

ACTIVITY: Defining and Aligning Your Values

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to:

- Identify your values in various areas of life
- Reflect on where you are out of alignment with your values and why.
- Start to identify ways you could begin to live more fully with your values.

ESTIMATED TIME

15-25 Minutes per section
(2 sections)

MATERIALS

Required:

- A. Pen
- B. Handout

Background

Values are individual ideas and beliefs about what is important in life. Our values shape our behavior and our actions. Research shows that resilient people are committed to their values.

When we take time to truly examine what our values are and why they are important, we are better prepared to meet life's challenges. Having a strong sense of our personal values provides us a road map through life.

When we are not living by our values, we feel uncomfortable – we are out of alignment. This can result in sadness, anger, anxiety, or other negative feelings and leads to a lack of life satisfaction and a decrease in our ability to be resilient.

The attached activity helps individuals identify their values, reflect on where and why they might be out of alignment with their values, and begin to find ways to live more fully with their values.

Activity

This activity is divided into two sections. Each section can take approximately 15-25 minutes. You may want to:

- Complete the activity in two parts. For example, complete part one at a team meeting and then complete part two one month later.
 - Complete the activity as part of a retreat or learning day when you have adequate time to finish the entire activity.
- 1) Provide participants with a copy of the attached handout (entire handout or part 1 or 2 depending on how you structure activity)
 - 2) For part one, instruct them to look at the categories listed and for each category, reflect on the following questions and write down their thoughts:
 - What is important to you, or what do you value, in this area of life?**
 - How important is this area of life?**
 - What qualities or characteristics do you want to bring to this area?**
 - 3) For part two, ask them to assess how successfully they have been living their values over the past few months, using the guidelines on the handout. When they have completed this they will move on to the next page and begin to identify areas where they may need to make changes and what they can do.
 - 4) After each section, take time as a group (or in small groups or pairs), to discuss what they have written.

Discussion Questions/ Key Points

- What did you discover about yourself and your values? Did you have any “aha” moments while completing the exercise?
- Are there areas of your life where it is easier or harder to align with your values?
- What kind of things can prevent us from being in alignment with our values?
- What kind of steps did you identify to help you re-align with your core values?

Activity adapted from:

The Happiness Trap. Russ Harris.
www.actmindfully.com.au



Defining and Aligning Your Values Handout – Part 1

For each category below and on the next page, take some time to reflect on the following questions:

What is important to you, or what do you value, in this area of life?

How important is this area of life?

What qualities or characteristics do you want to bring to this area?

Write down a few notes about your values in each area. You may want to further break down some categories (for example, under family you may have different notes for spouse or siblings or parenting). Some categories may overlap. Some may be much less important to you than others.

Family (*spouse or significant other, children, siblings, parents, etc.*)

Social relationships (*friends, social groups, etc.*)

Career/Work



Defining and Aligning Your Values Handout – Part 1

Leisure (*hobbies, recreation, etc.*)

Spirituality (*whatever this means to you*)

Community (*groups you may be involved in that are not strictly social, community service, politics, charity, neighborhood, children's school, etc.*)

Health (*physical and mental health, nutrition, exercise, etc.*)



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Defining and Aligning Your Values Handout – Part 2

Fill out the table below, assessing how successful you have been in fully living your values over the past few months. Rate yourself between 0 and 100%, with 0 meaning you are not at all living by your values and 100 indicating you are successful in living by your values all the time. For areas where you are out of alignment, write down possible reasons.

Area	Alignment With My Values (0-100%)	If I am not aligned, why not? (What am I doing or not doing? Are there things preventing me from fully living my values?)
Family		
Social relationships		
Career/Work		
Leisure		
Spirituality		
Community		
Health		



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Defining and Aligning Your Values Handout – Part 2

Based on your reflections, are there things in your life that need to change?
What are some steps you can take to live more consistently by your values?