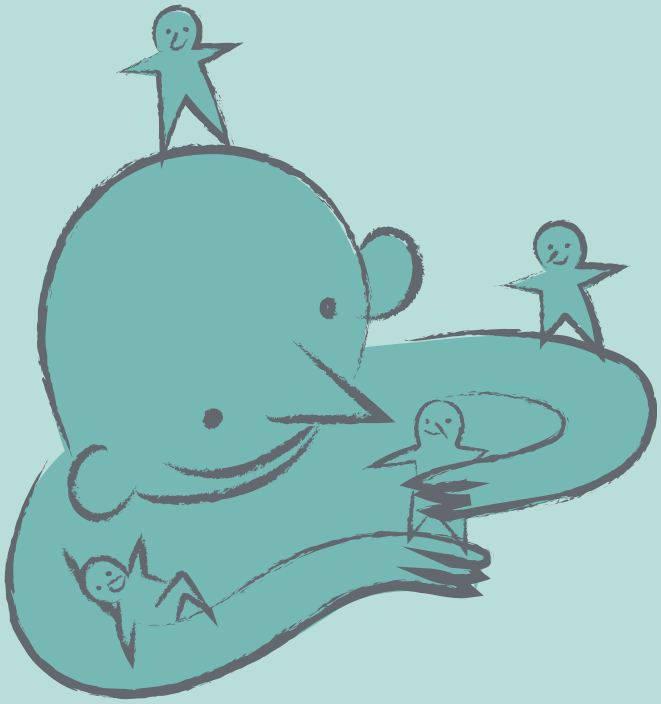
The

VALUES

Workbook



Introduction

Have you ever watched a movie or read a book where a character suddenly made a decision that was totally misaligned with who they are, their values, or what they seem to care about? You might have found yourself thinking, “Woah, that’s so out of character! So-and-so would never do that!” Likewise, at different junctions in our life, we might find ourselves making choices that seem misaligned with our **values,** or the principles or lighthouses that guide our choices and behaviors.

Think of values as guide posts, lighthouses, or other beacons that keep us working towards something outside of ourselves. The neat thing about values is that they can be something profound, whimsical, or really anything that you truly care about. The important thing is to identify what those values are and to start working towards them.

Working towards a more value-driven or value-centered life *doesn’t* mean that life loses its painful moments, but it does help us feel more fulfilled and find a little more purpose in those tough moments.

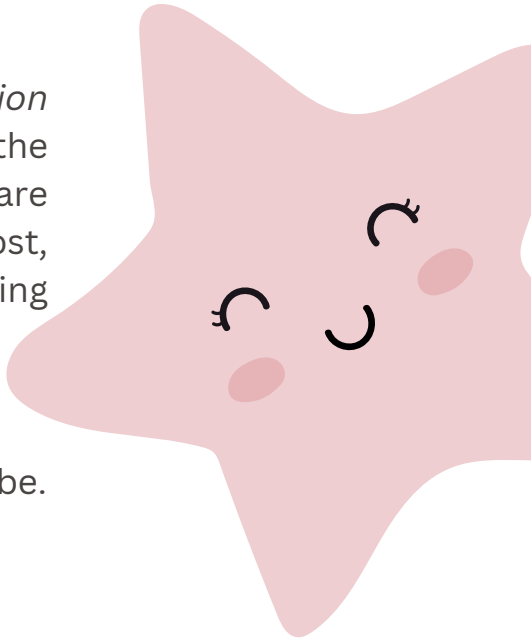
Hopefully, this brief workbook will help you reconnect with your values!

Values

When you look up at the night sky, you can see an infinite array of stars stretching out across the galaxy. For sailors, astronomers, and even the hobbyist, these stars can provide a sense of direction even when no other tools are available. Like the stars, values can guide our choices.

Let's imagine, that a person named Rebecca is invited to a barbeque the same weekend as a friend's wedding and the same weekend as an important business conference. Rebecca could technically decide to do any or none of these! However, the choice that is most closely aligned with Rebecca's values might be the most rewarding for her.

For example, let's say Rebecca was career-driven and *ambition* was an important value for her. She may choose to go to the conference, and instead send a gift to the friends who are getting married. However, if Rebecca valued *friendships* most, she may choose to attend the barbeque or the wedding depending on how close she was to each party involved.



Clarifying our values helps us make choices that
feel more rewarding and aligned with who we are or want to be.

notice your thoughts

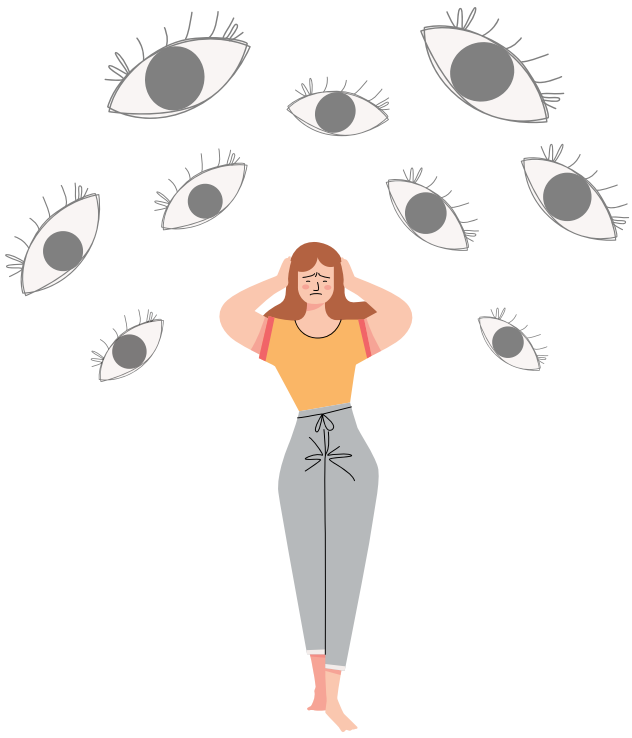
- **If you were Rebecca, which choice would you have made?**
- **What does your choice say about your values?**

Brainstorming Values

Take a moment to fill in the stars with some values that might be important to you. It's okay if you're in the initial brainstorming phase-- that's the whole point of this exercise!

Judgement-Based Thinking

If you read the example of Rebecca and felt that one of the decisions was "good" and the other options were "bad," you might still be thinking within a judgement-based thinking framework.



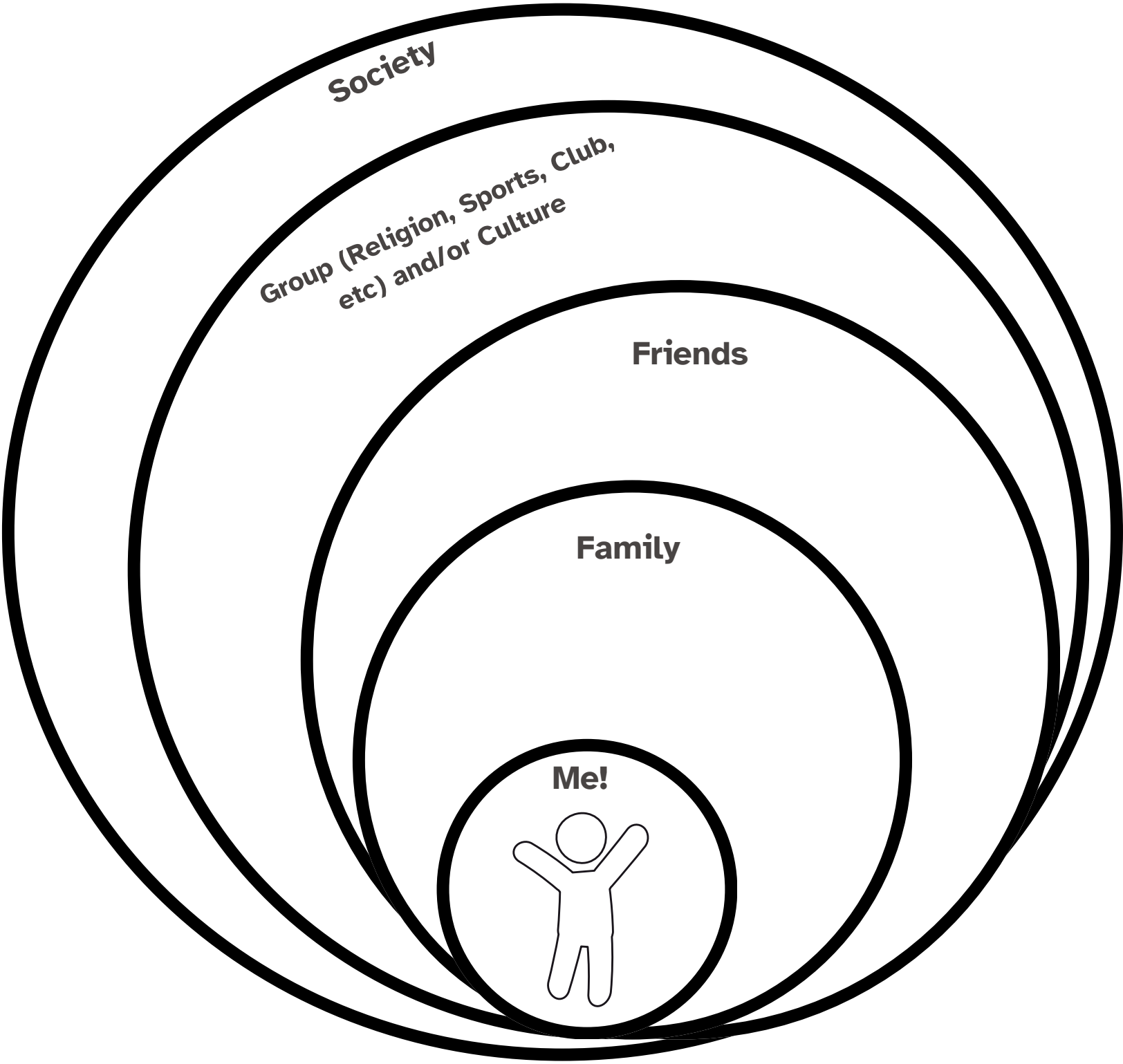
When we are engaged in judgement-based thinking, we assign labels to our decisions. For example, the decision could be "good" or "bad." This thinking is very limited, closed, and often leaves us with too few options. The other problem with judgement-based thinking is that the judgement can come from within (e.g. "I should go to the family function.") or from outside (e.g. "My mom will be disappointed in me if I don't go. That would be bad.")

This judgement-based thinking not only limits our choices, but also prevents us from making decisions that are actually aligned with our values. Instead, we want to ask ourselves, does this decision align with our values?

- **Do you currently judge your decision-making by labeling it as good or bad?**
- **Are your choices motivated by your own values, the wants of others, obligations, etc.?**
- **What steps can you take to move away from judgement-based thinking?**

Understanding Who Shapes Your Values

It is completely normal and understandable that some of our values will be shaped by cultural expectations, group expectations (clubs, religions, political parties, sports affiliations, etc.), family, and even society at large. Take a moment to reflect on what values each group or circle might be placing on you or encouraging you to adopt.



Journal Exercise

Look back at the previous worksheet.

- Are the values that are being encouraged by those around you aligned with the values that you want to live by?
- How closely do they align or misalign?
- What changes do you think you may want to make?
- How can you navigate group values that differ from your own?

Case Study

Max and Hilda lived a life dedicated to growing their family and investing for retirement. Max often shared an intense pride in his ability to provide for the family, in his work ethic, and in his perseverance even as the markets and the economy fluctuated. Hilda shared more pride and joy in raising her kids and getting to watch them blossom into adults with kids of their own. Now as retirees, they both acknowledged that priorities of the past have shifted somewhat.

Max and Hilda recognized that they were no longer in charge of a house full of kids or having to dedicate themselves to long working hours. Hilda found joy in her new role as grandmother, and often followed her values by making handmade gifts for the grandchildren and providing advice for her adult children as needed.

Max found himself struggling with the transition, noting that while he still valued a strong work ethic, he was struggling to find a new project which to dedicate himself. Max began to reflect and realized that he fulfilled his obligations as a provider, but that in his pursuit of this, it left very little time for self-discovery.

notice your thoughts

- **How would you guide Max towards reconnecting with and identifying his values?**
- **How could Max still meet his value of a strong work ethic while working within the parameters of his new stage in life?**

Case Study (continued)

Max decides to call up an old friend and confide in some of the challenges he's been having as he transitions from a hard-working professional to a retiree. Max's friend, Steve, validates that Max worked really hard, but points out that Max never really prioritized anything outside of work. Steve gently invites Max to consider if there was something beyond work that he might have enjoyed.

Max begins to identify several values that are important to him that he hadn't really had time to cultivate including:

- adventure
- leaving a legacy
- learning

After some discussion, Steve invites Max to start thinking about working towards one of these values or taking **committed action.** Steve points out that even if Max makes a very small change, it would still bring Max closer towards living in a more aligned manner with his values.

- **What small step could Max take that would get him closer to living more aligned with his values?**
- **How would you encourage Max to take this small step if he pushes back, voices fear, or acknowledges that change is hard?**

Case Study (continued)

Max decides to come up with a small list of ideas to work towards his values.

He makes the following list:

Adventure:

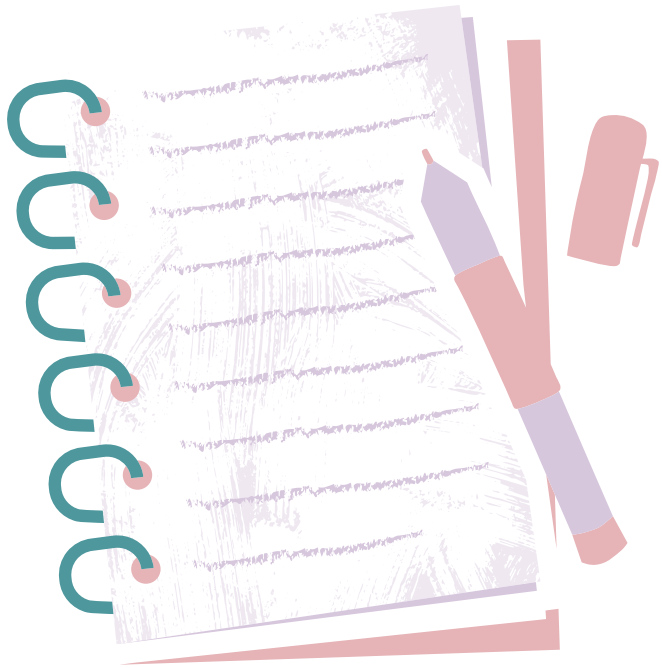
- Try a new restaurant in town
- Go to a local park that I haven't been to before
- Go fishing at a new lake
- Plan a trip to a city, state, or country I've never been to

Leaving a Legacy

- Write an autobiography
- Start a micro-scholarship fund
- Plant a tree
- Volunteer

Learning

- Audit a class at the local community college
- Take a free class online or attend a community lecture
- Read a book on a new topic
- Read an article online about a new topic
- Spend 10 minutes on Duolingo, Rosetta Stone, or some other language learning software



notice your thoughts

- **Notice how some of these committed actions take a small amount of time, while others are a larger time commitment.**
- **Can you think of any other committed actions to add to Max's list?**

Committed Actions

Maybe you have seen dating profiles that mention that the person “likes to hike” or “likes to travel,” but when you ask the person about the last time they traveled or hiked, they mention that it’s been months or even years. In these situations we’re witnessing a giant disconnect between a *values and actions*.

Committed actions, or steps that we can take towards our values, are necessary steps that we must take if we want to live a **value-driven life.**

Committed actions are often not easy, because it creates change. Most people experience some level of discomfort (or even anxiety and fear) when we engage in changes. *That’s okay!* We know that life is sprinkled with moments of pain, discomfort, anxiety, and fear. By living a value-driven life, we are not erasing the pain. Instead, we are trying to create meaning and purpose within our lives.

Let’s return to the original example of a person stating in their dating profile that they “like to travel.” If they wanted to be aligned with this value, they might decide to take a committed action to do one of the following:

- plan a trip
- research a new travel destination
- read a book or autobiography about a traveler
- watch a new travel vlog

Even though these steps are not actually taking the person on a trip quite yet, it is getting the person more aligned with their value.

Putting it all Together

Now that you hopefully have a better understanding of values, it's time to put it all together. In the following pages, you'll work on:

1. **Value Identification**
2. **Reflecting on current practice of values**
3. **Working on New Committed Actions**
4. **Rinse, lather, and repeat as necessary.**

Living a value-centered life is journey-- not a one time deal.

Value Identification

Circle any of the values that you identify with. If there are values that you identify with, but they aren't listed, feel free to add them!

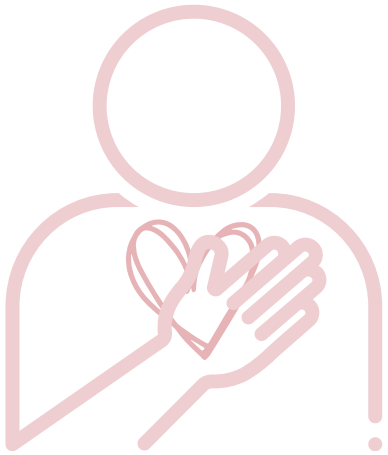
- Accomplishment
- Activeness
- Achievement
- Adventure
- Altruism
- Animals
- Ambition
- Amusement
- Assertiveness
- Athleticism
- Beauty
- Belonging
- Bravery
- Calmness
- Candor
- Caring
- Charity
- Cheerfulness
- Cleanliness
- Comfort
- Compassion
- Confidence
- Creativity
- Curiosity
- Dependability
- Determination
- Diligence
- Duty
- Education
- Empathy
- Entertainment
- Exploration
- Extravagance
- Financial Independence
- Fitness
- Freedom
- Friendliness
- Frugality
- Generosity
- Grace
- Gratitude
- Growth
- Happiness
- Health
- Helpfulness
- Honesty
- Hospitality
- Humility
- Humor
- Imagination
- Industry
- Insightfulness
- Integrity
- Intelligence
- Intimacy
- Justice
- Kindness
- Knowledge
- Logic
- Love
- Loyalty
- Making a difference
- Mindfulness
- Nature
- Order
- Open-mindedness
- Optimism
- Passion
- Patience
- Persistence
- Pleasure
- Poise
- Power
- Reciprocity
- Respect
- Ritual(s)
- Romance
- Safety
- Self-care
- Sensuality
- Sexuality
- Spirituality
- Skillfulness
- Teamwork
- Thankfulness
- Thriftiness
- Tidiness
- Trustworthiness
- Variety
- Wealth
- Wonder
- Zest / Joy for Life
- _____

My Values Plan

Look back at the list that you just completed and allow yourself to narrow it down to your top ten values. Take a moment to reflect. Now narrow that list down to your top five values. These are sometimes referred to as your core values.

My Core Values

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Now take a moment to reflect on how closely aligned you feel that your life is with your values. Do you feel that if you shared your core values with a close friend that they would easily see the connections between your choices and your values? Identify where you are in your values journey.

Just getting started.

Taking a few committed actions towards my values.

Fairly aligned.

Almost there!

Recognizing that it's an ongoing journey, but keeping values at the forefront of my thoughts.

Finally, take a moment to think about some committed actions that you can take to become more aligned with your values.

Committed Actions

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Summary

Remember that your committed actions can be something very small, but meaningful to you. If someone identified that they value *nature*, but recognized that they're low on time and money, they might feel defeated. Rather than getting stuck on the things we can't do, we can focus on the things that we can do. This person might not have the time or resources to go on a hike in an exotic location, but they probably do have the time and resources to sit outside for ten to fifteen minutes and watch the clouds.

Another important reminder is that *values can and will change*! Let's imagine a person values athleticism above everything else, but then they suffer a serious injury. Or let's imagine that a person who was previously very money-driven has a change of heart. These things happen and that's completely okay. What's important is to periodically check in with yourself and reflect on your values, how closely your life aligns with those values, and then to make adjustments as needed.

Finally, remember that while the value-centered life doesn't remove pain from life, it definitely can add a little meaning and sense of purpose. Centering our life on these values can be beneficial, particularly when things become challenging.

Have fun with your value-centered life!