

Discover Your Core Values

Instructions

In this activity, you will discover the values that matter most to you, and evaluate yourself on how well you live those values.¹ Because what's most important to us can change over time, I suggest you do this activity yearly, as part of your annual goal setting and self-reflection.

To complete the activity, take these steps:

1. Circle your top-ten values from the list below. To help you determine your top ten, notice which values really seem to catch your attention and make you think, "I want that!"
2. Next, start making some hard decisions. Choose your top five from that list of ten. When the pressure is on and you have to choose between these values, which ones do you choose and which ones do you drop?
3. Now for the real work - choose your top three from that list of five. Why? Because a short list of three will represent what you really cling to when you have to let other stuff go.
4. Now let's test that list of three. As a final step, rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 for how well you lived out those values in the last week. For example, if you never really thought about that value before today, give yourself a "1." If you make a point to act on that value every day, and you can point to specific actions taken in the last week, then give yourself a "5."

Anything you score lower than a 3 may be something you say is important to you, but your actions say otherwise. We know what we really value when we take a look at what we cheer for or what we spend time and money on.

Values to Choose From

Achievement - a sense of accomplishment, mastery, global achievement

Activity - fast-paced, highly active work

Advancement - growth, seniority, and promotion resulting from work well done

Adventure - new and challenging opportunities, excitement, risk

¹ This list is taken from Exhibit 4.1, "Common Values" in King, Altman, and Lee (2011), *Discovering The Leader In You: How to Realize Your Leadership Potential*.

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Dr. Stanley J. Ward, PhD

stan@coachingforinfluence.com

201.948.LEAD

Aesthetics - appreciation of beauty in things, ideas, surroundings, personal space

Affiliation - interaction with other people, recognition as a member of a particular group, involvement, belonging

Affluence - high income, financial success, prosperity

Authority - position and power to control event and other people's activities

Autonomy - ability to act independently with few constraints, self-sufficiency, self-reliance, ability to make most decisions and choices

Balance - giving proper weight to each area of one's life

Challenge - continually facing complex and demanding tasks and problems

Change and Variation - absence of routine; work responsibilities, daily activities, or settings that change frequently; unpredictability

Collaboration - close, cooperative working relationships with groups

Community - serving and supporting a purpose that supersedes personal desires, making a difference

Compassion - a deep awareness of and sympathy for another's suffering

Competence - demonstrating a high degree of proficiency and knowledge, showing above-average effectiveness and efficiency at tasks

Competition - rivalry and winning as the goal

Courage - willingness to stand up for one's beliefs

Creativity - the ability to discover, develop, or design new ideas, formats, programs, or things; to demonstrate innovation and imagination

Diverse Perspectives - unusual ideas, opinions, and points of view that may not seem right or be popular at first but bear fruit in the long run

Duty - respect for authority, rules, and regulations

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Economic Security - steady and secure employment, adequate financial reward, low risk

Enjoyment - having fun and laughing

Fame - becoming prominent, famous, well known

Family - spending time with partner, children, parents, or extended family

Freedom - the power to act or speak without externally imposed restraints

Friendship - developing close personal relationships with others

Happiness - finding satisfaction, joy, pleasure, contentment

Health - physical and mental well-being, vitality

Help Others - helping other people attain their goals, provide care and support

Humor - the ability to laugh at oneself and life

Influence - having an impact or effect on the attitudes or opinions of others

Integrity - acting in accord with moral and ethical standards; honesty, sincerity, truth, trustworthiness

Justice - fairness, equality, doing the right thing

Knowledge - the pursuit of understanding, skill, and expertise; continuous learning

Location - choice of a place to live that is conducive to one's lifestyle

Love - involvement in close, affectionate relationships; intimacy

Loyalty - faithfulness; dedication to individuals, traditions, or organizations

Order - stability, routine, predictability, clear lines of authority, standardized procedures

Personal Development - Dedication to maximizing one's potential

Physical Fitness - staying in shape through exercise and physical activity

Recognition - positive feedback and public credit for work well done; respect and admiration

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Reflection - taking time out to think about the past, present, and future

Responsibility - dependability, reliability, accountability for results

Self-respect - pride, self-esteem, sense of personal identity

Spirituality - strong spiritual or religious beliefs, moral fulfillment

Status - being respected for one's job or association with a prestigious group or organization

Wisdom - sound judgment based on knowledge, experience, and understanding

For Reflection

- What did you learn about yourself?
- How well are you living your core values?
- If you lived those values daily, what kind of life would that create for you?
- What do you want to do about that?

For more information on core values and more resources to help you live them, be sure to check out my [blog](#) or send me an [email](#).

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