

Template 6.2.4: Guidance on Defining Your Personal Values

Purpose

Defining your personal values – process of inquiry

When you define your personal values, you discover what's truly important to you. A good way of starting to do this is to look back on your life to identify when you felt really good and really confident that you were making good choices. Reflecting on the alignment of your personal values to the values of the team/service/organisation you work with will help you to understand the fit or otherwise between both.

How to use it?

Engage in personal reflection with regard to the following:

Step 1: Identify the times when you were happiest

Find examples from both your career and personal life. This will ensure some balance in your answers.

- ▶ What were you doing?
- ▶ Were you with other people? Who?
- ▶ What other factors contributed to your happiness?

Step 2: Identify the times when you were most proud

Use examples from your career and personal life.

- ▶ Why were you proud?
- ▶ Did other people share your pride? Who?
- ▶ What other factors contributed to your feelings of pride?

Step 3: Identify the times when you were most fulfilled and satisfied

Again, use both work and personal examples.

- ▶ What need or desire was fulfilled?
- ▶ How and why did the experience give your life meaning?
- ▶ What other factors contributed to your feelings of fulfilment?

Step 4: Determine your top values, based on your experiences of happiness, pride and fulfilment

Why is each experience truly important and memorable?

Step 5: Prioritise your top values

This step is probably the most difficult because you'll have to look deep inside yourself. It's also the most important step because, when making a decision, you'll have to choose between solutions that may satisfy different values. This is when you must decide which value is more important to you.

- ▶ Write down your top values, in no particular order.
- ▶ Look at the first two values and ask yourself, 'If I could satisfy only one of these, which would I choose?' It might help to visualise a situation in which you would have to make that choice. For example, if you compare the values of service and stability, imagine that you must decide whether to sell your house and move to another country to do valuable foreign aid work, or keep your house and volunteer to do charity work closer to home.
- ▶ Keep working through the list by comparing each value with the other values, until your list is in the correct order.

Step 6: Reaffirm your values

Check your top-priority values, and make sure they fit with your life and your vision for yourself.

- ▶ Do these values make you feel good about yourself?
- ▶ Are you proud of your top three values?
- ▶ Would you be comfortable and proud to tell your values to people you respect and admire?
- ▶ Do these values represent things you would support, even if your choice isn't popular, and it puts you in the minority?

When you consider your values in decision-making, you can be sure to keep your sense of integrity and what you know is right, and approach decisions with confidence and clarity. You'll also know that what you're doing is best for your current and future happiness and satisfaction. You also need to consider the alignment between your personal values and your workplace values. Does this alignment assist you to live your values in your personal and work life?

Making value-based choices may not always be easy. However, making a choice that you know is right is a lot less difficult in the long run.

Key points

Identifying and understanding your values is a challenging and important exercise. Your personal values are a central part of who you are – and who you want to be. By becoming more aware of these important factors in your life, you can use them as a guide to make the best choice in any situation. Some of life's decisions are really about determining what you value most. When many options seem reasonable, it's helpful and comforting to rely on your values – and use them as a strong guiding force to point you in the right direction.

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