



Check Your Gauges

Open your arms to change, but don't let go of your values.

—The 14th Dalai Lama, Buddhist leader

When you are driving and a warning light comes on, it is an indication that something is wrong with your car and you need to take action to fix the problem. The trouble could be something as simple as running low on gas or oil, or it could be a bigger problem, such as an overheated engine. Regardless, it's not a good idea to ignore these gauges for long, as they serve to warn you of problems that could keep things from running smoothly in the future, or even cause severe damage to your vehicle!

Your values are like your own personal gauges. They help remind you of what's most important to you and warn you of potential conflicts that might keep your life from running smoothly. Your core values represent what means the most to you: things like respect, honesty, family, adventure, or freedom.

Life will be less stressful in the long run if you make sure your future career possibilities are in line with your core values. For example, if you choose a career that requires you to work 80 hours a week, but have determined that one of your top values is "family" (or spending time with family), the extra hours will not allow you to live this value fully, and will eventually stress you out! Therefore, it is far better to choose a career path consistent with your top values when you are at the beginning of your career search.

Whether you have thought about them much or not, you probably already have a set of values that are important to you. In this next exercise you'll make a list of these values and then prioritize them from most to least important. This way, when a warning light goes off during your journey, you can refer back to your list to see which values might be out of balance and have a better idea of what to do to correct the situation.

Remember Shelly, who wanted to draw a complete comic book as one of her life's must-sees? Here's her top ten life values list:

1. Sacrifice
2. Open-mindedness
3. Ambition
4. Family
5. Perceptiveness
6. Expressiveness
7. Curiosity
8. Adventure
9. Logic
10. Art



Act with integrity and treat people with respect. Do not compromise your principles. Your reputation is, in the end, your greatest asset.

—Jennifer, attorney

And here are the top ten values for Steve, another student from one of our workshops:

1. Family
2. Adventure
3. Honesty
4. Compassion
5. Humor
6. Friendship
7. Uniqueness
8. Determination
9. Wisdom
10. Unity



Mile Marker Exercise 2.1: Prioritize Your Values

1. Go through the list of values below and place a check mark next to the ones that matter to you. Star the values that are the most important. ¹¹

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Acceptance | <input type="checkbox"/> Flexibility | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning | <input type="checkbox"/> Religiousness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Achievement | <input type="checkbox"/> Focus | <input type="checkbox"/> Liberty | <input type="checkbox"/> Reputation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledgment | <input type="checkbox"/> Freedom | <input type="checkbox"/> Logic | <input type="checkbox"/> Resilience |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adventure | <input type="checkbox"/> Friendship | <input type="checkbox"/> Longevity | <input type="checkbox"/> Resolve |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Affection | <input type="checkbox"/> Frugality | <input type="checkbox"/> Love | <input type="checkbox"/> Resourcefulness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agility | <input type="checkbox"/> Fun | <input type="checkbox"/> Loyalty | <input type="checkbox"/> Respect |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ambition | <input type="checkbox"/> Generosity | <input type="checkbox"/> Making a difference | <input type="checkbox"/> Reverence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Getting ahead | <input type="checkbox"/> Marriage | <input type="checkbox"/> Sacrifice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assertiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Getting my way | <input type="checkbox"/> Mastery | <input type="checkbox"/> Safety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Athleticism | <input type="checkbox"/> Grace | <input type="checkbox"/> Maturity | <input type="checkbox"/> Security |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attentiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Gratitude | <input type="checkbox"/> Mellowness | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-control |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Awareness | <input type="checkbox"/> Growth | <input type="checkbox"/> Meticulousness | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-esteem |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Balance | <input type="checkbox"/> Happiness | <input type="checkbox"/> Mindfulness | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-expression |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beauty | <input type="checkbox"/> Hard work | <input type="checkbox"/> Modesty | <input type="checkbox"/> Selflessness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being the best | <input type="checkbox"/> Harmony | <input type="checkbox"/> Money | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-reliance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Belonging | <input type="checkbox"/> Health | <input type="checkbox"/> Motivation | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-respect |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bravery | <input type="checkbox"/> Helpfulness | <input type="checkbox"/> Mysteriousness | <input type="checkbox"/> Sensitivity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calmness | <input type="checkbox"/> Honesty | <input type="checkbox"/> Neatness | <input type="checkbox"/> Serenity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitality | <input type="checkbox"/> Obedience | <input type="checkbox"/> Service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Change | <input type="checkbox"/> Humility | <input type="checkbox"/> Open-mindedness | <input type="checkbox"/> Sharing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Charity | <input type="checkbox"/> Humor | <input type="checkbox"/> Optimism | <input type="checkbox"/> Shrewdness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children | <input type="checkbox"/> Imagination | <input type="checkbox"/> Order | <input type="checkbox"/> Silliness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cheerfulness | <input type="checkbox"/> Independence | <input type="checkbox"/> Organization | <input type="checkbox"/> Simplicity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clarity | <input type="checkbox"/> Ingenuity | <input type="checkbox"/> Originality | <input type="checkbox"/> Sincerity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cleanliness | <input type="checkbox"/> Inquisitiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Outrageousness | <input type="checkbox"/> Skill |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Comfort | <input type="checkbox"/> Insightfulness | <input type="checkbox"/> Passion | <input type="checkbox"/> Solitude |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compassion | <input type="checkbox"/> Inspiration | <input type="checkbox"/> Patriotism | <input type="checkbox"/> Spirituality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competition | <input type="checkbox"/> Integrity | <input type="checkbox"/> Peace | <input type="checkbox"/> Spontaneity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confidence | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligence | <input type="checkbox"/> Perceptiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Spunk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conformity | <input type="checkbox"/> Energy | <input type="checkbox"/> Perfection | <input type="checkbox"/> Stability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consciousness | <input type="checkbox"/> Enthusiasm | <input type="checkbox"/> Perkiness | <input type="checkbox"/> Strength |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Control | <input type="checkbox"/> Excellence | <input type="checkbox"/> Persistence | <input type="checkbox"/> Success |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coolness | <input type="checkbox"/> Excitement | <input type="checkbox"/> Philanthropy | <input type="checkbox"/> Support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperation | <input type="checkbox"/> Expertise | <input type="checkbox"/> Playfulness | <input type="checkbox"/> Teamwork |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creativity | <input type="checkbox"/> Expressiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Poise | <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtfulness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Credibility | <input type="checkbox"/> Extravagance | <input type="checkbox"/> Popularity | <input type="checkbox"/> Travel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Curiosity | <input type="checkbox"/> Fairness | <input type="checkbox"/> Power | <input type="checkbox"/> Trustworthiness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decisiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Faith | <input type="checkbox"/> Practicality | <input type="checkbox"/> Truthfulness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dependability | <input type="checkbox"/> Fame | <input type="checkbox"/> Preparedness | <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Depth | <input type="checkbox"/> Family | <input type="checkbox"/> Privacy | <input type="checkbox"/> Uniqueness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Determination | <input type="checkbox"/> Fashion | <input type="checkbox"/> Proactiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Unity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dignity | <input type="checkbox"/> Financial security | <input type="checkbox"/> Professionalism | <input type="checkbox"/> Usefulness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity | <input type="checkbox"/> Intuition | <input type="checkbox"/> Prosperity | <input type="checkbox"/> Vision |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Duty | <input type="checkbox"/> Innovation | <input type="checkbox"/> Punctuality | <input type="checkbox"/> Warmth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Joy | <input type="checkbox"/> Realism | <input type="checkbox"/> Wealth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Effectiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Justice | <input type="checkbox"/> Reason | <input type="checkbox"/> Wisdom |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Empowerment | <input type="checkbox"/> Kindness | <input type="checkbox"/> Rebellion | <input type="checkbox"/> Youthfulness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Endurance | <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge | <input type="checkbox"/> Relaxation | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fitness | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership | <input type="checkbox"/> Reliability | |

2. In the space below, make a list of the values you starred, writing them in order, starting with the value most important to you (#1).

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____


6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

3. Different values mean different things to different people. Now that you have your list organized, jot down a brief explanation of what each value means to you and how it relates to you, the people around you, or life in general. For example, if respect was one of your top values, you might write “to respect myself and others,” or respect could mean “to get respect from my family and friends by being successful.” Optimism might mean “to have a positive outlook on life,” or “to help others see the good things happening in the world.” Write the unique meaning of each of your top ten values next to the value you listed above.
4. Can you think of any careers that exemplify your top five values? (For example, being a judge exemplifies the value of “justice” or “fairness.”) Add these to your Career Lot. 



Help from Family and Friends: *Compare Your Values*

Conduct the values activity with a parent, sibling, or a friend. You can download an additional Values Checklist from the Navigation Center at **TestDriveYourFuture.com**. Have that person list and prioritize their values in the same way you just did and compare your lists. What are common values you share? What values are most important to them? Which of their values are not on your list, and vice versa—and of theirs, are there any values you would like to add to your list? After having completed this activity with someone else, do you feel like you know and understand this person better than before? This is certainly the case with Beth and her brother:

When my younger brother was in high school, he was given an assignment to put ten values in order according to what was most important to him and write a paper about them. My mom kept my brother’s list in her hope chest and pulled it out many years later to discover the values of “freedom for the country,” “service,” and “patriotism” were higher on the list than other values like “family,” “career,” and “money.”

With this knowledge, I can now better understand a lot of the choices he has made throughout life—including his decision to go into the Marines immediately after high school, and then, years later, to volunteer for the National Guard (knowing he would be deployed overseas) even after he had started a career and a family. It’s important for me to respect that his choices are based on his values, not mine or anyone else’s. We cannot live by someone else’s values because our own values are an essential part of who we are.



I wanted a career that would promote community, freedom, and equality (there’s more activism and community building involved in public librarianship than many people know—think anti-censorship, grassroots education, and free information for all).

—Jill, senior children’s librarian

When I was about 8 years old, I told my father that someday I would like to design an engine that out-performs all other engines in emissions, fuel economy, and power. I was happy that in October 2003 I was able to call my father and say, “It is complete and in production.”

—Brent, systems engineer

I’ve seen first-hand how important it is to have a safe, decent place to live. In this current recession and with the housing market crunch, more people than ever are homeless or fighting eviction. I decided a long time ago that creating affordable housing is a mission that I believe in and so I aligned my career with that goal. My mission is to work every day to help solve the housing problem and to build projects that I am proud of.

—Elizabeth, construction project manager