yourbestyou

Your values

Establishing what's important to you

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What's most important to you? Think about what you truly value in your life. Think about what's most important in your life right now.

The power of this exercise is in *actually doing it*. Put pen to paper rather than just idly thinking about it. You might be surprised at what comes up. Consider repeating the exercise in a couple of weeks' time. Have your answers changed? Remember to be honest and write down what you really think — not what you 'ought' to think.

Write down the single most important thing in your life right now. What do you care about? Now write down the next thing.... and the next. You should have a list of 4 or 5 things / people / places / activities that you value most highly.

Now you've got your list, ask yourself what you get from this. Write down what having this thing / person / place / activity in your life actually gives you.

If you're feeling stuck, use this list of 'life areas' to prompt you:

- Family
- Job
- Money
- Friends
- Leisure
- Travel
- Home

Or, think of a time when you were feeling really amazing (it could be a few moments, hours or weeks). What were you doing? What was good about it? What was most important?

Then, take your list of 'what you get' and ask yourself what having *that* gives you. Keep asking yourself, 'and what does *that* give me?' until you've distilled your answer down to a value.

As an example, here are a couple of mine:

What's most important to you right now?	*What does this give you?*	*And what does **that** give you?*	*And what does **that** give you?*
My husband	Someone to care for who cares for me	Love	Love
Exercise — on a jogging 'high'	Thinking space, a feeling of being alive	Being fit for purpose. Feeling proud of myself.	Power

It was easy for me to arrive at 'love' as a key value. This one feels really obvious for me and is something that most people value. 'Power' was much more surprising and took a bit more digging and self-examination.

Continue asking yourself the 'what's important?' question until you've covered all aspects of your life. This should leave you with a list of your most important values.

Different people might have different ways of describing similar things (e.g. honesty, integrity, authenticity, reliability) — it's important that you choose words that resonate with you.

Your list of values can help you make decisions — it's a reference guide for being your best you.

So, if I'm offered a job as, say, a bailiff's assistant — working in an office with no power over what I do, in an environment that creates fear and loss — I shouldn't take that job! I couldn't live two of my most important values 'love' and 'power'. Of course, some people might thrive in this environment. Some

people could absolutely bring their values to this sort of role and make a fabulous contribution. I just know it's not for me.

That's what this exercise is all about — getting clear on what's 'for you'. Just because your friends are really into the latest fashions, doesn't mean you should be. Maybe you have a passion for 1940s vintage and you feel most alive and authentic when you're wearing clothes inspired from this era. Just because your family expects you to become an accountant doesn't mean it's right for you. Maybe your passion lies with helping animals.

Often our parents, siblings, friends and teachers make assumptions about us — and sometimes we agree with them. Often those assumptions look (on the surface, at least) completely reasonable to us... *until we stop to question what we really think and feel*.

Looking at your list of values, ask yourself 'how am I living these?' Are your work and home conducive to living your values every day?

What could you change that would enable you to live your values more fully?

What action will you take as a result of doing this exercise?

Here's a brief list of possible values — there are loads more, but this might get you thinking:

Achievement	Freedom	Pleasure
Advancement and promotion	Friendships	Power
Adventure	Growth	Privacy
Affection	Having a family	Purity
Arts	Helping other people	Quality
Authenticity	Helping society	Recognition
Challenges	Honesty	Religion
Change and variety	Independence	Reputation
Close relationships	Influencing others	Responsibility and accountability
Community	Inner harmony	Security
Competence	Integrity	Self-expression
Competition	Intellectual status	Self-respect
Control	Involvement	Serenity
Cooperation	Job tranqulity	Service
Creativity	Knowledge	Stability
Decisiveness	Leadership	Status
Democracy	Location	Supervising others
Ecological awareness	Loyalty	Teamwork
Economic security	Love	Time freedom
Effectiveness	Meaningful work	Truth
Efficiency	Money	Wealth
Ethical practice	Nature	Wisdom
Excellence	Order	Working under pressure
Excitement	Personal development	Working with others
Fame	Physical challenge	Working alone