

# Core Values Basics

**What are my core values—the ones that are shaping my life right now?** Consciously experiencing your core values and how they influence your thoughts, judgments, and behavior is a lifelong pursuit. We'll be asking you to name three to five top core values that guide your life—values that you use daily to make the small (what I will eat) and the large complex decisions (who I will marry) that shape your life.

**What are values?** Prioritized beliefs and principles we are committed to live by. They are established as a child. How we prioritize them may evolve as our life changes.

**Why are values important?** They:

- **Govern**, shape, and strongly influence our thoughts, judgments, and behavior about what is good and bad, right and wrong, important or not, and what we will accept or not accept in our relationships, *in ourselves, and in our world*.
- **Clarify** who we are within ourselves—and who we choose to be with others.
- **Give us standards** we *live* by; help us determine what we stand for—and what we won't.
- **Give us a clear compass** from which we can set our own course and solve problems.
- **Pull us through** hard times; help us do the “heavy lifting” in the hardest of times.

**How conscious am I of my core values, and how they influence my life?**

When we ask how conscious we are of our core values, we're asking:

- How aware am I of my core values? What core values do I *live by* and honor in my life?
- How do my core values daily influence my behavior at work, with my family, and in the community? How do I lean on them, use them consistently?"

*Let's pause and share examples of the core values you honor and choose to live by.*

- Am I aware of the *impact my core values have on others* when I live and “enforce” them? Do my values tend to connect or separate me from others in different situations?
- Do I *weigh the consequences* of acting on a core value—understanding what could result from it—and still move forward leaning on this value in my relationships?
- Am I aware of situations when one of my core values has been in conflict with another one?

**What blocks or supports me from living my core values?**

For each of us, this is a personal question. So we ask you to pause and ask yourself: What's a core value I *don't* always live? What blocks or keeps me from living it? Now, what's a core value that I consistently live? What motivates or propels me to live it?

Some common blocks to living our core values and setting boundaries when our values are violated:

- Not aware of my core values. OR, I know what they are, but don't consistently *live* them.
- Fear that my needs for security, control, or approval will be threatened—or not met—if I voice my values. So I go along to get along. I go with the priorities, energy, and actions of others.
- My natural temperament is to withdraw from what I view as conflict, not face into it.
- These disempowering beliefs and similar ones are stronger than my values:
  - Don't want to hurt someone's feelings.
  - Don't want to interrupt, call attention to myself, or cause conflict in any way.
  - Don't have the “right” words.

- I won't be heard.
- The person has more power than I do and will use it against me.
- Nobody else talks up about these things. I shouldn't either.
- Wouldn't do any good—they'll never change anyway.

**Common supports** for living our core values and setting boundaries when our values are violated:

- With clear values, I *set clear priorities*. I can “give up” what’s not important, and I “get real” about what’s truly important to me. I am able to find the time to do what really matters. I set and meet the goals that are most important to me.
- I’m able to respectfully *set and enforce clear boundaries* when someone challenges a core value of mine.
- I lean into my core values and use them to *make decisions* about nearly everything.
- My values support me in making clear, *conscious choices* that serve me well with my family, friends, work colleagues, my boss—with everyone.
- These empowering beliefs and similar ones support my values:
  - I feel powerful and whole when I continually live my values.
  - It serves both you and me to be upfront about what we truly value. The more we’re able to be direct, clear, and respectful, the better.
  - When I’m afraid to live my values in a relationship, I’ll face into it and learn from it. I’m willing to face into, honor, and voice differences in committed relationships.
  - I won’t live my values perfectly and that’s okay. It means I’ll have to forgive myself and have compassion for my shortcomings. I can commit to that.

### **How do my core values influence my thoughts and my behavior?**

When I consciously “walk the talk” with my core values, I am aware of and honest about my thoughts, feelings, judgments in the moment. What I say, feel, and do tend to be *aligned* with my core values. I feel integrated, whole. I’m able to live with integrity. I know what is influencing me and why. I take personal responsibility—ownership—for what I say and do. I stand up for myself when a value is challenged. I do it while respecting the dignity of others and their values. When necessary, I set and enforce boundaries out of respect for myself.

When I don’t “walk the talk” with my core values, I am not aware and honest about my thoughts, feelings, judgments in the moment. What I say, feel, and do are often in conflict within me. I say one thing, and do another. I have little if any awareness of what is influencing me or why. I’m not able to experience integrity and wholeness within myself. I take little if any responsibility for what I say and do. I blame others. I get triggered and may explode when I feel a core value is being challenged. I rarely if ever set and enforce boundaries. When I do, it’s not out of being respectful for myself; it’s a way to protect myself. I put up a wall and withdraw, rather than set boundaries.