

Clarifying Your Most Important Values

The objective of this exercise is to help you clarify your values or beliefs. Your personal values are the inner rules (standards, principles) you use to make choices and to run your life. Some are more important to you than others. By selecting and prioritizing your most important values, you will make better decisions and develop more effective relationships.

Since our values and beliefs change from time to time, often after reflection or certain events in our lives, it is useful to review and review and consider our values and beliefs regularly. Being mindful of your values requires periodic reflection about your beliefs and their importance to you at this point in your life.

On the next page we present a list of values, beliefs, or personal characteristics for your consideration, along with steps to help you identify which are most important to you as guiding principles in your life.

You might find it useful to determine degrees of importance by considering whether you would be upset or elated if your present state or condition in life would change if you could no longer act on a particular value. You might at times find it helpful to consider two values at a time, asking yourself about the relative importance of one over the other.

Directions:

1. Identify fifteen or so values that are most important to you, and mark them with an asterisk or highlight or circle them.
2. From this list, identify the seven that are the most important to you and list under A- G.
3. On the next page, follow the instructions to prioritize each of the seven with "1" being the most important value to you to "7" being the least important of these seven most important values.
4. Answer the reality check (Ideal vs. Actual Values Test) in the next section. Finally, complete the action plan.

List of Values, Beliefs or Desirable Characteristics

Accomplishment	Courage	Integrity	Responsibility
Achievement	Courteousness	Intellect	Restrained
Advancement	Creativity	Involvement	Risk
Adventure	Dependability	Imagination	Salvation
Affection	Discipline	Joy	Security
Affectionate	Economic security	Learning	Self-control
Affiliation	Education	Leisure	Self-reliance
Ambition	Effectiveness	Logic	Self-respect
Artistic expression	Equality	Love	Sincerity
Assisting others	Exciting life	Loving	Spirituality
Authority	Fairness	Loyalty	Stability
Autonomy	Fame	Mature love	Status
Balance	Family happiness	National security	Success
Beauty	Family security	Nature	Symbolism
Belonging	Forgiving	Obedience	Taking risks
Broad or open- mindedness	Free choice	Order	Teamwork
Caring	Freedom	Peace	Tidiness
Challenge	Friendship	Personal	Tenderness
Cheerfulness	Fun	development	Tolerance
Cleanliness	Generosity	Pleasure	Tradition
Comfortable life	Genuineness	Politeness	Tranquility
Companionship	Happiness	Power	Variety
Competent	Health	Prestige	Wealth
Competitiveness	Helpfulness	Pride	Winning
Contribution	Honesty	Quality	Wisdom
Conformity	Independence	Rationality	Others?
Contentedness	Influence	Recognition	
Control	Inner harmony	Reliable	
Cooperation	Improving society	Religion	
	Innovativeness	Respect	

PRIORITIZING YOUR MOST IMPORTANT VALUES

Please list your seven most important values on the lines below in any order. Don't be concerned with the order for now; just list the seven values, one on each line.

A _____
 B _____
 C _____
 D _____
 E _____
 F _____
 G _____

This next exercise will help you clearly rank your values in their order of importance to you. Compare each of your values to each of the others. As you look at the first pair of values (A and B), decide which one is more important to you and circle that letter. Continue comparing each value with the others until each pairing has been compared and one of them circled. Then count up the total number of As circled, Bs circled, and so on and write those numbers in the appropriate blanks in the Total column at the right.

						Total
A	A	A	A	A	A	
B	C	D	E	F	G	_____As
	B	B	B	B	B	
	C	D	E	F	G	_____Bs
		C	C	C	C	
		D	E	F	G	_____Cs
			D	D	D	
			E	F	G	_____Ds
				E	E	
				F	G	_____Es
					F	
					G	_____Fs
						_____Gs
						Total _____
						(should be 21)

The letter most circled identifies your highest priority.

LIST YOUR TOP SEVEN PERSONAL VALUES HERE:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____

REALITY CHECK: IDEAL VERSUS ACTUAL VALUES

THE CALENDAR AND CHECKBOOK TEST

Sometimes the values we think we embrace are actually different from those we live. We may discover that some outside influence, such as family, religion, or employer, has a value priority that we think we “should” have, but it is not really a strong value for us. We call these ideal values rather than actual values. One way to determine your actual values is to apply the calendar and checkbook test.

To apply the calendar and checkbook test, look at each of the values listed above and ask yourself: “How much time do I spend each week trying to acquire or increase this value?” If you feel comfortable with the amount of time you devote to building that value into your life, place a plus mark (+) in the appropriate column; if not, give it a minus (-). After completing the time column, continue in the same way with the money column, marking a + if you are satisfied and a - if you are dissatisfied with the amount of money you spend trying to acquire or increase this value.

Note: This exercise may be difficult for some of the more intangible values, such as integrity, but do your best to complete it. Ask yourself, for example: “Have I spent the time or money necessary to meet a promise I’ve made?” or “Am I satisfied with how I am living this value?”



PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

Based on the Calendar and Checkbook Test, list which of your values are:

Actual Values

Ideal Values

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

If you placed mostly pluses by your top values, you are probably satisfied with how you live your values. List one or two actions you could take to continue to “live by your own values”:

If you placed mostly minuses by your values, then you may be dissatisfied with how you are currently investing your time and money, or you may have selected values that are not really important to you. List several actions you can take to really live your values, or make a commitment to review your value priorities and select others that are more meaningful to you.

List any of your top values that might conflict with each other (for example, adventure and stability). Write down the ways this may explain any intrapersonal conflict. How can you resolve this dilemma?