



Personal values

An Everyday Insight tool
myvaluescardsort.com



A guided reflection for a 90-minute group session, adapted from the Personal Values Card Sort.

Values are not rules, and they are not goals. A goal is something you can finish and check off, like getting the certificate or paying off the card. A value is a direction you keep choosing for as long as you're alive. Nobody ever finishes being a caring person or an honest one.

That's what makes values useful when life is hard. Goals can be taken from you. Directions can't.

The next two pages list 83 values, each with a short meaning, under seven headings. The headings are only there to make the list easier to read. A value could fit under more than one, so go by what each word means to you.

Before you start

- There are no right answers. Nobody grades this, and nobody has to see it.
- You may feel a pull to pick what you think you should value, such as what your family valued or what would sound best said out loud in this room. If you feel it, set it aside and choose for yourself.
- If a value stings because you've lost touch with it, don't read that as failure. The sting usually means it still matters to you.
- You never have to share your list. If you talk in the group, you can talk about what this was like without saying what you chose.

How it works

- 1 **First pass, check.** Read through all seven headings at your own pace. Check the box next to anything that matters to you at all. Don't limit yourself. Most people check 25 to 35.
- 2 **Second pass, star.** Go back through only what you checked and star the ones that are very important, the ones you'd call core. Most people end up with 10 to 20. If you're well past 20, go back and take some stars away.
- 3 **Narrow to ten.** From your starred values, choose the ten that matter most and write them down. This part is supposed to be uncomfortable. Cutting a value doesn't mean you don't care about it.
- 4 **Choose five and rank them.** Number them 1 to 5. Pay attention to what you had to let go of, and how that felt.
- 5 **Look at the gap.** For each of your five, rate from 0 to 10 how much your daily life reflects it right now. Not how much you care, but how much your time and choices show it.
- 6 **Choose a step.** Pick one value and something you could do about it this week, small enough that you'll follow through.

Values from the Personal Values Card Sort by W. R. Miller, J. C'de Baca, D. B. Matthews, and P. L. Wilbourne, University of New Mexico, 2001. Public domain. The headings were added for readability.

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The values

- ☐ **First pass.** Check anything that matters to you at all. ☐ **Second pass.** Star the ones that are very important.

Connection and relationships

How I love, care for, and belong with others

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ ☆ Caring to take care of others | ☐ ☆ Compassion to feel and act on concern for others |
| ☐ ☆ Cooperation to work collaboratively with others | ☐ ☆ Courtesy to be considerate and polite toward others |
| ☐ ☆ Faithfulness to be loyal and true in relationships | ☐ ☆ Family to have a happy, loving family |
| ☐ ☆ Forgiveness to be forgiving of others | ☐ ☆ Friendship to have close, supportive friends |
| ☐ ☆ Generosity to give what I have to others | ☐ ☆ Helpfulness to be helpful to others |
| ☐ ☆ Intimacy to share my innermost experiences with others | ☐ ☆ Loved to be loved by those close to me |
| ☐ ☆ Loving to give love to others | ☐ ☆ Monogamy to have one close, loving relationship |
| ☐ ☆ Nurturance to take care of and nurture others | ☐ ☆ Romance to have intense, exciting love in my life |
| ☐ ☆ Service to be of service to others | ☐ ☆ Sexuality to have an active and satisfying sex life |
| ☐ ☆ Tolerance to accept and respect those who differ from me | |

Self and inner life

How I relate to myself and my own experience

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ ☆ Acceptance to be accepted as I am | ☐ ☆ Self-Acceptance to accept myself as I am |
| ☐ ☆ Self-Esteem to feel good about myself | ☐ ☆ Self-Knowledge to have a deep and honest understanding of myself |
| ☐ ☆ Genuineness to act in a manner that is true to who I am | ☐ ☆ Inner Peace to experience personal peace |
| ☐ ☆ Mindfulness to live conscious and mindful of the present moment | ☐ ☆ Hope to maintain a positive and optimistic outlook |
| ☐ ☆ Humility to be modest and unassuming | ☐ ☆ Humor to see the humorous side of myself and the world |
| ☐ ☆ Self-Control to be disciplined in my own actions | ☐ ☆ Solitude to have time and space where I can be apart from others |

Growth, learning, and purpose

What I am building, becoming, and reaching toward

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ ☆ Growth to keep changing and growing | ☐ ☆ Purpose to have meaning and direction in my life |
| ☐ ☆ Knowledge to learn and contribute valuable knowledge | ☐ ☆ Creativity to have new and original ideas |
| ☐ ☆ Openness to be open to new experiences, ideas, and options | ☐ ☆ Challenge to take on difficult tasks and problems |
| ☐ ☆ Mastery to be competent in my everyday activities | ☐ ☆ Achievement to have important accomplishments |
| ☐ ☆ Industry to work hard and well at my life tasks | ☐ ☆ Spirituality to grow and mature spiritually |
| ☐ ☆ God's Will to seek and obey the will of God | |

Integrity and contribution

The principles I want to stand on and give to the world

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ ☆ Honesty to be honest and truthful | ☐ ☆ Dependability to be reliable and trustworthy |
| ☐ ☆ Responsibility to make and carry out responsible decisions | ☐ ☆ Duty to carry out my duties and obligations |
| ☐ ☆ Commitment to make enduring, meaningful commitments | ☐ ☆ Virtue to live a morally pure and excellent life |
| ☐ ☆ Justice to promote fair and equal treatment for all | ☐ ☆ Contribution to make a lasting contribution in the world |
| ☐ ☆ World Peace to work to promote peace in the world | ☐ ☆ Ecology to live in harmony with the environment |
| ☐ ☆ Accuracy to be accurate in my opinions and beliefs | ☐ ☆ Rationality to be guided by reason and logic |
| ☐ ☆ Realism to see and act realistically and practically | ☐ ☆ Non-Conformity to question and challenge authority and norms |





Vitality, joy, and adventure

What makes life feel alive and worth showing up for

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ ☆ Adventure to have new and exciting experiences | ☐ ☆ Excitement to have a life full of thrills and stimulation |
| ☐ ☆ Change to have a life full of change and variety | ☐ ☆ Risk to take risks and chances |
| ☐ ☆ Fun to play and have fun | ☐ ☆ Pleasure to feel good |
| ☐ ☆ Leisure to take time to relax and enjoy | ☐ ☆ Passion to have deep feelings about ideas, activities, or people |
| ☐ ☆ Beauty to appreciate beauty around me | ☐ ☆ Flexibility to adjust to new circumstances easily |

Stability, health, and security

What helps me feel safe, steady, and well

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ ☆ Health to be physically well and healthy | ☐ ☆ Fitness to be physically fit and strong |
| ☐ ☆ Safety to be safe and secure | ☐ ☆ Stability to have a life that stays fairly consistent |
| ☐ ☆ Order to have a life that is well-ordered and organized | ☐ ☆ Comfort to have a pleasant and comfortable life |
| ☐ ☆ Moderation to avoid excesses and find a middle ground | ☐ ☆ Simplicity to live life simply, with minimal needs |
| ☐ ☆ Tradition to follow respected patterns of the past | ☐ ☆ Wealth to have plenty of money |

Autonomy, influence, and recognition

How I hold my own power and how I am seen

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ ☆ Autonomy to be self-determined and independent | ☐ ☆ Independence to be free from dependence on others |
| ☐ ☆ Authority to be in charge of and responsible for others | ☐ ☆ Power to have control over others |
| ☐ ☆ Fame to be known and recognized | ☐ ☆ Popularity to be well-liked by many people |
| ☐ ☆ Attractiveness to be physically attractive | |
| ☐ ☆ Other _____ | |
| ☐ ☆ Other _____ | |





1 My ten

From your starred values, the ten that matter most. Order doesn't matter yet.

1	_____	6	_____
2	_____	7	_____
3	_____	8	_____
4	_____	9	_____
5	_____	10	_____

2 My five

The five you would keep if you could keep only five. Rank them 1 to 5.

VALUE	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE WHEN I'M LIVING IT
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

3 The gap

For each of your five, circle how much your life right now reflects it, from 0, not at all, to 10, fully. Not how much you care, but how much it shows up in your days.

VALUE	NOT AT ALL										FULLY
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10





4 Thinking it over

Answer whichever questions you want. You don't have to answer all of them, and you don't have to share.

Which value surprised you by making your list?

Were you surprised by anything you left unchecked, something you've been organizing your life around that turned out not to matter much to you?

Which one was hardest to cut?

Where is the widest gap between a value you care about and how you're living now?

Whose voice do you hear when you look at your list, your own or someone else's?

Which value has kept you going through a hard stretch, even before you had a name for it?

5 This week

Choose one value and one specific thing you will do about it this week. If you can, write down the day. Then think about what could get in the way, and decide now what you'll do if it does.

THE VALUE

ONE THING I WILL DO THIS WEEK

--	--

IF THIS GETS IN THE WAY

THEN I WILL

--	--

For later

You won't live your values perfectly this week, or any week. Nobody does. The point of naming them is not to give yourself a new list to fail at. It's so that when you drift, you know which way home is. Drifting and coming back is the practice.

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