

# What Is Worth Wanting?

Exercises for discovering and clarifying your values

Different exercises work best for different people, so choose the ones that speak to you most. As always with this work: doing one is better than doing none, and giving it ten to fifteen minutes beats waiting until you have hours free.

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## Exercise 1

### What Makes Me Happiest, Proudest, and Most Fulfilled?

This exercise emerges from concepts in humanistic psychology — Abraham Maslow's work on self-actualization and peak experiences. Take some time to reflect on the following questions. You may want to write down your thoughts as you go.

#### STEP 1: Identify three times when you were happiest.

Think back on moments, days, or periods in your life when you felt a deep sense of happiness, joy, or contentment. What was happening? Who were you with? What were you doing? Describe these experiences in detail.

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#### STEP 2: Identify three times when you were most proud.

Recall situations where you felt a profound sense of pride, achievement, or self-respect. What had you accomplished? What challenges had you overcome? What principles or standards were you upholding?

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#### STEP 3: Identify three times when you were most fulfilled and satisfied.

Consider the periods when you felt a strong sense of fulfillment, satisfaction, or sense of purpose. What needs were being met? What were you contributing to? How were you growing or expressing your potential?

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**STEP 4: Determine your top values, based on your experiences.**

Look back over the experiences you described. What themes emerge? What qualities, principles, or motivators seem to be sources of happiness, pride, and fulfillment for you?

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Exercise 2

## The Five Whys

This exercise begins with choosing your values — but the trick is, don't think too hard about it. Just quickly write down the first three to five things that occur to you as being important.

The Five Whys is a problem-solving technique used to identify the root cause of an issue by asking "Why?" five times in succession. Here, we use it to get deeper into our values.

**Start: Write down 3–5 things that feel important to you right now (don't overthink it):**

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**Now pick one item and work through the Whys below:**

**Why #1 — Why is that important to you?**

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**Why #2 — Why is that important to you?**

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**Why #3 — Why is that important to you?**

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**Why #4 — Why is that important to you?**

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**Why #5 — Why is that important to you?**

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**What deeper emotional desire or need did you reach?**

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*Tip: You don't always need to reach all five whys. Often a couple will lead you to a surprisingly foundational place. The deeper the emotion you bring to this, the more your life will feel in alignment.*

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### Exercise 3

## Pick a Guide

This exercise was recommended by the cofounders of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) as their favourite for determining values.

### STEP 1: Select Your Guide

Choose a person you deeply admire — someone from your personal life, a historical figure, or even a fictional character. The key is to pick someone whose qualities and life decisions resonate with you on a profound level.

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### STEP 2: Reflect on Qualities

Write down the qualities and attributes of this person that you admire most. What is it about them that inspires you? Are they kind, brave, wise, resilient? List as many qualities as you can.

### STEP 3: Imagine a Conversation

Close your eyes and imagine sitting down in a quiet place with this guide. Visualize yourself discussing a current dilemma or decision you are facing. Ask them for advice. What would they say?

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### STEP 4: Listen for Values

During this imagined conversation, pay attention to the underlying values that inform the advice. What principles are they drawing on? Write those values down below.

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### STEP 5: Identify Your Core Values

Consider whether these values align with how you currently live your life. Are these values you want to embrace more fully?

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#### Exercise 4

## The Funeral

First encountered in Stephen Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, this exercise has roots in both Stoicism and Buddhism — both of which encourage reflecting on our own death in order to understand what is truly important to us in life.

*(If picturing your own funeral feels too dark, your eightieth birthday bash will work just fine.)*

### STEP 1: Prepare Your Mind

Find a quiet space. Close your eyes and breathe slowly a few times to center yourself.

### STEP 2: Imagine the Setting

Visualize attending your own funeral. Write down what you see:

- Who is attending?

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- What kind of setting is it?

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- What music is playing?

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- What emotions do you sense in the room?

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### STEP 3: The Eulogies

Imagine four people giving eulogies. What do you hope they say?

#### 1. A family member

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#### 2. A close friend

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#### 3. A work colleague

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#### 4. A community member

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### STEP 4: Reflect on Your Values

What values were highlighted in the eulogies you imagined? Remember: the goal is to imagine what you *hope* they will say in the future — not to judge where you stand today.

## Value-Conflict Mapping

The purpose of this exercise is to help you quickly spot everyday situations where you feel torn between a short-term desire and a long-term value, then consider more harmonious alternatives.

## 1. Recall a Recent Conflict

Think of a moment in the past few days where you felt pulled in two directions. Maybe you wanted to watch TV instead of going for a run, or you felt torn between saying yes to a favour versus protecting your time.

## 2. List the Two Forces

On one side: your *immediate want* — the impulse you felt in that moment (e.g., comfort, relaxation, avoiding difficulty). On the other side: the *value* that made you hesitate (e.g., health, learning, integrity).

### 3. Identify the Core Tension

Briefly note why the tension existed. What benefit did each side promise? (e.g., "TV = quick relaxation" vs. "Running = sticking to my fitness goal")

## 4. Envision a Healthier Response

Considering both the short-term need and the long-term value, how might you respond differently if this scenario happened again? (e.g., "Maybe I run for just ten minutes and then watch my show.")

## 5. Reflect on Feelings and Outcomes

How did you actually feel afterward, and did it align with who you want to be? If there's a mismatch, note one small shift you could make next time to better honour your value.

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### Reflection Prompt:

*When I see the push and pull between what I wanted in the moment and the deeper value I care about, what new insights do I gain about how to handle similar situations?*

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*For worksheets for these exercises and additional exercises, visit [oneyoufeed.net/resources](https://oneyoufeed.net/resources)*