

## The 5 Core Values

Before we can establish what values are, we need to establish what they are not. Values are not goals. Goals are things that you can obtain while walking a valued path. Goals are concrete achievable events, situations, or objects. They can be completed, possessed, or finished. Values guide the direction we take our lives in, and goals are not the same as directions. If goals are confused with direction, once they have been achieved, progress must necessarily stop. Values are also not feelings. Over time, we will learn the degree to which our feelings can help us know when we are living according to our values. However, this definitely doesn't mean that living according to our values means we are only doing what feels good, particularly in the short term. Sometimes living a values-based lifestyle, intended to promote effective behaviour change, will feel uncomfortable. It means sitting with emotions we would normally avoid.

Values are so much more than words; this is why the metaphor I used for Living the Life I want to Live about, "Driving the bus called Our Life" can be so helpful. It has the potential to give us the necessary insight for the primary reasons values are so important in the way we live our lives. So, to continue this metaphor, mainly to help us build some more insight, imagine that you are on your bus traveling through a large flat valley with many gravel roads. All around you are distant mountains, hills, trees, and rocks. In the more immediate area, there are ponds, shrubs, pastures, rocks, and streams. Your bus is equipped with a compass, and you must choose a direction to follow. You say to yourself, "I think I will go east."

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~Steven Morris RP.

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You look at the compass and turn your bus in that direction. You see a road ahead, it isn't perfectly due east, but it leads you in that general direction. You move the bus forward, come to the end of the road, and are presented with a couple of alternative routes. You study the alternatives and go forward once again, more or less in an easterly direction. Herein lies a few significant rhetorical questions. When you travel in this way, when do you actually arrive at east? How will you know when you have reached east? When is the destination called east finally finished? When have you gone as far east as you can go?

The answer to these questions is really quite simple, in life, we never arrive at east. Regardless of what destinations we arrive at, and what obstacles get in our way, there is always more "east"

for us to travel. Our values are exactly the same, in that, we can never truly achieve our true core values. We can, and will, accomplish things as a result of living according to them, but when this happens, we continue in the same direction, being the person we want to be. In the past, when I achieved things while I was living a life that compromised my values, these achievements held no true meaning for me. Yes, I celebrated these things, in the same way as I always did, as great personal accomplishments, but they were tainted by a sense of guilt and shame for the way in which I'd arrived at this destination.

In many ways, throughout the metaphorical picture we are painting, values are like verbs and adverbs, not nouns or adjectives. Values are something that we do or a quality of something that we do, they are not something we have. When we understand values as something we do, or the quality of something we do, they are never-ending, we are never finished with them, they are just how we re being. For example, one of my values is honesty, and I believe that I should not tell lies to the people in my life. This doesn't mean that as soon as I've told the truth to someone that's questioning me about my previous actions that I am completely done with being honest. There is more honesty for me to do, always. Honesty is a direction, it's how I am being, it's not an object I can obtain or something I can complete.

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I found it helpful when establishing my values to know that descriptively, they exist as single words, and in my experience, most people have a set of values that sit at the core of their system that seem to be generic across the general population that I've been exposed to. These values are like the roots of a tree. They spread out into many other values, and they generate the beliefs by which we function each day. We will discuss the nature of these core values later in this process, but for now, I want to work from the principle that all 5 of them are held throughout the passage of time, never really shifting, regardless of our experiences. The things that can, and definitely do change, are our authentic core beliefs about the way we live by our values.

The list below contains the 5 Core Values in no particular order of importance, as the hierarchy of these values can change depending on the specific situations we find ourselves in. For example, if someone asks me to tell the truth, as I previously said, I value honesty. As such, I

want to tell the truth so I can Live the Life I want to Live. At the same time, it's really clear, in this imaginary situation I'm describing, that telling the truth puts me, or someone I care about, in some type of physical danger. If I find myself in circumstances like this, the value of safety completely overpowers the value of honesty inside my Hierarchy of Values, and so I will avoid telling the truth and still be able, with a little bit of work, to stick to my authentic self and my true core values. The 5 Core Values we are going to be working with are as follows.

- **Honesty** – To speak and act truthfully.
- **Integrity** – To do what you said you would do when you said you would do it.
- **Safety** – To create freedom from risk or danger.
- **Respect** – To accept the way things are, or who a person is.
- **Loyalty** – To show support for someone, or something.

Remember to keep in mind that these are not the only values we have, this is where we start the conversation, there are many other values that can spawn out of these 5. For example, underneath the value of respect, you may also value kindness, compassion, love, and humility. Start by asking yourself what each one of these 5 core values means to you. If you were looking at a person who was exhibiting each one in their behaviours, what would you see them doing? This can look very different for each person as it's usually based on the way you were raised, your cultural background, the family of origin, the type of media you were exposed to as a child, and many other things.

On the following pages of this PDF, you will find a worksheet that contains a list of these 5 Core values, and a series of short questions that helps you to explore each one. Take your time and see if you can write a few sentences about what each one truly means to you, and you alone. Try and be as specific as you can to how you see each one and try not to write what you think other people would want you to write, be true to your own thoughts about each one of these values. Remember nobody has the write to tell you how to feel about these things, it is entirely your choice on what this looks like for you.

### 5 Core Values

#### HONESTY

What does it look like for you to exhibit honesty in your life, how would you behave if you were being honest all the time?

How would you experience honesty from others, what would you need to see to know they are being honest?

#### INTEGRITY

What would it look like for you to exhibit integrity in your life, how would you demonstrate the presence of integrity in your behaviour?

How would you experience Integrity from others, what would you need to see to know they have Integrity?

#### SAFETY

What would it look like for you to experience safety in your life, how would you create the presence of safety in your world?

How would you experience the feeling of safety from others, what would you need to see to know they are safe?

### RESPECT

What would it look like for you to demonstrate respect in your life, how would you create the presence of respect in your behaviours?

How would you experience the feeling of respect from others, what would you need to see to know they are respectful of you?

### LOYALTY

What would it look like for you to experience loyalty in your life, how would you create the presence of loyalty in your behaviours?

How would you experience the feeling of loyalty from others, what would you need to see to know they are loyal?

Now that you have completed this exercise, stop, take a deep breath, and read through what you wrote. This is the first representation of your list of true Core Beliefs. This is an important start to living the life you want to live, because if you apply these beliefs to the areas of life that are important to you, and you live this way to the best of your ability in those areas, then you are living a values-based life. Living the Life you Want to Live means living a life worth living, a life that has meaning. Giving your life meaning means doing meaningful things, and the only way we do meaningful things is by taking on things that have value to us. Next, we will apply these values and beliefs to an area of your life that is important to you. Take the time to complete the exercise on the next page and see what results you come up with.