

10 Steps

to Defining Your Core Values



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COACHING & EDUCATION



Hello there!

Discovering your core values is a pivotal step in understanding yourself better. Your values will act as that little voice inside that whispers whether you're on the right path or not. These foundational pillars will shape your decisions, guide your actions, and even influence who you welcome into your life. By identifying them, you gain a clearer insight into what drives you and what you hold dear.

The truth is that values exist, whether you recognize them or not. Life can be much easier when you acknowledge your values – and when you make plans and decisions that honor them. It's like giving yourself a roadmap to happiness.

This guide is designed to guide you through the process in 10 easy steps. This is a personal journey. Make sure you're in a safe, comfortable space. Grab a cup of tea, a journal and maybe even a box of tissues. Know that every step is about clarity and self-awareness. We'll approach it with a balanced mix of introspection and practicality, aiming for genuine understanding over perfection. Nothing you discover through this process is set in stone. In fact, we believe core values should be revisited at least once a year.

Ready to embark on this enlightening journey? Let's dive in!

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1. Reflect on Past Experiences
2. Think About Your “Origin Values”
3. Review a List of Common Values
4. Write Freely
5. Narrow Down Your List
6. Define Each Value in Your Own Words
7. Prioritize Your Values
8. Reflection and Acknowledgment
9. Test Your Values
10. Live Your Values

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Step 1: Reflect on Past Experiences

- Make a list of the times when you felt happiest.
- Make a list of the times you were the most proud.
- Make a list of the times you were most fulfilled and satisfied.
- Ask yourself: What made those experiences memorable? What values or feelings were at play? For example, if you fondly remember times when you helped others, write down words that come up to describe your memories such as compassion, service, volunteering.

Step 2: Think About Your “Origin Values”

- What people or experiences have had a major influence on your life? This is often your family and community of origin.
- What values did those influences hold? Do you resonate with these values too?

Note: It's completely normal to feel guilt or shame for no longer feeling aligned with the values imparted on you in your childhood. Many of us outgrow the values of our family and community of origin. This does not make you ungrateful or equate to loving or appreciating them any less. It's simply your current truth. In fact, it's often liberating to acknowledge these changes in yourself and to release yourself from the obligation of having to fit into a particular mold.

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Step 3: Review a List of Common Values

We've included an EXTENSIVE list of common personal value terms at the end of this document. We recommend you print these pages out. Grab a highlighter or a pen and as you read through the list just start to mark the ones that resonate in any way.

I invite you to discuss this step with your therapist (if you have one) and even potentially do this activity together in an upcoming session. It can be really cathartic to talk out loud as you read through the list. To elaborate verbally why a particular word stands out to you. Any memories or feelings that come up.

Step 4: Write Freely

- Take 15-20 minutes to jot down words or phrases that are resonating the most with you and why.
- What memories, feelings or desires do these words bring up?

Don't censor yourself during this exercise. Write down a total stream of consciousness if you have too. Or even open your voice app and record yourself if that's easier.

Step 5: Narrow Down Your List

- Review the values you've identified and try to narrow them down to a list of 10 that are most important to you.
- See if you can group any words together in a common theme. For example: if you selected stability, reliability and punctuality. These values could all be grouped together. This is a good indicator that this theme is very important to you.

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Step 6: Define Each Value in Your Own Words

For each value, write a sentence or two about what it means to you specifically. This personalizes the process and makes it more meaningful.

Step 7: Prioritize Your Values

This can be a challenging step, but try to rank your values in order of importance to you. It can be really helpful at this point to write each word on an index card or a post-it. This gives you the ability to physically order and re-order them very easily. Remember, there's no right or wrong here; it's about what feels most crucial to your happiness right now.

A tip is to ask yourself “What do I need to be doing or feeling on a weekly and monthly basis to feel the most at peace right now.”

And recognize that a core value might not be something that comes easily or naturally to you. For example, a core value could be “Discipline”, which can be tied to working out, eating right, sticking to routines, being financially responsible. These might be challenges you're facing. But you know that to feel at peace right now you need to hold Discipline as a core value in your life.

Narrow it down to the top 3-5 values that you want to use to guide you right now.

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Step 8: Reflection and Acknowledgment

- Consider how your current life aligns with these values.
- Are there any values you're not honoring as much as you'd like? Any changes you want to make?

Caution: We don't recommend you jump immediately into making major commitments to yourself or life altering decisions right out of the gate. This step is a time of reflection and acknowledgment. It's the moment when you pour hot water over tea leaves...we're just starting to steep in these realizations at this point.

Step 9: Test Your Values

- Think of a recent challenging decision or situation. Would your top 3-5 defined values have provided guidance? If not, you may want to revisit and adjust.
- Discuss your values with your therapist, best friend, parents or partner. Telling others will feel scary at first, but hearing and feeling how right and aligned they are with you, will add confirmation you've gotten it right. The more you share your values the more confident you'll feel in using them as guideposts when faced with challenges.

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Step 10: Live Your Values

Consider ways to integrate these values more fully into your daily life. Start with just small easy wins. If one of your core values is Adventure or Travel, plan a fun short weekend trip with your partner or your best friends. Take a rock climbing class or go kayaking this weekend. Make a short list of ideas for each of your top 3-5 values.

Another technique you can use to incorporate your newly realized values into your life is with Habit Stacking. Habit stacking refers to the practice of grouping together several small actions into a routine that you follow consistently. The concept behind habit stacking is to take advantage of the habits you already do automatically every day and then add new, positive habits onto them.

So let's go back to my example of Discipline as a core value. It's frankly tough to improve one's discipline in any area of life. So let's break it down into a small step first. What is the most achievable thing related to this value that you can start working on today? An example might be that you decide to take certain work calls while you're walking. This could be on a treadmill, walking pad or outside! Don't jog or hike uphill – making it hard for you to speak. But if part of discipline means moving your body every day, this is a super easy way to start.

Once you start to live your values and can confirm their effect on your happiness and joy. Only then is it time to pull out the big guns...start vision and goal setting. Honor your values as you plan for your future. We offer a full workbook on this process as well. You can download that [here](#).

Remember, as you move through life, your values may change. For example, when you start your career, success – measured by money and status – might be a top priority. But after you have a family, work-life balance may be what you value more. As your definition of success changes, so do your personal values. This is why keeping in touch with your values is a lifelong exercise. You should continuously revisit this, especially if you start to feel unbalanced... and you can't quite figure out why.

Common Personal Core Values Wordlist

Accountability
Accuracy
Achievement
Adaptability
Adventurousness
Affection
Altruism
Ambition
Approachability
Artistry
Assertiveness
Authenticity
Awareness
Balance
Being the best
Belonging
Benevolence
Boldness
Bravery
Brotherhood/sisterhood
Calmness
Carefulness
Caring
Celebration
Challenge

Cheerfulness
Clarity
Clear-mindedness
Collaboration
Comfort
Commitment
Commitment
Community
Community-building
Compassion
Competitiveness
Connection
Consistency
Contentment
Continuous
Contribution
Control
Cooperation
Correctness
Courage
Courtesy
Craftsmanship
Creativity
Curiosity
Decisiveness

Common Personal Core Values Wordlist

Democraticness
Dependability
Determination
Devoutness
Dignity
Diligence
Discipline
Discretion
Diversity
Dreaming
Drive
Duty
Dynamism
Economy
Education
Effectiveness
Efficiency
Elegance
Empathy
Empowerment
Endurance
Energy
Enjoyment
Enterprising
Enthusiasm

Environmentalism
Equality
Equality
Ethics
Excellence
Excitement
Expertise
Exploration
Exploration
Expressiveness
Fair-mindedness
Fairness
Faith
Family-orientedness
Fidelity
Fitness
Flexibility
Fluency
Focus
Forgiveness
Fortitude
Freedom
Freedom
Friendship
Frugality

Common Personal Core Values Wordlist

Fun
Generosity
Goodness
Grace
Gratitude
Groundedness
Growth
Happiness
Hard work
Harmony
Health
Helping society
Holiness
Honesty
Honor
Hope
Hospitality
Humility
Humor
Imagination
Impartiality
Improvement
Inclusion
Independence
Ingenuity

Inner harmony
Innovation
Inquisitiveness
Insightfulness
Inspiration
Integrity
Intellectual status
Intelligence
Intimacy
Intuition
Joy
Justice
Justice
Kindness
Knowledge
Leadership
Learning
Legacy
Liberation
Love
Loyalty
Making a difference
Mastery
Merit
Mindfulness

Common Personal Core Values Wordlist

Moderation
Nobility
Nurturing
Obedience
Openness
Optimism
Order
Originality
Patience
Patriotism
Peace
Perfection
Piety
Playfulness
Positivity
Practicality
Preparedness
Professionalism
Prudence
Purposefulness
Quality-orientation
Reliability
Resourcefulness
Respect
Restraint

Results-oriented
Reverence
Rigor
Risk-taking
Sacrifice
Safety
Security
Self-actualization
Self-control
Self-reliance
Selflessness
Sensitivity
Serenity
Service
Shrewdness
Simplicity
Sincerity
Solidarity
Soundness
Speed
Spirituality
Spontaneity
Stability
Steadfastness
Stoicism

Common Personal Core Values Wordlist

Strategic
Strength
Structure
Success
Support
Teamwork
Temperance
Tenacity
Thankfulness
Thoroughness
Thoughtfulness
Timeliness
Tolerance
Traditionalism
Transparency
Trustworthiness
Truth-seeking
Understanding
Uniqueness
Unity
Usefulness
Valor
Vision Vitality
Wisdom
Wonder

