



## Core Values Exercise

### What are core values?

*Core values* are the best way we have to talk about who you really are, deep down inside—your core essence. Actually, who you really are is beyond words, just as the beauty of a sunset is beyond words. Yet, words are one of the basic ways we have to communicate and core values allow us to talk about our core essence in a way that is both tangible and unlimited. Whether we are aware of them or not, our core values are the fundamental criteria we use to judge the quality of our life, our relationships, and our happiness.

Most people have between 3 and 7 core values. If you find you have more than 7, see if some of them group together. If so, choose the one that best represents that group of values.

There are four parts. Please complete all four. If you have any difficulty identifying your core values, please do as much as you can. For some, it comes easy, and for others it can take a while. What is important at this point is that you engage in the exercise.

### Part 1: Identification

If you are not certain what your values are, the list below will help. (This is not an exhaustive list. Feel free to add to it.) First, read the list and circle the values that pop out at you.

Truth	Creativity	Strength	Authenticity
Play	Peace	Courage	Dignity
Innovation	Love	Accountability	Honor
Integrity	Relationship	Loyalty	Flexibility
Security	Commitment	Persistence	Learning
Fun	Fairness	Faith	Spirituality
Honesty	Cooperation	Order	Collaboration
Respect	Dependability	Humor	Excellence
Adventure	Service	Trust	Freedom
Resourcefulness	Support	Justice	Quality
Friendship	Caring	Connectedness	Purposefulness



Second, review the selected values and choose no more than seven, remembering that some values may group together. Write them down below.

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## Part 2: Verification

We use a specific definition to distinguish core values from all other values. Core values are essential, universal, and personal. They are *essential* because it feels as though you cannot live without them. For example, if respect is one of your core values and you are told that respect will never happen, ever, you would say, “Then what is the point of life?” It is so fundamental; life would be meaningless without it.

*Universal* means that your core values apply everywhere, all the time. No matter where you are or when it is, your core values are important. This is what separates core values from other important values. This is true whether you are at home, at work or in line at the movie theater. For example, let’s say respect is one of your core values. You’re in a movie line and someone cuts in ahead of you. At the very least, it will bother you, whether you did something about it or not.

They are *personal* because they are based on your life experience. If you and a co-work both have a core value of respect, you would each describe it differently. This is because you have different life experiences and thereby different definitions.

In addition, core values are not actions. For example someone might say, “Telling the truth is my core value.” However, telling the truth is an action. In this case consider what is it about telling the truth that is essential. The answer could be honest, or trust, or integrity. So, if you identify an action, then ask yourself what is essential about it. Look for the deeper value.

Now review your core values and determine if they meet these three elements. If not, keep looking. You are likely going down the right track, just not far enough yet.



### **Part 3: Defining**

Below is a list of question to help you to expand on what your core values mean to you. You do not need to answer all the questions; do as many as you like. It is helpful to write down your answers.

- Where did this value come from? (usually a person or an event)
- When did it first become important to me?
- Was there anyone in my life who demonstrated this value? Parent, teacher, coach, mentor, hero, etc.)
- Did any significant events happen that relate to this value?
- What does this value mean to me?
- What have I done that is consistent with this value?
- What do I do that is consistent with this value?
- Who are the people that represent this value to me? (It can be someone you don't know.)
- What has happened in my life that is inconsistent with this value?
- What do I do that is inconsistent with this value?
- What happens at work that are consistent with this value?
- What happens at work that are inconsistent with this value?
- How do I want this value honored by others?
- How do I want to honor this value myself?

### **Part 4: Sharing**

Engage your family, friends, and colleagues in conversations about core values, yours and theirs. Have the intention to learn something about yourself and about them.

Also, continue to think about your core values in relation to your life and see what you notice.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss what you learn, please feel free to contact our office.

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