# Content

# Values and goals

A value is a chosen life direction that is meaningful to you. It is not an end destination that you reach.

A goal is something that you want to reach, the places along the way that help you in your journey continue towards your value. You can think of them as little things you can do to help you move in the direction you want to.

A popular way of thinking about this using the ‘compass metaphor’ (add image). The value you want to move towards is (north, south, east or west) and the goals are the check points along the way.

Often we act impulsively (responses) to feelings and emotions we have ‘in the moment’, our responses to unpleasant feelings, emotions or memories are not always consistent with as our values and so we find ourselves doing things that we don’t actually want to be doing. For example eating cake when we want to lose weight, smoking a cigarette when we are trying to quit or avoiding an event that would help us connect with people.

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*Wrong train metaphor:*

"Imagine you are going on a journey. Somewhere really special, where you really want to go, somewhere you've wanted to go your whole life. When you get to the train station you see two trains, one is a bit odd looking and strange, some of the seats look a bit hard and overall it looks a bit dirty and uncomfortable. On the next platform, there is a different train; it's a super train. It looks familiar, safe, reliable, the sort of train you might prefer. The sign says it has air conditioning, a cinema, and a fancy all you can eat restaurant that is free. You think, wow! I just have to take this train, I couldn’t possibly make my journey on that other one! So you wait for this 'great' train to get ready to board and the odd looking train goes on its way. And you wait for the safe train some more and another odd train leaves the station, and another. All the while you are waiting for a chance to board this great reliable train so you can take your journey, as yet another odd looking one leaves. But here is the thing. What if the safe train can't ever board, what if it won't ever leave the station. What if you are waiting for the wrong train?"

*Consider the following:*

1. You know where you want to go in life, what are you prepared to have/experience to get there?

2. If we can't ever have discomfort, where does that leave us?

3. How does waiting for the good old predicable train work in terms of actually moving towards our values and goals?

**Popular values (PDF)**

Time is precious, how do you really want to spend it? Consider the person you want to be and the personal qualities do you want to develop? What is really important to you? (tick all that apply)

* Work and career
* Education
* Relationships (e.g. friendships, partner, family, siblings, children, co-workers and other social contacts)
* Personal growth
* Leisure time (e.g active or inactive pursuits that you enjoy and want to take part in: sport, hobbies, arts and crafts, gardening, dance, music, enjoyment etc)
* Health
* Spirituality
* The environment
* Self-care
* Community

# Try now

*Values exploration: 80th birthday party (PDF)*

**Rationale**

This is an exercise that’s designed to help you picture what you want your life to be about, what is important and meaningful to you? It’s a way of exploring what you would like to treat as important and how you want to be with yourself or with others. If you’re willing to give it a try, read the following text and just notice what comes up for you. There are no right or wrong answers in this exercise – it’s all about noticing what comes up.

**Exercise**

Take a moment to get centered by noticing your breath and noticing how your body feels. If you find yourself getting distracted or notice your mind wandering, that’s OK. Just notice that and gently bring your attention back to this exercise. Now, imagine moving forward through time. Imagine yourself aging and growing older as you move through life. Imagine now that you are turning 80 years old, and your friends, family, and co-workers have gathered to celebrate your 80th birthday.

Imagine what you will look like on your 80th birthday (or whatever age you want). And, I invite you to imagine not who you think would likely be there, but imagine who you would most want to be at your 80th birthday party – even if that means they would be very old. There could even be people you haven’t met yet. Try to really picture who would be there. Now the time has come in the party where people are starting to give speeches. They are taking turns standing up and speaking about what you have meant to them. They are speaking about what you have stood for as a person, and the impact you have had. Again, I’m not asking you to imagine what they would likely say. I’m inviting you to imagine, if you were to be bold in this moment, what you would most want them to say. Deep down in your heart, imagine what you would most want others to say about what you’ve meant.

Imagine the first person standing up to speak. Imagine it’s someone very close to you. Take a moment now and imagine what you would most want them to say about the impact you’ve had. Try to really hear them saying that.

Now, imagine the next person standing up to speak. This could be someone from a different part of your life – perhaps a co-worker or neighbour. And for them too, imagine what you would most want for them to say about what you have stood for in your life.

Now thank your mind for this experience, and gently bring your attention back to the present moment. Take a moment to get centered here, noticing your breath and how your body feels. And when you’re ready, you can open your eyes.

**Ask yourself**

* What came up for you?
* Who did you imagine speaking?
* What did you most want them to say about you?
* What other thoughts/feelings did you notice?
* What values did you choose as opposed to one you ‘should’ do?
* Can you consider your values as on-going direction or agenda in life (in contrast to specific goals)

Keep a journal of thoughts and come back to these exercises.

# Try at home

Values clarification exercise

If you are finding it difficult to picture your 80th birthday party or would like to have another go at exploring your own values there are other techniques you can try. Practicing these exercises will also help you clarify those values which are most important to you.

Find a quite space and try them out, you can spend only 5 minutes on this, or longer, it’s up to you. Little and often is helpful. Be kind to yourself and think about what you hold most value (and we are not taking about objects or material items here) rather it’s about what want to spend time on and what in this life really means the most to you.

*Life as a movie exercise (audio available)*

Picture your life as a movie. The first episodes are already shot (can you summarize the key moments). Now the movie continues and the cameras are rolling. Imagine you are the director and you can direct an actor that plays your part. But you're a special kind of director with a limited power. You can't go to the writer and ask them to change the life events happening to you or direct the other characters to act in the way you want them to do. The only actor you can have an influence on is the one playing your part. You can have him/her play exactly like the person you dream to be. How you would want him/her to act, in that precise situation you are experiencing now.

*How would you instruct the actor to act* *if you want the movie to resemble how you would like your life to be?*

Take your time considering your values, you don’t have to know them all today or even next week. This is something you can come back as often as you like.

***Goal setting***

Once you have identified some of the things that are important to you (values), choose one to focus on and set three goals you want to reach which are in line with your value.

Consider the goal as a specific activity which will help you achieve your value. Your goal can help you choose actions and behaviours which will help you move towards your values and also let you know you are on the right path.

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| For example  *Vivienne*\* valued her interest and enjoyment in photography both as a career (she is a photography lecturer) and as a leisure pursuit (she finds it relaxing and enjoyable and it gives her a sense of achievement when she captures a beautiful scene). However over the past year she has found that she has not been able to give as much time and energy to pursuing her chosen life value (a practicing photographer) as much as she had hoped. She decides to set some goals to help her develop her achieve her value and to foster her interest and love of photography again   * Get them now goals ­­­­­­­­­­­­­: once a week / month dedicate an hour/day to visiting a new coastal area of Gower with her camera * Future goals: continue to develop her skills and expertise in photography by learning or practicing a new/existing technique to improve her work and to share her learning with her students * Wild card goals: submit a photograph to national geographic or a national photography competition |

PDF goal setting activity

What meaningful activities do you want to pursue in your life?

Turn your values into actions for your everyday life

* Get them now goals ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Future goals \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Wild card goals\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Remember that these goals are here to help you along your road to reaching your values (chosen life directions)

Or

Try setting a **SMART goal (free text)**

**Specific:** what specific action will you take and when?

Example

“*I will play with my children on Saturday in the park”*

*“I will go for a ten minute walk every lunch time.”*

**Meaningful**: The goal should be personally meaningful to you.

**Adaptive**: Does the goal help you to move your life forwards towards a direction that you want to go in?

**Realistic**: can you achieve the goal. Take into account your health, demands on your time, finances, and skills

**Time-bound**: set a day, date and time to do the goal

**Watch**

*Passengers on a bus*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z29ptSuoWRc>

Values and goals

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-lRbuy4XtA>

# Lesson summary

“*The goal of ACT is to create a rich and meaningful life, while accepting the pain that inevitably goes with it*” (Russ Haris).

Practice a little bit every day.



**References**

Kashdan, T., & Rottenberg, J. (2010). Psychological flexibility as a fundamental aspect of health Clinical Psychology Review, 30 (7), 865-878 DOI: [10.1016/j.cpr.2010.03.001](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2010.03.001)

Association for contextual behavioural science website (ACBS) <https://contextualscience.org/>