

Fulfillment and Values

In its simplest expression, a fulfilling life is one in which important values are honored each and every day. Those questions we posed at the very beginning of this manual all point to values. Remember your Co-Active® Coaching Fundamentals course? There was an exercise when you were asked to find a peak experience, a time in your life when you felt fully alive, resonating with your world like the vibration of a tuning fork when you strike a strong, clear note. Who, if anyone, were you with? What were you doing? By mining this one experience, you can uncover a number of important values.

In this Fulfillment course we introduce a variety of techniques — including “peak experience” — for helping clients discover their values. We sometimes call this process “values clarification.” It’s important to note that the values are already there, inside the client. They are not ideals to be worked on or acquired; they are expressed in the living of a person’s life. If they are important values and they are NOT being expressed in the person’s life, dissonance will show up. Maybe it would be more useful to call this process “values discovery” or “mining” or “unearthing,” because the process we go through is designed to help clients experience their values as opposed to analyzing them or listing them as words on a page. The more clients feel their values as part of their internal being, the more they can make choices based on those core values.

For the coach then, this process heightens your Level 3 listening skills because clients are so close to their own experience that they really need a coach to help them notice when the tuning fork of their life is resonating — or not, to notice when the light is brightening — or dimming. Whatever image works for you, your role is to be aware of the aliveness in your client.

Because values are so personal and sometimes difficult to articulate exactly, we recommend using word strings. For example, many people might choose freedom as a value. For one person it might be freedom/independence/adventure and for another person it might be freedom/self-expression/outrageous creativity. Same starting point, but very different meaning, so it’s important for you, the coach, to stay curious and dig deeper. We also encourage looking for those expressions that are personal. Standard values lists can be almost useless. Values like “coyote” or “cinnamon/chenille/candlelight” don’t show up on those lists. You might not have a clue what they mean to your client and the good news is, you don’t need to. Your job as coach is to keep mining, looking for jewels that make the client’s life light up.

Most likely you will begin the values clarification work at your initial discovery or intake session with your clients. It’s important to remember that this work just starts the process. Clients are living their values or not, every moment of every day of their lives. Values may not be visible, but the effect and impact are very visible. In an ongoing coaching relationship, there is ample opportunity to continue mining for values, polishing what you both found before and uncovering

those hard to expose invisible values — the ones that are so much a part of the air the client breathes that they aren't often noticed at first.

As clients gain more clarity about their values, the values serve as guideposts on their journey. Challenging decisions become clearer when the coach asks values-based questions. “Will this decision honor your values? What values will you honor by choosing A or B? What values would your Captain take a stand for in this situation?”