

Exercise: Uncovering Your Core Values

This exercise is adapted from Greg Bell's book, Water the Bamboo. The act of choosing and defining our core values sheds light on why I do the things I do—and how to frame those choices for myself and for others.

Read this list of values carefully and select the five that are *most* important to you. (The values listed are just suggestions; if you have other values, use those instead.) Resist the temptation to select more than five—having too many values means you haven't decided what's important.

1. Don't confuse values and goals—a goal is something you intend to accomplish, whereas a value is an internal belief. The advantage of starting with understanding your values is that you avoid setting a goal that is potentially in conflict with your values.
2. Be sure to choose which values you truly care about, not ones you feel you “ought” to choose. What values would create the ideal life for you?
3. Your values can shift. Do you have the same values as you had 10 or 20 years ago? Probably not.
4. After you have selected your five values, ask yourself, “What does each value mean to me?” and, “Why did I choose these?”
5. Next to each of your five core values, list ways you are currently living out that value. Do you notice any gaps between the values you selected and the way you spend your time and energy?
6. Create small goals associated with each value to begin expressing and living your values in your everyday life. Pick something you can do right away that doesn't take a lot of time, energy or money. The sooner you take some action, the more likely you are to follow through.
7. Bring your values to life by choosing one of your five values each week to focus on and highlight or “live” even more.

Review the list below carefully and choose the five values that are most important to you:

Acceptance	Family	Curiosity	Community
Achievement	Friendship	Diversity	Courage
Beauty	Happiness	Flexibility	Dedication
Accomplishment	Honesty	Fun	Empathy
Compassion	Innovativeness	Hard Work	Forgiveness
Accountability	Friendliness	Pleasure	Generosity
Adventure	Grace	Security	Harmony
Ambition			

Change	Health	Spirituality	Hope
Collaboration	Humour	Sustainability Honour	Intelligence
Competency	Joy	Integrity	Learning
Cooperation	Love	Knowledge	Peace
Courage	Persistence	Optimism	Respect
Creativity	Responsibility	Religion	Service
Dignity	Solitude	Serenity	Strength
Dependability	Success Kindness	Stability	Wisdom
Fairness	Loyalty	Teamwork	