

Identify Your Values

For your work to be satisfying, it must be compatible with your values. For some people, money, power, prestige, and status are what it takes for a job to be rewarding. Others must experience meaning or purpose in the work itself for a job to be satisfying. The following exercises contain lists of work and personal values that could form the basis of your career-planning decisions.

Part 1-Work Values

Rate each work value using the following scale:

1=very important to have in my work

2=somewhat important to have in my work

3= unimportant to have in my work

A. Work conditions may permit or require the following:

- Independence/Autonomy – doing what you want to do without much direction from others
- Time flexibility – arranging your own hours, working according to your own time schedule
- Change/Variety – performing varying tasks in a number of different settings
- Change/Risk – performing new tasks or leading new programs that challenge the established order and may be initially resisted
- Stability/Security – working in a secure job that pays you reasonably well
- Physical Challenge –performing dangerous tasks that challenge your physical capabilities
- Physical Demands – performing physically strenuous but relatively safe activities
- Mental Challenge – performing demanding tasks that challenge your intelligence and creativity
- Pressure-performing in a highly critical environment with constant deadlines
- Precise Work – performing prescribed tasks that leave little room for error
- Decision Making – making choices about what to do and how to do it

B. Individuals work for the following purposes:

- To pursue truth/knowledge
- To acquire experience/authority
- To use creativity/innovativeness
- To foster aesthetic appreciation
- To make social contributions
- To acquire material gain
- To seek recognition
- To promote ethics/morality
- To seek spiritual/transpersonal gain

C. Relationships at work may involve the following:

- Working alone – doing assignments by yourself, with minimal contact with other people
- Public contact – interacting in predictable ways with a continuous flow of people
- Developing close friendships with coworkers
- Group membership – belonging to a group with a common purpose and/or interest
- Helping others
- Influencing others
- Supervising others
- Controlling others
- A chance to make social changes
- To be remembered for my accomplishments
- Helping those in distress
- Freedom to live where I wish
- Time to myself
- Enjoyment of arts, entertainment, and cultural activities
- A life with many challenges
- A life with many changes
- Opportunity to be a leader
- To make a major discovery that would save lives
- A good physical appearance

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- Opportunity to teach others
- To write something memorable
- A chance to become famous
- To help others solve problems
- To make lots of money

List five of your most important personal values:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Now ask yourself the following questions and note your answers:

1. Does your life right now reflect your values? Is the way you spend your time consistent with your priorities?
2. If the way you spend your time is not consistent with your priorities, how can you make it so?
3. Are there some parts of your life that you would like to change but cannot right now? If so, what is your timetable for bringing your lifestyle more into harmony with your values?
4. How do you think your most important personal values will affect your career choice?

List below your three or four most important work values in each of the three categories:

Work Conditions

Work Purposes

Work Relationships

Part II – Personal Values

Whether you realize it or not, every time you make a choice about doing one thing as opposed to another, you make a value decision. When you have a decision that involves two or more conflicting values that are of major importance to you, the decision can be extremely difficult to make (e.g. career values may conflict with family and friendship values). You can, however, make these decisions more effectively if you have some idea of what your most important values are and the priority that you give each.

The following exercise will help you to understand what personal values are, which personal values are important to you, and what priorities you give to them. In reality, your values are expressed through your actions.

A list of personal values is provided below. Using the following scale, rank each value according to its importance to you:

- 1 = very important
- 2 = somewhat important
- 3 = not important

Place the number that corresponds to your rating in the appropriate space to the left of each personal value.

- ___ Good health
- ___ Many close friendships
- ___ A large family
- ___ A fulfilling career
- ___ A stable marriage
- ___ A financially comfortable life
- ___ Independence
- ___ Creativity
- ___ Participating in an organized religion
- ___ Having children
- ___ A variety of interests and activities
- ___ Freedom to create my own lifestyle
- ___ Owning a house
- ___ A happy love relationship
- ___ Fulfilling careers for me and my spouse
- ___ Contributing to my community
- ___ Abundance of leisure time
- ___ Ability to move from place to place
- ___ A stable life
- ___ A life without stress
- ___ Strong religious values