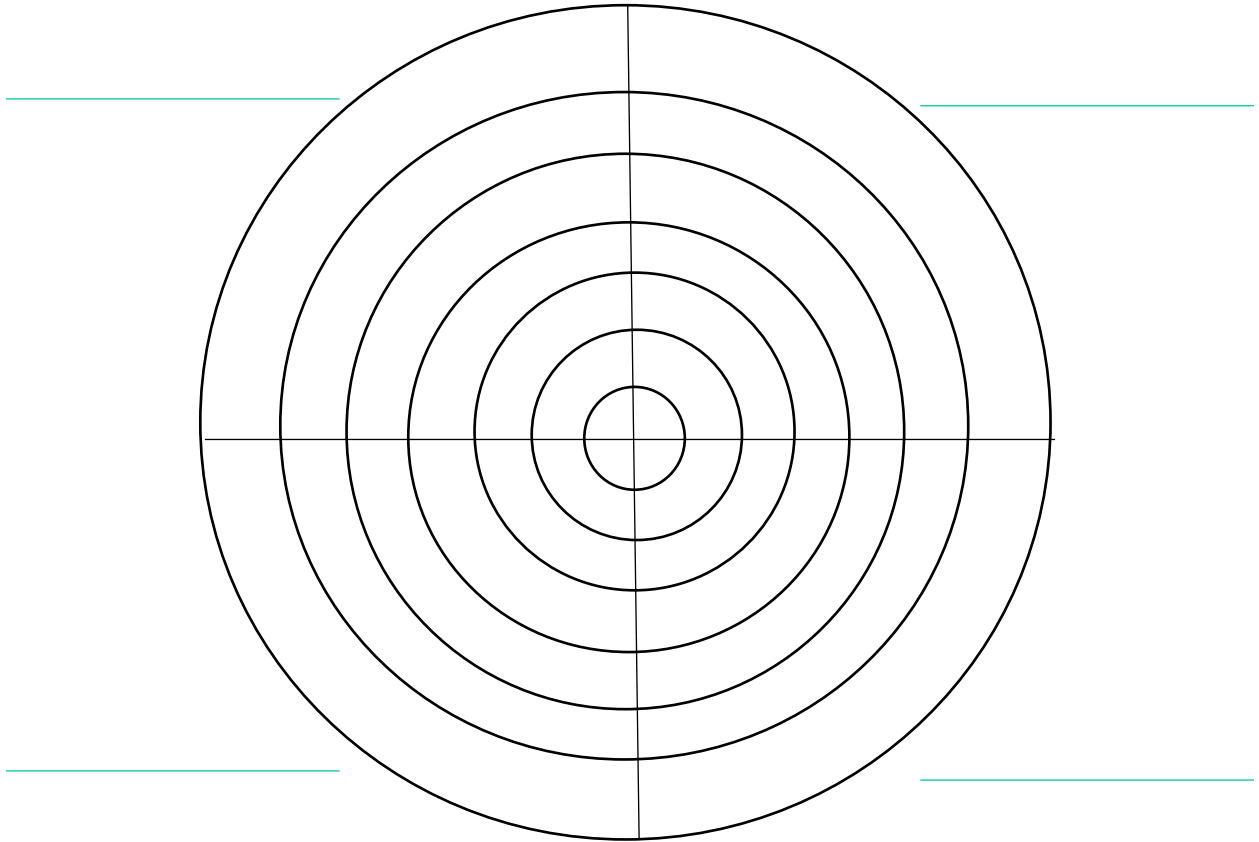
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