

VALUES MATTER

A step-by-step guide for getting clarity on what you want in life, beyond relief from illness and physical pain.



WELCOME

Wouldn't it be great if you could trust your sense of direction all the time, without using any kind of map or GPS device? Wouldn't it also be great if you could trust your sense of direction with difficult life decisions?

When you know what matters to you, making decisions is much easier. Values are the things that matter to you and they are like a compass that guides you on our journey.

This workbook will help you learn how to effectively make decisions so that you don't have to question whether you've done the right thing. And you'll even be able to make them when you feel sick, sad, angry, anxious, desperate, or alone. You'll get clarity on what really matters to you in life and learn how to use that information to help you set goals or making tough decisions. So let's get to it!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

This first exercise is just a way to get your brain warmed up, so let your imagination go crazy here. There's no right or wrong answers.

Imagine it's your 90th birthday and you're celebrating with all the important people in your life. As you reflect back on your life, what do you want to be able to say about how you lived? What do you want other people to say?



Write some thoughts here:

Did any fears pop up as you think about this? Other emotions? Thoughts? Write them down...

YOUR VALUES COMPASS

Imagine you are driving down a long deserted highway. Eventually you arrive at a fork in the road. There are no signs and you don't have any indication which way is the right way. You are faced with a choice to go in one of three directions. You can go right, left, or back in the direction you came from. You aren't quite sure where you're going and you have no map. You're lost, forced to make arbitrary choices based on the feel or look of the road, or based on some inviting object in the distance.



This is how we live life when our actions aren't guided by our values. Our choices become wayward and blind, based simply on avoiding pain or seeking pleasure in the moment. We drift, uncertain of our direction and confused by every fork in the road.

When we connect deeply with what matters to us, the crossroads feel different. Because we know where we're going, we have a clear and constant sense of direction that tells us when to turn and when to go straight.

Values are the things we care about most. They aren't about what you want to accomplish; they are about how you want to be on an ongoing basis. You can experience values like gratitude and freedom right now by turning your attention towards them and experiencing them. They are immediate and controllable. They help you connect with the world exactly as it is, not as you wish it were.

Crappy values usually rely on external events to come true for you. Not being sick anymore, being famous, driving a Lamborghini, and marrying the person of your dreams are crappy values. They might seem to make your life better, but they are unrealistic and outside of your control. Chasing after something outside of your control can cause more distress and add to your suffering.

Now let's learn about your values so you have a compass for your journey.

VALUES CHECKLIST

Look through the list below and select the values that matter to you most. Don't worry too much about whether you're acting on the values. Most people aren't acting on all their values all the time. It might help to read through the whole list first and mark the ones that really speak to you.

- | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ACCEPTANCE | <input type="checkbox"/> GRATITUDE | <input type="checkbox"/> SELF-CONTROL | <input type="checkbox"/> SELF-CARE | <input type="checkbox"/> ADVENTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> FLEXIBILITY |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LOVE | <input type="checkbox"/> HONESTY | <input type="checkbox"/> SENSUALITY | <input type="checkbox"/> GENEROSITY | <input type="checkbox"/> HEALTH | <input type="checkbox"/> CONTRIBUTION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LEADERSHIP | <input type="checkbox"/> HUMOR | <input type="checkbox"/> SEXUALITY | <input type="checkbox"/> COURAGE | <input type="checkbox"/> RESPECT | <input type="checkbox"/> FITNESS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CURIOSITY | <input type="checkbox"/> HUMILITY | <input type="checkbox"/> SPIRITUALITY | <input type="checkbox"/> RECIPROCITY | <input type="checkbox"/> PATIENCE | <input type="checkbox"/> FAIRNESS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> RESPONSIBILITY | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY | <input type="checkbox"/> SKILLFULNESS | <input type="checkbox"/> COMPASSION | <input type="checkbox"/> AUTHENTICITY | <input type="checkbox"/> CREATIVITY |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OPENNESS | <input type="checkbox"/> INDEPENDENCE | <input type="checkbox"/> SUPPORTIVENESS | <input type="checkbox"/> INTIMACY | <input type="checkbox"/> PERSISTENCE | <input type="checkbox"/> MINDFULNESS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CONNECTION | <input type="checkbox"/> ROMANCE | <input type="checkbox"/> TRUST | <input type="checkbox"/> CARING | <input type="checkbox"/> ASSERTIVENESS | <input type="checkbox"/> FUN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ADAPTATION | <input type="checkbox"/> JUSTICE | <input type="checkbox"/> SAFETY | <input type="checkbox"/> FREEDOM | <input type="checkbox"/> SELF-AWARENESS | <input type="checkbox"/> FORGIVENESS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COOPERATION | <input type="checkbox"/> KINDNESS | <input type="checkbox"/> EQUALITY | <input type="checkbox"/> ACHIEVEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> AUTHORITY | <input type="checkbox"/> SERVICE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BALANCE | <input type="checkbox"/> HARMONY | <input type="checkbox"/> PRACTICAL | <input type="checkbox"/> COMPETENCY | <input type="checkbox"/> OPTIMISM | <input type="checkbox"/> FRIENDSHIP |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LOYALTY | <input type="checkbox"/> MEANING | <input type="checkbox"/> AUTONOMY | <input type="checkbox"/> LEARNING | <input type="checkbox"/> PEACE | <input type="checkbox"/> RECOGNITION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SECURITY | <input type="checkbox"/> STABILITY | <input type="checkbox"/> SELF-RESPECT | <input type="checkbox"/> FAITH | <input type="checkbox"/> INNOVATION | <input type="checkbox"/> KNOWLEDGE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> WISDOM | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION | <input type="checkbox"/> SUCCESS | <input type="checkbox"/> WEALTH | <input type="checkbox"/> VULNERABILITY | <input type="checkbox"/> INTEGRITY |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISCIPLINE | <input type="checkbox"/> DILIGENCE | <input type="checkbox"/> RESTRAINT | <input type="checkbox"/> WILLPOWER | <input type="checkbox"/> OBSERVANT | <input type="checkbox"/> EMPATHY |

Now go back through the list and omit the following:

1. Any value that was imposed or taught to you by society, your parents, peers, teachers or anyone else and that does not feel particularly important to you. These are “shoulds” and don't truly reflect your core values.
2. Any value that has a temporary flavor to it because of something that is happening in your life right now. If you believe that the value may not feel important to you after the current struggle is over, then get rid of it.

MY TOP 10

Narrow your checklist from the previous page down to your top 8-10 values. These are the ones that are most important to you. This is difficult for most people, so don't sweat it if you write less than 10, or a few more. You can list them in no particular order. So that you are clear on what your values mean, there's extra space for you to define them. For example, one might define the value of Flexibility as "Accepting things as they are and readily adapting to change."

VALUE	WHAT IT MEANS

REVEALING BARRIERS

It's hard to manage an illness and also participate fully in all the things you value, like social time, intimate relationships, fitness, parenting, career, or community involvement. As symptom and pain management becomes your primary job, other important things get neglected.

Barriers to valued living can be obvious, like when fatigue prevents you from hanging out with friends or a tight budget keeps you from accessing healthcare. Barriers can also be in the form of feelings like depression, shame, self-doubt or fear of failure. Thoughts can also get in the way, like "Why if I can't do this?" or "I'll just get sick anyway, why try?"

If we don't face these demons we end up doing nothing. Think about the values you uncovered on the last page. Identify the things that have kept you from acting on your values.

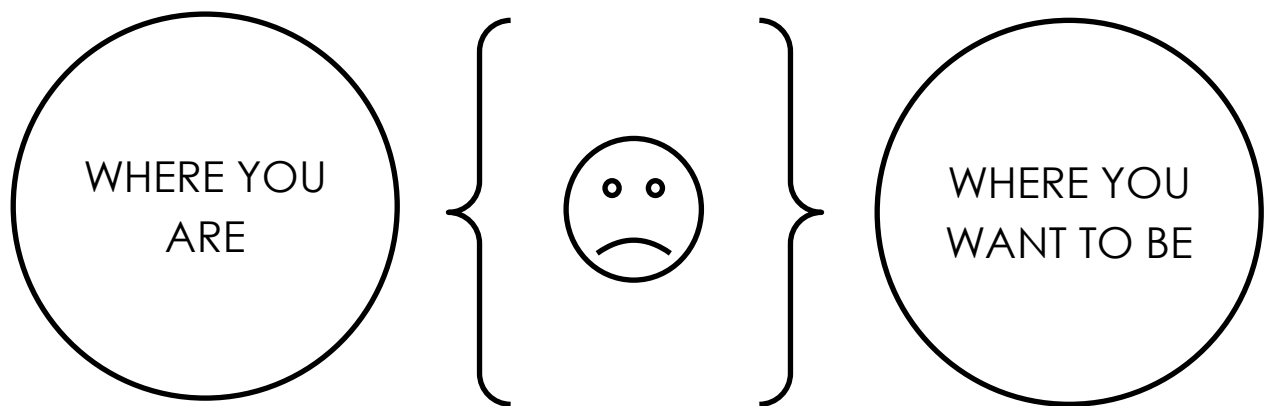
What gets in your way?

YOUR BODY	FEELINGS/EMOTIONS
THOUGHTS	EXTERNAL STUFF

{ "I find the great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving." - Oliver Wendell Holmes }

THE SPACE BETWEEN

Often, anxiety pops up when we do Values Work. It's because we realize we may not be acting on our values. There's a space between where you are and where you want to be, and that space is pretty uncomfortable. That might be the space between being sick and being well. Or the space between now and your envisioned life without those barriers getting in the way.



That space is filled with what feels like unbearable uncertainty and ambiguity. That's where anxiety lies. Anxiety is always in the gap between the way things are and the way you think they ought to be.

But most of the things in life we truly care about are very ambiguous, and if we can't tolerate ambiguity, we get all preoccupied in trying to eliminate it. That's a recipe for disaster.

Learning to allow ambiguity can be very powerful. When you embrace that uncertain place, you're allowing your life to be just as it is. When we stop focusing on where-we-are-not, we snap back to center. That's what being centered means. Then anxiety fades.

Your goal is to be intentional with that space between. Your life is unfolding in that space. When stuff gets in the way, just notice it, stop shaming yourself for it, then keep going. Master those obstacles with flexibility and a go-with-the-flow attitude. And most importantly, trust that your values will always guide you in the right direction.

HOW TO CREATE AN ACTION PLAN

I want to show you how to create an effective Action Plan. Remember that a value is something you are always moving towards. You don't finish or check values off a list. Whereas a goal is an observable behavior or action step that you can complete or check off a list.

LET'S TACO
'BOUT A PLAN!



On the next few pages you're going to create action plans for your values. You're going to categorize your values into four major life domains: relationships, work, recreation, and health.

I know this feels a bit repetitive. It's supposed to. We know the mind needs repetition to make stuff stick.

You don't need to come up with new values, you just need to categorize the ones you've already identified on any of the previous pages. After that, you'll write down some specific behaviors, or action steps, that align with your values. Make them simple and realistic.

Here's an example:

RELATIONSHIP VALUES (children, parents, partner, close friends, relatives)	GOALS (observable behaviors that align with values)
Love	Be helpful and give gifts without special occasions.
Appreciation	Express gratitude each day.
Affection	Touch and snuggle when we watch TV.
Quality time	Plan our next Mexico trip.
Fun	Initiate silliness.
Communication	Express feelings willingly and seek to understand my partners thoughts and perspectives.

MY ACTION PLAN

WHAT I VALUE

ACTIONS I WILL TAKE (GOALS)

Relationships (children, parents, partner, close friends, relatives)

Work (career, education, volunteering, domestic)

Recreation (relaxation, hobbies, creativity, entertainment)

Health (physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual)

WEEKLY ACTION PLAN

WEEK OF: _____

MY WORD OF THE WEEK

[A large rectangular box with a red dotted border, intended for writing the word of the week.]

Pick one value that feels really important this week!

EMOTIONS THAT MIGHT POP UP THIS WEEK: _____

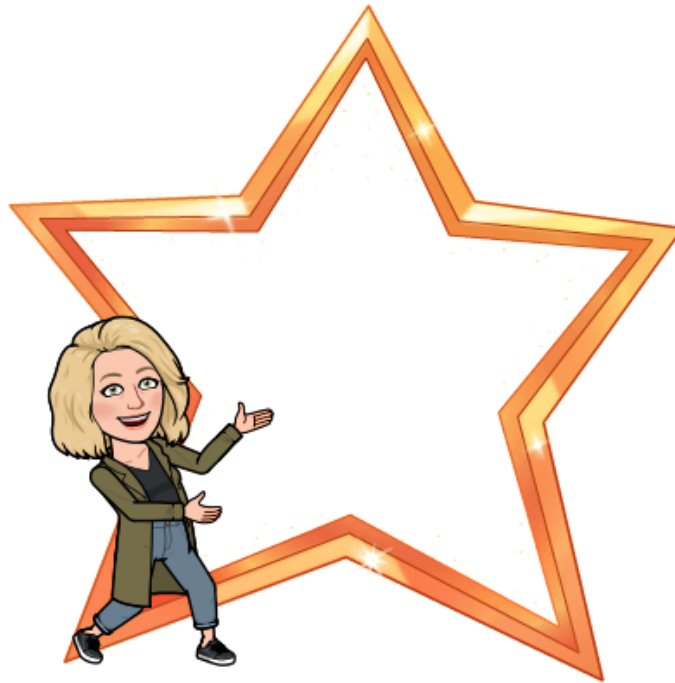
OTHER BARRIERS I WILL BE FLEXIBLE WITH: _____

VALUES	GOALS
<i>Within each category, only pick 1-3 values and one goal to focus on each week.</i>	
Relationships (children, parents, partner, close friends, relatives)	
Work (career, education, volunteering, domestic)	
Recreation (relaxation, hobbies, creativity, entertainment)	
Health (physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual)	

YOU'RE FINISHED! YAY!

Well, with this workbook anyway.

You have now created a beautiful list of Values and Goals. And you have an Action Plan you can print off each week and fill out. Hang that on the refrigerator! Look at it every day. Follow through. Then put some gold stars on it!



Everyday, bring to mind what is important to you and take action on those things. If barriers get in the way, just be patient with yourself and do what you can with what you have.

In health,

Emily