

LIFE ESSENCE

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LET YOUR VALUES GOVERN YOUR ACTIONS

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A house built with a foundation set on solid ground, will be able to withstand nature's onslaught of wind and weather. This ensures that the house remains structurally sound. Our foundation as people is our value system. It is that deep-rooted beliefs that we firmly have faith in

When we talk about values, there are two perspectives:

1. **My values** - that which I *believe in* and what I stand for and
 2. **The things which I treasure** - the *things* that are *important* to me
- Both perspectives have an influence on the decisions we make.

According to *Hyrum W. Smith* in his book "*What Matters Most - The Power of Living Your Values*", there are four natural laws of values.

1. There are conscious or unconscious inner values that have a definite impact on our outward conduct.
2. The following natural law is an extension of the first, our natural actions are in line with our inner values.
3. We can improve our personal effectiveness if we know our inner values.
4. We will experience inner peace if our behavior is aligned with our inner values.

Let's look at a few examples of Personal Values:

Honesty: I intend to act in honesty – do what is righteous
Integrity: to stand by your principles
Helpful: my attitude to be of service

Work Ethics - to take ownership of my responsibilities

Respect: to respect another person
Fairness: to act fairly in all circumstances

Examples of what I consider to be of value to me:

Balanced: the quest to pursue balance in my life

Harmony: my quest to minimize and/or avoid conflict

Own time: to know that I need to take care of myself

Participation: my quest to respect and observe others' opinions

Financial Independence: my desire that my income should exceed my expenses

But how do we identify our values?

The answer lies in asking the right questions to yourself:

1. What people, activities or things are important for me?

Examples:

People who are important to me: my husband/wife, my children, my parents/parents in law, my friends, my neighbours

Activities that are important to me: my job/career, enough exercise, healthy eating, time with family

2. What would I do if I only had about six months to live?

Examples: I will make peace with people I dislike or begrudge, I will respond to the need in my community to alleviate their suffering, an overseas trip, I will laugh more and have more fun, I will look at more sunrises and sunsets.

3. What would I want people to say about me at my funeral?

Examples: I made a difference in the world and other people's lives, that I treated everyone I encountered with respect, that I did not abuse people and walked over them to achieve my personal dreams and goals, that I was respected as a leader by my seniors and subordinates, that I showed empathy towards people who trusted me with their personal circumstances, I listened more and talked less.

4. Is there something that I feel inside I should pursue?

Example: I want to be happy in my work, I want to ease the burden in my community, I want to help people reach their full potential.

What am I doing when I experience the greatest feeling of inner peace and harmony?

Examples: When I play with my children, when I am in conversation with my wife/husband, when I share my singing talent with other people.

5. To what cause do I want to dedicate my life?

Examples: to be the best in my field of expertise or sports, to be within the bounds of my ability, community service.

6. What causes pain for me?

(The answer may indicate values that are important to you)

Example: When I am not treated fairly, when I am falsely accused, when someone acts disrespectful towards me, when

discord reigns, when I do not have time for the people I care for, if my opinion is not taken in consideration, when I do not feel in control of my life.

After you listed your values, ask yourself WHY these values are important to you.

The answers to the "whys" will help you to determine whether an identified value is really important to you.

Now that you know what your values are, how should you go about to prioritise them?

Let me explain this by means of an example:

Value - **Honesty**

Value that I treasure - **Financial Independence**

Suppose someone approaches me for a once-in-a-lifetime business opportunity. The outcome will ensure me and my family's financial independence. There is only one small challenge - the business opportunity is not 100% legal.

What do I do?

I need to decide if I will undermine my value of "honesty" to pursue the other value of "financial independence" that I treasure. The answer should be obvious. I cannot choose one value at the expense of others, as I will not experience inner peace if I get involved in illegal transactions.

Values are and will remain the invisible compass that governs our actions and decisions.