

Core Values

We all have core values, but often we're not aware of what those are. This activity will help you identify your core values. It's a useful one to do every year and to reflect on how they change—or don't change.

Process

1. Read through the list of values located at the end of this exercise and circle 10 that you feel are most important to you.
2. Cross off five of those values, leaving you with the five that are most important to you.
3. Now, from your list of five values, cross off two, leaving you with the *three* values that are most important to you. These are your core values.

Reflect

- ☞ How does it feel to read your list of values? What did it feel like to do this activity?
- ☞ One year ago, what do you suspect your core values might have been? Ten years ago, what do you think they might have been?
- ☞ Consider how your actions reflect your core values. Which values show up more often in your actions at work? At home? In social circles? With family?
- ☞ What are some ways in which your actions reflect your core values? Think of one example of how actions you take reflect your core values.
- ☞ Can you think of a time—or two—when your actions conflicted with a core value? How does it feel to remember those moments when there was a discrepancy between a value and your actions?

Write your three core values on a piece of paper and post them somewhere prominent.

Reflect on them for a few months. See if they still feel like “core” values.

Suggestions for Sharing Your Core Values

Sharing your core values with colleagues is a powerful way to connect and learn about each other. I often offer groups these discussion prompts:

- ☞ What do your core values mean to you?
- ☞ Describe the elimination process you went through to arrive at your three core values. How are the ones that you crossed off reflected in your top three?
- ☞ Share a time when you acted on your core values.
- ☞ Which of your core values feels easiest to uphold? Which feels hardest?
- ☞ Find someone with the same value as you have, and explore how you experience the value similarly and differently—one value can mean different things to different people.

Values

The following values apply to work and personal life. This is not an exhaustive list—you're welcome to add your own.

Acceptance	Contribution	Happiness
Achievement	Cooperation	Harmony
Advancement	Creativity	Health
Adventure	Democracy	Helping others
Affection	Effectiveness	High expectations
Altruism	Efficiency	Honesty
Ambition	Empathy	Hope
Appreciation	Equality	Humor
Arts	Equity	Imagination
Authenticity	Excellence	Independence
Authority	Excitement	Influence
Autonomy	Expertise	Initiative
Balance	Fairness	Integrity
Beauty	Faith	Interdependence
Belonging	Fame	Intuition
Caring	Family	Justice
Celebration	Flexibility	Kindness
Challenge	Focus	Knowledge
Choice	Forgiveness	Leadership
Collaboration	Freedom	Loyalty
Commitment	Friendship	Making a difference
Communication	Fun	Meaningful work
Community	Generosity	Mindfulness
Compassion	Goals	Nature
Competition	Gratitude	Nurturing
Connection	Growth	Order

Passion	Success
Peace	Support
Perseverance	Teamwork
Personal development	Time
Personal growth	Togetherness
Pleasure	Tolerance
Positive attitude	Tradition
Power	Travel
Pride	Trust
Privacy	Truth
Productivity	Unity
Recognition	Variety
Reflection	Zest
Reputation	
Respect	
Responsibility	
Results	
Risk taking	
Romance	
Routine	
Self-expression	
Self-respect	
Service	
Sharing	
Solitude	
Spirituality	

Crafting a Mission Statement

A mission statement is a declaration of your purpose. It has a dual audience: You and others. It helps you establish priorities and guides your decisions. You may want to create a mission statement that speaks to your purpose as a professional, or to a broader purpose in life.

Step 1

☞ Draft a few mission statements on 3-by-5 index cards. Don't worry about the wording, and don't show them to anyone. These prompts can help you generate ideas for your statement:

- ☞ What do you hope will be true as a result of your work?
- ☞ What impact do you want to have on others or the world?
- ☞ Which values drive you to do what you do?

Carry these index cards around in your pocket for a week.

☞ Pull them out occasionally and read them. Notice how you feel reading them. Is there one that feels more empowering? Closer to the truth? Are there elements in each one that if combined might reflect your sense of purpose?

Capture your reflections on your first round of mission statements here:

Step 2

After a week of carrying your drafts, write one mission statement that draws from them.

Of course, you can write something entirely new if you want. Use words that feel like you. They don't have to be fancy—they need to feel authentic. Write your statement in the box here.

My Mission:

Reflect

How does it feel to see your mission statement?

Read it aloud. How does it feel to hear yourself proclaim it?

Share it with someone else. How does it feel to share? What was the person's response?

Author: I feel very uncomfortable when I share my mission with others. Sharing makes me feel vulnerable and exposed. But I do it anyway. Here's mine:

My mission is to heal and transform the world. I help educators discover ways of being and working that are joyful and rewarding, that bring communities together, and that result in positive outcomes for children. I help people find their own power and empower others so that we can transform our education system, our society, and our world.

Step 3

- ☞ Write your mission statement in large letters and post it in your work space where you'll see it regularly. Use color or decorate it if you want.
- ☞ When you're having a hard day, read it and notice how you feel.