

Personal Values 17 Reasons why they matter for you

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Our *personal values* are carried both consciously and unconsciously and are embedded into every priority decision we engage in and participate in. While companies are eager to talk about organizational values, they tend to shy away from personal values. According to Richard Barrett of the Barret Values Centre, “Values-based decision-making allows you to create a future that resonates deeply with who you are. It creates conditions that allow authenticity and integrity to flourish.” Many of us struggle with finding direction, making big decisions, and even knowing how to act in day-to-day situations. When you take the time to consider your *core values*, these things become crystal clear.

What are Personal Values?

Personal values are your moral compass: what you deeply believe is morally right. Your core values are always believed or perceived to be moral or influenced by morality. Personal values are developed through life experiences, familial patterns, social conditioning, and consumption of content, events, and opinions. Our beliefs that affirm our *core values* are often those unquestioned convictions that we accept as truth based on our current cognition.

Everyone has their own *personal values*, and they can be quite different. Some people are competitive, while others value cooperation. Some people value adventure, while others prefer security. Values matter because you are likely to feel better if you’re living according to your values and to feel worse if you don’t. This applies both to day-to-day decisions and to larger life choices. Everybody is different, and what makes one person happy may leave another person feeling anxious or disengaged. Defining your *personal values* and then living by them can help you to feel more fulfilled and to make choices that make you happy, even if they don’t make sense to other people.

Examples of Personal Values

Below are examples of *Personal values* one can have. Values differ per person and one’s experience and exposure:

1. Achievement
2. Adventure
3. Courage
4. Creativity
5. Dependability
6. Determination
7. Friendship
8. Health
9. Honesty

10. Independence
11. Integrity
12. Intelligence
13. Justice
14. Kindness
15. Learning
16. Love
17. Peace
18. Perfection
19. Security
20. Simplicity
21. Sincerity
22. Spontaneity
23. Success
24. Understanding
25. Wealth

The above list is not exhaustive but gives an example of possible values one can have. It is usually recommended for one to focus on between 5 to 10 *core values* to work with, one cannot say they value everything. Values are not static. They change and evolve with us as we grow.

How to define your Core Values/ Personal 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. When it comes to *core values*, there's no "one size fits all" approach. Everyone is different. Here are some more questions to consider when trying to come up or define your *core values*:

1. What's important to you in life?
2. If you could have any career, without worrying about money or other practical constraints, what would you do?
3. When you're reading news stories, what sort of story or behaviour tends to inspire you?
4. What type of story or behaviour makes you angry?
5. What do you want to change about the world or about yourself?
6. What are you most proud of?
7. When were you the happiest?

Take a blank sheet of paper and quickly brainstorm some answers to these questions. Then use those answers as guides to figuring out your *personal values*. If you're inspired by stories of successful entrepreneurs, maybe you value determination or achievement, or maybe it is wealth and success. If you are inspired by activists trying to change the world, maybe you value courage or integrity, or maybe it's justice or peace. Try to examine what exactly it is about those stories or experiences that you relate to.

Importance of Personal Values

Values are a part of us. They highlight what we stand for. They can represent our unique, individual essence.

Below are reasons why personal values are important:

1. **Values help you find your purpose-** values can help answer the all-encompassing question, “What is my purpose in life?” You can’t expect to know what you want out of life if you don’t know what is important in life. Knowing what you value gets you that much closer to an answer.
2. **Values help you react in difficult situations-** Values are guiding principles for behavior. They can help ensure you behave in a way that matches who you want to be at your core.
3. **Values help you make decisions-** When you come across the need to make a decision, your values can help you make the right call. Sometimes emotions get in the way of good decision making.
4. **Values help clear out clutter-** Identifying your values will help you rule out the things you really do not want, need, or believe are important.
5. **Values help you choose the right career-** when you know what matters most to you, you can be sure you are choosing the right career path.
6. **Values help you develop a sense of self-** Knowing your values means you can develop strong opinions about important subjects.
7. **Values help increase your confidence-** Identifying your values increases your level of confidence because it brings about a sense of stability and safety to your life. When you know what you want, it doesn’t matter what other people want.
8. **Values help your overall happiness level-**When you know what you value in life, you are likely to be happier.
9. **Values are a part of us-**They highlight what we stand for. They can represent our unique, individual essence.
10. Values guide our behavior, providing us with a personal code of conduct.
11. Knowing your personal values changes your behavior.
12. Values can assist you in setting your goals.
13. People with core values are less likely to engage in destructive thought patterns, especially in difficult life situations.
14. Greater self-discipline and self-motivation.
15. Social connections are stronger.

How to live according to your Personal values

Living your *values* is about more than the big, long-term goals, however. It’s also about the small, day-to-day decisions. In the moment, do you react to situations in ways that align with your values? If you value compassion, for example, do you regularly display compassion towards others, or do you sometimes slip into judgment and blame?

According to Blackman (2018), the following are examples of how you can live according to your values:

- Make a habit of reading your list of values every morning when you wake up.
- Visualize the day ahead and plan out how you'll live by your values throughout the day.
- Print out your values and keep them close to you to refer to through the day.
- Make them the background on your mobile phone or computer.
- Set up reminders to pop up on your phone.
- Whenever you find yourself straying from your values, analyse the situation afterward, and ask yourself what you could have done differently.

So why do so many of us still struggle to live according to our *personal values*? Sometimes it is about lack of clarity or not knowing what your values really are. In some cases, our personal values come into conflict with those of our family or the wider society. You may value honesty, but feel that there are certain lies you need to tell to preserve important relationships, to keep your job, or whatever else. These are important barriers, and they're worth reflecting on seriously. But it's also worth remembering that there are many ways to live your values, and you don't have to reject all compromises and ignore practical considerations. If your circumstances allow, you can also fight to change society according to your own beliefs. Look at many of the heroes of history like Susan B. Anthony or Martin Luther King, Jr. (Blackman, 2018)

Your *personal values* are not set in stone. While some of your *core values* will probably stay the same throughout your life, others may change as your life circumstances change or simply as you get older and start to have a different view of what's important. Or even if the values stay the same, the order in which you prioritise them may shift. So it's worth checking in regularly to see if your values have changed. Repeat the process of brainstorming, listing, and prioritising, and see if your results are different. How often should you do this? According to Blackman (2018), at least once a year is probably a good idea, and any time you go through a major life change like job loss, bereavement, illness, divorce, etc.

When your *personal values* align with your workplace values, you are maximizing your ability to be engaged, productive, and highly effective, thus realizing more moments of joy and happiness, resulting in more contentment and aligning to your life's legacy. (Harris, 2020)

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