



Personal Values and Leadership

Leadership and personal development that reinforces your capability, effectiveness, influence and self-awareness



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What are Personal Values?

Personal values are an important part of our lives. But do you know what your values are and understand how they impact you and those closest to you?

Values are deeply held beliefs that guide our choices, attitudes, and behaviors. They act as a compass, helping us navigate the complexities of life and determine what is most meaningful and important to us. In essence, they are the core principles that provide direction in our lives and influence our sense of right and wrong.

Identifying your own personal values can be a powerful tool. Increased self-awareness and knowledge of what is most important to you can help to identify how you act and why you make certain choices.

They also help you to discover what motivations drive you and why you react to particular events or situations more than others.

Personal values play a pivotal role in shaping one's life and can influence everything from career choices to relationships to day-to-day actions. Reflecting on and understanding your own values is crucial for personal development and meaningful decision-making.

Values vs. Beliefs vs. Attitudes

While values are core principles that guide our behavior, beliefs are the convictions we hold as true, often without evidence.

Attitudes are our established ways of responding to people and situations based on our beliefs and values. Understanding the difference can help in ensuring we're not confusing a fleeting attitude or a deeply-held belief for a core value.

Challenges in Alignment:

Complex Values Interplay: Sometimes, two or more core values might conflict, making it challenging to decide on the "right" action. In such cases, introspection and prioritization are crucial.

Environmental Constraints: There might be external factors preventing perfect alignment, such as job demands conflicting with personal values. Here, individuals might have to make hard choices or find creative solutions.

Evolving Values: As individuals grow and evolve, so do their values. What was once a primary value might shift in importance, necessitating continual reassessment of alignment.



The Importance of Personal Values

The journey of discovering personal values is deeply introspective. It's about understanding what truly matters most to you, what drives your actions, and what principles you won't compromise on. This journey often requires reflection on past experiences, considering moments of happiness, pride, regret, and anger, and understanding the values at play during those times.

1. **Decision-Making:** Values are like an internal compass that helps us make decisions, from the mundane daily choices to significant life-changing ones. When we understand our values, decision-making becomes clearer and more aligned with our true selves.
2. **Sense of Purpose:** Recognising and living by our values can provide a profound sense of purpose. They can guide us toward fulfilling careers, meaningful relationships, and passions that truly resonate with who we are.
3. **Integrity and Authenticity:** When our actions and words are consistent with our values, we live with integrity. This alignment brings about a genuine sense of self or authenticity, which can lead to increased confidence and self-respect.
4. **Relationships:** Shared values often form the foundation for deep and meaningful relationships. They can also help navigate differences or conflicts in relationships by providing a common ground or understanding.
5. **Motivation:** Values are tied to what we are passionate about. Recognising our values can be a significant source of motivation, driving us toward actions that are meaningful and fulfilling.



Values can become an issue in various situations, often when they lead to conflicts, misunderstandings, or when they are compromised.

While values serve as guiding principles, they can become an issue when they lead to conflicts, are too rigidly adhered to, are compromised, or are not adequately understood or defined. Being aware of one's values, reflecting on them, and being open to understanding the values of others can help mitigate many of these challenges.

Values should determine your priorities, and deep down, they're probably the measures you use to tell if your life is turning out the way you want it to.

When the things that you do and the way you behave match your values, life is usually good – you're satisfied and content. But when these don't align with your personal values, that's when things feel wrong.

This can be a real source of unhappiness and is why making a conscious effort to identify your values is so important.

Understanding your personal values can be an effective reference point. Your personal values are a central part of who you are – and who you want to be.

Where Do Values Come From?

Values act as the compass by which we navigate our lives, helping us make decisions, interpret situations, and interact with others. The origins of values and their potential for change over time are both fascinating and multi-faceted.

- 1. Cultural Influences:** Our broader culture plays a significant role in shaping our values. Cultural norms, traditions, and shared histories can inform what is seen as important, desirable, or acceptable within a particular society.
- 2. Family and Upbringing:** For many, family is the first introduction to a set of values. Parental beliefs, family traditions, and household norms can significantly influence an individual's value system.
- 3. Personal Experiences:** Over time, personal experiences can have a profound impact on values. Experiencing the repercussions of honesty (or dishonesty), for instance, can deeply instill the value of truthfulness.
- 4. Religious and Spiritual Beliefs:** For many, religious teachings or spiritual beliefs form the foundation of their value system. Concepts like karma, sin, or divine command can shape one's views on right and wrong.
- 5. Education and Learning:** Formal and informal education can shape our values. Schools not only teach subjects but often also impart values, whether explicitly through subjects like ethics or implicitly through the behavior they reward or punish.
- 6. Peer Groups:** The company we keep, especially during formative years, can influence our values. Peer pressure and the desire for group belonging can shift our beliefs about what is valuable or acceptable.
- 7. Media and Popular Culture:** The media, including television shows, movies, books, and more recently, social media platforms, can shape or reflect societal values, influencing individual value systems in the process.



Do Values Change Over Time?

While values can be deeply ingrained, they are not set in stone. They emerge from a complex interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic factors and can evolve over time as individuals grow, learn, and experience the world around them. Recognising this fluidity allows for self-reflection, growth, and a deeper understanding of oneself and others.

Importantly, values can be shaped through both negative and positive experiences. An individual may hold a core value based on something that has happened in the past that they regret, have unhappy memories about or the same value can be important to an individual because of positive stimuli.

- 1. Stability and Evolution:** Some values remain relatively stable throughout life, especially if they're deeply ingrained during formative years. However, values can also evolve based on new experiences, knowledge, or shifts in life circumstances.
- 2. Life Events:** Major life events, such as becoming a parent, facing a life-threatening illness, or experiencing a significant loss, can cause individuals to reevaluate and shift their values.
- 3. Societal Changes:** As societies grow and evolve, so do the collective values. For instance, views on subjects like gender equality, environmental conservation, or LGBTQ+ rights have seen shifts over the decades due to societal evolution.
- 4. Personal Growth:** Personal growth, through experiences like travel, education, or introspective practices like meditation, can lead to an evolution or refinement of values.
- 5. Relational Influences:** Relationships, be it friendships, romantic partnerships, or professional associations, can introduce us to new perspectives and values, potentially leading to a change in our own value system.
- 6. Age and Developmental Stages:** It's not uncommon for values to shift as people move through different life stages. For example, an individual's values might shift from valuing independence and adventure in youth to valuing stability and family in later years.



Personal values develop early in life and may be resistant to change as we age. However, values can and do change over time and are not universal, being unique to each of us.

Personal Values – One Story

Since becoming more aware of what values are and the place they hold in my life I have discovered a stronger sense of comfort that was missing previously. Let me provide a personal example that I often use regarding the impact of values and the benefit of a deeper understanding on how they can influence an individual.

In the past I would sometimes be driving home at the end of a day feeling frustrated, angry, disappointed or some other negative emotional response. I would often dwell on these emotions and the events that triggered my responses.



Due to the build-up of my emotions, I would start to become angrier and more frustrated reflecting my lack of ability to understand myself and why I couldn't let the moment pass.

In a sense I was getting annoyed about being annoyed in the first place. Sometimes this inability to simply 'let it go' became a bigger issue for me than the events that triggered my response in the first place.

Since gaining a better understanding of personal values and my own responses I began to recognise that in the vast majority of cases when I was most frustrated or disappointed it was due to one or more of my core values being breached.

Understanding my responses and the reasons why has provided a more solid platform for me to move through those moments more readily. I am not saying that I don't have negative responses or reactions – simply that I understand my responses better and as a result, can more effectively manage my own emotions relative to the situation.



A value is a measure of the worth or importance a person attaches to something; our values are often reflected in the way we live our lives e.g. I value freedom of speech, or I value my family. An attitude is the way a person expresses or applies their beliefs and values and is expressed through words and behaviours.

Values exist, whether you recognise them or not. Life can be much easier when you acknowledge your values – and when you make plans and decisions that honor them.

If you value family, but you have to work 70-hour weeks in your job, will you feel internal stress and conflict? And if you don't value competition, and you work in a highly competitive sales environment, are you likely to be satisfied with your job?



Values-Based Decision-Making

Every decision we make is either a conscious or unconscious attempt to satisfy our needs.

Over time, humans have developed six ways of making decisions—instincts, subconscious beliefs, conscious beliefs, values, intuition, and inspiration. Nowadays, it is normal for human beings to grow up with the ability to utilise the first three modes of decision-making. From an evolutionary perspective, values-based decision-making, intuition-based decision-making, and inspiration are still relatively new, but are increasingly being used as more and more people evolve to higher levels of consciousness. The reasons why values-based decision-making is so important at this time in our human history are three-fold:

- Values-based decision-making is necessary for individuation and self-actualisation. Values allow us to transcend the belief structures of our parental and cultural conditioning, so we can become more fully who we are, and live a more authentic life.
- Values-based decision-making is necessary for the institutionalisation and development of democracy around the world. Values allow us to transcend our ethnic/cultural belief structures by uniting us around shared basic human principles. In human group cultures, values unite and beliefs separate.
- Values-based decision-making allows us to throw away our rule books. When a group of people espouse an agreed set of values and understand which behaviours support those values, then you no longer need to rely on bureaucratic procedures setting out what people should or should not do in specific situations. All the rules reduce to one—live the values. People can work out for themselves what they need to do, and in so doing become responsible and accountable for their behaviours.

Values are deeply held convictions and beliefs which guide behaviors and decisions.

Personal values are the components of a life of integrity.

Examples of personal values might include integrity, generosity, diligence, persistence, and humor

There are hundreds of words in the English language describing personal values, though each individual might hold dear to a handful

Values reside deeply within the subconscious and are tightly integrated into the fabric of everyday living

We make decisions and choose behaviors, friends, employment, and entertainment based, in large part, on our values

When honoring values a person feels right, in-tune with and true to themselves. Stress often results from being out of alignment with values.

When we use our values to make decisions, we make a deliberate choice to focus on what is important to us. When values are shared, they build internal cohesion in a group.



Personal Values Exploratory Questions: Define and Understand

Identifying your core personal values without a formal assessment involves deep self-reflection. The insightful questions below will, if reflected upon, guide this introspection:

What Activities Make Me Feel Most Fulfilled? Think about the activities or moments when you feel a profound sense of fulfillment. What about these experiences is meaningful to you?

When Do I Feel Most Like Myself? Consider the times you feel most authentic and true to yourself. What are you doing? Who are you with? Why do you feel this way?

What Does a Great Day Look Like for Me? Imagine your ideal day from start to finish. What activities, people, and experiences are involved?

What Are My Non-Negotiables? Identify the principles or beliefs that you are not willing to compromise on, regardless of the situation. What makes these so important to you?

What Do I Spend the Most Time Thinking About? Consider where your thoughts naturally drift when you're not focused on specific tasks. What themes or topics are most prevalent?

What Causes or Issues Am I Passionate About? Reflect on the social, environmental, or political causes that resonate deeply with you. Why do these issues matter to you?

How Do I Define Success? Contemplate your personal definition of success. Is it career achievement, family happiness, making a difference in the world, etc.?

What Would I Do If I Had No Fear of Failure? Imagine you have no fear of failure or judgment. What would you pursue or change in your life?

What Are My Biggest Regrets and What Do They Teach Me? Reflect on past regrets and consider what they reveal about your priorities and values.

What Legacy Do I Want to Leave / What Do I Want to Be Known For? Think about how you would like to be remembered. What impact do you want to have on the world or those around you?

What Do I Enjoy Doing in My Free Time? Consider the activities you choose to do when you have no obligations. What do they say about what you value?

When Have I Felt Most Proud of Myself? Recall moments of pride and satisfaction. What achievements or actions made you feel this way?

What Am I Most Grateful For? Reflect on the people, experiences, or aspects of your life for which you feel deep gratitude. Why are these significant to you?

What Challenges Have Shaped Me the Most? Identify significant challenges or obstacles you've faced. How did you respond, and what values were reflected in those responses?

What Role Does Spirituality or Faith Play in My Life? Reflect on the importance of spirituality, religion, or a sense of higher purpose in guiding your actions and decisions.

How Do I Prioritise My Time and Resources? Consider how you allocate your time, money, and energy. What does this reveal about your priorities and values?

What Brings Me a Sense of Peace or Contentment? Identify the situations, people, or activities that bring you inner peace and contentment.

How Do I Handle Conflicts or Difficult Decisions? Reflect on your approach to resolving conflicts or making tough decisions. What values guide your choices?

Reflect and Act

Once you have discovered what your core values are, do something with this knowledge and reflect on what this information means to you.

Reflection is a powerful tool in personal growth and self-awareness. It offers you a chance to pause, consider experiences, understand reactions, and gain insight into your core beliefs and values. By taking the time to reflect, you can better align your actions with your values, ensuring a more genuine, purposeful life.

1. Share your results with family, friends and colleagues.
2. How do your values influence your decision-making process?
3. Would those closest to you recognise your Primary Values as consistent and obvious?
4. How fulfilled are you regarding each core value? Score your values 1 – 10 where 10 represents maximum fulfilment.
 - What is your overall average score?
 - What does this average say about your level of engagement, fulfillment, and energy in your life?
5. Are there areas in your life where your actions aren't in alignment with your values? How can you address this?
6. How will you hold yourself accountable to living in accordance with your values?
7. If you do not know what each of your team member's core values are you could be potentially missing the success of growing and developing your team to be the best they can be. This could be impacting the business bottom line, morale, relationships and other key elements.
8. We should ask as leaders, how well do we meet the needs of our team member's in providing both the environment and opportunity to at least partially meet their values every day?

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