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The Value of Knowing Your True Values

By Michelle Gabbe, Success Coach

Quickly, off the top of your head, make a list of up to 20 things about life that are really important to you. Here are some examples to get you started: professional credibility, physical fitness, conscious parenting, community service, marriage, personal integrity, nature, compassion, friendship, academic achievement. Take a break for a few minutes, and come back to the list, adding anything that might be missing. Strike out any items that you feel *should* be important to you, but actually aren't.

Next, narrow your list to the top 10 items and reorder them according to importance. To do this, compare each item with the other, one pair at a time, and ask yourself, "*if I could only have item A but not item B, would I be ok with that?*" until you have a hierarchical list. This will take some time, and you may be surprised at what is revealed during this step.

For each item, come up with two or three reasons why it is important to you. If you find that you value something out of fear, or in order to *avoid* something else, try replacing it with a value that would move you *toward* what you actually want.

Now look at your final list and ask yourself the following:

- *Are you happy with it?*
- *Does it represent the life you really want for yourself?*
- *Do any of the values conflict with the others – i.e. does it seem possible to have both? Until you resolve the conflict, you will experience dissatisfaction in both areas.*
- *Look at the problem areas in your life. How are they reflected in the list? Let's say you have an illness, for example, and realize that it never even occurred to you to list physical health as a value.*

It's hard to get motivated to do something when you haven't learned to value it.

We tend to define the term 'values' as those things that are important to us – behaviors and actions that we prioritize in our lives when times are good. But our values reflect not only what we consciously choose to revere, but also what we believe about our world, ourselves and our potential.

What are beliefs if not simply recurrent thoughts and thought patterns – both conscious and subconscious?

As young children, we develop beliefs that help us cope with our circumstances and feel safe in the world. As we grow and gather life experience, we tend to notice and become attracted to the people and situations that help us reinforce those beliefs. Beliefs borne of adversity can be self-limiting, lurking below our conscious awareness where they can drive self-sabotage and stubbornly resist positive change.



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All of your beliefs are reflected in your current life experience. Take any area of your life and compare your beliefs about it to the results you're getting – they will always be a match.

Because your values tend to be organized around groups of beliefs, making a conscious change in what you value can oftentimes clear up the old beliefs that no longer ring true for you.

Working on your values with a coach is a great way to discover what motivates you, why you might be feeling stuck, and how you can consciously create the life you want.

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