VALUES DISCOVERY WITH CYNTHIA MORRIS

Values discovery is the first work I do with my coaching clients. When they gain clarity on what’s really true to them and their creative spirit, everything that follows is much easier. Decisions are easier to make, priorities are easier to set, projects are easier to finish and life is easier to enjoy.

By identifying your values, you gain clarity about what serves you and what doesn’t. Using your values as navigating tools, you can make decisions according to who you are at your core, rather than who you think you should be.

Values are what make us unique. They reflect who we are at our essence. Think of values as the invisible traits that make you you.

I use these exercises to start the values discovery process with my clients. Give yourself some retreat time – an hour or so should get you started – and delve deep to clarify your values.

Use a notebook or several sheets of paper to do this process. Feel free to play with color, add a visual element or make your values exploration a work of art in itself. Whatever works for you is the right way.

For each value, do a string of words. Each word gets closer to the heart of the value and helps to distinguish it. For instance, Creativity as a value will mean something different for you than for me. For me it would look like this:

Creativity/expression/fun  For you it might be: Creativity/play/beauty

Values work is a different way of thinking about yourself and your life, so don’t be frustrated if it takes longer than you thought it would.
**Exercise One**

Think of a peak experience. A time when all was well and you were feeling great. This could be a concert with friend, a time you struck out on your own and did something risky, or when you were acknowledged for something you did. Write a few words to describe this experience. Then look for what made it so great – what values were you living in that moment?

Example: A peak experience for me was going to the Ani DiFranco concert at Red Rocks. It was my first concert there and she is one of my biggest heroes. I went with friends and the night was just perfect.

Values: fun/friends/play
Creative expression/personal empowerment/positive impact on others

**Exercise Two**

What makes you angry? What really ticks you off? Write down a few notes about what bothers you. Now look at the opposite of that and discover the values that lie hidden behind your peeves.

Example: I hate it when people ignore me. When I’ve met someone and then they pretend to not remember.

Values: community/connection
**EXERCISE THREE**

What are you really good at? How would people describe you if they were talking about your greatest assets?

Example: People would say that I am very neat and organized.

Values: order/clarity/productivity

**EXERCISE FOUR**

What must you have? What do you refuse to live without?

Example: I will not live without exercise. I must bicycle, play tennis and practice yoga.

Values: body/feeling good/clearing the mind & emotions
Delve Deeper into Your Values

1. Identify Your Values

Create a list of 10 to 12 values strings. Don’t agonize over doing it right. Use the exercises above to get a list down on paper.

2. Prioritize Your Values

Once you have a list of 10-12 value strings, prioritize them. Choose which values are most important to you in descending order. Now, this can feel like an arbitrary ordering of your values, and in truth, they don’t exist in us in any linear, neat way. But it can still be useful to get a sense of which ones are most important to you. If you were on a sinking boat and needed to toss values overboard to survive, which ones would go first?

3. Honor Your Values

Look over your list of values. Next to the priority number, write a number that represents your level of satisfaction with how much you are honoring that value in your life right now. Ten is honoring that value fully, 1 is not honoring it at all.

4. Live Your Values

Perusing your list, you can easily see which values need more attention. Say you have a value of fitness and health, and you’re honoring it at a level of 3. Pretty sad. But don’t despair. Ask this question: What would my life look like if I were honoring this value at a level of 5? What specifically would I do differently?

You might go to the gym once a week. Get out for a daily 10-minute walk.
I’ve asked you to up your satisfaction by a small factor on purpose. When you make changes incrementally, it’s easier to build on small successes. If you were to ask what would take that value to a 10, you’d have a lofty list that you’d likely not put into practice.

How did it go? I’d love to know how this values exercise worked for you. Drop me a line at Cynthia@originalimpulse.com and let me know what your values discovery did for you.

Like the idea but having trouble laying your values on paper? Don’t despair – as I mentioned, this is a very different way of looking at yourself and can take some time to shift to the new values-based perspective. Often it’s hard to dig deeply enough to identify our values.

I work with clients just on getting clear on their values. This is a valuable exercise when you’re considering a big life change, when you’re stuck for your next move, and when you’re wishing you felt more authentically expressed in your life. It’s well worth the time and effort to connect with your values – they’ll then guide you to more satisfaction in life. Contact me about doing a values discovery session together.

To your creative success, fueled by your values,

Cynthia