



LIFEVALUESINVENTORY ONLINE

clarifying your personal truth

Your Values Profile

Understanding Your Results

| High Priority | Over-Attention | Under-Attention | Medium/Low Priority |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| #1 Concern for Others | Objective Analysis | Humility | Independence |
| #2 Belonging | Achievement | Concern for Environment | Privacy |
| #3 Financial Prosperity | | Responsibility | Interdependence |
| #4 Creativity | | Health & Activity | Spirituality |

High Priority

These values are important to me AND I frequently act on them.

These values are an integral part of your life because they are important and you are making sure they are being expressed. The way you act on them is generally a source of satisfaction in your life, unless you have too many values in this category. If this is the case, you may need to work on prioritizing your values because many lifestyles do not permit people to satisfy large numbers of values. Because the importance and actions of these values are aligned, it usually reflects a combination of good life management on your part because you are making time to express these values, and the environment is providing opportunities for you to express them.

As you look forward, clarify changes that may be on the horizon and how they may impact these values. These may include changes in your environment as well as internal changes that may be shifting what is important to you. These values are also vulnerable to drifting into a need where they become too intense and you experience more stress than satisfaction. It is important to pay attention to the section on Optimizing Values Expression for effective management of these important values.

CONCERN FOR OTHERS (12)**The well being of others and helping others are important.**

- Being sensitive to others' needs
- Helping others
- Being concerned about the rights of others

YOU RANKED THIS **#1**

People who hold this value are likely to believe in equality, see themselves as helpful, honest, friendly, and forgiving, may strive for inner tranquility and world peace, and may have little concern for the accumulation of wealth. However, some people who hold this value also value Financial Prosperity. Roles in which they can heal, teach, help, mentor, or otherwise advance the welfare of others are the most satisfying to people holding this value. This value can facilitate personal and professional relationships because of sensitivity to others. However, a great deal of interpersonal frustration may occur with others who act in an uncaring or selfish manner. This value can be a source of stress if one feels unable to help others or if help is rejected. Over-attention to this value can result in burnout, feeling overly responsible for the problems of others, and a loss of equity in relationships.

Concern for Others may be complementary with Belonging, but may conflict with Independence if overemphasized. Similarly, people with highly prioritized Privacy and Concern for Others values may experience conflict because one value pulls them toward solitary activities while the other pushes them toward interaction with people. Conflict may occur if individuals who have a highly prioritized Concern for Others value find themselves in roles with people who place material rewards (Financial Prosperity) ahead of the welfare of people.

BELONGING (14)**It is important to be accepted by others and to feel included.**

- Being liked by others
- Being accepted by others
- Feeling as though I belong

YOU RANKED THIS **#2**

Connectedness and inclusion in work and social groups are valued. Inclusion can be the basis for positive self-evaluation, and acceptance may be sought in a variety of ways including being helpful, polite, and/or loyal.

Stress can result when other values are compromised for the sake of harmony or having others like you. Being assertive or dealing with confrontation can also be a source of stress. Transitions to new environments can be hard until a sense of belonging is felt. Independence, Privacy and Achievement may conflict with Belonging to the degree they interfere with feeling connected to others. Conflict may occur if there is little acceptance or recognition given within a role. Conflict may also occur if other roles interfere with the time necessary to develop meaningful relationships.

FINANCIAL PROSPERITY (12)**It is important to be financially successful.**

- Having financial success
- Making money
- Being wealthy

YOU RANKED THIS **#3**

People who hold this value may perceive themselves to be ambitious, capable, intelligent, and logical. They strive to accumulate wealth and live a comfortable life. This value can complement or facilitate the attainment of other important values, such as Independence. Stress occurs for people who hold Financial Prosperity as a highly prioritized value when they are unable to accumulate wealth at a rate that they deem appropriate, or whenever they experience loss of wealth. Stress can be felt when there is perceived inequity in the amount of financial return one receives for the amount of energy expended.

Financial Prosperity does not necessarily conflict with other values unless it is overemphasized. Over-attention to this value may result in placing too much importance on material things at the sacrifice of relationships, as well as spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being.

CREATIVITY (8)YOU RANKED THIS **#4**

It is important to have new ideas, create new things or be creatively expressive.

- Coming up with new ideas
- Being creative
- Discovering new things or ideas

People who hold this value are likely to perceive themselves as imaginative, intelligent, expressive, capable, and broad-minded. They are also likely to be concerned about beauty in the world, although this may not be restricted to nature.

Creativity can complement many other values since it facilitates looking at things in new and different ways. Stress can occur when Creativity is overemphasized at the expense of orderliness that may be necessary for the proper management of their lives and relationships. They are likely to experience stress when their ability to use their imagination to solve problems is restricted (e.g. if they work in a routine, repetitive job).

Conflict may occur when people have a highly prioritized Creativity value as well as a highly prioritized Responsibility value. Dependability, which is the hallmark of a person with a Responsibility value, may mean being orderly and predictable, responses that may not be highly compatible with creative expression. Conflict is also likely to result if the person who prizes Creativity is expected by others to follow a routine.

Over-Attention

I am focusing on these values more than I would prefer.

Why do we act on values more frequently than we prefer?

1 — It may be that the environment is demanding us to act on these values. At times, this incongruence is acceptable and we can manage the stress well. But ongoing periods of acting on values that are less important can cause strain and lead to burnout or illness. Look for opportunities that may allow you to adjust your actions to act less on these values. The article on Stress & Emotional Management in Step 5 may be helpful in managing situations where the environment is forcing this type of behavior.

2 — These values may have been of high importance in the past but are starting to shift for you. They may be shifting toward less importance in your life but your actions are still on cruise control. By focusing your attention on other values that are growing in importance can help align the values in this category with a frequency of expression that is more congruent with importance. The timing of these changes is an important consideration and even if your environment doesn't currently allow for much change, developing a plan for the future can be a helpful way to cope with current stress.

3 — There may be a value in this category that has been too important and has felt too intense, causing more stress than fulfillment. At some level, we know that we're acting on this value too much. But it's emotionally difficult to back off. This is an example of when a value has shifted toward a need state and is out of perspective. The reason it causes so much stress is that we are over-expressing this value at the cost of under-attending to other important values. By courageously focusing on expressing other values and internally challenging the myth that one value sufficiently defines you can help put this value in a better perspective. This is a difficult shift because there are usually powerful life experiences that have shaped this value into a need. Conscientious attention to a more balanced expression of values and additional support may foster a healthier perspective.

It is important to use logical principles to understand and solve problems.

- Relying on objective facts
- Relying on logic to solve problems
- Being analytical

People who hold this value may perceive themselves to be logical, intelligent, analytical, critical, curious, and precise. They may perceive themselves to have analytic ability and engage in scientific or analytical activities. They may enjoy learning about science or technology, working with computers or other technical equipment, or simply talking about science or technology. Stress occurs for these people when they have to function in non-orderly, non-analytical ways. Objective Analysis typically does not conflict with other values. However, stress may occur if a person who prizes Objective Analysis is forced into roles that require leadership and persuasive activities.

ACHIEVEMENT (13)

It is important to challenge myself and to work hard to improve.

- Challenging myself to achieve
- Improving my performance
- Working hard to do better

People who hold this value may view themselves as ambitious and capable, and they may enjoy activities that require taking risks. This value can serve as a source of motivation to improve and do your best. Satisfaction of this value may come in many ways including the accumulation of knowledge, helping others, performing physical feats, setting challenging personal goals and working to achieve them, working to improve performance, putting forth extra effort to accomplish a goal, and through success in business.

People who value Achievement experience stress when they are unable to act on their achievement-oriented goals, when they feel unchallenged, or when they become too focused on results or outcome at the sacrifice of satisfaction about their performance or effort. Belonging may conflict with Achievement when acceptance by a peer group is dependent upon maintaining relatively low levels of performance. Conflict may occur between persons who have a highly prioritized Achievement value and people who act to limit their accomplishments or do not share their Achievement value. Conflict can also occur when the demands of one or more other roles preclude the pursuit of cherished, achievement-oriented goals.

Under-Attention

I am not focusing on these values as much as I would prefer.

Values in this category often elicit feelings of guilt and frustration. Common self-statements can include, "If I only had more time." "If only other things wouldn't get in the way," "If only I had more willpower," etc. These values often reflect personal goals that we believe would improve our life but are very difficult to establish a consistent rhythm of behavior or can often conflict with other values or life roles. They may also reflect values that are growing in importance but you haven't developed a habit of consistently acting on them yet. No matter the reason, this category reflects values that have some kind of challenge associated with them. The challenges can be external in terms of conflicting activities or limited time for expression; or they may be internal obstacles such as fear or guilt.

For values in this category, it is recommended to chip away at creating more time to express these values. This process will clarify how much these values reflect preferences or something important enough to fight for. We all have preferences that are about being more skilled at something or being more fit or wishing to spend more time with certain people . . . but at what cost? Values in this category usually represent some

kind of personal cost and, therefore, don't get expressed as much as you would want.

It is helpful to reflect from time to time on these values and ask yourself if they are elevating to a level of importance that you are willing to devote the energy to manage the costs associated with their expression. If the answer is "not yet", then compassionately shelve them as "preferences" for now in the faith that you will return to them at some point. If the answer is "yes," then develop a plan of expression that will increase this value, a plan of readiness to prepare you for the challenges associated with expressing this value while reducing expression of others to make room for this one, and a plan of support so that others can help you through this transition. It is important to honor the difficulty of this work and incorporate times of celebration and restoration. The articles in Step 5 on "Optimal Self-Leadership", "Stress and Emotional Management", and "Managing Life Transitions" may be helpful with this process.

HUMILITY (14)

It is important to be humble and modest about my accomplishments.

- Downplaying compliments or praise
- Being quiet about my successes
- Avoiding credit for my accomplishments

People who hold this value are modest and may be self-effacing. They tend to be uncomfortable when their accomplishments are highlighted and may attempt to point to the accomplishment of others to deflect attention from themselves. Also, they are likely to be obedient, polite, loyal, and self-controlled.

Humility may conflict with Achievement, particularly if the result is individual achievement that draws attention to the person. Stress is likely if the person who holds a highly prioritized Humility value is placed in a position of having to promote her or his accomplishments

CONCERN FOR ENVIRONMENT (10)

It is important to protect and preserve the environment.

- Protecting the environment
- Preserving nature
- Appreciating the beauty of nature

Protecting the natural beauty of the environment is of utmost important for people who highly prioritize this value. They may also hold other altruistic beliefs such as equality and world peace. People who hold this value typically act on it by engaging in good environmental practices, reading about the environment, and engaging in activities such as fundraisers for organizations that advocate for environmental improvement.

People holding this value experience stress when they perceive that the natural beauty of the environment is being permanently damaged, and when they are not advancing their goal of improving the environment. Conflict is likely between people holding this value and people who are either apathetic about the environment or who deliberately engage in acts that harm or detract from the natural beauty of the environment. Conflict may also occur if people who have deep-seated concerns about the environment become engaged in roles (e.g. work or leisure) that preclude or restrict them from acting on this value.

RESPONSIBILITY (7)

It is important to be dependable and trustworthy.

- Being reliable
- Being trustworthy
- Meeting my obligations

People who hold this value may perceive themselves as being responsible, honest, helpful, logical, self-controlled, and trustworthy. They are viewed by others as reliable and are seen as the dependable person for important tasks. Being

responsible is very fulfilling if there is also perceived equity and fairness in their commitment of time and energy. Long periods of perceived inequity or unfairness can result in burnout. Accountability is important and can result in holding others to high standards. Excuses from others can be frustrating. Because being trustworthy is important, trust is critical and broken trust can be felt deeply.

Stress occurs when people who value Responsibility become too other-oriented at the sacrifice of self-care and maintenance (responsibility to oneself). Stress is also experienced when role overload occurs to the point that it precludes or reduces the opportunity to act in a dependable fashion. A person who prizes both Creativity and Responsibility may have a conflict between the desire to innovate and the motive to be reliable.

HEALTH & ACTIVITY (6)

It is important to be healthy and physically active.

- Taking care of my body
- Being in good physical shape
- Being athletic

People who hold this value tend to like clean, healthy environments, enjoy exciting activities, and are committed to their health and well-being. They may see this value as a powerful way to manage the stress in their lives. Over-attention to this value can result in being overly critical of their appearance or level of fitness, and can result in an unhealthy form of coping if not managed appropriately. Stress may be felt when the demands of others restrict the time devoted to being physically active. Stress may also be experienced when people who value Health & Activity see others engage in unhealthy activities. Health and Activity can facilitate the attainment of other values and does not necessarily conflict with other values unless it is overemphasized.

Medium/Low Priority

These values are of medium to low importance and I act on them occasionally.

Generally speaking, these values are not a source of stress for you because the occasional expression is congruent with the medium to low level of importance they have to you. Maintaining the same level of expression is recommended for the values in this category, so be cautious of opportunities that may lead to increased expression. However, during life transitions it may be helpful to reflect on these values to see if they are shifting in importance to you. It is also recommended to understand how your view of these values compares to people around you. It may be stressful to “feel alone” if others give high importance to these values. Gaining a sense of empathy for those who deem these values as important and communicating to them why other values are important to you can allow for diversity to benefit relationships and groups.

INDEPENDENCE (13)

It is important to have a sense of autonomy with my decisions and actions.

- Being independent
- Giving my opinion
- Having control over my time

People with this value strive for personal freedom and autonomous action of speech and movement. They may perceive themselves to be ambitious, capable, pleasure seeking, and may like to be regarded by others as independent. People who value Independence may accept temporary positions of restricted autonomy but it will be important for them to see a clear future opportunity for increased autonomy. It is also important to feel a sense of equity in that they are receiving a fair reward for

what they are contributing. Stress occurs for people holding this value when their actions are limited in some fashion. When this value is overemphasized, other people are disregarded in the decision-making process and/or the individual overreacts emotionally to attempts, real or imagined, at restricting their activities.

Independence may conflict with Interdependence and Belonging because both of these values require fairly high degrees of conformity for satisfaction. Conflict may occur when people who value Independence are involved with people who strongly value Belonging and/or Interdependence.

PRIVACY (12)

It is important to have time alone.

- Having time to myself
- Having quiet time to think
- Having a private place to go

People who hold this value seek personal freedom. Behavioral manifestations of this value include reading, taking long drives or walks, listening to music, and other solitary activities. People who hold this value are not likely to see themselves as entrepreneurial. Stress occurs for people who value Privacy when they are forced, because of role demands, to spend extensive amounts of time with people at the expense of time alone. Privacy is compatible with Independence but may conflict with Interdependence.

INTERDEPENDENCE (9)

It is important to follow the expectations of my family, social group, team or organization.

- Accepting my place in my family or group
- Respecting the traditions of my family or group
- Making decisions with my family or group in mind

Family or group security is important to people who hold this value. They are likely to perceive themselves to be helpful, honest, loving, loyal, obedient, polite, and self-controlled. Behavioral expressions of this value include concern for family or work group, putting the needs of the family or group first, and adherence to family or group traditions. Stress occurs when people who hold this value become totally bound by tradition and are unable to adapt to changes that occur.

Interdependence may conflict with Independence. Interdependence requires conformity to the expectations of others while Independence dictates that one act on his or her volition. People who value both Interdependence and Independence may strongly consider the opinions of others but choose to do what they feel is right for themselves in the long run.

SPIRITUALITY (6)

It is important to have spiritual beliefs that reflect being a part of something greater than myself.

- Believing in a higher power
- Believing that there is something greater than ourselves
- Living in harmony with my spiritual beliefs

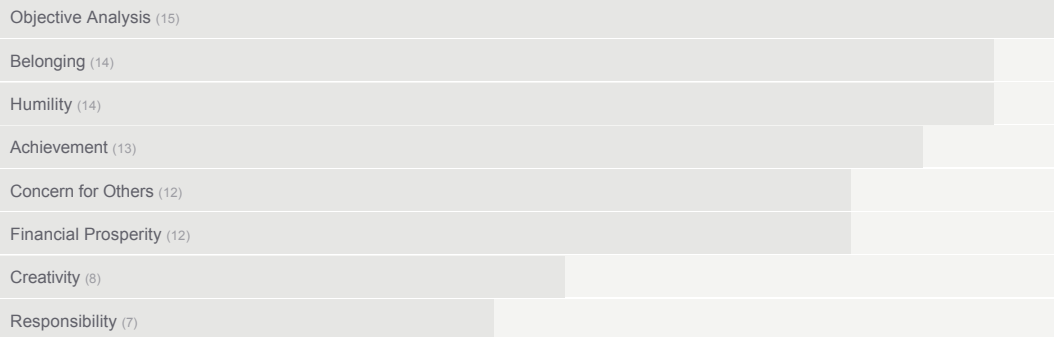
People who hold this belief seek inner harmony and salvation, may dream of a world of peace and beauty, are honest, and are obedient to their spiritual beliefs. Behavioral manifestations of this value are religious activities such as going to church, synagogue, temple, or mosque, worshipping or meditating, and voicing beliefs. Some people who do not subscribe to any of the major religions of the world may also have a highly prioritized Spirituality value. These people may feel that they are connected to nature or the cosmos in spiritual ways and may worship through meditation, treks to places with natural beauty, or by developing connections with other human beings.

Spirituality does not necessarily conflict with other values. Conflict with others is likely if their spiritual beliefs are devalued or if actions contrary to those beliefs occur. Conflict may also occur if the demands of other life roles interfere with acting on the Spirituality value.

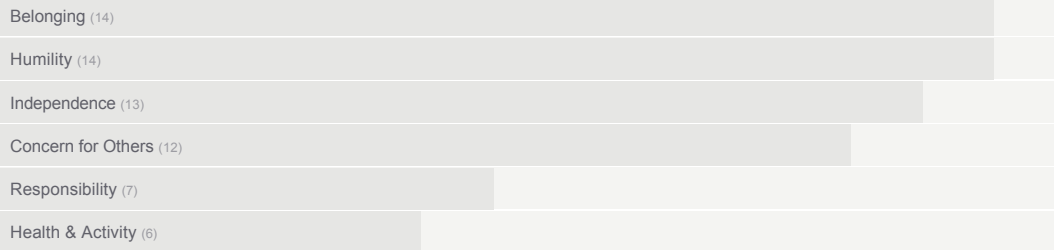
Your Values Profile

Values & Life Roles

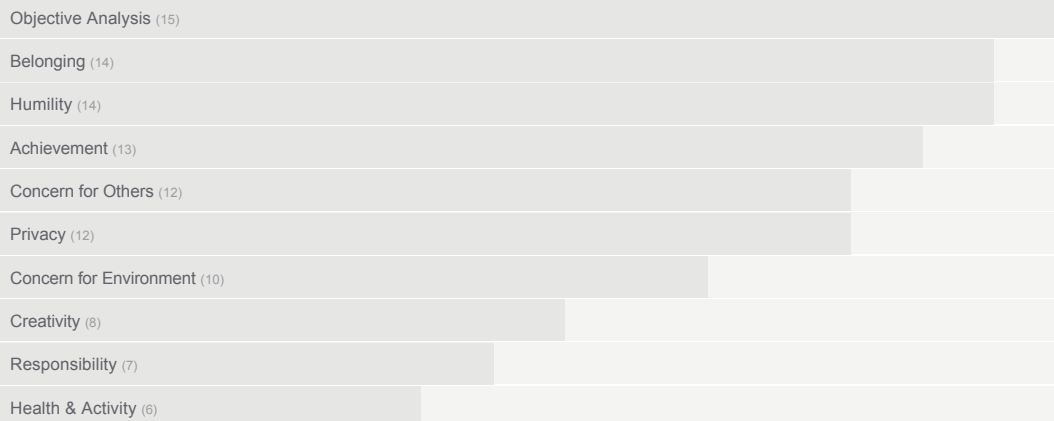
Work/Academics



Relationships



Leisure/Community Activities



Other

| Limited or No Expression | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Interdependence (9) | |
| Spirituality (6) | |

We express our values through our life roles. Since it is rare that one life role satisfies all of our values, we often devote time and energy to several roles. **From your results, reflect on the following:**

1 Identify the values that show up in more than one role.

For example, it may be important to express Belonging in your work, leisure and relationships roles. **These usually reflect values that are central to your identity** and require multiple forms of expression in order to be fulfilled.

2 Identify the values that are expressed in only one role.

For instance, your leisure role may be the only time you express your Health & Activity value. It is essential that you allow enough time for that role since it is the only time that value can be expressed.

3 Identify any values you want to act on more frequently.

What role(s) will be the best form of expression of that value? How will an increase in time toward that value affect your time and energy in other roles?

4 Use these results to gain a better understanding of how stress is manifested in your life.

There are two forms of role-related stress, *inter-role stress* and *intra-role stress*. **Inter-role stress** is the stress you feel **between roles** when the time and energy you spend in one role is interfering with the time you can devote to other important roles where other values are expressed. **Intra-role stress** is the stress you feel **within a role** when the values you want fulfilled in a certain role are not being rewarded. The strategies discussed in the supplement on "Stress & Emotional Management" in **Step 5** can help you manage these forms of stress.

Your Values Profile

Strategies for Optimal Expression of Values

How you express and act on your values is as important as understanding them. Provided below are **5 strategies for optimal values expression**. They are designed to help your values serve as an authentic source of motivation and fulfillment.

Integrity Action Steps

STRATEGY 1

One of the cornerstones of healthy self-esteem is integrity, behaving congruently with the values that are important to you. People with high self-esteem routinely monitor how well their behavior aligns with what's important to them and develop action steps to bring behavior and values closer together. In Steps 1-3, you clarified your current values and made adjustments for the near future. Now you need to develop specific action steps or goals for these adjustments. Keep them realistic and totally within your control.

What specific actions would prove that you are behaving according to your values? For example, if you decided you wanted to increase time and energy in your Spirituality value, you may choose to commit a specific amount of time each day for meditation, prayer, reflection or a nature walk. Your values-based goals should be less about outcomes, which you can't control, and more about actions that you can completely control.

You should have only a few action steps. Be sensitive to when you feel that your action steps are exceeding your available time and energy, or what your environment will allow. Assume you are already 100 percent committed, so if you are going to devote more energy to one value, you must reduce time and energy for another value.

Clarifying and trying to follow these action steps increases our sense of integrity and, in turn, increases our sense of self-esteem and resilience.

Balanced Expression of Values

STRATEGY 2

Balance WITHIN Values. To feel a sense of fulfillment, you must devote time and energy to important values - up to a point. Your values are like a double-edged sword. They are a primary determinant of life satisfaction, but they are also a major source of stress. If you over-express a value, you will feel the cost or stress associated with it because it is becoming a psychological need - a "have to," or perhaps a compulsion - at the expense of other important values.

One of the most important factors in fostering success (as defined by fulfillment, productivity, and resilience) is to commit to a balanced expression of each value. In the first section of this report, you familiarized yourself with the description of each value and learned how your values can cause both fulfillment and stress. Use this information to learn when expressing your important values moves you from fulfillment to stress. A commitment to balanced expression of your values results in more fulfillment.

Managing the Interaction BETWEEN Values. Review the primary values that frequently guide your behavior. You will notice that some of those values are complementary - the expression of one helps the expression of another. We usually experience this interaction as either amplified fulfillment or synergy because one action can fulfill more than one value. For example, the sensitive support you may provide a friend in need can fulfill both Concern for Others and Belonging.

However, you may notice that there are conflicting values among your top values, such as Independence and Belonging, or Independence and Interdependence. You will feel this conflict in the form of stress or tension. Decision making can be stressful when one opportunity fulfills one value while another opportunity fulfills the conflicting value. When you make a decision that fulfills one value but conflicts with another, you'll feel a certain ambivalence or perceived "wrongness" associated with sacrificing an important value. Not accepting or managing this ambivalence can lead to chronic indecision.

To effectively manage conflicting values, you must respect why these values are important to you and strive to express them in a manner that corresponds with their rankings. Your decisions and actions should reflect balanced expression instead of an all-or-nothing approach. This balance is analogous to seeing time and energy as weights that you carefully add to both sides of a scale to keep them in

balance, as opposed to a seesaw approach, in which you alternate between complete expression of one value at the sacrifice of the other. For example, if Belonging and Independence are two important values, find separate activities that will currently fulfill both values. Don't devote excessive time to Belonging at the sacrifice of Independence, then shift when you feel the urgent need to completely reverse the expression. Balanced expression helps you gain an appreciation and emotional tolerance for the healthy tension that exists between your conflicting values, rather than perceiving this tension as a problem. This cannot be done passively, but with active management, you can become very skilled at maintaining a fulfilling balance between conflicting values.

Effective Decision Making

STRATEGY 3

To make the best decisions, commit to giving yourself a 24-hour pause before you say "yes" to any opportunity. When opportunities arise that touch our values, we are vulnerable to saying "yes" to all of them without much regard for our current time commitments. We also tend to underestimate the additional time required for new opportunities.

As opportunities present themselves, take time to reflect on whether your decision is more aligned with your adjusted values rankings or your current rankings. Try to take advantage of opportunities that come your way to shift your behavior to be more congruent with your adjusted rankings.

Consider the balance within and between your values. Will taking on this new opportunity cause you to lose balance within a value and result in over-expression of one value at the expense of other important values? Will you lose balance between conflicting values?

Commit to opportunities that are congruent with your most important values but also commit to managing them with a realistic appraisal of your available time and energy. The basis for good decision making is values congruency and energy management, not whether your decision resulted in a good outcome. If a good outcome results from your values-based decisions, it's to be appreciated, but not to be used as the criterion for evaluating your decision.

A Simple Daily Plan for Expressing Values

STRATEGY 4

The following is a five-step process that incorporates what you have learned about your values into a daily plan. Please refer to the supplement "Optimal Self-Leadership" for a description as to why this plan is helpful.

Step 1: Values. At the beginning of each day, ask yourself, "What is the most right way for me to devote my time and energy today?" The word "right" is intended to tap into the values you have clarified, but in the context of a day. The answer on one day may be about balance, doing something in all the things that are important to you. One day it may be more singular and focused on an important project. On another day it may be about rest. Whatever it is, use the concept of "rightness" to tap into your values. This process doesn't have to be long and structured. It can be short and intuitive, while you are getting ready for your day.

Step 2: Acceptance and "Can." Usually, you will react to the answer from Step 1 with uncertainty as to whether you can get it all done. If you feel a twinge of doubt, you're probably right. Reduce the activities until you feel a sense of confidence and a mindset of "I can do this."

Step 3: Expression and Engagement. Once you have your "can do" list of values-based behaviors, you focus on expressing those activities the rest of the day. The day is about being fully engaged in the expression of your talent and energy, with courage and commitment.

Step 4: Appreciation. At some point near the end of the day, spend a couple of minutes appreciating what you did and why. This may sound a little touchy-feely for some. However, there is a very practical reason for doing this. At the end of the day, we most naturally think of the things that didn't get done and what we need to do tomorrow to make up for it. This triggers an overly evaluative, or judging, mindset and negatively affects our motivation and stress level. Taking a couple of minutes to appreciate what you did and why counters this negative process. We already know what didn't get done. In addition, this step allows us to see how unexpected events provided opportunities for values-congruent behavior. For instance, we may have planned to devote time to an important project but ended up devoting time to a friend who unexpectedly called in crisis. It is important to appreciate the values that are behind that behavior. This is not intended to be a self-love fest, but a moment to take time to appreciate the courage you exhibited by committing to values-based behavior. Martin Luther King, Jr. often spoke of the heroism associated with living congruently with our values on a daily basis. This step is intended to be a form of self-management and self-encouragement for our difficult efforts.

Step 5: Analysis. After spending time appreciating what you did during the day, ask yourself "What is one thing I can learn from today that will help me tomorrow?" This helps us continue to grow and improve. This process is analysis - which is not the same as evaluation.

Analysis is an authentic way to learn and self-improve; evaluation is too personal - we process it as good-bad or success-failure. For example, we may look back at the day and realize that we fell short of a particular goal. Evaluating our actions may cause us to conclude that we were lazy (or some other very negative, personal label). This process only serves to negatively affect our motivation and make us vulnerable to repeating the same behavior. Thinking analytically, we can look at the situation, try to understand the factors that influenced our behavior (e.g., we took on too much today, we let fear get in the way, something unanticipated happened that was more important), and try to learn from the experience. After you have appreciated and learned from your day, you can mentally flush the stress of the day with a clear conscience, helping you sleep better and fully restoring your body and mind.

Embracing the Fight for Meaning

STRATEGY 5

From this values clarification process, we hope that you have discovered an important point about stress. Much of the stress we feel is connected at some level to the things we believe are important. We can't feel anxious about things that are unimportant to us. If we view stress as a problem that needs to be removed from our lives, then we may also be removing areas that are central to our fulfillment. For example, you could get your feelings hurt less if you cared less, but if you value Belonging or Concern for Others, you will feel the loss of not expressing that value.

We are naturally inclined toward physical comfort. This can also lead us to place primary importance on emotional comfort. If the primary guide to your life is emotional comfort, you will make decisions and act to reduce any uncomfortable emotions, such as fear, boredom, hurt, or anxiety. But this may also come at a cost: less meaning and fulfillment. If you place primary importance on meaning by committing to act on your values, the cost may be periodic stress and discomfort associated with having to manage those values. We all have times when we need a break from stress and discomfort, but there's a distinction between primary versus secondary focus. Fulfillment, productivity, and resilience are optimized when commitment to our values is primary and emotional comfort is secondary. This concept is further explored in the supplement "Optimal Self-Leadership."

Dedicating yourself to a values-centered life provides the opportunity for excellence and fulfillment. But it also means you are dedicating yourself to something that is hard. It's not complicated, just hard. That's why positive change requires courage and commitment. You have to cross that emotional hurdle of accepting the fight of doing something hard. Fortunately, if you accept the fight and seek to intentionally devote your time and energy to your values, your emotional reaction to the fight decreases and feels less painful.

While positive change is ultimately our own responsibility, support can help us from feeling alone in the fight. Growth comes from a balance of challenge and support. Helpful support for positive change tends to come in the form of people, faith and structure. The support of friends, loved ones, and/or professionals can provide encouragement and perspective. You may find that prayer, meditation, or reflection consistent with your spiritual beliefs can help you maintain faith and hope. You may also find that a certain level of organization or structure to your day helps create a rhythm and routine when you are trying to internalize change. Whatever combination of support feels most helpful, it is important to develop that support before you begin your personal development program.

To continue learning values-based strategies for specific life issues, proceed to Step Five.