Find your deeper meaning

Creating a Meaningful life

Your values are the beliefs that define what is most important to you - they are your heart's deepest desires for how you want to live your life. Values are not about what you want to accumulate or achieve, rather they act as guides for behaviours and decision-making. They are about how you want to authentically live your life on an ongoing basis.

Values are a set of attitudes, unique to each individual, which direct your behaviour and guide the way you look at the world. Individuals seek to achieve specific goals in life, and ideally your goals are guided by your values. For example, for some people having a close family life is the most important value to them. Therefore they believe that spending time with their family is more important than working long hours. Looking back at their life, they hope to see that their family was their top priority.

Conversely, individuals who may hold a more work-oriented value system may believe that they need to be available to work long hours even if that means time away from their family. Clarifying your values can help you prioritize your life in order to align you with a truly fulfilling life.

Our values can often be a strong motivating force in guiding behaviour change. For example, your values may be part of the reason why you are willing to do this program (e.g. relationships, work, health, leisure, spirituality,

kr	nowledge, personal development).		
Take a moment to answer the following questions:			
1.	What is most important to you?		
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2.	What gives your life meaning?		
3.	If you weren't struggling with your thoughts, feelings, worries etc., what would you channel your time and energy into doing?		
4.	What do you want your life to stand for?		



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:

you get to have a life that is about loving relationships now.

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;

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



