

REDISCOVERING BASIC VALUES

by Eugene Raudsepp

Personal Growth and Career Advancement Depend on a Clear Understanding of Your Needs and Beliefs

An increasing number of people are asking themselves the all-important question, "What should I be doing to lead a full and successful life?" "Am I pursuing a career that is truly satisfying?" As these questions imply, people have a strong need to get in touch with their values.

Self-discovery is the basis of psychological health and success, according to one of our foremost psychologists, Carl R. Rogers. From treating thousands of patients he concludes that one central issues underlies almost every problem - the lack of self-knowledge. In Dr. Roger's therapeutic techniques, success is recorded when the person begins to act more like his or her true self, dropping the masks and roles formerly used. Only when people begin to realize how much of their actions have been based on mistaken notions of what they should be or what is expected of them, rather than on who they really are or want to be, are they on the road to recovery.

According to research conducted by psychologist Stella Reszuck, individuals who succeed in self-discovery are more capable of assuming self-responsibility. "Self-responsibility," she says, "means recognizing that you choose what you do and who you are." When individuals take responsibility for their lives, they enlarge their alternatives and learn to make career choices that enhance and nourish them rather than deplete them.

Unfortunately, few of us are fully aware of our values on a conscious level. What is even worse, most of our values aren't really our own, but have been imposed on us by parents, education, and other outside pressure and standards.

So, the first thing to do is to define your values; then rank them in terms of their importance. The exercise in this article will help you accomplish this with ease. Before you begin, remember the following points.

Clearly defined values will aid you in everything you do. In an important sense, you crystallized values serve as banisters on a staircase, to guide you, to be touched when you have to make decisions, and, in very risky matters, grasped. There is always an element of risk in any form of decision-making. The only way to reduce it is by studying the implications of your choices in terms of their effect upon your value system. Then you can make a firm decision concerning the best alternative and accept whatever consequences may emerge. When establishing your personal hierarchy of values, remember to be almost merciless in discarding those items you feel are no longer important. This way you will conserve energy for accomplishing the goals that mean the most to you.

Also, don't worry if some values seem equally desirable. Step back and evaluate them. Chances are some will emerge as much more important than other.

This exercise is designed to help you clarify your values. Take the test now, marking the three columns as follows:

- . **Column I: Importance Scale: 0 - 3 = low; 4 - 6 = medium; 5 - 10 = high**
- . **Column II: Importance Scale, How well satisfied: 0 - 3 = very little or slightly; 4 - 6 = moderately well; 7 - 10 = fairly to extremely well**
- . **Column III: Discrepancy scores**

Here is how to score the test. Column I shows you the priority of your values. After reviewing your scores in Column I, circle the values you rated high in importance and deduct from them the ratings you put in Column II. The resulting discrepancy scores in Column III will indicate how well you are satisfying those values that you deem important. High discrepancy scores (7 - 10) with values you rated high indicate that they are your primary concerns. Moderate discrepancy scores (4 - 6) show some concern and you should also strive to increase these values. Low discrepancy scores (less than 3) indicate that you are relatively happy with your realizations.

PERSONAL VALUES

Value:

Column I

Column II

Column III

Excitement: adventure, new experiences, exploring, challenge, being enthusiastic

Expertness: being considered as an authority

Family well-being: taking care of loved ones

Friendship: having close friends, companionship

Health: physical well-being

Helping Others: humanitarianism, serving and working with others, concern for others

Honesty: being sincere, open with others, integrity, courtesy

Intellectual: Using your mind, liking to think, acquiring knowledge, studying

Leadership: influence, power, or control over others, being persuasive

Accomplishment: achievement, fame, recognition, aspiration for excellence

Aesthetics: appreciation of beauty, art, music

Affection: love, caring, becoming close and intimate with another person

Appearance: physical attractiveness, sex-appeal

Autonomy: independence, self-direction, freedom, planning and directing own future

Competition: winning, being #1, liking competitive activity

Cooperation: participating with others, involvement

Creativity: using imagination, being innovative, problem-solving abilities

Devotion: strong spiritual beliefs, faith

Economic security: comfortable life, freedom from economic worry

Emotional well-being: peace of mind, contentment, freedom from inner conflicts

Loyalty: sense of duty, trustworthiness

Money: wealth, getting rich

Personal growth: development, use of potential, self-realization

Play: pleasure, fun, leisurely life

Prestige: visible success, social recognition

Promotions: career advancement

Recognition: status, respect from other, admiration

Responsibility: accountability, reliability, dependability

Self-acceptance: accepting one's own strengths and weaknesses

Self-confidence: faith in talent and abilities

Self-control: ability to control and inhibit undesirable behaviors, self-discipline

Self-respect: pride in self, self-esteem, strong sense of personal identity

Stability: order, predictability, tranquility

Sometimes when you examine your past priorities in light of your new, crystallized value system, you may discover that many of your previous concerns are no longer meaningful. This discovery alone can be a giant step toward career success.

Frequently you will find that you have either outgrown or radically modified your old priorities. For example, you may discover that your present career - no matter the extent of your success - isn't providing the psychological income you really need or isn't offering sufficient opportunities. These kinds of discoveries may have a profound effect on your life, so be prepared!

In this rapidly changing world, each of us needs to reexamine our values and priorities. Self-scrutiny that leads to a defined value system gives us a clearer idea of what we really want out of life. We will begin to see the real work more realistically and learn to recognize demands that conflict with our basic priorities.

*For the most part, I do the thing
which my own nature drives me to do.*

- *Albert Einstein*
from "News Service,"
3/19/55