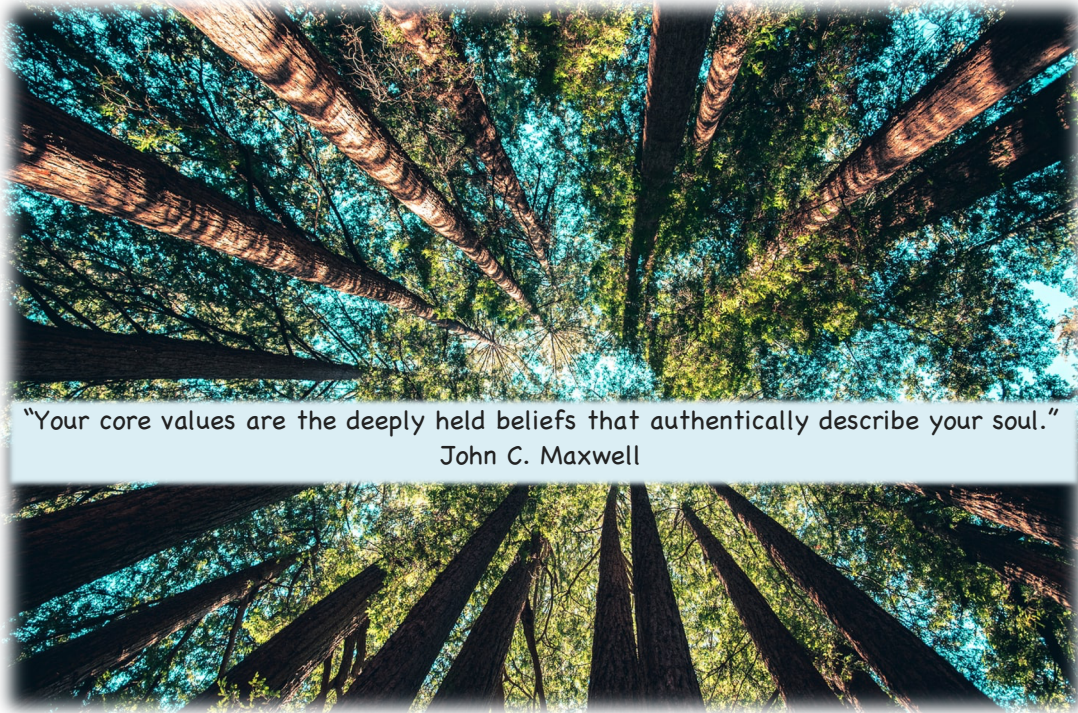


What Are Your Values?

This is a critical question, and yet many of us have never stopped to think about it. You can use this resource to get clear on what is most important to you so that you can find more of it.
Read on to find out more!



"Your core values are the deeply held beliefs that authentically describe your soul."
John C. Maxwell

Deciding What's Most Important in Life

Before you answer the question "What are your Values?", you need to know what, in general, values are. So how can you define your values?

Your values are the things that you believe are important in the way you live and work. They are the principles you live by, the things that make you tick and drive you. They determine your priorities and, deep down, they are probably the measures you use to tell if your life is turning out the way you want it to (whether you realise it or not).

When the things that you do and the way you behave match your values, life usually feels good – you're satisfied and content. But when these don't align with your values, that's when things feel... wrong. This can be a real source of unhappiness.

This is why making a conscious effort to identify your values is so important – you can start to make choices that will align with your values and notice the positive impact it has on how you feel.

How Values Help You

Values exist, whether you recognize them or not. **Life feels much better when you understand your values – and when you make plans and decisions that honor them**, instead of following your mood, habits or continually reacting to circumstances or other people.

For example, if you value family, but you have to work 70-hour weeks in your job, will you feel internal stress and conflict? And if you don't value competition, and you work in a highly competitive sales environment, are you likely to be satisfied with your job?

In these types of situations, understanding your values can really help. **When you know your own values, you can use them to make decisions about how to live your life.** For example, looking at your values could help you to answer questions like these:

- How much time shall I spend doing X?
- Which of these should I prioritise?
- Should I compromise, or be firm with my position?
- Should I follow tradition, or travel down a new path?
- What type of workplace should I consider?
- Why don't I want to do that?
- Why do I experience conflict with this person?

So, take the time to understand the real priorities in your life, and you'll be able to determine the best direction for you and your life goals.

Values can change!

Values are usually fairly stable, yet they don't have strict limits or boundaries. Also, 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. After you have a family, work-life balance may be what you value more.

As your definition of “success” changes, so do your 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.

As you go through the exercise below, bear in mind that values that were important in the past may not be relevant now.

Two Types of Values

There are 2 types of values: fear-based and conscious-based.

Values based on fear are the ones that cause you to take action to avoid something. They are the "have-to's", the “musts”, the “can'ts” and are often driving us in secret so we make unconscious choices but we feel like we are not choosing at all and have no other option.

For example: “I have to have a high-paid corporate job otherwise people will think I am not successful” (the fear – and the thing to be avoided – is what other people will think). Your conscious values for your life and in a job may not depend on money or corporations at all.

Conscious values allow you to take positive action. They are the "want to's" that tap into your true passion and are the most powerful motivators and drivers for sustainable action. When you really want to do something, you are 10 times more likely to achieve it. If the motivation to get up in the morning and go to work is based on your value of connection (e.g. with work colleagues), community (e.g. the impact of your job), family (e.g. the benefits it can provide) or creativity (e.g. an aspect of your job), and you are aware of this as a your driver, your level of energy for it will be different

Working with a coach can make a massive difference when looking at your values - often our unconscious beliefs are hard to identify ourselves and your coach will help you realise whether you are choosing from passion or fear, or consciously or not.

Start Defining Your Values!

When you define your values, you discover what's truly important to you. A good way of starting to do this is to look back on your life – to identify when you felt really good, and really confident that you were making good choices.

1. Reflection Exercise

Step 1: Identify the times when you were happiest:

Write down some examples from both your career and personal life. This will ensure some balance in your answers. Answer these questions for each example.

- What were you doing?
- Were you with other people? Who?
- What other factors contributed to your happiness?

Step 2: Identify the times when you were most proud:

Write down some examples from your career and personal life. Answer these questions for each example.

- Why were you proud?
- Did other people share your pride? Who?
- What other factors contributed to your feelings of pride?

Step 3: Identify the times when you were most fulfilled and satisfied:

Again, use both work and personal examples and answer the following questions for each.

- What need or desire was fulfilled?
- How and why did the experience give your life meaning?
- What other factors contributed to your feelings of fulfillment?

2. Exploration Exercise

Determine your Core Values, based on your experiences of happiness, pride, and fulfillment

Reflecting on the exercise above, think about the following question for each step: “why is this experience truly important and memorable to me?”

Use the following list of common personal values to help you get started – and aim for about 10 core values. (As you work through, you may find that some of these naturally combine. For instance, if you value philanthropy, community, and generosity, you might say that service to others is one of your core values.)

Add your own words to the list that really resonate for you, the below are just examples and it is by no means an exhaustive list – in fact thinking of words that mean something to you will be extremely powerful. Remember, language can be an imperfect or limiting way of expressing our feelings, so don't worry too much about the words you choose at first, just go with your first impulse.

Abundance	Decisiveness	Gratitude	Partnership	Spontaneity
Accomplishment	Democracy	Growth	Patriotism	Stability
Accountability	Dependability	Happiness	Perfection	Strength
Accuracy	Determination	Hard Work	Personal growth	Success
Achievement	Discretion	Health	Play	Support
Adventure	Diversity	Helping Society	Positivity	Teamwork
Assertiveness	Efficiency	Honesty	Power	Tolerance
Authenticity	Empathy	Honour	Practicality	Traditionalism
Balance	Enjoyment	Humour	Privacy	Trust
Beauty	Enthusiasm	Humility	Professionalism	Truth
Belonging	Equality	Independence	Prudence	Understanding
Calmness	Excellence	Inner Harmony	Quality	Uniqueness
Carefulness	Excitement	Integrity	Recognition	Unity
Challenge	Exploration	Intelligence	Reliability	Usefulness
Clarity	Expressiveness	Intimacy	Resourcefulness	Vision
Commitment	Fairness	Intuition	Respect	Vitality
Communication	Faith	Joy	Romance	
Community	Family	Justice	Safety	Other:
Compassion	Fidelity	Leadership	Security	
Connection	Fitness	Love	Self-actualization	
Consistency	Focus	Loyalty	Self-control	
Contentment	Freedom	Making a	Self-expression	
Contribution	Friendship	difference	Selflessness	
Cooperation	Fulfilment	Mastery	Sensitivity	
Courage	Fun	Nature	Serenity	
Courtesy	Generosity	Obedience	Service	
Creativity	Goodness	Openness	Simplicity	
Curiosity	Grace	Order	Spirituality	

Don't worry too much about what the words are supposed to mean, just use them however works for you. If you are thinking of a value and can't quite put your finger on a word, perhaps use a Thesaurus or Google to help you.

Write down your Core Values here:

3. Clarification Exercise

Prioritize your Core Values

Sometimes situations arise where our values conflict and action requires prioritizing one value over another – it is often why (without knowing it) we have trouble making decisions or feel conflicted about choices. Therefore **it is valuable to know which value is more important to you.**

This step may feel difficult, but that's totally natural and it's because you'll have to look deep inside yourself. It's also a very important step because, when making a decision, you'll have to choose between solutions that may satisfy different values.

Look at the first two values on your list and ask yourself the Cringe Question: "*If I could satisfy only one of these, which would I choose?*"

Visualization: It might help to visualize a situation in which you would have to make that choice. For example, if you compare the values of service and stability, imagine that you must decide whether to sell your house and move to another country to do critical foreign aid work, or keep your house and volunteer to do charity work closer to home. In the first example, service is above stability. In the second example, stability is above service. Both are still important and (if we are aware of them) both can be satisfied to some extent - there is no right or wrong answer – we are each unique.

- Keep working through the list, by comparing each value with each other value, until your list is in the order of priority that feels good or you.

Write down your 5 Core Values in order of priority here. If you feel like one is missing, perhaps re-assess your prioritizing (or just add it in!)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

4. Affirmation Exercise

Reaffirm your values

Check your top-priority Core Values, and make sure they fit with your inner feelings and your vision for yourself.

- Do these values make you feel good about yourself?
- Are you proud of your top three values?
- Would you be comfortable and proud to tell your values to people you respect and admire?
- Do these values represent things you would support, even if your choice isn't popular and it puts you in the minority?

Making value-based choices may not always be easy. However, making a choice that you know is good (according your own internal code) is a lot less difficult in the long run.

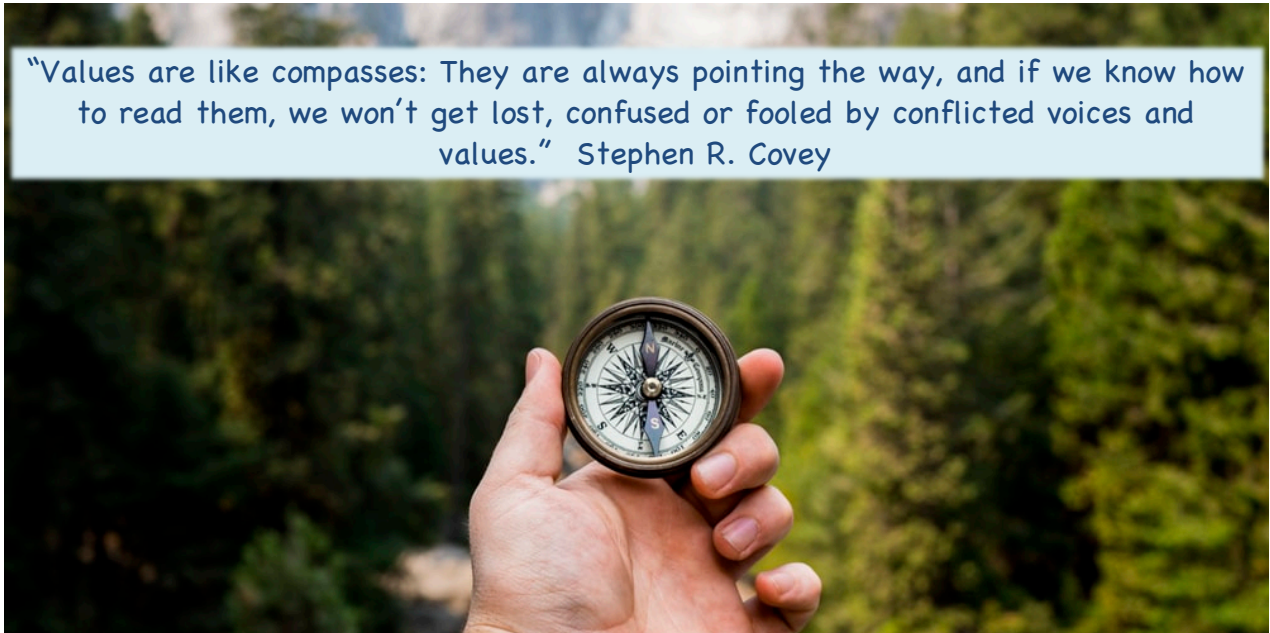
When you choose to consider your values in decision making, you can be sure that you are keeping your sense of integrity and what you know is right, and this will enable you to approach decisions with confidence and clarity. You'll also know that what you're doing is best for your current and future happiness and satisfaction. Living in line with your own conscious values is the path to fulfilment.

Congratulations!

Identifying and understanding your values is a challenging and important exercise. Your values are a central part of who you are – and who you want to be. By becoming more aware of these important factors in your life, you can use them as a guide to make the best choice in any situation.

Some of life's decisions are really about determining what you value most. When many options seem reasonable, it's helpful and comforting to rely on your values – and use them as a strong guiding force to point you in the right direction.

“Values are like compasses: They are always pointing the way, and if we know how to read them, we won't get lost, confused or fooled by conflicted voices and values.” Stephen R. Covey



This exercise can be very deep and enlightening - it may cause you to start reflecting about your current life and what you want. This is natural and is a sign that you are already moving towards conscious alignment with your values.

Coaching is a powerful and supportive means to explore this – and the creator of this tool, Sally Nilsson (Certified Professional Coach and Founder of The Dandelion Life) is an experienced guide on your path. Please visit www.thedandelionlife.com and get in touch with Sally!

Well done for taking a huge step towards more self-awareness, personal growth and consciously creating the life you choose. Your own Dandelion Life.



What Values are the Big Rocks in your life?



If your life is the jar, the big rocks represent your Core Values and the sand represents all the other “small stuff” that takes up space in your life...

Remember to put the Big Rocks in first - or you'll never get them in at all as the jar will be filled with Sand!