

Identifying Your Personal Values

Step 1: Identify the times when you were happiest

Find examples from both your career and personal life. This will ensure some balance in your answers.

- What were you doing?
- Were you with other people? Who?
- What other factors contributed to your happiness?

Step 2: Identify the times when you were most proud

Use examples from your career and personal life.

- Why were you proud?
- Did other people share your pride? Who?
- What other factors contributed to your feelings of pride?

Step 3: Identify the times when you were most fulfilled and satisfied

Again, use both work and personal examples.

- What need or desire was fulfilled?
- How and why did the experience give your life meaning?
- What other factors contributed to your feelings of fulfillment?

Step 4: Determine your top values, based on your experiences of happiness, pride, and fulfillment

Why is each experience truly important and memorable? Use the list of common personal values on the reverse of this page to help you get started. (As you work through, you may find that some of these naturally combine. For instance, if you value philanthropy, community, and generosity, you might say that service to others is one of your top values.)

Step 5: Prioritize your top values

This step is probably the most difficult because you'll have to look deep inside yourself. It's also the most important step, because, when making a decision, you'll have to choose between solutions that may satisfy different values. This is when you must know which value is more important to you.

Write down your top values, not in any particular order.

Look at the first two values and ask yourself, "If I could satisfy only one of these, which would I choose?" It might help to visualize a situation in which you would have to make that choice. For example, if you compare the values of service and stability, imagine that you must decide whether to sell your house and move to another country to do valuable foreign aid work, or keep your house and volunteer to do charity work closer to home. Keep working through the list, by comparing each value with each other value, until your list is in the correct order.

Step 6: Reaffirm your values

Check your top-priority values, and make sure they fit with your life and your vision for yourself.

- Do these values make you feel good about yourself?
- Are you proud of your top three values?
- Would you be comfortable and proud to tell your values to people you respect and admire?
- Do these values represent things you would support, even if your choice isn't popular, and it puts you in the minority?

When you consider your values in decision making, you can be sure to keep your sense of integrity and what you know is right, and approach decisions with confidence and clarity. You'll also know that what you're doing is best for your current and future happiness and satisfaction.

Making value-based choices may not always be easy. However, making a choice that you know is right is a lot less difficult in the long run.

Sample Values List

Accountability	Curiosity	Fluency	Loyalty	Service
Accuracy	Decisiveness	Focus	Making a difference	Shrewdness
Achievement	Democratic-ness	Freedom	Mastery	Simplicity
Adventurousness	Dependability	Fun	Merit	Soundness
Altruism	Determination	Generosity	Obedience	Speed
Ambition	Devoutness	Goodness	Openness	Spontaneity
Assertiveness	Diligence	Grace	Order	Stability
Balance	Discipline	Growth	Originality	Strategic
Being the best	Discretion	Happiness	Patriotism	Strength
Belonging	Diversity	Hard Work	Perfection	Structure
Boldness	Dynamism	Health	Piety	Success
Calmness	Economy	Helping Society	Positivity	Support
Carefulness	Effectiveness	Holiness	Practicality	Teamwork
Challenge	Efficiency	Honesty	Preparedness	Temperance
Cheerfulness	Elegance	Honor	Professionalism	Thankfulness
Clear-mindedness	Empathy	Humility	Prudence	Thoroughness
Commitment	Enjoyment	Independence	Quality-orientation	Thoughtfulness
Community	Enthusiasm	Ingenuity	Reliability	Timeliness
Compassion	Equality	Inner Harmony	Resourcefulness	Tolerance
Competitiveness	Excellence	Inquisitiveness	Restraint	Traditionalism
Consistency	Excitement	Insightfulness	Results-oriented	Trustworthiness
Contentment	Expertise	Intelligence	Rigor	Truth-seeking
Continuous Improvement	Exploration	Intellectual Status	Security	Understanding
Contribution	Expressiveness	Intuition	Self-actualization	Uniqueness
Control	Fairness	Joy	Self-control	Unity
Cooperation	Faith	Justice	Selflessness	Usefulness
Correctness	Family-orientedness	Leadership	Self-reliance	Vision
Courtesy	Fidelity	Legacy	Sensitivity	Vitality
Creativity	Fitness	Love	Serenity	