# Personal values



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.

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

## Self and inner life

*How I relate to myself and my own experience*

- ☐ ☆ **Acceptance** to be accepted as I am
- ☐ ☆ **Self-Esteem** to feel good about myself
- ☐ ☆ **Genuineness** to act in a manner that is true to who I am
- ☐ ☆ **Mindfulness** to live conscious and mindful of the present moment
- ☐ ☆ **Humility** to be modest and unassuming
- ☐ ☆ **Self-Control** to be disciplined in my own actions
- ☐ ☆ **Self-Acceptance** to accept myself as I am
- ☐ ☆ **Self-Knowledge** to have a deep and honest understanding of myself
- ☐ ☆ **Inner Peace** to experience personal peace
- ☐ ☆ **Hope** to maintain a positive and optimistic outlook
- ☐ ☆ **Humor** to see the humorous side of myself and the world
- ☐ ☆ **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
- ☐ ☆ **Knowledge** to learn and contribute valuable knowledge
- ☐ ☆ **Openness** to be open to new experiences, ideas, and options
- ☐ ☆ **Mastery** to be competent in my everyday activities
- ☐ ☆ **Industry** to work hard and well at my life tasks
- ☐ ☆ **God's Will** to seek and obey the will of God
- ☐ ☆ **Purpose** to have meaning and direction in my life
- ☐ ☆ **Creativity** to have new and original ideas
- ☐ ☆ **Challenge** to take on difficult tasks and problems
- ☐ ☆ **Achievement** to have important accomplishments
- ☐ ☆ **Spirituality** to grow and mature spiritually

## Integrity and contribution

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

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

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## Vitality, joy, and adventure

*What makes life feel alive and worth showing up for*

- ☐ ☆ **Adventure** to have new and exciting experiences
- ☐ ☆ **Change** to have a life full of change and variety
- ☐ ☆ **Fun** to play and have fun
- ☐ ☆ **Leisure** to take time to relax and enjoy
- ☐ ☆ **Beauty** to appreciate beauty around me
- ☐ ☆ **Excitement** to have a life full of thrills and stimulation
- ☐ ☆ **Risk** to take risks and chances
- ☐ ☆ **Pleasure** to feel good
- ☐ ☆ **Passion** to have deep feelings about ideas, activities, or people
- ☐ ☆ **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
- ☐ ☆ **Safety** to be safe and secure
- ☐ ☆ **Order** to have a life that is well-ordered and organized
- ☐ ☆ **Moderation** to avoid excesses and find a middle ground
- ☐ ☆ **Tradition** to follow respected patterns of the past
- ☐ ☆ **Fitness** to be physically fit and strong
- ☐ ☆ **Stability** to have a life that stays fairly consistent
- ☐ ☆ **Comfort** to have a pleasant and comfortable life
- ☐ ☆ **Simplicity** to live life simply, with minimal needs
- ☐ ☆ **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
- ☐ ☆ **Authority** to be in charge of and responsible for others
- ☐ ☆ **Fame** to be known and recognized
- ☐ ☆ **Attractiveness** to be physically attractive
- ☐ ☆ **Independence** to be free from dependence on others
- ☐ ☆ **Power** to have control over others
- ☐ ☆ **Popularity** to be well-liked by many people
- ☐ ☆ **Other** _____
- ☐ ☆ **Other** _____

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## 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 |

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## 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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