

7 Steps to Discover Your Personal Core Values

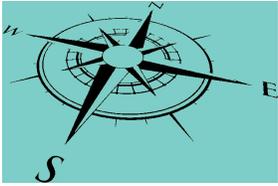
Discover Your Personal Core Values — Most of us don't know our values. We don't understand what's most important to us. Instead, we focus on what our society, culture, and media values. Can you articulate your top 5 to 10 values that are most important to you? Without undergoing a discovery process, it's challenging to identify your personal core values. It's easy to speculate and idealize what you should value. But knowing and accepting what you value takes effort. While the following process is best done with a qualified coach, you can do it on your own if you apply self-honesty, patience, and determination. Ready? Take out your journal, a notepad, or a note-taking app. And let's get started. Here are 7 steps to creating distinct and meaningful core values that will serve you in every area of your life and work ...

As a business coach, I appreciate the power of values. I've noticed that individuals experience greater fulfillment when they live by their values. And when we don't honor our values, our mental, emotional, and physical state suffers. I've seen this to be true in my life too.

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Vision

Greater fulfillment in life.

Mission

To help us understand what's most important to us.

Values

Personal Values: Why Personal Core Values Are Important -- Values are a part of us. They highlight what we stand for. They can represent our unique, individual essence. Values guide our behavior, providing us with a personal code of conduct. When we honor our personal core values consistently, we experience fulfillment. When we don't, we are incongruent and are more likely to escape into bad habits and regress into childish behavior to uplift ourselves... As a reference, here's a list of 230 personal values:

Acceptance

Accomplishment

Accountability

Accuracy

Achievement

Adaptability

Alertness

Altruism

Ambition

Amusement

Assertiveness

Attentive

Awareness

Balance

Beauty

Boldness

Bravery

Brilliance

Calm
Candor
Capable
Careful
Certainty
Challenge
Charity
Cleanliness
Clear
Clever
Comfort
Commitment
Common sense
Communication
Community
Compassion
Competence
Concentration
Confidence
Connection
Consciousness
Consistency
Contentment
Contribution
Control
Conviction
Cooperation
Courage
Courtesy
Creation
Creativity
Credibility
Curiosity
Decisive
Decisiveness

Dedication
Dependability
Determination
Development
Devotion
Dignity
Discipline
Discovery
Drive
Effectiveness
Efficiency
Empathy
Empower
Endurance
Energy
Enjoyment
Enthusiasm
Equality
Ethical
Excellence
Experience
Exploration
Expressive
Fairness
Family
Famous
Fearless
Feelings
Ferocious
Fidelity
Focus
Foresight
Fortitude
Freedom
Friendship

- Fun**
- Generosity**
- Genius**
- Giving**
- Goodness**
- Grace**
- Gratitude**
- Greatness**
- Growth**
- Happiness**
- Hard work**
- Harmony**
- Health**
- Honesty**
- Honor**
- Hope**
- Humility**
- Humor**
- Imagination**
- Improvement**
- Independence**
- Individuality**
- Innovation**
- Inquisitive**
- Insightful**
- Inspiring**
- Integrity**
- Intelligence**
- Intensity**
- Intuitive**
- Irreverent**
- Joy**
- Justice**
- Kindness**
- Knowledge**

Lawful
Leadership
Learning
Liberty
Logic
Love
Loyalty
Mastery
Maturity
Meaning
Moderation
Motivation
Openness
Optimism
Order
Organization
Originality
Passion
Patience
Peace
Performance
Persistence
Playfulness
Poise
Potential
Power
Present
Productivity
Professionalism
Prosperity
Purpose
Quality
Realistic
Reason
Recognition

- Recreation**
- Reflective**
- Respect**
- Responsibility**
- Restraint**
- Results-oriented**
- Reverence**
- Rigor**
- Risk**
- Satisfaction**
- Security**
- Self-reliance**
- Selfless**
- Sensitivity**
- Serenity**
- Service**
- Sharing**
- Significance**
- Silence**
- Simplicity**
- Sincerity**
- Skill**
- Skillfulness**
- Smart**
- Solitude**
- Spirit**
- Spirituality**
- Spontaneous**
- Stability**
- Status**
- Stewardship**
- Strength**
- Structure**
- Success**
- Support**

Surprise
Sustainability
Talent
Teamwork
Temperance
Thankful
Thorough
Thoughtful
Timeliness
Tolerance
Toughness
Traditional
Tranquility
Transparency
Trust
Trustworthy
Truth
Understanding
Uniqueness
Unity
Valor
Victory
Vigor
Vision
Vitality
Wealth
Welcoming
Winning
Wisdom
Wonder

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STEP 1. Beginning

Start with a Beginner's Mind

It's too easy to presume that we know the answer at the start and to, therefore, never embark on a creative, personal discovery process. Adopt the mind of a beginner—someone with no preconceived notions of what is—to give you access to inner truths to which your conscious mind is yet unaware. Take a deep breath and empty your mind. Remember that your conscious mind doesn't have all the answers. Create a space for new insights and revelations to emerge. Getting in right mental and emotional state is an essential first step. I also created a program called The Mastery Method: Activate Your Higher Potential to help individuals enter a state of heightened mental alertness, calm, and centeredness before doing processes like this.

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STEP 2. Listing

Create Your List of Personal Values

Arriving at a concise and short list of personal values can be a daunting task. You can find lists online with almost 400 values to choose from. However, I don't advise using any predetermined lists. Why? Values aren't selected; we discover and reveal them. If you start with a list, your conscious mind will test which values appear "better" than others. That said, if you're not familiar with working with values, you can scan a list of values to get a sense of your range of options. To help you uncover your own personal core values, here are three processes you can try:

2.1. Peak Experiences

Consider what values you were honoring during a particularly meaningful moment.

Consider a meaningful moment—a peak experience that stands out. What was happening to you? What was going on? What values were you honoring at this time?

2.2. Suppressed Values

Consider what values were being suppressed at a time when you got angry, frustrated, or upset.

Now, go in the opposite direction; consider a time when you got angry, frustrated, or upset. What was going on? What were you feeling? Now flip those feelings around. What value is being suppressed?

2.3. Code of Conduct

Consider what personal values you must honor to experience fulfillment in your life.

What's most important in your life? Beyond your basic human needs, what must you have in your life to experience fulfillment? Creative self-expression? A strong level of health and vitality? A sense of excitement and adventure? Surrounded by beauty? Always learning? What are the personal values you must honor or a part of you withers?

STEP 3. Grouping

Chunk Your Personal Values into Related Groups

Combining all the answers from step 2, you now have a master list of personal values. Maybe there are between 20 and 40 values on your list. That's too many to be actionable. Your next step is to group these values under related themes. Values like accountability, responsibility, and timeliness are all related. Values like learning, growth, and development relate to each other. Connection, belonging, and intimacy are related too. Group them together.

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STEP 4. Themes

Highlight the Central Theme of Each Value Group

If you have a group of values that include honesty, transparency, integrity, candor, directness, and truth, select a word that best represents the group. For example, integrity might work as a central theme for the values I listed. You can keep the other words in the group in parentheses to give your primary value more context. You'll use them again in step 6.

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STEP 5: Core Values

Determine Your Top Personal Core Values

Now comes the hardest part. After completing step 4, you still may have a sizable list of values. Here are a few questions to help you whittle your list down: What values are essential to your life? What values represent your primary way of being? What values are essential to supporting your inner self? As a unique individual, you possess certain strengths and weaknesses. Your values matter most to you. How many core values should you end up with? Too few and you won't capture all the unique dimensions of your being. Too many and you'll forget them or won't take advantage of them. While the number of core values differs for each person, the magic range seems to be between 5 and 10. Rank them in the order of importance. This is often the most challenging part. You may need to do this step in multiple sittings. After doing one round of ranking put it aside and "sleep on it." Revisit your ranking the next day and see how it sits with you. Then, go through the process again.

5.1. Identification

Identify five to ten of values.

5.2. Ranking

Rank those values in order of importance to you.

5.3. Review

Review your ranking on multiple days.

STEP 6. Context

Give Your Personal Values Richer Context

Now, creativity comes into play.

6.1. Articulation

Articulate the meaning behind each value in memorable phrases or sentences.

Highlighting values into memorable phrases or sentences helps you articulate the meaning behind each value. It gives you the opportunity to make the value more emotional and memorable. Here are a few tips and guidelines for crafting your values statements:

6.1.1. Inspiration

Use inspiring words and vocabulary.

Our brains are quick to delete or ignore the mundane and commonplace. Mine for words that evoke and trigger emotional responses. They will be more meaningful and memorable.

6.1.2. Strengths

Play to your strengths in crafting your values.

6.1.3. Meaning

Make your value statements rich and meaningful.

Make your value statements rich and meaningful to you so they inspire you to uphold them. You could use other words from the groupings you made in step 3 in your description. For example, let's say you've identified a core value of health to represent other values, like energy and vitality. Your values statement might be: "Health: to live with full vitality and energy every day."

STEP 7. Testing

Test the Ecology of Each Value

Once you've completed your list of core values, walk away from them and revisit them the next day after a good night's sleep. Review your list:

7.1. Feelings

Consider how the values make you feel.

How do they make you feel?

7.2. Consistency

Consider whether the values are consistent with who you feel you are.

Do you feel they are consistent with who you are?

7.3. Personality

Consider whether the values are personal to you.

Are they personal to you?

7.4. Identity

Consider whether any of the values may be inconsistent with your identity.

Do you see any values that feel inconsistent with your identity (as if they belong to someone else, like an authority figure or society) and not you?

7.5. Priority

Review whether your values are in the proper order of importance.

Check your priority ranking. Do you feel like your values are in the proper order of importance?

7.6. Changes

Make changes as necessary.

Nothing is final. Make any tweaks and changes as necessary.

Administrative Information

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