



# Discovering your values

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## DISCOVERING YOUR VALUES

Are you interested in personal growth, insight, awareness, and acceptance of who you are?

One key area for exploration to assist in this journey is to gain clarity on your values.

Enjoy this booklet, follow along with the exercises and activities, and download the free resources.

In this article you will:

- Learn the difference between values and goals.
- Discover what your values are.
- Discover your shared family values.
- Evaluate if you are living in alignment with your values.
- Reflect on the values passed to you across the generations.
- Gain clarity on what values you want to pass on to the next generation.

### VALUES VS GOALS

I love a good goal! And I love helping people set goals and work towards them.

But I also know that it is helpful to understand the difference between GOALS and VALUES.

Your GOAL is something specific that you and your family are working towards, to achieve, complete or aim for.

Your VALUES are how you and your family want to live as human beings. Your desired behaviours in the world. What you stand for. How you want to be in relationships. Your compass in life.

For example, you may have a value of being loving and caring in your couple relationship, and you may have a goal to show you care by sending flowers on your wedding anniversary every year.

The value of being loving and caring is ongoing throughout your life, but the goal of buying flowers is a choice you make.

Other examples...

- To go to the gym every day is a goal. To care about your health is a value.
- To own a house is a goal. To support and care for your family is a value.



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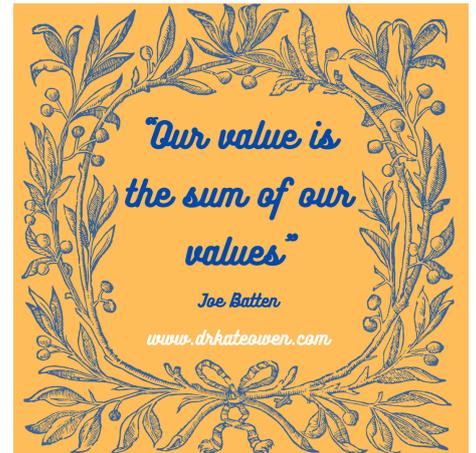
Values are your desires for the way you want to interact with and relate to the world, other people, and yourself. They are important principles that guide you and motivate you as you move through life.

It can be challenging trying to gain clarity on your values. And there is no "right way" to identify your values.

Some people like to think about all the domains in their life and determine their values in relation to those domains.

Others prefer to have 5 to 10 top values that they act upon across all domains of their life.

Which do you prefer?



### Activity One:

*Step 1 - If you would like a list of domains to reflect on:*

- Family relationships
- Couple relationship
- Parenting
- Friendships
- Career
- Education and personal growth
- Fun
- Spirituality
- Community and the environment
- Health

*Step 2 - Ask yourself these questions:*

Q: What is important to you in each of these areas?

Q: What personal qualities do you bring to these areas that you are happy about?

Q: What personal qualities would you like to further develop in each domain?

Q: How would you interact and behave if you were the "ideal you" in that domain?

*Step 3 - Now pick your top three values in each of the domains.*

If you prefer a worksheet, [download this activity from The Happiness Trap website.](#)

### Activity Two:

For those who prefer to live by 5 to 10 top guiding values, [visit the ACT Mindfully website and complete this Values Checklist activity.](#)

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### DISCOVERING YOUR FAMILY VALUES

The research shows that people who write about their values just once, for ten minutes, show benefits months or even years later (Kelly McGonigal, 2016). This is a great reason to spend time with your partner and family having these discussions.

Moreover, if you are raising teenagers, this is a great conversation to have as they start to develop a sense of who they are, and what they see as important to them in their life.

Some great questions from Russ Harris (2009) to get the conversation started include:

- Deep in your heart, what do you want your life to be about?
- What do you want to stand for?
- What do you want to do with your time on this planet?
- What qualities and strengths do you want to cultivate?
- How do you want to behave in relationships?
- What truly matters to you?

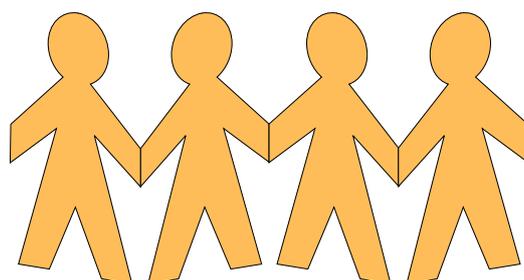
Grab a pen and paper and ask each family member to write down the first things that comes to their mind.

Let your family know that there is no right or wrong answer.

Take turns listening to each person's answers.

Write down the commonalities and overlap in values to become clearer on what your shared family values are.

You might even discuss how these values came to be important to your family.



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### LIVING IN ALIGNMENT WITH YOUR VALUES

How close are you to living in alignment with your values?

#### Activity One: The Bull's Eye

In Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), The Bull's Eye activity helps you to evaluate where you stand today in relation to living in alignment with your values.

Imagine the centre of the dartboard means that you are living fully by your values. Evaluate how close to the Bull's Eye are you - are you living close to your values or distant from what is important to you?

Which domains or values in your life need some attention so that you can live more aligned with what you see as important?

If you prefer a worksheet to perform the exercise, [you can download the Clarifying Your Values worksheet from The Happiness Trap website here.](#)

#### Activity Two: Scaling

You might prefer a scaling exercise instead.

*Step 1 - Use scaling for each of your values.*

- One on the scale represents "I have lost touch with my values".
- Ten on the scale represents "I am living fully by my values".
- Evaluate each of your identified values in relation to this scale.

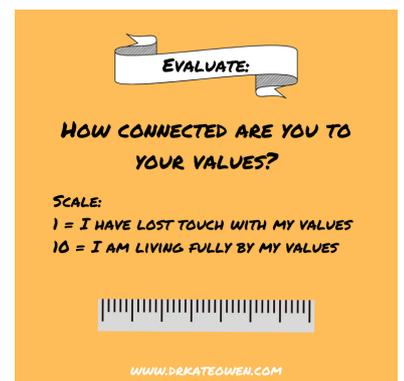
*Step 2 - Pay close attention to the values that you rate high on the scale*

- Determine what is working well so that you can continue.
- Who and what is helping you to live in alignment?

*Step 3 - Reflect on the values that you rated lower on the scale.*

- Identify what is getting in the way of you living in alignment with your values.
- Consider what actions you can take to reduce the influence of these obstacles.

You can also use this scale for evaluating family values. For example, if your family has identified that living a life of gratitude is important, then sit down and ask each family member where they would rate themselves on the scale as an individual in relation to that value, and where they would rate the family in relation to that value. The aim is not for consensus on numbers, but rather to stimulate a meaningful conversation with your family.



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### VALUES ACROSS THE GENERATIONS

Have you ever stopped to think where your values may have come from?

Often we are handed down family values and beliefs from our ancestors as well as creating values from our own experiences in life.

If you were to think back across your family history:

Q: What values have been passed down across the generations?

Q: What strengths and resiliences and resources?

Q: How did those values come to be created in the first place?

Q: How important are these family values to you today? Why?

You can also have these conversations with your partner to understand each other on a more meaningful level.

Be curious about each other's family history and how values have been handed down across the generations.

You can also have these conversations with your children so that they connect to their family history and connect more meaningfully to their individual and family values.

### VALUES FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

You can make choices about what family values, patterns, rules, strengths, and experiences you wish to hand down to your children and the next generation in society.

So consider these questions:

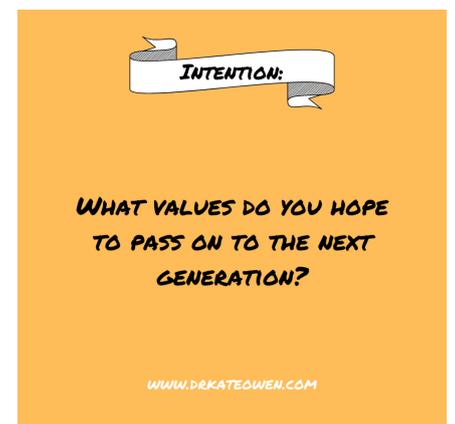
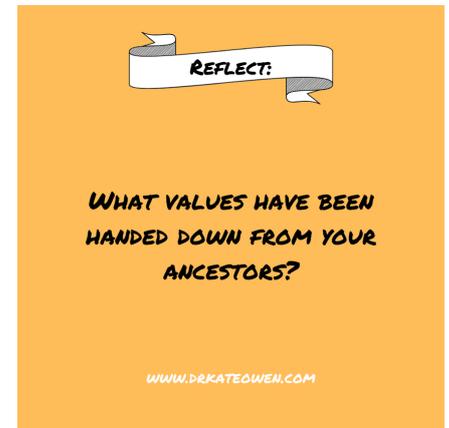
Q: When you are no longer on this Earth, how do you want to be remembered?

Q: What qualities do you want people to remember you for and admire you for?

Q: How would these qualities about you have made an impact on other people's lives? In what way?

Q: What can you do today that will contribute to this story being told about you?

Q: What qualities do you want your children to learn from you and take forward for future generations?



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### FIVE KEY POINTS ABOUT VALUES

In conclusion, Russ Harris (2009) outlines five key points about values.

1. Values are here and now; goals are in the future.
  - At any given moment you can choose to act on your values or neglect them.
2. Values never need to be justified.
  - Values are simply statements about what is meaningful to us.
3. Values often need to be prioritised.
  - Because all our values are available at each moment, we need to prioritise which values we act on.
4. Values are best held lightly.
  - We want to be aware of our values but we do not want to fuse with them so that they feel oppressive and restrictive.
5. Values are freely chosen.
  - We do not have to act in this way; we choose to because it matters to us.

### References and Resources

- Harris, R. (2009). ACT Made Simple: An Easy-To-Read Primer on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy.
- McGonical, K. (2016). The Upside Of Stress: Why Stress Is Good For You, And How To Get Good At It.
- <https://www.actmindfully.com.au/>
- <https://thehappinesstrap.com/>

*This booklet is educational in nature and does not constitute therapeutic advice.  
Please seek professional support if required.*