
DISCOVERING YOUR CORE VALUES

Workbook

Introduction

What are core values?

- ❑ Your personal core values are your fundamental beliefs. They reflect what you stand for, what's important to you.



Why are they important?

- ❑ Values guide your behavior, providing you with a personal code of conduct
- ❑ Clarifying your values can serve as a blueprint for effective decision-making and goal setting
- ❑ Most people experience greater fulfillment when they live by their values
- ❑ Getting clarity on your own values is a critical step in becoming a leader

If you want to know more about core values and how knowing yours can impact your life in a positive way, you can refer to my article [here](#).

Before you start

- ❑ **Approach things with an open mind.** We're often quick to presume we know the answers before we even start. As a result, we are missing the opportunity to embark on a creative self-discovery process. Adopt a beginner's mind by letting go of any expectations about what will happen and instead develop a curiosity to understand yourself more deeply.

- ❑ **Core values are discovered, not selected.** Your core values are an integral part of you and the point of the following exercise is to help you become consciously aware of them. Core values are not the same as aspirational values that express who you want to be, what you aspire to.

In order to do this exercise, all you need is a few pieces of paper, a pen and an undisturbed place. When you're ready, go to the next page and follow the instructions.

Step 1 - List up

A) Things you enjoy

1. **Make a list of things you enjoy** - What are your interests and hobbies? What are you passionate about? How do you spend your free time?

List up everything that comes to your mind.

2. **Think about why you enjoy these things** - This is a crucial element of the exercise. Two people can have the same interest, let's say they like playing tennis, but their WHYs can be very different. One person might enjoy the competition and the challenge, for them it's about winning and seeing who's the better player. The other person might play tennis to get some exercise and keep in shape, for them it's part of a healthy lifestyle.

Take some time and carefully think about your motivations for the activities you listed.

3. **Assign values** - Go back to your list and try to determine what values lie behind each of the things you enjoy. In some cases the values already became evident when you thought about your motivations. In the example of the person that likes to play tennis in order to win, their values might be "Challenge" or "Recognition".

- ❖ Refer to page 6 for a list of the most common values. The list is by no means exhaustive, so don't restrict yourself to those values only
- ❖ Refer to page 7 for an example of how to assign values

B) Role models

1. **Think about people that inspire you** - These can be people you know personally or indirectly or even historical figures. List them all up. Again, the important part is to ask yourself why you respect or admire these people. What do they stand for, what values do they represent?

Same as before, list up the reasons and determine the underlying values.

C) Negative experiences

1. **Think about negative experiences** - You can also discover your values by remembering situations in your life in which you were frustrated, upset or sad. What did you feel in those particular situations and why?

What values were being violated or suppressed? Write them down.

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- ❖ Refer to page 7 for an example of how to assign values

— Core values list

Achievement

Adaptability

Altruism

Ambition

Amusement

Beauty

Boldness

Bravery

Calm

Challenge

Charity

Cleanliness

Communication

Community

Compassion

Confidence

Connection

Cooperation

Courage

Creativity

Curiosity

Dedication

Dependability

Discipline

Efficiency

Empathy

Enjoyment

Equality

Excellence

Fairness

Family

Fame

Fidelity

Freedom

Friendship

Fun

Generosity

Giving

Gratitude

Growth

Happiness

Hard work

Health

Honesty

Honor

Humility

Humor

Improvement

Independence

Individuality

Innovation

Inspiration

Intelligence

Joy

Justice

Knowledge

Leadership

Love

Openness

Passion

Peace

Performance

Power

Professionalism

Reason

Recognition

Respect

Responsibility

Security

Self-reliance

Sensitivity

Sharing

Stability

Status

Strength

Support

Tolerance

Tranquility

Trust

Understanding

Communication

Wealth

Winning

Wisdom

Examples

Interests	Why	Values
Photography	Being outside all day, exploring my surroundings, discovering new things, working with the images in creative ways	Creativity Curiosity Adventure
Role models	Why	Values
My grandfather	He always spoke his mind. Never said anything he didn't mean just to please someone or avoid an uncomfortable situation	Honesty Authenticity
Negative experiences		Violated values
At the office, a co-worker was reprimanded for a mistake she made. Our supervisor almost yelled at her in front of the whole team. I was upset because it wasn't really her fault and our supervisor gave her no chance to explain herself.		Respect Fairness

Step 2 - Group together

By now, you might have a long list of personal values. Maybe there are 10, 20 or 50 values on your list. The next step is to group similar values under related themes.

For example, compassion, empathy and understanding are similar. Or independence, freedom and individuality are related. Group them together.

Step 3 - Find a common theme

Look at each group and select a word that best represents the whole group. It can be one of the values within the group or a new word.

For example, I might choose “self-reliance” as the word that best describes my values of independence, freedom and individuality.

Step 4 - Determine top values

After completing step 3, you may still have a considerable list of values. Now comes the time to determine which values are most important to you. You want to end up at somewhere between 5 to 10 values.

If you have too many, you won't be able to remember them all and to use them effectively, for example when making difficult decisions. Picking just a few forces you to get to the root of who you really are and what you stand for.

Ask yourself: What values are essential to your life? What values represent your primary way of being?

Step 5 - Rank your values

In this last step, we want to rank your core values in order of importance. This is usually the most challenging part but also a crucial one; you may have core values that are in conflict with each other, for example, growth and stability. Or there might be situations where not all your values can be met. So it's important to know which of your values are non-negotiable.

In order to do this, write down your core values in no particular order. Then look at the first two values and ask yourself, "If I could satisfy only one of these, which would I choose?" Go through the whole list and compare all values with each other until your list is in the right order.

Step 6 - Review and adjust

Congratulations! You've completed the exercise. It's time to take a break and clear your mind. I recommend to "sleep over it" and come back to your list the next day.

With a fresh mind, look at your core values and ask yourself:

- Do these values "feel right"? Do they resonate with you?
- Do these values represent things you would support, even if your choice wasn't popular?
- Would you be comfortable and proud to tell your values to your friends and family?

Don't hesitate to make changes to your list, nothing is written in stone.

Step 7 - Observe yourself

Over the coming days, be mindful of the choices you make and keep reviewing your list regularly.

Whenever you make a decision, consciously put a label on the values behind. Are the values on your list reflected in your daily life? If not, are there other values that you are living by as you go through your day?

Keep working on your list (removing/replacing values, changing the order, finding a better word to describe a specific value, etc.) until you are satisfied with it.

Final notes

Knowing your core values is only one step on the path to an authentic life. Learning to apply them daily is a major component to happiness and success.

The key is to keep your values top of mind. Put them where you can always see them, for example on post-it notes or on your screensaver or desktop.

As you go through your days, identify behaviors and actions that satisfy your core values. Try to bring more of those into your life - and get rid of the ones that are in conflict with your values. Whenever you set a goal or evaluate an opportunity, make sure you take your core values into account.

By actively and consciously living your values, you will experience - and enjoy - personal growth.

“Knowing your values does not mean you’ll always live in perfect accordance with them, but as a map, they will help guide you on your journey through life.”

—
Amy Blacklock