

9/The Importance of Values

I'm not sure what my values are. What can I do to get in touch with my values?

I get frustrated when I know I make choices that are in conflict with my values. What can I do to live according to my values in my daily life?

What do my values have to do with stress management?

I nearly flunked out of college my first semester and I'm starting to think it was because I valued socializing and fitting in with the crowd more than I valued my education. What can I do to be sure this doesn't happen again?

Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

REAL PEOPLE, REAL STORIES

Unchanging Principles Former President Jimmy Carter tells this story about his Plains High School superintendent, Miss Julia Coleman:

Remarkably, for a woman who never moved out of her small house in Plains, Georgia, her most important lesson was pertinent to every student who passed through her classrooms, regardless of which far-flung direction life took them. "We must adjust to changing times," she told us, "but cling to unchanging principles."

I never forgot that. She explained that we have to analyze new situations repeatedly, but whether it was choosing a spouse or selecting a career or making difficult decisions during times of stress or trial or temptation, we not only have to accommodate those new challenges but never deviate from certain ideals that we were taught, such as justice and integrity and peace and truthfulness and loyalty.

When I ran for president, I had many private conversations about what theme I should choose as my most ardent promise to the American people. I didn't want to go into complexities like supporting one specific House bill

or another in my bigger speeches. My competitors did, but I said instead that I would never lie and that I would adhere to the basic principles that Miss Julia and my parents taught me. I quoted Miss Julia in my inaugural address—"Adjust to changing times but cling to

unchanging principles"—committing myself and all Americans to real ideas of justice and truth, no matter what difficulties faced us.

Source: *The Right Words at the Right Time*, by M. Thomas (New York: Atria Books, 2002), pp. 44–46.

Student Objectives

Study of this chapter will enable you to:

1. Clarify and prioritize the values that are most important in your life.
2. Explain the connection between values clarification and stress management.
3. Explain the Niagara syndrome as it relates to feeling stuck in your life.
4. Differentiate between instrumental values and terminal values.
5. Participate in values clarification activities.

The Importance of Values

Have you ever stopped to really think about who you are or how you want to live your life? This is something we do not tend to dwell on. The answers aren't always clear or easy in this sometimes confusing world. We might have a good idea of some aspects of our life, such as what we want to do academically or professionally. But many parts of our lives remain undiscovered. This may stem from our fear of finding what might be there, or maybe we simply don't know how to look. Clarifying our values and understanding what is central to defining who we are as individuals, and then living those values in our daily lives, is essential to living with inner peace in an ever-changing world.

A **value** can be defined as a belief upon which one acts by preference.¹ Values guide our actions and give direction and meaning to life. When we place importance on something we cherish, we are valuing that trait, ideal, or characteristic. The decisions we make on a moment-to-moment basis create our future. Decision making comes down to how we value those things about which we are deciding. When you know what is most important to you, making the best decision is much easier. When you are unclear about what you value most, making the best decision is more difficult. The result is inner conflict and stress.

Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are.

—JOHN WOODEN

Understanding Your Values

Knowing our values, and then learning to live by them, is one of the most powerful ways to gain inner peace and decrease stress. This applies to our everyday choices as well as major decisions. Let's say you are taking a test in your math class and glance over to see your best friend, Rick, cheating. You clearly see the formulas written on his arm. When the professor isn't looking, Rick pushes up his sleeve and looks at his notes.

What would you do? Would you immediately report the cheating to your professor? Would you wait until after class to report your observations? Would you confront Rick after class? Or would you choose to do nothing, believing that in the end, cheating will hurt Rick and he will suffer the consequences eventually? Or maybe you feel no conflict and think Rick is smart for coming up with a clever strategy for cheating, and you decide you will try it yourself next time. Values are a strong determinant in the choices you make between competing alternatives.

People who value honesty feel distress when they cheat on a test, copy a friend's paper, or shoplift from the mall. When a person places a high value on family yet finds little time to spend with the family, stress is the likely outcome. When our actions are not in line with our values, the natural emotional consequence is stress and inner chaos.

By comparison, those who value the personality traits of altruism and compassion and who devote time to volunteer for a hospice program will find deep feelings of peace and

Altruism: Helping Others, It Feels Good

Students across the country are demonstrating their commitment to altruism, a value they hold high. Altruism, defined as helping or giving to others without thought of self-benefit, is put into action through student participation in community projects. Service-learning is now a student requirement in many universities. People become involved in community service for a range of reasons—for many, serving community is an altruistic act. “Today’s college students have a strong altruistic bent and are working in extraordinary ways to tackle some of our most pressing problems,” said Corporation for National and Community Service CEO David Eisner. Tufts University CIRCLE (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) conducts research on the civic and political engagement of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25. Here are some findings:

- Most young people who volunteer want to help other people. For example, young people who volunteered for environmental organizations generally did so to help other people (52%), not to address a social or political problem (23%).
- Young people who grow up in a household where someone volunteers are twice as likely to volunteer regularly.
- Being asked is the top reason motivating young people to volunteer (closely followed by “because it makes me feel good”).
- Eighty-seven percent of participants in the 2008 Civic Health Index Poll favored expanding national and community service programs so that every young American would have a chance to serve full-time for a year. Seventy-six percent would like service-learning to be required of all high school students.

© Yellowdog Productions/Gary Images



Many college students demonstrate altruism and a desire to help others by participating in service learning projects

Volunteering and Educational Performance: The Link

It turns out that community service doesn’t just feel good, it’s good for you. A study correlating community service with academic success found that students who maintain a weekly community service record are significantly more likely to succeed and have a higher grade point average than those who do none at all. Investigations on the effect of school-required community service on academic performance found positive links between the two. Students who participated in school-required community service were 22% more likely to graduate from college than those who did not.

Examples of community service projects include (but are not limited to):

- Cleaning a park
- Collecting much-needed items including clothes, shoes, food, blankets, etc.
- Getting involved with Habitat for Humanity
- Cleaning up the side of highways or other roads
- Reading to the elderly in nursing homes
- Helping out a local fire or police department
- Helping out at a local library
- Tutoring developmentally disabled children (for free)
- Participating in school activities that benefit the community

If altruism is a value you hold highly, consider the benefits of volunteering to help others, and yourself.

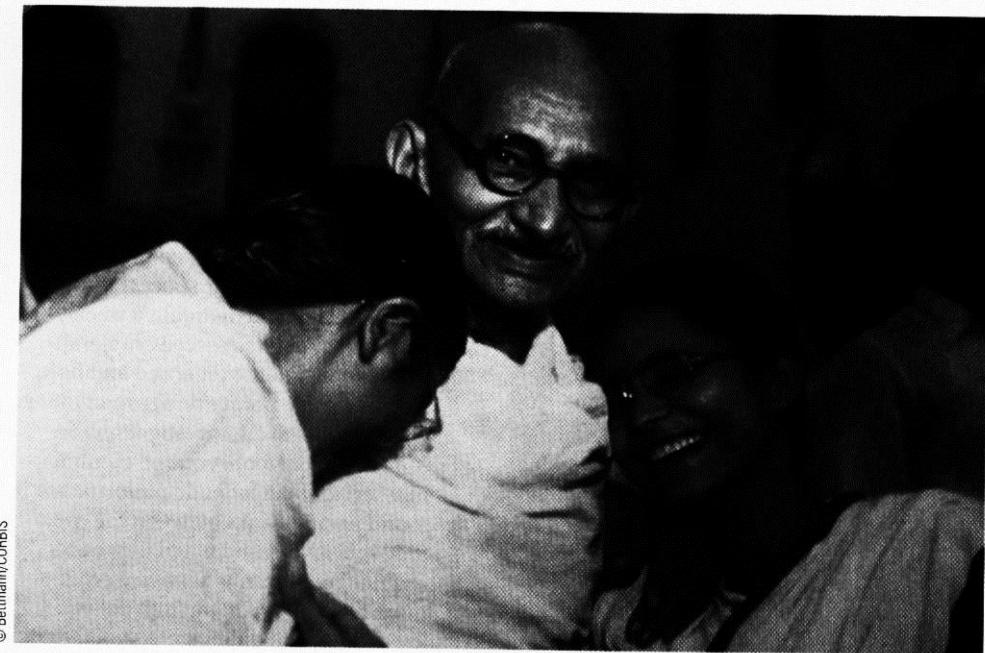
Source: “Community Participation,” Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Tufts University. Retrieved from <http://www.civicyouth.org>, October 11, 2008.

contentment because their actions are in line with their behavior. An individual who values health will gain peace and satisfaction by participating in regular exercise.

Think about the people we tend to respect the most in our culture. They usually are those who live by clearly defined values. Mahatma Gandhi, the great leader of India, is an example of someone who was entirely clear about his values, what was most important to him. Despite impossible odds, Gandhi’s commitment to live according to his highest values ultimately brought about the freeing of an entire nation. Gandhi knew that his choices and behavior followed his values. He was driven by his values instead of being driven by his emotions or the circumstances in his environment. In Gandhi’s words, “Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.”

This above all, to thine own self be true, for it must follow as dost the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.

—SHAKESPEARE



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Gandhi with his granddaughters.
His behaviors matched his values.

Discovering Your Values

One aspect of the complex Buddhist principle called **dharma** can be compared to a jigsaw puzzle. Consider the possibility that every person who has ever lived is a specific piece of an enormous puzzle of several billion pieces (one for each person). Consider, further, that your personal piece of this gigantic puzzle is a specific size and shape and fits correctly in only one precise place in this puzzle. Thus, you are not able to be another puzzle piece; you can be only your own.

Dharma teaches that when you find your place in the puzzle, you find satisfaction in life. You feel fulfilled, happy, and worthwhile.

When a person wanders aimlessly

through life not knowing where he or she fits in the puzzle, or tries to be someone else's puzzle piece, thinking that is the appropriate way to live, this person is likely to encounter confusion, unhappiness, and despair. Aimless people are not living according to their own puzzle piece, which is uniquely theirs and entirely necessary to discover. This is a source of stress.

What happens when we find our place in the puzzle? The natural consequences are inner peace, wisdom, and happiness. When we are certain about who we are, we feel fulfilled and satisfied with ourselves and the direction our life is going. We also understand that we are part of something bigger than ourselves. Every piece of the puzzle is necessary for the picture to be complete.

When we live by an agenda that is set by someone else, we easily get caught up in living someone else's life. One of the primary tasks involved in becoming an adult is to become more independent and self-directed in our thoughts and actions. Separating from the control and influence of parents and others and moving toward greater self-direction is a fundamental rite of passage into adulthood. Yet, when our values shift or when new values replace existing values, conflict and stress often result.

Cognitive Dissonance The truth is that most people do not pay much attention to their values until they find themselves in a situation where they feel in conflict with them. The concept of **cognitive dissonance** refers to stress caused by holding two contradictory feelings simultaneously and results from situations in which our behavior is inconsistent with our beliefs, values, or self-image.

The greatest dissonance arises when the two alternatives are fairly equal. Dissonance theory is especially relevant to decision making and problem solving. A person who has dissonant cognitions is said to be in a state of psychological dissonance, experienced as unpleasant psychological tension or stress.

As an example, Mary and her best friend Sally are shopping at the mall. Sally tries on a sweater and just *has* to have it. The problem is that she has no money. Sally puts on her coat over the sweater and walks out of the store quickly. As Sally makes her getaway, the security guard races up to Mary and demands to know Sally's name. Conflict between Mary's belief that she should be faithful to her friend and her belief that it is wrong to steal results in psychological dissonance and stress. Dissonance can be eliminated by doing one of the following:

- Reducing the importance of the conflicting beliefs
- Acquiring new beliefs that change the balance
- Removing the conflicting attitude or behavior

Think of an example when you experienced cognitive dissonance as a result of having to choose between competing values. When your behavior is guided by clear values, your stress

is reduced. Values clarification and acquisition will help you. Before explaining those concepts, we will introduce the Niagara syndrome.

The Niagara Syndrome

What happens when we don't discover or aren't certain of our guiding principles? What are the consequences of not knowing our inner nature or of following someone else's perfect way—which is not perfect for us? Anthony Robbins, a recognized authority on peak performance, describes what commonly happens when people don't take a good look at who they are and where they are going. He calls this the **Niagara syndrome**.

Life is like a river, and most people jump in the river of life without ever really deciding where they want to end up. So, in a short period of time, they get caught up in the current: current events, current fears, current challenges. When they come to forks in the river, they don't consciously decide where they want to go, or which direction is right for them. They merely "go with the flow." They become a part of the mass of people who are directed by the environment instead of by their own values. As a result, they feel out of control. They remain in this unconscious state until one day the sound of the raging water awakens them and they discover that they are five feet from Niagara Falls in a boat with no oars.

At this point, all they can say is, "Oh, shoot!" By then it's too late. They are going to take a fall. Sometimes it's an emotional fall. Sometimes it's a physical fall. Sometimes it's a financial fall. It is likely that whatever challenges you have in your life currently could have been avoided by some better decisions upstream.²

Stephen Covey relates a similar analogy of the person who spends his entire life climbing the ladder of success only to realize, when he arrives at the top, that his ladder is leaning against the wrong wall.³ Throughout life, we are faced with choices that determine whether we flow in a different river or climb a different ladder. When we base decisions and actions on our values, we end up where we want to be.

Source of Values

Where do our values come from? We tend to base our values on several sources—culture, parental and familial influences, teachers, friends, and other environmental influences such as television, the Internet, and a host of other media outlets. Most of our values remain at the unconscious level. We don't spend conscious time deciding if the things we see and hear are valuable to us.

Advertisers fully understand this principle. If they promote an idea for a sufficient amount of time and with enough appeal, they can convince some people to believe in nearly any value. Smoking is a good example of this. After scientific research showed the ill effects of tobacco on health, tobacco companies realized that using their product is not a healthy choice and that if people really believed this, they would not be inclined to use tobacco. But with shrewd advertising, designed to convince consumers of the value of smoking,

Author Anecdote

This Is My Life

On one occasion, when I was about 24, I was jogging, nearing the end of a fairly long run. The endorphins were cruising, second wind was well in place, and I was feeling very good. I was at that place where I felt like I could jog forever. I wasn't really thinking of anything in particular when an overwhelming thought suddenly occurred to me. It sounded something like, "Damn! This is my life I'm living here! My life is nobody else's. I can live only this life, and all I will ever have is my life. But when I go along with the crowd, I'm not living my life. When I follow the direction that my parents, my teachers, my coaches, and other well-meaning people think is best for me, I'm not living my own life. My life is mine to choose. And if I don't start choosing, it's going to pass me by."

Then and there, I knew I didn't want to come to the end of my life and think that I had settled for mediocrity, that I had gotten so caught up in the day-to-day stuff that I had lost all awareness of what was really important to me. I didn't want my final words, when the time came to depart from this life, to be "if only."

—MO

FYI

Advertising Affects Values

In 2008, McDonald's spent \$1.2 billion on advertising in the United States. That's 12 times as much as it spent in the 1970s. And Coca-Cola now spends 13 times more than it did back then. For every \$1 spent on ads that urge us to eat at least five fruits and vegetables a day, the food and beverage industries spend \$1,100 enticing us to buy fast-food meals, soft drinks, sugary breakfast cereals, and a host of other foods that have led to massive waist sprawl. Advertisers know how to appeal to our emotions and values.

Source: "Food Advertising Swamps Eat-Healthy Messages," *Nutrition Action Health Letter*, Center for Science in the Public Interest, January/February 2011: 11.



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America's traditional values have resulted in a successful, prosperous and highly stressed society.

millions of people have taken up a habit that most wish they had not started in the first place. If no one thought there was value in lighting up this plant and sticking it in the mouth to inhale the fumes that come from the burning plant, no one would choose to do it in the first place. The value placed on doing this determines whether a person will do it.

Values within Cultures

Culture is a pattern of learned behavior based on values, beliefs, and perceptions of the world. It is the lens through which we see the world. More important than the behavior is the underlying values that encourage or discourage that specific behavior.

Some cultures teach, for instance, that you should stay in control of your emotions at all times. You are taught to value this control and believe that crying or expressing anger is an indication of weakness and therefore to be avoided. You are taught that men should not cry. These cultural beliefs may increase your stress because you do not feel free to express your emotions.

Another cultural value relates to what is sometimes called the Protestant work ethic. If you value hard work to the extent that you don't feel good about yourself if you are not working and being productive, you may have difficulty participating in recreation and relaxation to manage your stress. If your identity becomes so closely linked with the work you do, you may lose sight of who you are when you are not working. Someone once said, "When who you are is what you do, then when you don't, you aren't."

Predominant Values in the United States Some of the common values in the United States are listed here.⁴ Although the United States is becoming an increasingly diverse culture and not every individual will place equal emphasis on these traditional values, studies indicate that these are accepted values in many segments of this society. While these values have contributed to a highly prosperous and advanced society, consider ways in which these values may also contribute to stress.

1. *Personal achievement and success.* What is good for the individual may be more important than what is good for the community or society. Emphasis is on power, competition, and wealth.
2. *Activity and work.* Hard work will be rewarded, and people who do not work hard are considered lazy, regardless of whether they have the same opportunities to achieve success.
3. *Moral orientation.* The tendency is to view things as good or bad, right or wrong, a pattern that reinforces stereotyping.
4. *Efficiency and practicality.* The short-term, quick fix is often seen as the solution to problems, rather than long-term solutions.
5. *Progress.* Change is often viewed as progress and technology is highly valued in this process. The focus is on the future rather than the present.
6. *Material comfort.* The consumer-oriented society values a high standard of living.
7. *Personal freedom and individualism.* Individual rights are highly valued, sometimes at the expense of the common good.
8. *External conformity.* Notwithstanding the value of personal freedom, pressure is applied to conform to the predominant European American, middle-class, Judeo-Christian values.
9. *Science and rationality.* The scientific, medical approach to health has led to expectations of high-tech, quick-fix solutions with less emphasis on individual responsibility.

Predominant Alaska Native Values Compare the predominant American values with those of the Alaska Native culture.⁵ Notice the similarities and the differences of the important values.

1. *Show respect to others.* Each person has a special gift.
2. *Share what you have.* Giving makes you richer.
3. *Know who you are.* You are a reflection on your family.
4. *Accept what life brings.* You cannot control many things.
5. *Have patience.* Some things cannot be rushed.
6. *Live carefully.* What you do will come back to you.
7. *Take care of others.* You cannot live without them.
8. *Honor your elders.* They show you the way in life.
9. *Pray for guidance.* Many things are not known.
10. *See connections.* All things are related.

Reflect on the Lakota values explained in the Culture Connection feature. Take special note of the values of kinship, respect, generosity, and sharing that dictate behavior and conduct. Think about the impact of these different values on the perception of stress in a culture. Take time to reflect on how your cultural beliefs impact your values.

CULTURE Connection The Lakota Perspective of Peace and Harmony

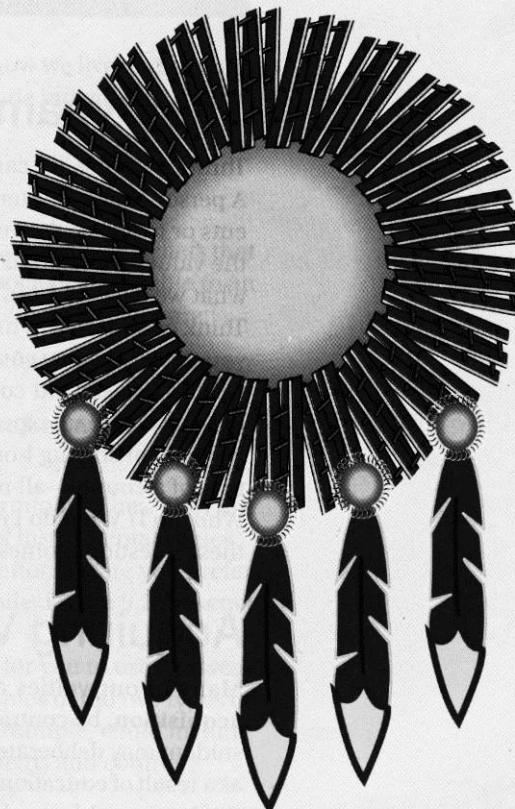
Leonard Little Finger, great-grandson of Chief Big Foot, who was massacred at Wounded Knee, shares his perspective on Lakota values as they relate to stress management:

Throughout the Lakota history, beginning when they were known as the People of the Seven Council Fires, they understood the relationships of being interconnected with all of creation and Creator, known to them as Tunkasila, Grandfather of all. They held paramount in their belief system that the created (people and all created) were all related to one another, and all existed within a sacred circle. The flame of the council fire was likened to the flame of the sun, and the flame represented the sum of a way of life within a sacred circle, to be attained in conduct, behavior, and spiritual existence supported by law and value systems.

The sacred pipe, Cannupa, integral to all since its inception, was brought by a sacred being known as the White Buffalo Calf Woman. The rituals and ceremonies such as Hanbelciya, Vision Quest, Inipi, Sweat Lodge, Wi'wangwaci, Sundance, and the other ceremonies are all inscribed in circles around the pipe. In addition, there are rings that denote the principal values including Kinship, Respect, Generosity, and Sharing to dictate behavior and conduct to all that is in this sacred circle.

Thus, (it dictates) the purpose is to fuse an individual with his or her counterparts in the community of mankind, as well as the larger community of all. Adherence to this allows a raising or expanding of individual consciousness known to the Lakota as "Natural Law." To learn and understand this ancient and traditional spiritual knowledge sheds the isolated, individual personality and restores a conscious harmony with the universe or "Sacred Circle of Life," or "Cangleska Wakan." Peace and harmony understandings replace stress and discord. The body, mind, and spirit become one in identity.

Source: "Personal communication," Leonard Little Finger, May 9, 2005.



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For Native Americans, the sacred circle represents harmony and oneness with the universe.

Stress Busting Behavior

CHILDHOOD VALUE MESSAGES

Many of our values have been “programmed” into our thinking and actions by the age of ten. What are the value messages you learned as a child? Check from the following list any that you learned as a child.

- If it's worth doing, it's worth doing well.
- Clean your plate; there are starving children in Africa!
- All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.
- Nice things happen to nice people
- The early bird gets the worm
- If you can't say something nice, don't say it at all.
- Do onto others as you would have them do onto you.

Now, it's your turn to write some of your childhood value messages. Put a check mark in the box if this is still your value today. Circle the messages that you want to let go or alter for greater contentment in life.

- _____.
- _____.
- _____.
- _____.

Reflect on the impact of these values. Whether these values are good or bad, useful or no longer useful, is your decision.

The Dynamic Quality of Values

Throughout life, we can benefit from taking time to clarify the values that guide our choices. A personal value system is not static. When we are young, our values mirror those of our parents or teachers. As we move through adolescence and young adulthood, we may challenge the values we learned as a child and develop more personal values resulting from a mix of what we learned from our parents and what we have chosen to embrace from our culture. Think of a value you have acquired that is new or different from a value your parents taught you. Has this value contributed to your well-being?

The 18-year-old college freshman away from home for the first time, the middle-aged executive who unexpectedly finds himself out of a job, the mother returning to college after 20 years of staying home to raise a family, and the elderly widower alone after 60 years as part of a couple—all may ask the same questions as they search for meaning in their lives. Who am I? What do I really want in life? What is the right path for me to take? The answer to these questions comes from understanding personal values and being true to them.

Acquiring Values

Many of our values are assimilated from family, friends, church, and society. **Values acquisition**, by contrast, means to consciously assume a new value. For example, a nursing student may deliberately acquire the professional value of caring or respect for human dignity as a result of education and experience. Or maybe for the first time, you have met someone you think you could spend the rest of your life with. You consciously nurture the values of love and commitment as the value of independence becomes less important to you. Values continually evolve as an individual matures in the ability to think critically and morally.

The seven steps in values acquisition are as follows:⁶

Step 1: The value is chosen freely.

Step 2: The value is chosen from among alternatives.

Step 3: The value is chosen after careful consideration of each alternative.

- Step 4: The value is prized and cherished.
- Step 5: The value is publicly affirmed.
- Step 6: The value is acted upon.
- Step 7: The value is part of a pattern of repeated action (the value is incorporated into the individual's lifestyle).

It is better to conquer yourself than to win a thousand battles. Then the victory is yours. It cannot be taken from you, not by angels or by demons, heaven or hell.

—BUDDHA

Beliefs about Values

To make positive change in the direction of our own true path, we must firmly maintain several beliefs in our mind to support us as we begin our journey.

1. We must first believe that we are capable of changing our thoughts and actions. Regardless of our current situation, we have the capacity and the ability to make any changes that we think are appropriate.
2. We also must have the belief that if we are going to create long-term change in our lives, we are responsible. Nobody else is going to do it for us. It requires our own decision, our own motivation, and our own action.
3. We must have the belief that if we set our sights in a new direction, and then move confidently in that direction, we will successfully arrive near the place we wanted to go. Henry David Thoreau wrote of his time at Walden Pond:

I learned this, at least, by my experiment; that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with success in uncommon hours.

4. We must be clear that our values determine our actions and behaviors. We may not be clear about what we value, but our choices depend on what we believe is most important to us. All decision making is based on values clarification.

Values are the foundation for determining who we are and how we live and strongly influence the knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs that make us unique individuals.

Types of Values

Instrumental and Terminal Values Values are explained as enduring beliefs that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence. Two kinds of values are:⁷

1. **Instrumental values**, which consist primarily of personal characteristics and character traits.
2. **Terminal values**, which are the outcomes we work toward or we believe are most important and desirable.

Instrumental values involve ways of being that help us arrive at terminal values. They are ways of triggering our terminal values. Figure 9.1 provides examples of instrumental values.

Terminal values are end states of feeling. These comprise the emotional state you prefer to experience. Terminal values make our lives fulfilling and worthwhile. Figure 9.2 presents examples of terminal values.

The two listings in Figures 9.1 and 9.2 appear in a checklist format for you to use to assess your values. These lists aren't exhaustive. Rather, each provides examples of the two types of values and indicates how they differ. Additional terminal values, for example, could include among many others, good health, power, passion, adventure, spontaneity, and control.

Values Clarification

Finding out what is most important to us may seem like an overwhelming task because we have so many things to consider. **Values clarification**—the process of clarifying and applying what we truly value—is helpful in reducing the stress that comes from making choices that are inconsistent with our values. Values clarification is a cognitive process that helps close the gap between what we value and what we actually do.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Ambitious (hard-working, aspiring)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Broad-minded (open-minded)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Capable (competent, effective)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cheerful (lighthearted, joyful)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Clean (neat, tidy)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Courageous (standing up for your beliefs)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Forgiving (willing to pardon others)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Helpful (working for the welfare of others)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Honest (sincere, truthful)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Imaginative (daring, creative)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Independent (self-reliant, self-sufficient)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Intellectual (intelligent, reflective)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Logical (consistent, rational)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Loving (affectionate, tender)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Obedient (dutiful, respectful)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Polite (courteous, well-mannered)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Responsible (dependable, reliable)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Self-controlled (restrained, self-disciplined)

FIGURE 9.1 Instrumental Values Checklist

<input type="checkbox"/>	A world at peace (free of war and conflict)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Family security (taking care of loved ones)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Freedom (independence, free choice)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Equality (brotherhood, equal opportunity for all)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Self-respect (self-esteem)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Happiness (contentedness)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wisdom (a mature understanding of life)
<input type="checkbox"/>	National security (protection from attack)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Salvation (saved, eternal life)
<input type="checkbox"/>	True friendship (close companionship)
<input type="checkbox"/>	A sense of accomplishment (a lasting contribution)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Inner harmony (freedom from inner conflict)
<input type="checkbox"/>	A comfortable life (a prosperous life)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mature love (sexual and spiritual intimacy)
<input type="checkbox"/>	A world of beauty (beauty of nature and the arts)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pleasure (an enjoyable leisurely life)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Social recognition (respect, admiration)
<input type="checkbox"/>	An exciting life (a stimulating active life)

FIGURE 9.2 Terminal Values Checklist

Clarifying and prioritizing values has great benefit. Many companies and corporations around the world have gone through the same process of finding what is most important to the company and then striving to live according to that understanding. The end result is commonly called a mission statement or a constitution.

Creating Your Personal Constitution

The following three-step process will guide you in clarifying and applying your key values. You will begin by identifying your values, next you will prioritize your values, and finally, you will write a clarifying paragraph for each of your top values. Complete the Stress Management Lab at the end of this chapter as you move through this process.

Step 1: Identify Your Values Begin by completing the following activities—Instrumental and Terminal Values Selection, and Your Funeral.

Activity #1: Instrumental and Terminal Values Selection Review the listings of Instrumental and Terminal Values found in Figures 9.1 and 9.2. Put a checkmark by each of the listed values that are important for you. Feel free to include additional values that are of importance to you.

Activity #2: Your Funeral Stephen Covey suggests another way to uncover the things that matter most to you. With your eyes closed, imagine in your mind the following scenario while someone else reads it to you:

See yourself going to the funeral of a loved one. Picture yourself driving to the funeral parlor or chapel, parking the car, and getting out. As you walk inside the building, you notice the flowers and the soft organ music. You see the faces of friends and family you pass along the way. You feel the sense of sorrow that permeates the room for losing this special person. You also sense the shared joy of having known this person that radiates from the hearts of all the people there.

As you walk down to the front of the room and look inside the casket, you suddenly come face to face with yourself. This is your own funeral and all of these people have come to honor you. They are here to express their feelings of love and appreciation for your life.

As you take a seat and wait for the services to begin, you look at the program in your hand. There are to be four speakers. The first speaker is someone from your immediate family—perhaps your mom or dad, a brother, sister, aunt or uncle, a cousin or grandparent. The second speaker is one of your best friends, someone who is going to tell about the kind of person you were. The third speaker is from your work or an instructor in your school. The fourth is someone from your church or community organization where you have been involved in service.

Now think deeply. What would you like each of these speakers to say about you and your life? What kind of son or daughter would you like their words to reflect? What kind of friend would you like to have others say you were? Were you there for others when they needed you? Did you care for them and trust them and have a deep respect for them? What would your best friend say about you at your own funeral? What about someone who is a neighbor who knows of you, but doesn't know you really well? What contributions would you like them to have said you made to other people's lives? What achievements would you want them to remember?⁸

Based on the Instrumental and Terminal Values and Your Funeral activities, record your results in the Stress Management Lab at the end of the chapter. In no particular order, what came to you as being your highest values. Write down all the values that came to mind. It doesn't matter how many you have. What matters is that they are yours. Look back at the Tombstone Test you completed as an assessment in Chapter 2. Compare what you wrote then to the values you have identified in this chapter.

You may find some inconsistencies—you may find that you have some values that you are not doing anything about at the present time. That is okay. List them anyway, if they are important to you. For example, you might value your health highly, but you may not be doing anything currently to improve your level of health and well-being. You still hold health as a high personal value.

Now you have a list of all your important values. Once you have identified your highest values, you can proceed to Step 2.

Step 2: Prioritize Your Values Next, prioritize your list of values in order of importance to you. The item that is the most important goes at the top of the list. The next important value goes next, and so on through your entire list.

You may ask why this is an important step. *If you are clear about the order of your highest values, no decision is difficult.* This holds true for life's big decisions as well as the little decisions. To illustrate, imagine that you have, as one of your highest values, seeking excitement and being a thrill-seeking risk taker. You also may have security and stability as another value, but you have determined that you do not hold this latter value as highly as the first. If you happen to be in school and are studying to be an accountant who will spend most of your professional life sitting behind desks crunching numbers, you probably will find little satisfaction in that career path.

Imagine that you were offered a high-paying job requiring you to live in another country where you don't know the language and don't know anyone there. Whether you would accept the job depends on which values you ranked the highest. If you value adventure and risk taking along with an increase in your finances more highly than some of your other values, you probably would consider the proposal. If you value security, safety, and a rich family life more highly, you probably would pass up this job offer.

Knowing the order of values applies in making smaller decisions as well. Imagine that one of your values is high-level health and well-being. Another one of your values is that of being social and having a good time with friends. One of your friends calls you and says she is having a party on Friday. You know what kind of parties she throws: a lot of drinking and all the other things that go along with plentiful alcohol. Whether you will go is an easy decision, depending on which value you hold more highly. If you value socializing over your good health, the obvious choice is to go to the party. If you value your health more highly than socializing, you probably won't show up at the party, or you might decide to go as the designated driver.

How you prioritize your values is up to you. *This must be your decision.* The order of your values probably will change as you go through different stages of your life. For example, while

"To be nobody but myself
in a world which is doing
its best night and day to
make me everybody else—
means to fight the hardest
battle which any human
being can fight, and never
stop fighting."

—E. E. CUMMINGS

Author Anecdote

Finding the Worth of Values

One day in class we were discussing this idea of prioritizing our values in a way that would propel someone toward the most fulfilling life. The reason this is so important became apparent. One student went through the entire process of finding her highest values, putting them in order, and then attaching a clarifying paragraph to each value. As I looked at her list, I saw that she had some major discrepancies between her values and her daily behavior. I also noticed that both her values and her behaviors were mediocre. The number-one value in her life was her dog. This was the most important thing to her. She really loved her dog, and I respected that fully, but she seemed to be setting herself up for long-term depression if something were to happen to the dog.

The other values she listed were uninspiring by any standards. Her life was similarly uninspiring. She was letting life happen to her like waves knocking her over, one after another. She was not the captain of her own ship. If she would have looked at her values and asked herself, "What would my values have to be to create my ultimate destiny, to be the best person I could possibly be, to have the most impact in my lifetime?" she probably would have made a far different list of values, in an order that enabled her, and motivated her, to rise above the mediocre level in which she was currently functioning. She would have charted a different destiny for herself.

—MO

you are in school and perhaps not married, you might not rank a family relationship as highly as you rank your academic development. Later on, as you perhaps create a family and develop your career, these values will become more important to you. These might be on your list now, but not ranked as highly.

Anthony Robbins suggests that you ask this important question: "If I were to design my own life, if I were going to create a set of values that shape the ultimate destiny I desire, what would they need to be?" He asks us to look at our values and see if we can rearrange them (change their order), add others and subtract some, in order to have the largest impact on our own lives.⁹

What would be the single most important value that would propel you toward living your life the most fully? What would be the next most important value that you could integrate into your life that would have the greatest positive effect? Perhaps you have always felt that freedom is the most important thing to you. And maybe this freedom has resulted in a level of loneliness that is uncomfortable for you. If you were to include the value of intimacy as a higher value than freedom, your new focus would fill that gap you feel is currently lacking.

You now have a list ranking your important values starting with your single most important value. Again, you may or may not be living your life currently as a reflection of your prioritized values. The important learning in this step is to become aware of the values most important to you.



TIME TIP

"I made a list of the top ten things I value in my life and wrote them on a card. I carry the card with me every day. When I have trouble deciding what the most important use of my time is, I look at my card. This has helped me prioritize and has saved me so much stress and worry. I can spend my time on the things I most value."

—Jackie W.

Step 3: Write a Clarifying Paragraph for Your Values In this step, describe what it means to be living your important values. Write a clarifying paragraph for each of your top values. Write these clarifying paragraphs as affirmations. An **affirmation** has the following three characteristics:

1. Write your affirmation as a *positive statement*. If one of your values happens to be that of maintaining high-level health, your statement might say: "I eat food that is healthy for my body, I exercise regularly, and I rest my body well to rejuvenate and recharge myself." You would not write your statement this way: "I don't put bad food in my body. I never go through a day without exercising, and I don't let stress get the upper hand." We are developing a mental image or picture of what it would be like in reality. It may not be happening right now, but if we have the correct picture clearly in our minds, we are much more likely to act on that picture. This happens best when we write positive statements.
2. Write your clarifying affirmations as "*I* messages," as the previous examples demonstrate. When you put yourselves into the affirmation, your mind receives the message that you are the one who is making the change.
3. Write your clarifying paragraph in the *present tense*, as if it is happening currently. For example: "I eat food that is healthy for my body, I exercise regularly, and I rest my body well to rejuvenate and recharge myself." This is instead of: "I will eat healthy food. I will exercise. I will do things to manage my stress levels." The psychology behind this principle is similar to the other two: When we tell our mind, again and again, that something is happening currently, just like the advertisers do, we tend to believe it and will be more likely to act in ways that assume this is the case. When we place the realization of that value in the future, our mind considers that it will happen in the future, not the present.

Don't be discouraged if you write a clarifying paragraph and realize that this does not represent your current reality. That is okay. You are developing a vision to guide you.

Values clarification and acquisition do not constitute a once-in-a-lifetime activity but, rather, an ongoing process of conscious reflection and deliberate action for sorting out what is most important to you. Values are more than ideals we'd like to attain; they should be reflected in the way we live each day.¹⁰ The end result is increased awareness, focused direction, and greater inner peace.

The work of Ben Franklin and other wise individuals of his time have left a lasting legacy that affects nearly every aspect of our life today. After many months of hard work, the founding fathers of our country created the U.S. Constitution. This document of national values guides the creation of all laws that are made in every legislative body in the entire country.

Similarly, on a personal level, our own "personal constitution" can be our inner guide to all decisions we make during our lifetime. This process isn't easy—which probably is why so few people take the time to undertake it. Going with the flow and watching to see where the current takes us is easier. But those who go through this process, be it a major corporation, a family, or an individual, find tremendous value in selecting the path of their choosing. They find their own piece of the puzzle and experience the joy and satisfaction of a fulfilling life.

Conclusion

A ship without a rudder wanders aimlessly in the sea. Similarly, if we don't know why we are alive and what is most important to us, we spend a lot of time throughout our lives wondering and wandering aimlessly. Values clarification and acquisition put the rudder in the water and help us move in the direction that is best for each of us on a personal level.

The goal of values clarification is to facilitate self-understanding. This dynamic and ongoing process results in behaviors that are consistent with values. Actions are based, either consciously or unconsciously, on values. There is tremendous power in discovering and living according to our highest values. Cognitive dissonance is reduced. Inner peace is the natural consequence.

Your values become the basis for every decision that you make. Your task now is to follow through, as Ben Franklin did, and internalize your values. By looking at your values often and thinking deeply about what they mean to you, little by little these values will become part of you. They will guide you to become the person you most want to be. You will experience the type of life you really want. You will be the captain of your ship.

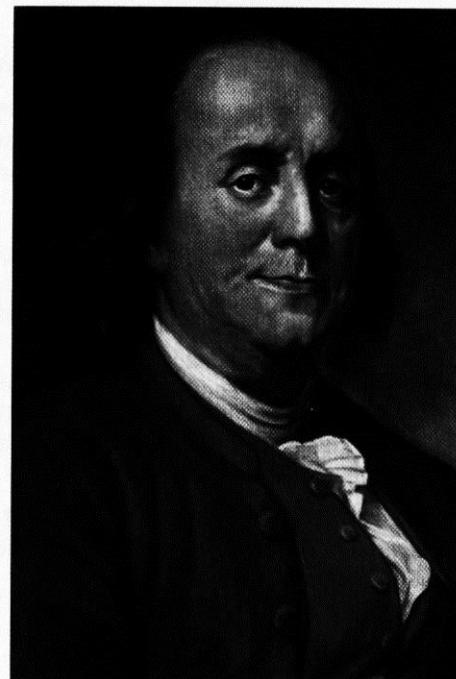
FYI

Ben Franklin's 13 Virtues

After nearly a half-century of regular practice, Benjamin finally recognized that he had realized his values. Ben Franklin showed us how powerful this process can be. When he was 27 years old, he had a midlife crisis. While working in a printing plant in Philadelphia, he felt like he hadn't accomplished anything. At that time, he asked himself some important questions that made him contemplate what his life was all about. After careful reflection, he discovered 13 values that were supremely important to him, and by living according to what he thought each one meant would cause him to, in his words, "become a perfect mortal." In his autobiography he called these his 13 virtues.

After Ben Franklin had decided on his highest values, he described each one in a short paragraph so he was absolutely clear what each of them meant to him. Then he organized his life in 13-week cycles. Each week he mentally focused on one of his values as the underlying foundation for all of his activity. He was trying to pull his performance in line with his values.

At the age of 79, Ben Franklin wrote that he had come to an important conclusion: He said he believed he had achieved oneness with his governing values. His values and his behavior were one and the same. He had earned the right to the consequential feeling of inner peace. As a result, Ben Franklin contributed a great deal to make the United States a better country, his own life more productive, and our lives happier. He created a lifetime of achievement and success based on how he lived according to the values that mattered most to him.



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Ben Franklin spent his life striving to live according to his highest values.

Source: *Autobiography*, by B. Franklin (London: MacMillan, 1993).

The measure of a man's real character is what he would do if he knew he would never be found out.

—THOMAS B. MACAULAY