



Clarifying Your Values

(Adapted from Russ Harris, Ph.D., & Kelly Wilson, Ph.D.)

What do you want your life to mean, to stand for? Who do you want to be as a person? What qualities do you want to cultivate in yourself, your life, your relationships? What is important to you?

Values are our deepest desires for the way we want to be and interact and relate to others. Values are guiding principles that help us behave in ways that are consistent with what matters most to us.

Values are not the same as goals. Values involve ongoing action; they are directions or orientations that we keep moving in, whereas goals are what we want to achieve along the way. In this sense, a value is like heading North on a hike while a goal is to reach the camp site by sundown. Goals can be checked-off when completed while values are enduring.

For example, a person living with cancer may desire to be a forthcoming and open spouse – that is a value since it involves ongoing action. In contrast, if a person living with cancer wants to share her fears and concerns with her partner right after leaving the medical appointment – that is a goal since it can be achieved. Communicating your feelings after an appointment is a goal but if you want to continue being forthcoming and open about your struggles by engaging fully with your partner and doing your best to cultivate a sense of openness and willingness – that is a value as it involves ongoing action.

The 'Bull's Eye' is a values-clarification exercise originally designed by a Swedish ACT therapist named Tobias Lundgren. The dartboard (separate file) is divided into ten important domains of life.



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To begin with, please write down your values in these 10 areas of life.

(Remember, not everyone has the same values, and this is not a test to see whether you have the "correct" ones. Think in terms of general life directions, rather than in terms of specific goals. There may be values that overlap – e.g. if you value working as a stay-at-home-mom, that may come under both Work and Family. Write down what you would value if there were nothing in your way, nothing stopping you. What's important? What do you care about? And what you would like to work towards? Your value should not be a specific goal but instead reflect a way you would like to live your life over time.)

1. Family – Biological, adoptive, chosen. What sort of brother/sister, son/daughter, uncle/auntie do you want to be? What personal qualities would you like to bring to those relationships? What sort of relationships would you like to build? How would you interact with others if you were the ideal you in these relationships?

2. Intimate Relationships. What sort of partner would you like to be in an intimate relationship? What personal qualities would you like to develop? What sort of relationship would you like to build? How would you interact with your partner if you were the 'ideal you' in this relationship?





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3. Parenting – Children, animals. What sort of parent would you like to be? What sort of qualities would you like to have? What sort of relationships would you like to build with your children or those that you care for? How would you behave if you were the 'ideal you'?

4. Friendships/social life. What sort of qualities would you like to bring to your friendships? If you could be the best friend possible, how would you behave towards your friends? What sort of friendships would you like to build?

5. Career/employment. What do you value in your work? What would make it more meaningful? What kind of worker would you like to be? If you were living up to your own ideal standards, what personal qualities would you like to bring to your work? What sort of work relations would you like to build?

6. Education/personal growth and development. What do you value about learning, education, training, or personal growth? What new skills would you like to learn? What knowledge would you like to gain? What further education appeals to you? What sort of student would you like to be? What personal qualities would you like to apply?





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7. Recreation/fun/leisure. What sorts of hobbies, sports, or leisure activities do you enjoy? How do you relax and unwind? How do you have fun? What sorts of activities would you like to do?

8. Spirituality. Whatever spirituality means to you is fine. It may be as simple as communing with nature, or as formal as participation in an organized religious group. What is important to you in this area of life?

9. Citizenship/ environment/ community life. How would you like to contribute to your community or environment, e.g. through volunteering, or recycling, or supporting a group/ charity/ political party? What sort of environments would you like to create at home, and at work? What environments would you like to spend more time in?

10. Health/physical and mental well-being. What are your values related to maintaining your well-being? How do you want to look after your health, with regard to sleep, diet, exercise, smoking, alcohol, etc.? Why is this important?

