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YOU CAN MAKE CHANGE

Identifying and Defining *Core Values*

WORKSHEET

Step 1: Discover

All About Values

We're here to discover your unique core values. Before we do, it might help to know that there are several different types of values:

Core Values drive your thoughts, feelings, and actions. Core values are like your DNA or your thumb print - no one else has the exact same combination of core values, defined the same way, that you do. Your core values make you, you.

Base Values are essential for building trusting relationships. They represent the behaviors we expect from one another, including honesty, integrity, communication, respect, and inclusion. If one of these base values drives your thoughts, feelings, and actions in a way that goes above and beyond what you might consider common in most people, it could certainly be a core value for you.

Aspirational Values represent how you would like to be rather than how you are, today. For example, you might aspire to behave in alignment with integrity, but in the current moment you have a tendency to break commitments to people and miss deadlines. Aspirational values can be very handy for setting goals for ourselves, but they are distinct from core values, which drive how you think, feel, and act in the here and now.

Let's Play

It's time to start exploring your unique personal values. Think of this as an investigation into the core values that most drive your choices and emotions, and yourself as the Chief Detective. Remembering that your core values drive your thoughts, feelings, and actions; your past is a rich well of clues as to what your core values are.

These activities are best enjoyed with a friend. We are so used to living life guided by our personal core values that the clues can be hard for us to spot. When you walk through these activities with someone else, you can help each other stay curious and spot patterns that you may miss otherwise.

Investigation Number One: Pivotal Moments

Think of a moment in your life that for whatever reason, everything that came before it was different from everything that came after it. Maybe it changed the trajectory of your life or how you see the world. What is the first thing that comes to your mind?

Sometimes pivotal moments are huge life-changing events. Sometimes they're joyful and other times, they're traumatic. Sometimes, a pivotal moment is an almost imperceptible snapshot in time that just got you thinking differently. Don't overthink it too much. When you think of a pivotal moment, jot down the first thing that pops into your head.

What happened?

And what changed because of that occurrence?

What did you learn because of that occurrence?

What is different in your life now because that thing happened?

Why do you think it created the impact it did for you?

Now, reflect back on your answers and look for any words that popped up in your answers that are values. You're looking for words like: love, compassion, adventure, joy, responsibility, service, and intention. Any time you see a word that describes a value, or something closely related to a value, draw a big colorful circle around it. Make note of these words.

Investigation Number Two: First Love

This investigation has two parts. First of all, think of the first thing you remember being obsessed with as a kid. It could be a toy, game, hobby, idea, or thing. It can even be a person. What is the first thing that comes to mind?

Here comes the second part. Now, as an adult, when you cast your mind back to this first obsession you had, what do you think it was about that thing that you loved so much?

In the same way that you did with your pivotal moment, look at your answers above and see if you can spot any value-words. It might be that some of the same concepts came up from the first activity, or new value-words might have arisen this time. Either outcome is fantastic. Look at your answers above. Any time you see a word that describes a value, or something closely related to a value, draw a big colorful circle around it. Make note of these words.

Investigation Number Three: Personal Decision

Think of a choice you have made for yourself. It could be something you decided recently, or maybe it was years ago. Either way, think of a time when you chose to do something, stop something, or change something just for you.

What choice did you make?

Why did you make this choice?

You can probably guess what comes next. Cast your eye over your answer and circle any value-words. Go ahead and add 'em to your list. If any repeat words come up, feel free to highlight or underline that word on your list so you know it's a repeat.

Look at your list of values words. Which ones resonate with you the most? Identify the 3-5 that you think are the most important to you.

Step 2: Refine and Define

Defining Your Core Values

While selecting the values concepts that feel most true to you is an important part of the process, it's only one part of the puzzle. There are three elements that go into capturing your true-to-you core values:

- The word itself
- Your personal definition of that word
- The specific intentions that extend from each value

We'll get to the intentions part soon enough, but for now let's focus on definitions. The reason this matters is because no two people have the exact same definition of a complex concept, like love or justice.

Think of it this way: if I asked 100 people to draw me a picture of a table or an apple, I would get 100 very similar looking pictures. But if I asked those same 100 people to draw me a picture of compassion or honesty, I would get a lot of different images back.

That's why knowing exactly what you mean by the word you select for each of your core values is really important. No one else will define your core values exactly like you do, and knowing what the word means to you will allow you to understand it and connect to it on a deeper level.

Let's get to defining each of your core values.

It's a process!

A reminder that if you are not a hundred percent clear on your short-list of core values, fear not. Every step of this process allows you to think more deeply about your core values and learn more along the way.

Write each of your core values in the left hand column, and then for each one, answer each of the questions to help you flesh out what this means to you. Pro-Tip: Take one value at a time.

Value	When this value is present in your life, how do you feel?	When this core value is missing in your life, how do you know?	What activities epitomize this value in action?	What's the dictionary definition of this value?

Look at everything you've written down in the grid and highlight the words and ideas that stand out to you the most.

Using the words you highlighted above, draft a personal definition for each of your core values. It doesn't have to be perfect - you can refine these over time.

Tip: Keep definitions short, and look back at your notes from step one for clues. For example, you might have noted down that curiosity and learning are both important to you. It might be that curiosity is your core value, but you define that by looking for the learning in every situation.

Some example definitions to provide inspiration:

- **Joy:** A feeling of great happiness, like my insides are smiling
- **Growth:** Becoming the very best version of myself
- **Fairness:** Impartiality over favoritism
- **Optimism:** Starting and ending with possibility
- **Adventure:** Doing scary things more often than most adults
- **Balance:** Never too much or not enough of any one thing
- **Safety:** Living life to the fullest, free from danger

Setting Intentions

Now that you've defined your core values, it's time to consider how they show up in your daily life. Intentions are small, specific ways that your values show up on a day to day basis.

Think of specific actions and behaviors that relate to your core values.

Core Value	Intentions

Example:

Value	Joy	Growth	Fairness
Definition	A feeling of great happiness, like my insides are smiling	Seeing the learning opportunity in everything and always trying new things	Treat others equitably
Intentions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play with my kids daily • Visit a new place at least once a year • Greet everyone I meet with a big smile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend a conference at least once a quarter • Read as much and often as possible • When things go wrong, always take time to reflect on what I would do differently next time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always consider the platinum rule - what does this person need in this situation? • Take time to stop and consider what is fair before acting