



Live by Your Values

by Natalie Gahrman

Your values are:

- what you are naturally inclined or drawn toward;
- what you are eager to do;
- what brings you fulfillment;
- what you do with little effort;
- your strongest beliefs;
- your internal motivator;
- the only sustainable basis for goal-setting;
- and, your heart and soul

Values are the core of who you are—not who you would like to be or who you think you should be. You are your values – they make up who you are, what you want and how you live. Like you mature, change and grow your values may also change over time. By gaining a better understanding of your values today you can begin incorporating your values into your life and creating a strong foundation which will be able to support you in every other way – including how you bring yourself to your work.

Your values represent your unique and individual essence. When you are engaged in activities aligned with your values, you feel most like yourself—well, connected, excited, glowing and effortless. However, when what you are doing conflicts with what is truly important to you, feelings of unhappiness, dissatisfaction, frustration and stress occur most often because your values are conflicting with your lifestyle and choices.

Your life can be deeply enhanced when you intertwine your values into your overall framework for life. Aligning your work and life around your personal values will help you achieve the greatest levels of success. Your values help you establish more congruency in your life and increase your capacity for having an abundance of joy and happiness.

Values are linked very closely with your integrity. Integrity is when your external behaviors are closely aligned with your inner values; when your actions match your inner belief system, you are operating in integrity and using your values to drive your choices in life.

Your values run deep within you and are often disguised when danger is sensed. Danger in this case is anything that may interfere with or intrude on your values such as: needs, obligations, roles, problems, shoulds, tolerations, stress, money, guilt, addictions or adrenaline.

The process of clarifying values is often difficult to do on your own. You can extract your core values based on what is most important to you, your actions, and the things you choose to do and not do in your life.

The activities you engage in are usually an observable demonstration of your values; sometimes, though, your values are neglected so it's harder to identify them.

One technique for identifying your values is to look at what motivates you both in your professional work and in your personal life. Recognize what gets you up in the morning and what keeps you going throughout the day. In this technique for identifying values you create 3 separate lists of about 3-5 values each.

1. Professional life – identify what is really important from your professional life; what motivates you to work or not work; what are your core professional values (e.g., job security, job satisfaction, salary, benefits, vacation time, flexibility, opportunity to make a difference, advancement, challenge, fulfillment, location, independence, ownership, control, achievement, notoriety, power, status, influence, authority, creativity, collaboration, risk-taking). Rank these



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values based on their importance to you in your work or business.

2. Personal life – identify what is really important to you in your personal life; what are your core personal values? (e.g., freedom, fun, fitness, spirituality, nutrition, friends, romance, personal growth, ethics, intellectual challenge, helping society, adventure, self-motivation, time, community involvement, outside interests/hobbies). Rank order these values.

3. Family life – identify all of the aspects of family life that are important to you; what are your core family values? (e.g., peace, discipline, health, education, relationships, fun, money, safety, nutrition, recreation, morality, honesty, stability). Relate these values to your personal and

professional values. Determine how these values rank in terms of their importance to you in your work and personal life.

Another technique is to create a list of values that are important to you right now at this point in your life; consider what you must have in your life. Ask yourself “what are the values I absolutely must be able to honor in my life in order for it to feel complete and whole?” Write down everything that comes to mind when you respond to this question.

You can also use the list below to stimulate your thinking and help you identify your core values. Select about 10 values either from the list below or through your own determination.

- Accomplish/Win/Triumph/Acquire/Achieve/Attain/Attract
- Adventure/Risk/Experiment/Gamble/Dare/Freedom
- Beauty/Elegance/Attractiveness/Magnificence/Loveliness/Grace
- Contribute/Collaborate/Partner/Serve/Assist/Facilitate
- Create/Innovate/Design/Invent/Build/Inspire
- Excellence/Perfection/Progress/Mastery/Competence/Superiority
- Freedom/Independence/Self-Expression/Autonomy/Choice/Control
- Fun/Humor/Play/Pleasure/Sensuality/Be Entertained
- Honesty/Integrity/Sincerity/Truthfulness/Authenticity/Openness
- Influence/Energize/Impact/Persuade/Impact/Power
- Intimacy/Connection/Relationships/Unity/Community/Family
- Lead/Empower/Motivate/Persuade/Influence/Model
- Learn/Grow/Discover/Distinguish/Detect/Observe
- Spirituality/Passion/Devotion/Religion/Acceptance/Honoring
- Support/Compassion/Sensitivity/Tenderness/Love/Being Present
- Teach/Educate/Inform/Instruct/Enlighten/Facilitate



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As you go through the process of delineating your values, pay attention to your own reactions to some of the values listed. You may immediately connect with some of the values on the list while you may disconnect with others. If you are tempted to eliminate a value from consideration because you initially feel that it's too silly or because you might have to change your life too much in order to have this value show up, recognize that this may be an indication of a suppressed value that you haven't honored in your life. You may be honoring someone else's value or expectations for you rather than your own.

Test the values you've selected over the course of a week or so to see how you're experiencing or suppressing those values. Then prioritize your list to identify your top 4 or 5 values. These values are the ones you must be living in order to feel great and be truly at peace with yourself—these are your core values.

Begin honoring each of these values more deeply in your everyday actions and relationships. Evaluate how your current choices in life and work are reflecting those values. Determine what big or small life changes you can make to begin really honoring these values.

As you consciously explore your values and begin honoring them, they grow more powerful and supportive; they help you feel good about yourself. This can directly increase your personal and professional effectiveness. Being in alignment with your values will help you live your life with integrity. Adopting this values-based approach to your goal-setting will help you select goals that fully express your values and help you focus your time and energy on what really matters most to you.



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