

## **Values Exploration and Clarification—Who Are You Really?**

### **Are you being the person you were designed to be?**

We all have a unique part to play in this world and a specific purpose to fulfill. We can align with this purpose by aligning with our values. Values are your heart's deepest desires for how you want to behave as a human being and the qualities you want to offer the world. Values are not about what you want to get or achieve; they are about how you want to behave or act on an ongoing basis. Authentic values are an intrinsic part of who you are; they are qualities embedded into you by the Universe as part of your intentional design. They are not forced onto you by your parents, friends, or society (those are "false/imposter values"); True values feel good in your heart to embody and are not things that you "should" care about according to someone else. It is important to give others the right to value what they value, while acknowledging we are all created different for a reason, and we don't have to value the same things they do, or vice versa.

When we focus on living our values, rather than reaching our goals, we create lives of fulfillment, and can begin to heal any feelings of anxiety and depression, which are commonly signs that we are not honoring who we really are. Ironically, when we focus on living our values, we tend to start reaching our goals as well, but we have more fun doing it! The goals become a nice side benefit to enjoying the process and journey of life.

There are literally hundreds of different values, but below you'll find a list of the most common ones to help you brainstorm. Probably, not all of them will be relevant to you, but many of them will be. It can be hard to narrow it down; that is normal. Think about these questions to help you get clearer: "How do I want to be remembered when I am no longer here?" or "What do I want people to say about me on my 80th birthday?" or "What do I really want my life to be about? What do I want to teach others or role model for the next generation?"

Keep in mind there are no such things as ‘right values’ or ‘wrong values’. It’s a bit like our taste in ice cream. If you prefer chocolate and I prefer strawberry, that doesn’t mean that my preference is *right* and yours is *wrong*. It just means we have different tastes. And similarly, we may have different values. Life would be pretty boring if we were all wired the exact same way, enjoying the same activities, exhibiting the same personalities, eating one type of ice cream, all trying to work on the exact same mission. Our differences make us interesting and fun to relate to and engage with. Our differences show us our special purpose and place in the world.

Your task is to read through the list below and find a way to narrow it down to your top 5-10 values. (There is no magic number, but it needs to be small enough to focus on in your daily life.) Then, see if you can identify your number one value. Once you have your list, mark how well you feel you are embodying each one right now, in your life to day, Zero being not at all and 10 being a perfect example of that lived value in all areas of your life. Jot down any notes next to that value that you feel may be helpful to share with your therapist, your friends, or your partner.

1. Acceptance: to be open to and accepting of myself, others, life etc
2. Adventure: to be adventurous; to actively seek, create, or explore novel or stimulating experiences
3. Assertiveness: to respectfully stand up for my rights and request what I want
4. Authenticity: to be authentic, genuine, real; to be true to myself
5. Beauty: to appreciate, create, nurture or cultivate beauty in myself, others, the environment etc
6. Caring: to be caring towards myself, others, the environment etc
7. Challenge: to keep challenging myself to grow, learn, improve

8. Compassion: to act with kindness towards those who are suffering
9. Connection: to engage fully in whatever I am doing, and be fully present with others
10. Contribution: to contribute, help, assist, or make a positive difference to myself or others
11. Conformity: to be respectful and obedient of rules and obligations
12. Cooperation: to be cooperative and collaborative with others
13. Courage: to be courageous or brave; to persist in the face of fear, threat, or difficulty
14. Creativity: to be creative or innovative
15. Curiosity: to be curious, open-minded and interested; to explore and discover
16. Encouragement: to encourage and reward behaviour that I value in myself or others
17. Equality: to treat others as equal to myself, and vice-versa
18. Excitement: to seek, create and engage in activities that are exciting, stimulating or thrilling
19. Fairness: to be fair to myself or others
20. Fitness: to maintain or improve my fitness; to look after my physical and mental health and wellbeing
21. Flexibility: to adjust and adapt readily to changing circumstances
22. Freedom: to live freely; to choose how I live and behave, or help others do likewise

23. Friendliness: to be friendly, companionable, or agreeable towards others
24. Forgiveness: to be forgiving towards myself or others
25. Fun: to be fun-loving; to seek, create, and engage in fun-filled activities
26. Generosity: to be generous, sharing and giving, to myself or others
27. Gratitude: to be grateful for and appreciative of the positive aspects of myself, others and life
28. Honesty: to be honest, truthful, and sincere with myself and others
29. Humor: to see and appreciate the humorous side of life
30. Humility: to be humble or modest; to let my achievements speak for themselves
31. Industry: to be industrious, hard-working, dedicated
32. Independence: to be self-supportive, and choose my own way of doing things
33. Intimacy: to open up, reveal, and share myself -- emotionally or physically – in my close personal relationships
34. Justice: to uphold justice and fairness
35. Kindness: to be kind, compassionate, considerate, nurturing or caring towards myself or others
36. Love: to act lovingly or affectionately towards myself or others

37. Mindfulness: to be conscious of, open to, and curious about my here-and-now experience
38. Order: to be orderly and organized
39. Open-mindedness: to think things through, see things from other's points of view, and weigh evidence fairly.
40. Patience: to wait calmly for what I want
41. Persistence: to continue resolutely, despite problems or difficulties.
42. Pleasure: to create and give pleasure to myself or others
43. Power: to strongly influence or impact others and the world, e.g. taking charge, leading, organizing, influencing, affecting change
44. Reciprocity: to build relationships in which there is a fair balance of giving and taking
45. Respect: to be respectful towards myself or others; to be polite, considerate and show positive regard
46. Responsibility: to be responsible and accountable for my actions
47. Romance: to be romantic; to display and express love or strong affection
48. Safety: to secure, protect, or ensure safety of myself or others
49. Self-awareness: to be aware of my own thoughts, feelings and actions
50. Self-care: to look after my health and wellbeing, and get my needs met

51. Self-development: to keep growing, advancing or improving in knowledge, skills, character, or life experience
52. Self-control: to act in accordance with my own ideals
53. Sensuality: to create, explore and enjoy experiences that stimulate the five senses
54. Sexuality: to explore or express my sexuality
55. Spirituality: to connect with things bigger than myself
56. Skillfulness: to continually practice and improve my skills, and apply myself fully when using them
57. Supportiveness: to be supportive, helpful, encouraging, and available to myself or others
58. Trust: to be trustworthy; to be loyal, faithful, sincere, and reliable
59. Insert your own unlisted value here:
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Once you've finished the exercise, keep your list handy to remind yourself that this is what you want to stand for as a human being. When you have a difficult decision to make or feel confused about the choices in front of you, refer to the list to help you clarify competing values. Which competing value is more important to YOU? How is fear and/or guilt playing into your inner conflict? Sometimes it is a choice between a true value versus wanting to avoid feeling fearful or guilty. Healthy choices are never made out of our desire to avoid an emotion, and will never lead to happy, fulfilling lives. When we act from a place of fear or guilt, we will always create more fear and guilt in our lives. When we act from a place of values, we create more of what we value.

Please note: It can be uncomfortable to live by your values in the short term, but those short-lived discomforts (such as fear and guilt) are preferable to the long-term chronic discomfort of never being fully yourself (depression and anxiety). Making healthy choices for yourself is not always easy. Mindfulness skills and Emotional Intelligence are an integral part of being able and willing to live by our values, in order to be able to tolerate short-term discomfort for long term fulfillment. Many of us miss out on learning these skills in childhood. It can be helpful to learn mindfulness skills and cultivate EI from a skilled therapist if you find yourself in too much discomfort to act on what you know you is right for you, or if you are struggling to identify what you value because you have never felt truly safe to be yourself. Sometimes we need to do deep trauma-healing work with a skilled mind/body somatic therapist before we are able to freely live our values. So don't be disheartened if you find it too scary to be you. But do ask for help and get to work healing your nervous system so that you can be free to be who you truly are. Clarifying who you are is the first step to fully enjoying life and all it has to offer. Then comes mindfulness skills and learning self-compassion, basically learning how to be your own therapist.

I hope you find this exercise to be a helpful self-exploration tool. Please only redistribute to others in full with proper credits.

-Katy David, LPC

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