

Values Clarification Toolkit

We all have values. Values are the things that have intrinsic worth to us. These are the qualities that we hold dear and strive to live. But so often we live life by default instead of by intention. We spend little time consciously thinking about and living our values.

Once you get clear on what you value the most, you can create commitments around those values and start taking actions that back up your words. By living this way, your life will improve immeasurably.

But don't fall into the trap of thinking about values as a checklist item that you develop then post on a plaque on the wall. If you do that, don't waste your time. Instead, when you get serious about living by your values, your life will improve immeasurably.

You'll know you've got your values right when you're willing to sacrifice financial gain or incur personal pain in order to live up to your values.

In this toolkit, I'll share some of my thoughts about values and show you a couple exercises that will help you clarify yours.

List of Values

To get you thinking about values, here are a few examples.

Family	Health	Spiritual Fulfillment	Achievement
Growth	Financial Security	Relationships	Serving Others
Continuous Learning	Leaving a Legacy	Passion	Integrity
Fearlessness	Impact	Enthusiasm	Fun

And here's a list of 500 values (yes, 500!) that you might want to peruse before finalizing your list: <http://www.threadsculture.com/blog/company-culture/core-values-list-threads/>

Fall Back on Your Values

Innovation expert and Harvard professor Clayton Christensen tells a story about his college days playing basketball in England. His team made it to the championship game. But there was only one problem—*the game was scheduled for a Sunday*.

Christensen had made a personal commitment to God that he would never play ball on Sunday. He agonized over the decision. Should he break his rule just this once, so he wouldn't let his teammates and coach down? Everyone had worked so hard all year to get to this game, and they were pulling him to make a "Sunday exception" for this game.

After careful prayer, he told the coach he could not break his commitment, not even once. He said, "Had I crossed the line that one time, I would have done it over and over and over in the years that followed."

It turns out his team won the game without him!

Christensen's example shows the power of values. When you know what is important to you, decision-making becomes much easier. When faced with tough decisions, ask yourself, "What would my values decide?"

Honor Yourself

By knowing your values, you can consciously spend more time living those values. When you live your values, you're honoring yourself and your life is aligned with the things that are most important to you. The more time you can spend doing and living by the things most important to you, the happier you're going to be.

Think back to a time when you were happiest in your life. Maybe it was a family vacation, or a spiritual awakening, or time you spent with someone close to you. I'll bet at those times you were fully engaged in living out your values.

Alignment With Others

We're always dealing with other people, whether it's employees, clients, friends, or others. I've found that being clear on my values is really helpful in how I approach working and being with other people. For example, I won't be a business partner or work with a client whose values are not in alignment with mine. I can guarantee you, if you only work with people whose values align with yours, you will save yourself a tremendous amount of heartache.

There's another benefit to this, too. You will find yourself saying "no" much more often. And the more often you say no, the more room you have to enthusiastically get behind the people and opportunities you say yes to. Success is directly correlated to focus, not to diffusion.

Motivation to Achieve

Focusing on your values can give you the motivation to achieve. For example, when health is a core value, it motivates you to exercise and eat right. When family is important to you, it motivates you to prioritize family time. When helping others is important to you, it motivates you to find ways to be of service.

Being clear on your values is energizing. And when you are energized, you have capacity. And when you have capacity, you have the ability to achieve greatness. Being clear on your values is the key that starts the chain reaction of achievement.

Values as a Verb

As you think about your values, it's also helpful to visualize what living your values looks and feels like. Your values shouldn't just be things you write on paper. They should be a verb.

For example, if health is important to you, then you should be lifting weights, doing cardio exercises, getting the right amount of sleep, and eating right. If you value good health but you're not doing any of the activities that promote good health, then you're simply fooling yourself into thinking health is one of your values.

Have Your Spouse Do This Too

If you're married, have your spouse complete this exercise too. When you're done, compare and discuss your results. If your values diverge, it's time to have a deep conversation. If you share similar values, find ways that you can help each other reinforce them. This simple exercise can be richly rewarding for the two of you.



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Identifying Your Values

Directions: Take some time to think about and determine which values are most important to you. Then do the following.

1. Write down 10 values that are important to you in the first column of the table below.
2. In the second column, rank your top 5 values.
3. In the third column, estimate the % of time during your waking hours that you spend thinking about, living, and incorporating each of those 5 values.

Important Values	Rank	% of Time
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

Turning Your Values Into Commitments

Take a close look at your list. Is there a big difference between what you say is important to you and how you are actually spending your time thinking about, living, and incorporating your values?

Now, restate each of your top 5 values (could be more or less than 5) and write down a commitment to live it. For example, let's say health is one of your top 5 values. Here's how that line might look in the table.

Important Value	Commitment to Live It
1. Health	I commit to consciously think about the food I put into my body and how it affects my health. I commit to living an active lifestyle and keeping my body strong so I can live long enough to play with my grandkids.

Ok, It's your turn!

Important Value	Commitment to Live It
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Once you're solid on your values, create a visual display of them. In my case, I have a PowerPoint slide that lists my values along with pictures that represent those values. It's easy for me to look at it on a daily basis. For best results, **review your list daily**.

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Thanks!
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