

Getting clear on your core values

Introduction to the core values toolkit

Core values are the guiding principles that shape how we live, work, and interact with others. In simple terms, they are the things we care about most in life, often intangible—meaning they can't be touched or physically seen, but they profoundly influence our behaviors and decisions. These values are what we stand for and what we will take a stand on.

From a leadership and business perspective, understanding core values is crucial. They serve as the foundation for trust, communication, and effective collaboration. When we are clear about our own values and those of our colleagues, it enables us to better understand behaviors, intentions, and actions. This understanding not only helps reduce conflict but also fosters stronger relationships built on mutual respect and alignment.

In teams, knowing each other's values brings greater depth to our interactions, helps us feel more understood, and strengthens the human connection within the workplace. This toolkit is designed to help you and your team identify your personal core values, share them, and better understand the values of others. Through these exercises, you'll gain insights that will enhance collaboration, build stronger relationships, and ultimately lead to a more cohesive, purpose-driven team.



Ultimately, being clear on our own core values enables us to live our lives 'on purpose', saying yes and no to the things that really matter.

Ben Morton

Identifying your personal values

1. Check list

Use the values list on the following pages and circle all the value words that resonate with you. Don't over think it and go with your instinctive gut feel.

2. Highlight list

Go back through your highlighted list and mark the ones that resonate most strongly with you. Aim for 8-10.

3. Primary values

Now go through your marked list from step 2. Look for the 5-6 values that stand out the most strongly. These are your primary values.

4. Secondary values

The remaining values from step two will be your secondary values.

Note:

Feel free to hyphenate any values as required
– e.g. Family/Balance

Before you start

It's likely that you'll identify some values quickly and easily. And others may take a bit more work.

You may struggle to identify the ones that resonate with you the most, and that's entirely normal. It's all part of the process.

One of the reasons that we struggle is that we are focusing on social idealism's as opposed to our own true values. Social idealisms are the thoughts we have around how we think we should be behaving, what we should value.

Whilst these may sound good, they won't create a happy, purposeful life if they aren't truly the things that you value the most in life.

Values menu

- Achievement
- Ambition
- Adventurousness
- Balance
- Being the best
- Belonging
- Boldness
- Calmness
- Challenge
- Commitment
- Community
- Compassion
- Competitiveness
- Consistency
- Contentment
- Control
- Co-operation
- Courtesy
- Curiosity
- Decisiveness
- Dependability
- Dependability
- Determination
- Devoutness
- Diligence
- Discipline
- Discretion
- Diversity
- Dynamism
- Economy
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Empathy
- Enjoyment
- Enthusiasm
- Equality
- Excellence
- Excitement
- Expertise
- Exploration
- Expressiveness
- Fairness
- Faith
- Family-Centric
- Fidelity
- Fitness
- Focus
- Freedom
- Fun
- Generosity
- Goodness
- Grace Growth
- Happiness
- Hard-Work
- Health
- Helping-Society
- Holiness
- Honesty
- Honour
- Intrepidness
- Intensity
- Inventiveness
- Investing
- Involvement
- Joy
- Judiciousness
- Justice
- Keeness
- Kindness
- Knowledge
- Leadership
- Learning
- Liberation
- Liberty
- Lightness
- Liveliness
- Logic
- Longevity
- Love
- Loyalty
- Making a difference
- Mastery
- Maturity
- Meaning
- Mellowness
- Meticulousness
- Mindfulness
- Modesty
- Motivation
- Mysteriousness
- Nature
- Neatness
- Nerve
- Non-comformity
- Obedience
- Open-mindedness
- Openness
- Optimism
- Order
- Organisation
- Originality
- Outdoors
- Outlandishness
- Outrageousness
- Positivity
- Practicality
- Preparedness
- Professionalism
- Reliability
- Religion
- Resourcefulness
- Restraint
- Security
- Self-actualisation
- Self-control
- Selflessness
- Self-reliance
- Sensitivity
- Serenity
- Service
- Simplicity
- Soundness
- Speed
- Stability
- Structure
- Success
- Support
- Teamwork
- Thankfulness
- Thoroughness
- Thoughtfulness
- Timeliness
- Tolerance
- Traditionalism
- Trustworthiness
- Understanding
- Uniqueness
- Unity
- Vision
- Vitality

My core values

My Core Values	
Primary Values	Secondary Values
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	

Going deeper

Having identified your Primary Values, the next step is to understand what they mean to you on a very granular level.

Reflect upon each value to distill down what it actually means in practical terms. Aim to develop two or three bullet points for each of your primary values. Specificity is key.

For example, if family is a core value, which family members are you talking about it? Is it just your spouse and children? Does it include your siblings or not?

There is no right or wrong answer.

For example, one of my core values is integrity and I break this down as follows:

- **Doing the right thing, not the easy thing.**
- **Being the same person, even when nobody is watching.**

This isn't an exercise that you'll nail in one sitting. These will develop over time as you strive to live up to them. When you fall-short you may realise that you've not quite got the definition right, or perhaps the value itself isn't right.

That's all perfectly normal. Let them marinate and become clearer over time.

There's space on the following page to start your first draft.

My values - deconstructed

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Values activity for teams

Shared Values Within Teams

Step One

- Ask every member of your team to complete the Personal Values Identification exercise on page 2 of this toolkit.

Step Two

- In this part of the exercise you need to get the team to move around and talk to each other about what's important to them. Ask them to form groups or 'gangs' with others who share their beliefs and values. They do not need to be identical matches word for word—you are looking for similarities. Equally, they are not looking to find people with identical values. They are simply looking for some connections.
- To help with this part of the exercise, it is important to encourage them to talk about what each value actually means to them rather than just stating the value word. For example, one person may value "honesty" , and another may value "integrity." When they describe what those words mean, they may well find that they mean something very similar.

Step Three

- When the conversation begins to quieten down and the team stops moving into different groups, ask them to stay where they are. At this point, you should facilitate a conversation about what everyone has learned about each other and the team.
- The following page has some suggested questions that you could use. The list is not exhaustive, and the questions are not designed to be worked through in order. It's better to listen carefully to what people say and allow the conversations to go wherever they go.

Suggested Questions

- How do you feel having completed that exercise?
- How would you describe your sense of connection to other team members now?
- What are the most commonly shared values within our team?
- What are some of the least commonly shared values in our team, and what does that mean?
- How could this sense of improved connection and understanding help us on a day-to-day basis?
- What (else) have we learned about each other as a result of this exercise?
- What should we do next?



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