



# Explore What Matters to You

A Values Exercise

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Take time to **explore, be curious, and discover what truly matters to you**. This exercise takes time, so please be patient with yourself. Allow yourself the flexibility to start and stop as needed. There's no rush—this is about self-discovery.

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## Why This Matters

Identifying what we **believe, think, and value** has a profound impact on how we experience and navigate the world.

Too often, we absorb values from external sources—**parents, friends, partners, communities, institutions, and society**—without intentionally exploring whether they align with our true selves.

In doing so, we may find ourselves **operating on autopilot**, living by values that don't reflect who we really are.

You may have noticed moments when your **gut or intuition** gives you feedback that something doesn't feel quite right. These signals often point to values misalignment. Learning to notice and explore them is part of reclaiming your personal truth.

When you **clarify your values**, you begin to move through the world in a way that is more congruent, grounded, and authentic.



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## Means vs. Ends

**Means values** are the qualities or behaviors we use as a *pathway* to get where we want to go things like discipline, patience, responsibility, or communication. They guide *how* we move through life.

**Ends values** are the *ultimate outcomes* we hope to experience such as love, peace, security, fulfillment, or connection. They represent what we're ultimately striving for.

Put simply: **means values shape the journey, ends values define the destination.**

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## Influences

Values are shaped by a variety of powerful sources that influence how we see the world and what we prioritize.

Family upbringing and early childhood experiences often lay the foundation, teaching us what's important through modeling and expectations. Culture, community, and social norms reinforce certain beliefs about what is “right,” desirable, or meaningful.

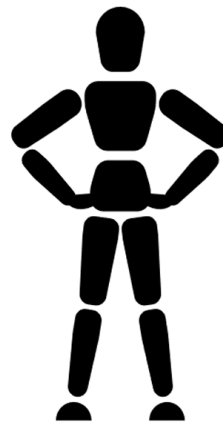
Personal experiences including successes, hardships, relationships, and turning points further refine our values as we age. Education, media, mentors, and faith or philosophical

systems can also play a role, offering frameworks that guide how we interpret life.

Over time, these layers interact, shaping a unique and evolving set of values for everyone.

**Source(s) of  
What  
Matters...**

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### **Internal**

- *Organic, Self Determined...*

### **External**

- *Determined by others...*

### **Acceptance**

- *Based on Others Approval...*

### **Cultural**

- *Based on Cultural Norms...*

### **Faith or Religious**

- *Based on 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Norms...*

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## Identify Your Process

There are several approaches to identifying your values. Several effective strategies have been provided as part of this communication. Take your time to review which approach works for you. Test to learn if one approach resonates more than another.

Take a moment to honestly consider whether the values you live by are ones you truly *own*, or if you're merely “renting” or “leasing” them from the people and environments around you.

Are your values rooted in your genuine beliefs and lived experiences, or are they borrowed from family expectations, cultural pressure, or the desire to fit in?

**Renting** values means temporarily adopting what others say matters.

**Leasing** values means holding them conditionally aligning with them only when convenient.

**Owning** your values, however, means committing to them fully, even when they require effort, discomfort, or growth. Reflecting on this distinction can help you align your choices with who you genuinely want to be, not who others expect you to be.



**RENT**



**LEASE**



**OWN**

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**Strategies:** A step-by-step guide using a **word list** as an example has been provided at the end.

### Direct Inquiry

These are simple, reflective questions that invite self-exploration.

- **Value clarification questions:**
  - *“What matters most to you in life?”*
  - *“What do you want to stand for?”*
  - *“What do you want people to remember you for?”*
- **Explore peak moments:** “Tell me about a time when you felt really alive, proud, or fulfilled—what was happening, and what does that say about what you care about?”
- **Explore frustration:** “What really frustrates or upsets you? What does that tell you about what you value?”

### Values Card Sort or Word List

A tactile or visual method that helps with clarifying values.

- **Card sort:** Present a set of value words (e.g., honesty, family, creativity) and sort them into categories:
  - Very important

- Important
- Not important
- Then narrow the “very important” list down to a top 5–10 core values.
- Use the final list as a foundation for goal setting or decision-making.

## Visualization and Imagery

Helps access intuition and deeper parts through a creative or sensory experience.

- **Ideal future self-visualization:** “Imagine yourself 5–10 years from now, living a meaningful life. What are you doing? Who are you with? What values are you honoring?”
- **Eulogy or obituary exercise:** “Imagine someone is giving a speech about your life at your funeral. What would you want them to say about the kind of person you were and what you stood for?”

## Values in Action

Focuses on noticing values through behavior and choice.

- **Behavior review:** “Look at how you spend your time and energy what does that say about your current values?”
- **Conflicts or tough decisions:** “Think about a recent difficult decision. What values were in tension?”
- **Role models:** “Who do you admire and why? What values do they embody that you aspire to?”

## ACT-Based Techniques (Acceptance & Commitment Therapy)

These tools help differentiate between values (ongoing life directions) and goals (specific achievements).

- **Life compass metaphor:** “Values are like a compass—they guide you, but there’s no end point. What compass points do you want to move toward?”
- **The Bullseye Exercise:** A visual target where clients rate how aligned they currently are in living out their values in different life areas (relationships, work, health, etc.).

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## Journaling Prompts

Use writing and a series of prompts to spark personal insight.

Sample prompts:

- “When do I feel most like myself?”
- “What makes me proud to be who I am?”
- “What would I fight for, no matter what?”
- “If fear didn’t get in the way, what would I pursue?”

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## Step by Step Guide: Using a Word List

### Step 1: Identify What Resonates

Below is a list of values. As you read through them, **highlight or write down the words that resonate with you**. Don't overthink it - just notice what feels meaningful.

If a value that's important to you isn't listed, feel free to add it.

#### Sample Value Words:

Abundance, Acceptance, Accountability, Achievement, Adventure, Advocacy, Ambition, Appreciation,  Attractiveness, Autonomy, Balance, Being the Best,	Empathy, Encouragement, Enthusiasm, Ethics,  Excellence, Expressiveness, Fairness, Family, Flexibility, Friendships, Freedom, Fun, Generosity,  Grace, Growth, Happiness, Health, Honesty, Humility, Humor, Inclusiveness, Independence,  Individuality, Innovation, Inspiration, Intelligence, Intuition, Joy, Kindness, Knowledge,	Personal Development, Perfection,  Playfulness, Popularity, Power, Preparedness, Proactivity, Professionalism, Punctuality,  Quality, Recognition, Relationships, Reliability, Resilience, Resourcefulness, Responsibility,
Benevolence, Boldness, Brilliance, Calmness,  Caring, Challenge, Charity, Cheerfulness, Cleverness, Collaboration, Commitment, Community,	Leadership, Learning, Love, Loyalty, Making a Difference, Mindfulness, Motivation, Optimism,	Responsiveness, Risk-Taking, Safety, Security, Self-Control, Selflessness, Simplicity,  Spirituality, Stability, Success, Teamwork, Thankfulness, Thoughtfulness, Traditionalism,
Compassion, Consistency, Contribution, Cooperation, Creativity, Credibility, Curiosity, Daring,  Decisiveness, Dedication, Dependability, Diversity,	Open-Mindedness, Originality, Passion, Peace, Performance,	Trustworthiness, Understanding, Uniqueness, Usefulness, Versatility, Vision, Warmth, Wealth,  Well-Being, Wisdom, Zeal

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## Step 2: Create Groupings

Once you have your list of values, begin **grouping similar words together**. Aim for **5–7 groups**. If you end up with more, simplify by trimming the least important groups.

### Example Groupings:

- **Joy & Positivity:** Abundance, Acceptance, Appreciation, Balance, Cheerfulness, Fun, Happiness, Humor
  - **Growth:** Growth, Learning, Knowledge, Curiosity, Wisdom
  - **Connection:** Compassion, Encouragement, Inclusiveness, Thankfulness, Relationships
  - **Inner Wisdom:** Intuition, Thoughtfulness, Spirituality, Mindfulness, Peace
  - **Freedom:** Independence, Freedom, Open-Mindedness
  - **Love & Kindness:** Kindness, Love, Joy, Grace
  - **Optimism & Impact:** Optimism, Inspiration, Making a Difference, Flexibility
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## Step 3: Choose Labels

Assign a **label** to each group that best captures its overall theme. Don't worry about getting it "right"—this is your process.

### Example Labels:

- |                        |                   |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| • Joy & Positivity     | • Freedom         |
| • Personal Growth      | • Loving Kindness |
| • Authentic Connection | • Inspired Action |
| • Inner Wisdom         |                   |
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## Step 4: Add Verbs to Your Values

Turn each value label into a **personal guiding principle** by pairing it with a verb.

### Examples:

- |                           |                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| • Live with joy           | • Honor your freedom |
| • Grow through curiosity  | • Lead with love     |
| • Connect with compassion | • Act with purpose   |
| • Trust your inner wisdom |                      |

These become your **living values**—principles you can apply as you move through the world.

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### **Step 5: Keep Your Values Visible**

Post your values somewhere you can see them:

- In your journal or planner
- On your bathroom mirror or refrigerator
- As a note in your phone
- As a wallpaper on your device

Having your values visible will help you stay grounded and make choices that align with what matters most to you.

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### **Final Thought**

Let this be an empowering process. Let curiosity and compassion be your guides. You are uncovering your internal compass your values that can guide you through life with more clarity, alignment, and intention.