



## The Heart of the Matter

Values are who we are. Not who we would like to be, not whom we think we should be, but who we are in our life, right now. Another way to put it is that values represent our unique and individual essence, our ultimate and most fulfilling form of expressing and relating. Our values serve as a compass pointing out what it means to be true to oneself. When we honor our values on a regular and consistent basis, life is good and fulfilling.

When you are clear on your values, important life decisions are easier to make and outcomes are more fulfilling. However, the process of clarifying values is often difficult. It frequently makes people intellectualize and fantasize, whereas you

want to look into your life and uncover the values that are already there, in your day-to-day actions and interactions. That's one of the reasons selecting values from a list seldom works: the list becomes an opportunity to vote on the most desirable or socially acceptable values, rather than serving as a mechanism to identify whom we are. Selecting values from a list reinforces the intellectual urge to figure it out and get the words right. Your values are observable; they live in the world. Thus, they won't benefit from picking your values from a list. My job as a coach is to assist you in viewing your life in such a way that values are revealed.

Sometimes it is difficult to get a perspective on your values. Coaching works well in such cases because the coach can ask questions and provide scenarios that take you into your life rather than into your head. Values clarification allows you to examine and articulate your values. The exact wording will matter, but what is most important in the short run is that the approximate label for the value resonates with you. Value clarification is enormously helpful in getting to know who you are at the core. *Working in your core values will facilitate fulfilling choices, strategizing appropriate actions, and recognizing situations in which values are an issue.*

Many of my clients struggle with finding the right words. They are constrained because they feel they have to find the perfect word and the value has much more emotional meaning than the definition of a single word allows. In fact, each individual has his or her own unique meaning for each value. We may have different meanings even though we use the same word.

# Values Clarification Exercise



- The first tip for this exercise is to use a pencil with an eraser. You often experience a sense of reluctance when values have to be written in ink. It is not important to get it right the first time.
- The second tip when doing values clarification is to use several words together to form a string describing the value.

Separating the words with slash marks makes the string easier to read. For example:

- Integrity/Honesty/Walk-the-talk
- Integrity/Whole/Congruent
- Leadership/Empower/Collaborative
- Leadership/Decisive/Powerful

When creating the values string, place the most significant term at the beginning, such as Integrity and Leadership in the examples above. This takes time and may take several months to come up with a fairly complete list of values. Since values show up over time in our life, it is unlikely that we will be able to capture them accurately and completely in one sitting. Values that are fully defined and elaborated on become a powerful tool in pointing you toward fulfilling choices as you approach a major crossroads or get off track.

The following exercises will help in identifying your values. These scenarios will give you a place to start. Experiment with them and continue to explore other methods for allowing you to see your values.

## A Peak Moment in Time

Identify special, peak moments when life was especially rewarding or poignant. It's important that the time frame be quite limited—a moment—or there will be too much in the experience to allow you to pinpoint specific values. When you have a specific moment in mind, start asking yourself:

- What was happening?
- Who was present and what was going on?
- What were the values that were being honored in that moment?

Acknowledge what you are hearing and keep probing; periodically test words to see what values resonate for you. Ask yourself:

- Why was that important.
- Is there a value of accomplishment or achievement in that experience?
- or I felt the energy go up when I remembered that day.

Does it sound like you were honoring a value around nature or a value of connection? Does that sound right? There will be a stronger response when the words ring true. Expand on the first word you came up with for example;

- What does 'accomplishment' mean to you?
- What words elaborate on your value of connection?
- Keep looking at peak moments, seeking experiences that you find particularly rich and fulfilling.

## Suppressed Values

Another way to isolate values is to go to the opposite extreme, looking at times when

# Values Clarification Exercise



you were angry, frustrated, or upset. This will often lead to identification of a value that was being suppressed. First, name the feelings and circumstances around the upset; then flip it over and look for the opposite of those feelings. For example, you might say,

- I felt trapped, backed into a corner. I had no choices.
- Your coach might then say, Trapped, cornered, without choice. If we flip that over, it sounds like there might be a value around freedom or options or choice. Does that sound right?

It's not so important that the vocabulary is right—it's important that the words feel right to you. To further illustrate, your coach might say, So you felt frustrated when they kept spinning your wheels, doing the same thing over and over again? Is the other side of that a value for creativity or innovation?

Many of us have created our life in such a way that we automatically and easily honor many of our values without even being aware that we are doing so. Therefore we may not recognize them as values until something gets in the way. The key here is to point out to you that every upset or moment of distress is likely to signal that a value is being suppressed.

## Must-Haves

Another way for you to identify your values is to look at what you must have in your life. Beyond the physical requirements of food, shelter, and community, what must you have in your life in order to be fulfilled? Must you have a form of creative self-

expression? Must you have adventure and excitement in your life? Must you have partnership and collaboration? Must you be moving toward a sense of accomplishment or success or be surrounded with natural beauty?

An underlying question for the process is what are the values you absolutely must honor—or part of you dies?

## Obsessive Expression

We are all capable of obsessive behavior—insisting on honoring a value, inflating it into a demand rather than a form of self-expression. You've probably had an experience like this in your own life, such as when your roommate's value of orderliness became an obsessive demand for perfection. Our friends and families often do us a service by pointing out the obsessive expression of our values:

- You are so controlling!
- All you think about is your business.
- You want all the attention.

These statements might point toward a value of personal power/leadership, of learning / growth, and of recognition / acknowledgment. Examine those times when you have taken certain values to the extreme.

- What is it that people say about you?
- What do you say about yourself?
- What is it that people tease you about or that drives you crazy?

There are important values here that have mutated for some reason. Look for the value, and don't focus on the mutation.

# Values Clarification Exercise



## The Values-Based Decision Matrix

One of the most potent tools for making fulfilling life choices is the Values-Based Decision Matrix. This matrix is launched during the initial values clarification process. (Please note that the listing of values may take several months to complete.)

After you have brainstormed a list of values, rank the top ten values in priority order. Then score them based on your sense of satisfaction—the degree to which you are honoring each value—using a scale of 0 to 10. You will find this exercise very revealing, and people are often shocked at what they learn about themselves.

Over the years, I have noticed that when things are going particularly well in a client's life, the scores typically are high. When you are struggling or at a low point, the values matrix can help determine where corrective action is needed. When you are facing a major decision, such as whether to make a job change or start a new business,

or even to have a child, the Values-Based Decision Matrix can be particularly revealing. Score your values today. Next, project out two months, a year, or sometime in the future:

Imagine that you did make the change. Anticipate and write down what your scores would be if you did. Next, imagine that you did not make the change and record those scores. This exercise will provide you with useful insight about making a fulfilling choice.

The following sample Values-Based Decision Matrix represents the responses of a client determining whether or not to take on the leadership role in his company. As you can see, Leadership is not among the top ten values. Review the numbers as if these were your values and your decision. Note how provocative and revealing such an examination can be. What are not on this list of values are tangible measures, such as money and status—factors that are usually the basis for decision-making yet rarely lead to fulfilling choices.

Sample Client: Values-Based Decision Matrix						
	Date: 03/14 Score Value	Date: 04/14 Score Value	Date: 08/14 Score Value	Date: Score Value	Date: Score Value	Date: Score Value
<b>Prioritize and List Values</b>						
1. Learning / Growth	9	9	6			
2. Self-Expression	7	9	8			
3. Freedom / Independence	5	7	8			
4. Innovate / Create	6	8	7			
5. Partnership / Collaborate	8	9	8			
6. Organized / Order	7	8	7			
7. Integrity / Honesty	9	9	7			
8. Fun / Humor / Play	7	6	8			
9. Connection / Intimacy	8	6	8			
10. Adventure / Risk Taking	5	8	7			

# Values Clarification Exercise



## Keep Looking

Because values are such an important part of the way you order your life and make choices, it is essential to continue to look at this area. Values could conceivably be examined in every decision you have to make—either to help make a choice or to clarify and reinforce a course of action: What is the value that would be honored if you did that?

When you honor your values, three things happen:

- They add additional fuel to the motivation fire and help build steam for action
- They undermine the work of the Saboteur because action based on values is more powerful than the Saboteur's reasons for not taking action or for taking some other course of action
- They have fulfilling life.

## Additional Forms

Three additional forms that can be used when working with values are included in this section. They are the **Values Worksheet**, to assist you in identifying values; the **Standards and Obstacles Worksheet**, to help with establishing standards and obstacles for honoring values; and the **Values Action Log**, to assist in creating values-based action plans.

## Values Worksheet

<b>Rank in Priority Order</b>	<b>Value / Description</b>	<b>Score Level of Satisfaction</b> Scale of 1 to 10 (10 = Highest)

## Standards and Obstacles Worksheet

<b>Value</b>	<b>Honoring Score</b>	<b>Standard (How is Value honored?)</b>	<b>Obstacle to Honoring Value</b>	<b>Strength of Obstacle Score</b>
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

## Values Action Log

Value	Action to Be Taken to Increase Score	By When?
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		