



## What Values are Not

### 1. Values are not goals:

Goals are things you can obtain while walking a valued path. Goals are concrete achievable events, situations, or objects. They can be completed, possessed or finished. Goals are not the same as directions, which cannot be completed.

When goals are confused with directions (also known as values), once they have been achieved, further progress tends to cease. This tends to happen often, which is one reason why anxiety and depression sometimes follows on from things, which one would 'expect' to feel happy about. For example, if getting a promotion at work is an end in itself, there is likely to be an enormous loss of direction once the promotion is achieved. Someone who gets a promotion as an end in itself, or as a way to reach other goals (such as, feeling better about oneself) may be left feeling unfulfilled by their achievement.

Goals can be motivating and empowering once the distinction between goals and values is clear. It sometimes helps (after a direction is chosen) to focus on goals as a way of keeping on track. Goals can provide an anchor for the direction we are heading in, a representation of what is important to us. If you are standing in a valley surrounded by mountains, hills, trees, and rock formations with only a compass, it may help to sight along your chosen direction to a prominent landmark and then head for that.

Similarly, a person who values, say helping others, might get a degree to be in a better position to help others. Immediately after getting the degree there will be lots of interesting and vital things to do that are not about the degree but about the value, that of helping others.

### 2. Values are not feelings:

Sometimes there are feelings which accompany our valued choices. For example, many people feel a sense of vitality when their actions line up with their chosen values. However, that doesn't mean that values are feelings. It also doesn't mean that values are doing what feels good, particularly in the short term.

For example, a person with a drug addiction feels good when using drugs. That doesn't mean being high is a valued outcome.

If that person valued close intimate relationships, but taking steps in that direction made them feel anxious and vulnerable, they may start using drugs again. If the person stops using drugs and begins to work on having close intimate relationships, they won't 'feel good' anytime soon, but they may feel less anxious and vulnerable.

So walking in a valued direction may not feel good but it will 'work good' or 'live good'. Furthermore, feelings are not something you can control, while choosing a direction is something you can control. Therefore, statements like 'I value feeling good about myself' are based on a misunderstanding of values.

### 3. Values are not outcomes

Although living your life according to your values often leads to wonderful outcomes, they are not a sneaky way to 'getting what you want' in the concrete world. Values are directions, not outcomes.

For example, suppose you value having a loving relationship with your sister, but your sister wants nothing to do with you. In this case your values may not manifest in ways that others can see, but the value is continuously present. So values might not always produce outcomes, but that does not mean it is no longer something important to you.

### 4. Values are not in the future:

Although values are seemingly about the 'future', in fact, they are really about the present. This is because the very instant that you choose your values; you are taking a valued path. Once you have chosen your values, the process you take to head in that direction is all values-laden. Having a direction allows a coherent trip to be taken; and it is this trip that is actually worthwhile.

Choosing a valued direction is like a trip down a never-ending path; it is not about an outcome, but rather it is about the journey you take on your way there. For example, if you value being a loving person, no matter how many loving things you do, there are always more loving things to do. The benefits of this path are not in the future; you get to have a life that is about loving relationships now.



## Why is it so important to establish value-centered goals?

- While goals may change, values are more often anchoring and consistent.
- Values connect us to a greater purpose in life.
- Values differentiate the important from the unimportant.
- Values are an inexhaustible source of motivation and energy.
- Values allow us to live a dynamic and vital existence.
- Values drive our lives in a positive direction and move us forward.
- Values provide an internal and personal reference for what is useful, beneficial, and desirable.

As you go through the values list below, you may find that while some values will have little significance to you, there are those that just jump out and resonate strongly with you. You might feel, 'Yes, this value is part of me'. This values list is merely a guide and is certainly not exhaustive, so feel free to add unlisted values to your own list as well.

## Values

Identify the values that are most important to you. Rank your top three values

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pride and dignity         | <input type="checkbox"/> Independence                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Loyalty                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Open-mindedness           | <input type="checkbox"/> Financial stability             | <input type="checkbox"/> Curiosity and openness             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meaningful friendships    | <input type="checkbox"/> Courage                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal growth                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flexible thinking         | <input type="checkbox"/> Contributing to the world       | <input type="checkbox"/> Travelling and exploring the world |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy relationships     | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-acceptance                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Fairness                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competence                | <input type="checkbox"/> Living ethically                | <input type="checkbox"/> Being creative                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional stability       | <input type="checkbox"/> Openness to new learning        | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling a sense of achievement     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-sufficiency          | <input type="checkbox"/> Living a healthy life           | <input type="checkbox"/> Experiencing positive emotions     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Respect for others        | <input type="checkbox"/> Being part of a greater purpose | <input type="checkbox"/> Being a caring parent (or child)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having a job with purpose | <input type="checkbox"/> Spirituality                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Integrity                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caring for others         | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy boundaries              | <input type="checkbox"/> Equality                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being productive          | <input type="checkbox"/> Connectedness to others         | <input type="checkbox"/> Embracing life                     |

