

CORE VALUES EXERCISE

What are core values?

Core values are the best way we have to talk about who we really are, deep down inside our core essence. Actually, who you really are is beyond words, just as the beauty of a sunset is beyond words. Yet, words are one of the basic ways we use to communicate and core values allow us to talk about our core essence in a way that is both tangible and unlimited. Whether we are aware of them or not, our core values are the fundamental criteria we use to judge the quality of our lives, our relationships, and our happiness. Most people have between 3 and 7 core values. If you find you have more than 7, it's okay. Take a moment and determine whether or not you can group some of them together. If so, choose the one that best represents a group of values.

There are four parts. Please complete all four. If you have any difficulty identifying your core values, it's okay; just do as much as you can. For some, it comes easy and for others it can take more time. What is important at this point is that you engage in the exercise with an open mind and heart.

Part 1: Identification of Your Core Values

If you are not certain what your values are, the list below will help you identify them. This is not an exhaustive list of values. Feel free to add to the list if you have a core value that is not included below. Simply read the list and circle the values that you are drawn to, that feel most relevant to who you are as a person.

Truth	Creativity	Strength
Ingenuity	Authenticity	Play
Strength	Peace	Courage
Dignity	Innovation	Love
Accountability	Honor	Integrity
Relationship	Loyalty	Flexibility
Security	Commitment	Persistence
Learning	Fun	Fairness
Faith	Spirituality	Honesty
Cooperation	Order	Collaboration
Respect	Dependability	Humor
Excellence	Adventure	Service
Trust	Freedom	Resourcefulness
Support	Justice	Quality
Friendship	Caring	Connectedness
Purposefulness	Beauty	Kindness

Next, review the selected values and choose no more than four, remembering that some values may be grouped together. Prioritize the most important values. Write them down below.

Part 2: Reflection

We use a specific definition to distinguish core values from all other values. Core values are essential, universal, and personal. They are essential because it feels as though you cannot live without them. For example, if “respect” is one of your core values and you feel disrespected in a situation or by a person, you will find it intolerable. At the very least, it will bother you, whether or not you choose to do something about it. The value is so fundamental to who you are, life would be meaningless without it. Universal means your core values apply everywhere, all the time. No matter where you are or what situation occurs, your core values are front and center as an essential and important element of your experience. This is what separates core values from other important values. They are personal because they are based on your life experience.

Core values are not actions. For example, someone might say, “Telling the truth is my core value.” However, telling the truth is an action. In this case, consider what is so important about telling the truth that makes it essential. The answer could be honesty, trust, or integrity. One of these words would best describe your core value. So, if you identify an action, then ask yourself, “What is essential about it?” Look for the deeper value. Now review your core values and determine if they meet these three elements. If not, keep looking. You are likely going down the right track, just not far enough yet.

Part 3: Defining

Below is a list of questions to help you expand on what your core values mean to you. You do not need to answer all the questions; do as many as you like. It is helpful to write down your answers.

- Where did this value come from (usually a person or an event)?

- When did it first become important to me?

- Was there anyone in my life who demonstrated this value? (e.g. Parent, teacher, coach, mentor, hero, etc.)

- Did any significant events happen that made this value important?

- What does this value mean to me?
- What have I done that is consistent with this value?
- What do I currently do that is consistent with this value?
- Who are the people that represent this value to me? (It can be someone you don't know)
- What has happened in my life that is inconsistent with this value?
- What happens at work that is consistent with this value?
- What happens at work that is inconsistent with this value?
- How do I want this value honored by others?
- How do I want to honor this value in myself?

Part 4: Debrief

Engage your family, friends, and colleagues in conversations about core values; yours and theirs. Have the intention to learn something about yourself and about them. Also, continue to think about your core values in relation to your life and pay attention to what you notice.