**What Are Your Values?**

Values are an important part of how you make plans or decisions, both personally, and professionally. For example, if you place a lot of value on family, and your job is 70 hours per week, you will feel stress and anxiety around this conflict. If you don’t put a lot of value on competition, working in a highly competitive sales driven environment might not be the best option for you.

Understanding what your values are can really help. When you know your values you can use them to make decisions on how to live your life in alignment with them and can answer questions like:

* What job should I pursue?
* Should I accept this promotion?
* Should I start my own business?
* What type of industry is the best fit for me?

**Defining Your Values**

In order to discover what is important to you, you need to define what your personal values are. One of the ways to do this is to think back on your life and identify when you felt good and confident that you were making good choices.

**Step 1: Identify times when you were happiest**

Think about examples from both your personal and professional life as your answers should be balanced.

* What were you doing?
* Who were you with? Were you alone?
* What other factors made you feel happy and confident?

**Step 2: Identify times you felt proud of yourself**

* Why were you proud?
* Were other people involved? Who?
* What other factors contributed to you feeling this way?

**Step 3: Identify times when you felt fulfilled and satisfied**

* What need or desire was fulfilled?
* How and why did this 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**

Use the following list of common personal values to help you get started. Try to determine your top ten values.

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

**Step 5: Prioritize your top values**

This step can be difficult as you will need to look deep inside yourself. It’s also an important step because when making a decision you will need to choose between solutions that may satisfy different values.

* Write down your top values in no particular order
* Look at the first two values and ask yourself “If I could satisfy one of these, which one would I choose?” It might help to visualize a scenario in which you would need to make that choice. Ex. If you compare the values of service and stability, imagine that you must decide between selling your home to do valuable charity work abroad, or to keep your house and volunteer in your own community
* Keep working through your list by comparing each value until your list is in the correct order

**Step 6: Reaffirm Your Values**

* Do these values make you feel good about yourself?
* Are you proud of your top three values?
* Would you feel comfortable to share your values with people you admire and respect?
* Do these values represent the things in life that you support, even if your choice isn’t popular or in the minority?

When you consider your values when making decisions, you can be sure to keep your sense of integrity. You’ll also know that what you’re doing is best for your current and future happiness and satisfaction.

Identifying and understanding your values is both a challenging and important exercise. Your personal values are a central part of who you are – and who you want to be. By becoming more aware of these important factors in your life, you can use them as a guide to make the best choice in any situation.