



CORE VALUES: WHERE IT ALL BEGINS

“Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom.”

—Aristotle

Core values are guiding principles that dictate behaviour and action.

Knowing your core values is essential to living a balanced life. They serve as a guide for every important (and even not so important) decision and choice that you make. The following exercise will help you to discover which values lie at the core of your being and how to use them to get the most out of life.

Part 1 – Work Individually

Task 1:

Grab few pieces of paper and a pen and write down your answers to the following questions.

Step 1 - Think

- Think back to your youth.
- When were you happiest?
- What made you feel successful and accomplished?
- Now consider your present situation.
- When was the last time you felt successful?
- What were you doing when you last felt successful?
- When is the last time you felt truly happy or content?
- What was happening in your life that made you feel that way?

Step 2 - Connect

Try to identify the common threads between your answers. Ask yourself:

- What do the experiences have in common?
- Are there any patterns?
- For example: If you were happiest as a child when you were climbing trees, you last felt successful when you were volunteering at an animal shelter, and you were last truly happy on a camping trip, a pattern may be connecting with nature.

Step 3 - Write

Now that you have an idea of what has made you feel happy and successful in the past, it's time to figure out your underlying values. For this step, you will need a blank piece of paper (preferably landscape orientation).

- Write the word VALUES in the middle of the paper.
- Using that word as a starting point, draw lines outward.
- At the end of each line, write down the next word that comes to mind.



- If a word inspires another word, draw another line and connect them.
- Continue adding and connecting words either to the original VALUES word or to the words you have contributed until no additional words come to mind.
- You will eventually end up with a web of interconnected words, or a Mind Map.

Value lists are available online if you're having trouble coming up with your own specific values. However, do try to complete this activity without accessing a list. It can be distracting and overwhelming to see what other people have written or chosen. Remember, these are your values – not someone else's.

Step 4 - Choose

Now you will use the words that you identified in Step 2 to determine what your core values are.

- On your Mind Map, circle the 5-10 words that most encompass who you are (or who you want to be).
- Check if any of the values can be combined (for example, "connection" and "belonging" are similar enough to be reduced to either one or the other).
- List the selected values on a new sheet of paper, ordered from the most important to the least important.