

# PERSONAL VALUES > > >

## Why knowing and living by your values matters.

Have you ever spent time thinking about what is really important to you? Does it even matter or is it worth taking the time to think about it when we are all rushing around living busy and hectic lives?

Well, it may be a surprise to hear that being aware of your personal values can actually make going about your day to day life easier. How? Evidence is now widely accepted that suggests living to our personal values can improve your decision making, confidence or overall happiness to name but a few.

Let me explain. If something crops up and you have to choose between two, three or maybe four different things, how do you decide what or whom to prioritise? To put this question into context let us have a think about a common and simple real-life scenario;

Imagine for a moment you are in an important client meeting that is drastically overrunning and you should have already left to travel to your child's sport day and be there on time. What do you decide to do? Make your apologies and leave the meeting part way through, perhaps missing some important information or even marring the relationship with the client? Or stay and miss the sports day?

There is obviously no right or wrong answer in this scenario and whatever decision you make is your personal choice and we can all only do what we feel is right at that point in time.

Could it be however that by deciding to stay in the meeting we are risking potential family upset? Or leaving and feeling like you have shirked your responsibilities to the client or even fearing you have lost some of your authority or future work?

These decisions can be very hard in the moment and we often lean towards compromising ourselves for fear of having to be the person that stands and says 'I'm leaving now'. Especially if you are already frustrated that it's now likely you are leaving the meeting without conclusion anyway and in fact still going to be late for your other commitment.

The truth is there is a gentle way we can navigate these situations if we have spent the time to be more conscious and therefore aware of our personal values.

So could we flip that entirely and suggest that it's ok to say to your client that although you are committed to the relationship and to the meeting that the time allowed has been taken up and in fact you have

another pressing commitment to your family and that work can reconvene after this?

### What do I mean by personal values?

Simply put, values are the things that you believe are important to the way you live your life - be that at work

## HONESTY

to be honest and truthful



or at home. They help you grow and develop, and they help you shape the future you want to experience. One of the best descriptions I have found for personal values is by Alan Williams author of The Values Economy. He describes values as 'emotional laden motivators that guide the way we behave and make choices', or simply put, if we are aware of our values and choose to live by them, then our values are our inner guiding compass.

Let us think back to the scenario, if family is one of your core values then the decision is probably an easy one, you will make your apologies and leave the meeting and attend the sports day. However, if responsibility or authority are your core values, the chances are you will choose to stay at the client meeting. *Trouble begins however when you believe the choice is not yours at all – but that's a big one and perhaps a topic for another day...*

In reality we tend not to walk around all day consciously thinking about our values and so making choices such as these can cause inner tension. This is especially so as we are swayed by what we think we should do rather than what we want to do. And too, I'm sure we have all made decisions that we don't feel great about but we have done it anyway – could this be a sign that the decision you have made contradicts your values?

So, if you were asked, right now would you be able to tell me what your top 5 values are?

If your answer is no, and we know that we can all benefit from being more aware of our values, would you be prepared to take some time to think that through?

Techniques to identify your values  
There are obviously hundreds of

## MINDFULNESS

to live conscious and mindful of the present moment



different values you could choose from but the key has to be that the choice is yours and yours alone.

Could it be that achievement, adventure, determination, integrity, respect, family, wealth are some values that may help to get the mental cogs turning? The list goes on and on, so beginning can seem like a big task.

There are no 'one size fits all' answers but there are a few things you can do to start homing in on your core values and the NFDC Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub is a great place to start.

Visit the NFDC's new Mental Health & Wellbeing Hub at: [demolition-nfdc.com/hub-mental-health-articles](https://demolition-nfdc.com/hub-mental-health-articles), where you will find a downloadable 'Personal Values card sort' activity which was created by W Miller et al, University of New Mexico in 2001.

This useful resource provides a set of cards each containing words describing values that are important to some people. There are lots to choose from so please be sure to read those instructions on how we keep this simple yet effective.

Alternatively, there are numerous value surveys online which are easy to find with a simple internet search, such as the free Personal Values Assessment (PVA) survey by Barrett Values Centre.

And, if this feels like it's too much just now another good way to start identifying your values is to take a moment to think of a time in your life when you have felt amazing and that everything was in-flow, ask yourself 'why was that?'. Perhaps when you are in that state it is because you were living to your values.

And without suggesting we relive those bad moments I'm sure it wouldn't take long to think of an example of the opposite. A time when you were really fed up and consider if in fact this was because your values were being trampled upon, either by you or by someone else. Once you have identified your core values you can start using them to help inform your decisions and actions which will consequently make your life simpler, facilitate decision making and leave you feeling more confident that the right decisions have been made.

Of course there may be times when your core values will be in conflict, and

this is to be expected. So give yourself a break as our values can't always be adhered to rigidly. They are a set, just as a pack of cards are a set and maybe we can't play the whole hand at the same time.

Understanding and acting on your personal values has not only been shown to improve your overall quality of life but there have also been numerous research studies looking into other benefits such as helping to reduce stress, inspire better health habits, improve your willpower, helping you to act more assertively, or even helping you make wiser work choices.

So, all in all, if we as a collective, choose to understand our own values and why they are important this can help us to avoid misunderstandings, frustration, and distrust. If we are mindful that everyone we meet has their own

values and that they may be different from our own this will also help us understand reasons for differing viewpoints, thus allow us to be more tolerant of each other.

Now, more than ever, is the perfect time to focus and remember what is important to you as there is much going on in the world and so many distractions. Take the opportunity, find some time to think about your values as they may just help guide you in achieving your goals.

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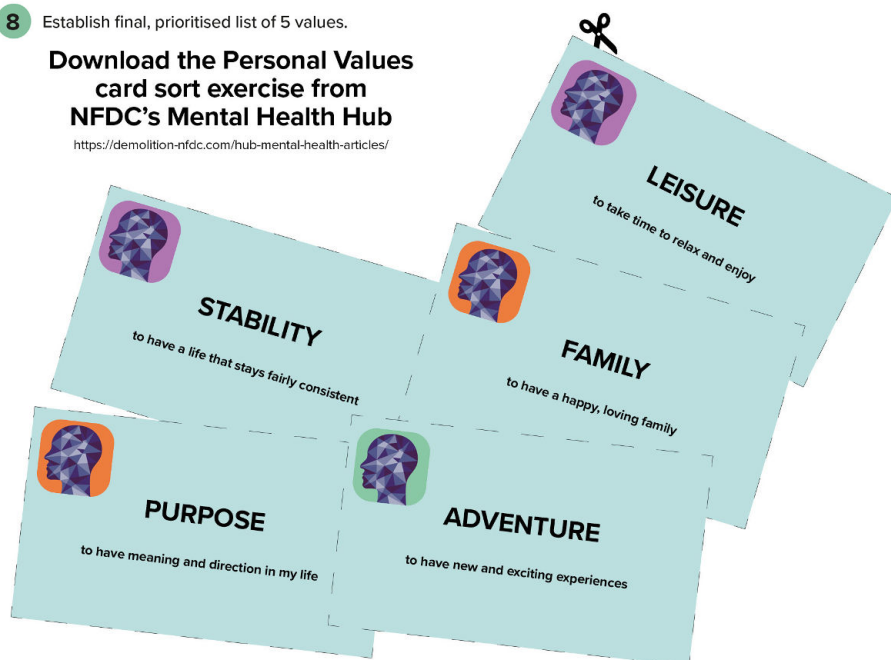
## COMPASSION

to feel and act on concern for others

- 1 To begin, print and cut out each card then shuffle all the value cards except for the blank 'Other Value' cards.
- 2 IMPORTANT: READ AND COMPLETE EACH STEP IN ORDER, BEFORE MOVING ON.
- 3 Once the cards are shuffled, go ahead and sort by placing all cards under the relevant heading – 'Very Important to Me', 'Important to ME', 'Not Important to ME'. Be quick, don't over analyse.
- 4 When done, check, move cards if necessary. Now remove all cards except those under 'Very Important'.
- 5 Prioritise then remove all cards except top 5.
- 6 Challenge yourself: 'Why is this important to me? Is it really MY value?'
- 7 Check priority again by comparing each value. 'If I could have X or Y which would I choose?'
- 8 Establish final, prioritised list of 5 values.

### Download the Personal Values card sort exercise from NFDC's Mental Health Hub

<https://demolition-nfdc.com/hub-mental-health-articles/>



# PERSONAL VALUES Card Sort Exercise

(created by W.R. Miller et al, University of New Mexico in 2001.)

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## **ACCEPTANCE**

to be accepted as I am

## **ACCURACY**

to be accurate in my opinions and beliefs

## **ACHIEVEMENT**

to have important accomplishments

## **ADVENTURE**

to have new and exciting experiences

## **ATTRACTIVENESS**

to be physically attractive

## **AUTHORITY**

to be in charge of and responsible for others

## **AUTONOMY**

to be self-determined and independent

## **BEAUTY**

to appreciate beauty around me

## **CARING**

to take care of others

## **CHALLENGE**

to take on difficult tasks and problems



## **CHANGE**

to have a life full of change and variety

## **COMFORT**

to have a pleasant and comfortable life

## **COMMITMENT**

to make enduring, meaningful commitments

## **COMPASSION**

to feel and act on concern for others

## **CONTRIBUTION**

to make a lasting contribution in the world

## **CO-OPERATION**

to work collaboratively with others

## **COURTESY**

to be considerate and polite toward others

## **CREATIVITY**

to have new and original ideas

## **DEPENDABILITY**

to be reliable and trustworthy

## **DUTY**

to carry out my duties and obligations



## **ECOLOGY**

to live in harmony with the environment

## **EXCITEMENT**

to have a life full of thrills and stimulation

## **FAITHFULNESS**

to be loyal and true in relationships

## **FAME**

to be known and recognised

## **FAMILY**

to have a happy, loving family

## **FITNESS**

to be physically fit and strong

## **FLEXIBILITY**

to adjust to new circumstances easily

## **FORGIVENESS**

to be forgiving of others

## **FRIENDSHIP**

to have close, supportive friends

## **FUN**

to play and have fun



## **GENEROSITY**

to give what I have to others

## **GENUINENESS**

to act in a manner that is true to who I am

## **GOD'S WILL**

to seek and obey the will of God

## **GROWTH**

to keep changing and growing

## **HEALTH**

to be physically well and healthy

## **HELPFULNESS**

to be helpful to others

## **HONESTY**

to be honest and truthful

## **HOPE**

to maintain a positive and optimistic outlook

## **HUMILITY**

to be modest and unassuming

## **HUMOUR**

to see the humorous side of myself and the world



## INDEPENDENCE

to be free from dependence on others

## INDUSTRY

to work hard and well at my life tasks

## INNER PEACE

to experience personal peace

## INTIMACY

to share my innermost experiences with others

## JUSTICE

to promote fair and equal treatment for all

## KNOWLEDGE

to learn and contribute valuable knowledge

## LEISURE

to take time to relax and enjoy

## LOVED

to be loved by those close to me

## LOVING

to give love to others

## MASTERY

to be competent in my everyday activities





## **MINDFULNESS**

to live conscious and mindful of the present moment

## **MODERATION**

to avoid excesses and find a middle ground

## **MONOGAMY**

to have one close, loving relationship

## **NON-CONFORMITY**

to question and challenge authority and norms

## **NURTURANCE**

to take care of and nurture others

## **OPENNESS**

to be open to new experiences, ideas, and options

## **ORDER**

to have a life that is well-ordered and organized

## **PASSION**

to have deep feelings about ideas, activities, or people

## **PLEASURE**

to feel good

## **POPULARITY**

to be well-liked by many people



## **POWER**

to have control over others

## **PURPOSE**

to have meaning and direction in my life

## **RATIONALITY**

to be guided by reason and logic

## **REALISM**

to see and act realistically and practically

## **RESPONSIBILITY**

to make and carry out responsible decisions

## **RISK**

to take risks and chances

## **ROMANCE**

to have intense, exciting love in my life

## **SAFETY**

to be safe and secure

## **SELF-ACCEPTANCE**

to accept myself as I am

## **SELF-CONTROL**

to be disciplined in my own actions



## **SELF-ESTEEM**

to feel good about myself

## **SELF-KNOWLEDGE**

to have a deep and honest understanding of myself

## **SERVICE**

to be of service to others

## **SEXUALITY**

to have an active and satisfying sex life

## **SIMPLICITY**

to live life simply, with minimal needs

## **SOLITUDE**

to have time and space where I can be apart from others

## **SPIRITUALITY**

to grow and mature spiritually

## **STABILITY**

to have a life that stays fairly consistent

## **TOLERANCE**

to accept and respect those who differ from me

## **TRADITION**

to follow respected patterns of the past



## VIRTUE

to live a morally pure and excellent life

## WEALTH

to have plenty of money

## WORLD PEACE

to work to promote peace in the world

**Other Value:**

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