UNDERSTAND YOUR VALUES EXERCISE

taken from MindTools – Essential skills for an excellent career
https://www.mindtools.com

Your values are the things that you believe are important in the way you live and work.
They (should) determine your priorities, and, deep down, they're probably the measures you use to tell if your life is turning out the way you want it to.
When the things that you do and the way you behave match your values, life is usually good – you're satisfied and content. But when these don't align with your personal values, that's when things feel... wrong. This can be a real source of unhappiness.
This is why making a conscious effort to identify your values is so important.

How Values Help You

Values exist, whether you recognize them or not. Life can be much easier when you acknowledge your values – and when you make plans and decisions that honor them.
If you value family, but you have to work 70-hour weeks in your job, will you feel internal stress and conflict? And if you don't value competition, and you work in a highly competitive sales environment, are you likely to be satisfied with your job?
In these types of situations, understanding your values can really help. When you know your own values, you can use them to make decisions about how to live your life, and you can answer questions like these:

- What job should I pursue?
- Should I accept this promotion?
- Should I start my own business?
- Should I compromise, or be firm with my position?
- Should I follow tradition, or travel down a new path?

TIP:
Values are usually fairly stable, yet they don't have strict limits or boundaries. Also, as you move through life, your values may change. For example, when you start your career, success – measured by money and status – might be a top priority. But after you have a family, work-life balance may be what you value more.

As your definition of success changes, so do your personal values. This is why keeping in touch with your values is a lifelong exercise. You should continuously revisit this, especially if you start to feel unbalanced... and you can't quite figure out why.

As you go through the exercise below, bear in mind that values that were important in the past may not be relevant now.

Defining Your Values

When you define your personal values, you discover what's truly important to you. A good way of starting to do this is to look back on your life – to identify when you felt really good, and really confident that you were making good choices.

Step 1: Identify the times when you were happiest

Find examples from both your career and personal life. This will ensure some balance in your answers.
What were you doing?
Were you with other people? Who?
What other factors contributed to your happiness?

Step 2: Identify the times when you were most proud

Use examples from your career and personal life.
Why were you proud?
Did other people share your pride? Who?
What other factors contributed to your feelings of pride?

Step 3: Identify the times when you were most fulfilled and satisfied

Again, use both work and personal examples.
What need or desire was fulfilled?
How and why did the experience give your life meaning?
What other factors contributed to your feelings of fulfillment?

Step 4: Determine your top values, based on your experiences of happiness, pride, and fulfillment

Why is each experience truly important and memorable?
Use the following list of common personal values to help you get started – and aim for about 10 top values. (As you work through, you may find that some of these naturally combine. For instance, if you value philanthropy, community, and generosity, you might say that service to others is one of your top values.)

Accountability	Excellence	Perfection
Accuracy	Excitement	Piety
Achievement	Expertise	Positivity
Adventurousness	Exploration	Practicality
Altruism	Expressiveness	Preparedness
Ambition	Fairness	Professionalism
Assertiveness	Faith	Prudence
Balance	Family-orientedness	Quality-orientation
Being the best	Fidelity	Reliability
Belonging	Fitness	Resourcefulness
Boldness	Fluency	Restraint
Calmness	Focus	Results-oriented

Carefulness	Freedom	Rigor
Challenge	Fun	Security
Cheerfulness	Generosity	Self-actualization
Clear-mindedness	Goodness	Self-control
Commitment	Grace	Selflessness
Community	Growth	Self-reliance
Compassion	Happiness	Sensitivity
Competitiveness	Hard Work	Serenity
Consistency	Health	Service
Contentment	Helping Society	Shrewdness
Continuous Improvement	Holiness	Simplicity
Contribution	Honesty	Soundness
Control	Honor	Speed
Cooperation	Humility	Spontaneity
Correctness	Independence	Stability
Courtesy	Ingenuity	Strategic
Creativity	Inner Harmony	Strength
Curiosity	Inquisitiveness	Structure
Decisiveness	Insightfulness	Success
Democraticness	Intelligence	Support
Dependability	Intellectual Status	Teamwork
Determination	Intuition	Temperance
Devoutness	Joy	Thankfulness
Diligence	Justice	Thoroughness
Discipline	Leadership	Thoughtfulness
Discretion	Legacy	Timeliness
Diversity	Love	Tolerance
Dynamism	Loyalty	Traditionalism
Economy	Making a difference	Trustworthiness
Effectiveness	Mastery	Truth-seeking
Efficiency	Merit	Understanding
Elegance	Obedience	Uniqueness
Empathy	Openness	Unity
Enjoyment	Order	Usefulness
Enthusiasm	Originality	Vision
Equality	Patriotism	Vitality

Step 5: Prioritize your top values

This step is probably the most difficult, because you'll have to look deep inside yourself. It's also the most important step, because, when making a decision, you'll have to choose between solutions that may satisfy different values. This is when you must know which value is more important to you.

Write down your top values, not in any particular order.

Look at the first two values and ask yourself, "If I could satisfy only one of these, which would I choose?" It might help to visualize a situation in which you would have to make that choice. For example, if you compare the values of service and stability, imagine that you must decide whether to sell your house and move to another country to do valuable foreign aid work, or keep your house and volunteer to do charity work closer to home.

Keep working through the list, by comparing each value with each other value, until your list is in the correct order.

Step 6: Reaffirm your values

Check your top-priority values, and make sure they fit with your life and your vision for yourself.

- Do these values make you feel good about yourself?
- Are you proud of your top three values?
- Would you be comfortable and proud to tell your values to people you respect and admire?
- Do these values represent things you would support, even if your choice isn't popular, and it puts you in the minority?

When you consider your values in decision making, you can be sure to keep your sense of integrity and what you know is right, and approach decisions with confidence and clarity. You'll also know that what you're doing is best for your current and future happiness and satisfaction.
Making value-based choices may not always be easy. However, making a choice that you know is right is a lot less difficult in the long run.

KEY POINTS:

Identifying and understanding your values is a challenging and important exercise. Your personal values are a central part of who you are – and who you want to be. By becoming more aware of these important factors in your life, you can use them as a guide to make the best choice in any situation.

Some of life's decisions are really about determining what you value most. When many options seem reasonable, it's helpful and comforting to rely on your values – and use them as a strong guiding force to point you in the right direction.

www.MindTools.com.... the MindTools site teaches you the skills you need for a happy and successful career; and this is just one of many tools and resources that you'll find at Mind Tools.