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Values stocktake

Words by Marie Rowland

Every day you make decisions based on what you value. As a central part of your character, your values create the road map by which you navigate life. But what happens when you hit a fork in the road where the life you lead collides with the values you hold dear?



We are all familiar with retail stores or wholesale suppliers doing stocktakes periodically. This arduous job means they can ascertain how much stock is on hand, what needs to be reordered and what hasn't moved off the shelves. At the end of this accounting process, the company is left with an accurate inventory knowing not just stock levels but, more importantly, what is perceived as a higher-value item and what is not. If we transpose this proposition to a human level, you too can differentiate and calibrate particular values that are significant to you and can rank them accordingly from high to low.

By doing a personal value stock inventory, you can come to know the values that mean most to you and what you relegate to the back room of your heart and mind. Values form an essential part of your being instructing you on how you want to live your life. Some values may be universal, but others are unique to you and how you view the world. No two people will have the same value set. Further, there is no right or wrong to this list, as is the case with morals or principles, which

are imbued with notions of good and bad based on societal norms and precepts. Values are inherent to your being and therefore are entirely individualistic in their nature. They impact every part of your life from how you parent to how you vote, from the choices you make to how you view the world – but not all values are equal in value.

Valuable values

In 1962, Isabel Briggs Myers co-created a personality profile test with her mother, Katharine Cook Myers. The test came to be known as the Myers Briggs Types Indicator. Briggs Myers formulated the test by distilling the research her mother, Cook Briggs, had done years prior, when she painstakingly catalogued the character of people she had met based on the theory of archetypes espoused by psychologist Carl Jung. This personality test was co-opted and is still used by companies and recruiters to assess the traits, moral leanings and values of prospective employees to establish how they will fit within the culture of their business. In the elapsing 60 years, a vast number of these personality tests and values indicators

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have been formulated for this purpose. While used extensively in the corporate context, the principle behind them is useful when indexing your own values.

Values don't merely comprise the king-hitter notions of honesty and integrity or fidelity and justice, for instance. There are also the ones which are more nuanced in meaning and application such as conscientiousness and accountability or spontaneity and free-spiritedness.

While it doesn't seem at all obvious and you may never think of punctuality as a high-ranking value, this is the cause of many marital and friendship disputes. When one person feels anxious or disrespected if the other is continually late, this can lead to major conflict. So, this value can become a deal breaker, even though it seems so minor in its ranking. Some people value beauty and aesthetics, while others value wealth and prosperity, which appear to be more material in their make-up. We may view this as shallow or immoral, yet have you ever stayed at a beautiful resort instead of donating to charity?

Fixed vs flexible values

For most of us, we are born into fixed value systems. These stem from religious, political and social belief schemas instilled within you from an early age and can be so rigid they stay with you for the rest of your life without being probed or challenged. However, values can be fluid and can change depending on how a particular individual experiences that value. For instance, most of us value family and for a long time the archetypal view of a family was the nuclear one. The same goes with romantic couples, which was confined to a male-female dyad. However, this fixed value has been challenged with social change and expanded viewpoints and so the value proposition for many of us has shifted accordingly.

For those people who adopt this revised value while still residing or emanating from cultures where this is frowned upon or not accepted, holding this view may be seen either as an act of insurgence or courage, depending on your viewpoint. A value is more than just an aspect of one person's being but serves to define and differentiate you. When you act upon your values, you are proclaiming what matters to you. Your values serve as a guide for your behaviour and actions and ultimately how you live.

The values clash

We all think we know what values we hold but how often do we actually take stock of the codes we live by? Do all your values have the same value? Or do you have

some values that mean more to you than others? And, if so, why? If you value honesty, for instance, why would you lie to protect a loved one? If we are passionate about justice, why don't we stand up for someone who is being victimised at work? If we value free speech, why would we strongly wish to ban hate speech?

When tested, we come to understand that not all values are equal. Inside your value system, you come up against your own dissonance too, where you think and feel one way but act in a way that is at odds with your innate and supposedly strongly held values. You may value family life but also working hard toward success, which may eat into highly prized family time. So what happens when values clash? What do you choose? What criteria do you use when making these choices? Sometimes we don't choose, and both suffer. Additionally, you compromise or forfeit your values for desired outcomes. For instance, you may value job satisfaction yet stay in a high-paying but unsatisfying job, also known as golden handcuffs. In these instances, it is really helpful to go back to the drawing board and re-evaluate your values, understand why they clash and then come up with a ranking system as a basis for our decision-making.

Your values define you, but they can also divide you, so it is helpful to do a values inventory to make discovery of your own personal hierarchy of values.

Values checklist

As an exercise, it is not a bad idea to go back to your values stockroom to ascertain what ranks as your high-stake values compared with the lesser ones. Further, you may discover you have incorrectly ranked the values based on precepts about what you think should be high-ranking values. You may be surprised about what you really value. You may like to think of yourself as egalitarian but value wealth. A values inventory is not merely knowing what you value but why you value these traits, as they determine how you think, act and react. If you did your values inventory, what would you choose to leave on the shelf?

When defining your own values inventory, the following checklist may help you distil what really matters to you: (Remember, there is no right or wrong!)

- Define what values make you feel most fulfilled and satisfied.
- Think about what values you base your choices on. For instance, do you seek personal satisfaction or do you act in service of the greater good? Remember, this is about doing what is right for you, rather than doing what is perceived as right.

Values checklist

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accountable | <input type="checkbox"/> Easy-going/flexible | <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accepting | <input type="checkbox"/> Focused | <input type="checkbox"/> Perfectionist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adventurousness | <input type="checkbox"/> Forgiving | <input type="checkbox"/> Punctuality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ambitious | <input type="checkbox"/> Fair/just | <input type="checkbox"/> Positivity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assertiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual | <input type="checkbox"/> Practicality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Balanced | <input type="checkbox"/> Family-oriented | <input type="checkbox"/> Preparedness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being the best | <input type="checkbox"/> Fidelity/faithful | <input type="checkbox"/> Professionalism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Belonging | <input type="checkbox"/> Being fit | <input type="checkbox"/> Reliability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boldness/upfront | <input type="checkbox"/> Having freedom | <input type="checkbox"/> Responsible |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calmness/collected | <input type="checkbox"/> Having fun | <input type="checkbox"/> Playful/light-hearted |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Careful/cautious | <input type="checkbox"/> Generosity | <input type="checkbox"/> Resourceful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Challenging/disruptive | <input type="checkbox"/> Growth | <input type="checkbox"/> Restraint |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cheerfulness/optimistic | <input type="checkbox"/> Happiness | <input type="checkbox"/> Results-oriented |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clear-minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Hard working | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling secure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commitment oriented | <input type="checkbox"/> Attractiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-actualisation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community-oriented | <input type="checkbox"/> Helpful | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-control |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compassionate | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy | <input type="checkbox"/> Selflessness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competitive | <input type="checkbox"/> Honest/sincere | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-reliance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consistent | <input type="checkbox"/> Honourable | <input type="checkbox"/> Sensitivity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caring | <input type="checkbox"/> Humility | <input type="checkbox"/> Serenity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Striving to improve | <input type="checkbox"/> Independence | <input type="checkbox"/> Service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contributing to society | <input type="checkbox"/> Ingenuity/inventive | <input type="checkbox"/> Shrewd/canny |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having control | <input type="checkbox"/> Inner harmony | <input type="checkbox"/> Simplicity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperative | <input type="checkbox"/> Inquisitive | <input type="checkbox"/> Resilient |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rule follower | <input type="checkbox"/> Insightful | <input type="checkbox"/> Action-oriented |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Courteous | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent | <input type="checkbox"/> Mindful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creative | <input type="checkbox"/> Intuitive/spiritual | <input type="checkbox"/> Spontaneity/spontaneous |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Curious | <input type="checkbox"/> Kind | <input type="checkbox"/> Stability/stable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decisive | <input type="checkbox"/> Protective | <input type="checkbox"/> Strategic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dependable | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership | <input type="checkbox"/> Strength |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Determined | <input type="checkbox"/> Loving/affectionate | <input type="checkbox"/> Success |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diligent | <input type="checkbox"/> Loyalty | <input type="checkbox"/> Supportive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disciplined | <input type="checkbox"/> Making a difference | <input type="checkbox"/> Temperance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity/inclusivity | <input type="checkbox"/> Having a faith | <input type="checkbox"/> Thankfulness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dynamic | <input type="checkbox"/> Obedient/compliant | <input type="checkbox"/> Team-oriented |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beauty/beautiful things | <input type="checkbox"/> Openness | <input type="checkbox"/> Thorough/detail-oriented |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Efficient | <input type="checkbox"/> Originality | <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elegant | <input type="checkbox"/> Patriotism | <input type="checkbox"/> Status/social ranking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Empathetic | <input type="checkbox"/> Accepting | <input type="checkbox"/> Tolerance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoying life | <input type="checkbox"/> Authentic | <input type="checkbox"/> Traditionalism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enthusiastic/joyful | <input type="checkbox"/> Caring | <input type="checkbox"/> Trustworthiness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Equality | <input type="checkbox"/> Curious | <input type="checkbox"/> Truth-seeking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Courageous/valiant | <input type="checkbox"/> Expressive/open | <input type="checkbox"/> Wealth/prosperity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grateful | <input type="checkbox"/> Risk-taker | <input type="checkbox"/> Uniqueness/original |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly/warm | <input type="checkbox"/> Skilful/industrious | <input type="checkbox"/> Usefulness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organised/orderly | <input type="checkbox"/> Respectful | <input type="checkbox"/> Considerate |
-

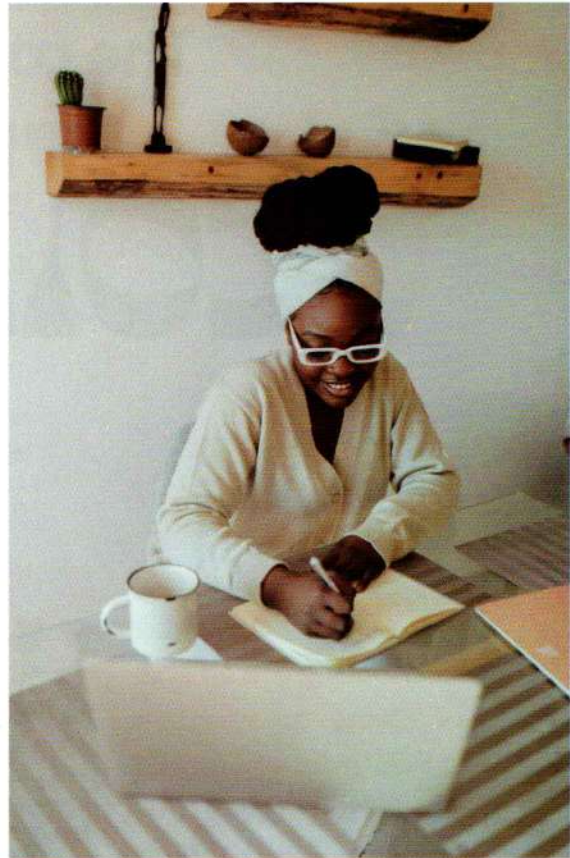
- Define what values make you feel your happiest. You may think that the right thing to do is build a secure foundation but, at the heart, you want to feel free and not tied down.
- Define what values make you feel most proud of yourself. Being of service to others may in fact trump making oodles of money. This is an innate value vs an imposed value.
- Finally, design your own values inventory and live the ones that matter most to you.

To kick you off, in the box is a checklist of a variety of values. While this list is vast and extensive, so many more can be added to it, which you can do yourself. As an exercise, use the ones below and place them in order from most to least important, and you just might find that the values you thought mattered to you differ greatly to what you actually value.

Core values

Values range from minor to major in importance and ranking them reminds you how you wish to act in life. When devising your own personal checklist, there are some that are deal breakers, essential to your being and tie in with your moral beliefs and principles, while others sit more on the periphery of your value solar system. For instance, justice may sit at the heart of your being, whereas punctuality is further out. Both values matter, but one carries more weight than the other. What is interesting to note is that values will naturally form clusters, such as justice and courage.

Knowing your values helps you come to know yourself better. You have more certainty about the person you are and this allows you to act in a more decisive way. Remember, your values are valuable so don't devalue them. 🌱



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