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# The Architecture Beneath Your Choices

*A values identification exercise*

## WHAT THIS IS ABOUT

Values are not goals. They are not aspirations or intentions. They are something more fundamental: the core beliefs and principles that define what genuinely matters to you. Think of them as the architecture beneath your choices. You may not always see them clearly. But they are always operating.

When your life is aligned with your values, when how you spend your time, energy, and attention reflects what you actually believe matters, something becomes possible that goes beyond happiness. A sense of groundedness. Of integrity in the original sense of that word: *wholeness*. The feeling that who you are and how you live are pointing in the same direction.

When that alignment breaks down, the result is a particular kind of suffering. Not always loud. More often it shows up quietly, as persistent dissatisfaction without a clear cause, as the experience of external success that somehow doesn't feel like enough, as a low-grade awareness that something is off that you can't quite name.

**This is not pathology. It is information.** Your internal compass is working. The discomfort of living out of alignment with your values is a signal, not a sentence. The purpose of this exercise is to help you hear it more clearly and to give you something concrete to return to when the noise gets loud.

## BEFORE YOU BEGIN

What area of your life feels most out of alignment right now?

Take a moment and write what comes up...

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## HOW TO USE THIS

This is a process of narrowing, not selecting. You are not choosing your values from a menu. You are excavating what is already there. Work through it in three passes.

**First pass: what matters.** Read through the full list and mark **M** next to anything that resonates. Don't filter yet. If something feels relevant to who you are or how you live, mark it. This pass should be relatively quick and instinct-driven.

**Second pass: what's important.** Go back through only the values you marked as M. Now ask a harder question: which of these don't just matter, but genuinely shape how I move through the world? Mark those I. You are looking for the values that, when violated, create real friction. When honored, create real momentum.

**Third pass: what's vital.** From your I values, identify the ones you cannot imagine living without integrity around. Not the ones that sound good. The ones that, if consistently absent from your life, would leave you feeling like a stranger to yourself. Mark those V.

Your seven core values will come from this final group. There is no correct answer here. There is only what is true for you.

<b>Matters</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Vital</b>
<b>M</b> This has some relevance to who I am	<b>I</b> This genuinely shapes how I live	<b>V</b> Without this, I am not fully myself

## THE VALUES

1 <b>Acceptance</b> Being open to myself, others, and life as it is	<b>M</b> <b>I</b> <b>V</b>	2 <b>Adventure</b> Actively seeking novel or stimulating experiences	<b>M</b> <b>I</b> <b>V</b>
3 <b>Assertiveness</b> Respectfully standing up for my rights and needs	<b>M</b> <b>I</b> <b>V</b>	4 <b>Authenticity</b> Being genuine and true to myself	<b>M</b> <b>I</b> <b>V</b>
5 <b>Beauty</b> Appreciating or cultivating beauty in the world	<b>M</b> <b>I</b> <b>V</b>	6 <b>Caring</b> Showing care toward myself, others, and the environment	<b>M</b> <b>I</b> <b>V</b>
7 <b>Challenge</b> Pushing myself to grow, learn, and improve	<b>M</b> <b>I</b> <b>V</b>	8 <b>Compassion</b> Acting with kindness toward those who are suffering	<b>M</b> <b>I</b> <b>V</b>
9 <b>Connection</b> Being fully present with others and what I'm doing	<b>M</b> <b>I</b> <b>V</b>	10 <b>Contribution</b> Making a positive difference in the lives of others	<b>M</b> <b>I</b> <b>V</b>

11	<b>Cooperation</b> Working collaboratively with others toward shared goals	(M) (I) (V)	12	<b>Courage</b> Persisting in the face of fear or difficulty	(M) (I) (V)
13	<b>Creativity</b> Bringing something new or original into existence	(M) (I) (V)	14	<b>Curiosity</b> Staying open-minded and genuinely interested in the world	(M) (I) (V)
15	<b>Encouragement</b> Recognizing and rewarding what I value in others	(M) (I) (V)	16	<b>Equality</b> Treating others as I wish to be treated	(M) (I) (V)
17	<b>Fairness</b> Acting equitably toward myself and others	(M) (I) (V)	18	<b>Flexibility</b> Adapting readily to changing circumstances	(M) (I) (V)
19	<b>Freedom</b> Living and choosing on my own terms	(M) (I) (V)	20	<b>Forgiveness</b> Releasing resentment toward myself or others	(M) (I) (V)
21	<b>Generosity</b> Giving freely of my time, energy, or resources	(M) (I) (V)	22	<b>Gratitude</b> Appreciating the positive aspects of my life	(M) (I) (V)
23	<b>Honesty</b> Being truthful and sincere with myself and others	(M) (I) (V)	24	<b>Humility</b> Letting my actions speak without needing recognition	(M) (I) (V)
25	<b>Independence</b> Being self-directed in how I live and work	(M) (I) (V)	26	<b>Integrity</b> Aligning my actions with my deepest convictions	(M) (I) (V)
27	<b>Intimacy</b> Opening up and sharing myself in close relationships	(M) (I) (V)	28	<b>Justice</b> Standing for fairness and what is right	(M) (I) (V)
29	<b>Kindness</b> Being considerate and nurturing toward others	(M) (I) (V)	30	<b>Love</b> Acting with genuine affection toward myself and others	(M) (I) (V)
31	<b>Mindfulness</b> Being present and curious about my current experience	(M) (I) (V)	32	<b>Open-mindedness</b> Considering other perspectives and weighing evidence	(M) (I) (V)
33	<b>Order</b> Maintaining structure and organization in my life	(M) (I) (V)	34	<b>Patience</b> Waiting calmly for what I want without forcing outcomes	(M) (I) (V)
35	<b>Persistence</b> Continuing forward despite setbacks or difficulty	(M) (I) (V)	36	<b>Power</b> Influencing and leading others effectively	(M) (I) (V)

37	<b>Reciprocity</b> Building relationships with a fair balance of give and take	M I V	38	<b>Respect</b> Being polite and showing genuine regard for others	M I V
39	<b>Responsibility</b> Being accountable for my choices and their impact	M I V	40	<b>Safety</b> Protecting the well-being of myself and those I care about	M I V
41	<b>Self-Awareness</b> Understanding my own thoughts, feelings, and patterns	M I V	42	<b>Self-Care</b> Attending to my own health and well-being	M I V
43	<b>Self-Development</b> Growing continuously in knowledge, skill, and character	M I V	44	<b>Self-Control</b> Acting in accordance with my own ideals	M I V
45	<b>Skillfulness</b> Practicing and applying my abilities with full effort	M I V	46	<b>Spirituality</b> Connecting with something larger than myself	M I V
47	<b>Supportiveness</b> Being available and encouraging to those around me	M I V	48	<b>Trust</b> Being loyal, reliable, and sincere in all my relationships	M I V
49	<b>Vulnerability</b> Allowing myself to be seen honestly by others	M I V	50	<b>Wisdom</b> Drawing on experience and reflection to navigate life well	M I V
51	<b>Wonder</b> Staying open to awe and mystery in everyday life	M I V	52	<b>Playfulness</b> Bringing lightness and humor into how I engage with life	M I V
53	<b>Purpose</b> Living in service of something meaningful beyond myself	M I V	54	<b>Resilience</b> Recovering and continuing forward in the face of adversity	M I V
55	<b>Sensuality</b> Being present to experiences that engage the senses	M I V	56	<b>Family</b> Honoring and nurturing my relationships with family	M I V
57	<b>Leadership</b> Guiding and inspiring others toward meaningful outcomes	M I V	58	<b>Legacy</b> Building something that will outlast and outlive me	M I V

Once you have identified your seven values and written what each means to you, transfer them to the final page. The value and your definition, nothing else. Save it. Print it. Put it somewhere you will see it. Return to it every one to two months and ask yourself: *Am I living in the direction of these? Where am I moving toward them? Where have I drifted?* This is not an exercise you complete once. It is a practice you return to.

# Your Values at a Glance

CLINICAL RESOURCE

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*Print this page and keep it somewhere you will see it. Return to it every one to two months.*

1

VALUE

WHAT IT MEANS TO ME

2

VALUE

WHAT IT MEANS TO ME

3

VALUE

WHAT IT MEANS TO ME

4

VALUE

WHAT IT MEANS TO ME

5

VALUE

WHAT IT MEANS TO ME

6

VALUE

WHAT IT MEANS TO ME

7

VALUE

WHAT IT MEANS TO ME