

What Matters to Me

REFLECTIVE WRITING SERIES · 5 OF 5 · VALUES-BASED WRITING

Reconnecting with the values that give life direction, especially when things are hard

This is a values-based reflective exercise informed by psychological research. Reflecting on what matters may help widen our sense of who we are beyond any one difficulty, and help guide small choices each day.

DIRECTIONS

Not destinations

A value is a direction you can keep moving in, not a goal you finish.

CHOSEN

Not imposed

What genuinely matters to you, rather than what you feel you should value.

PRESENT

Even in hard times

Values can guide small actions even when feelings are difficult.

Before I begin, I feel connected to what matters to me

0 = not at all · 10 = very connected

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1

Two or three values that matter most to me right now

From your Values Inventory, or in your own words.

2

Choose one. Why does it matter to me, and when have I felt it most alive in my life?

A memory, a person, or a moment when you were living this value.

3

Where does this value already show up in my life, even in small ways?

4

When life is hard, how might this value guide me?

5

One small action this week that expresses this value

After writing, I feel connected to what matters to me

rate again; any change, or none, is useful to notice

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Across this series, the page that helped me most was

What the research suggests

Brief values-affirmation exercises have been associated with changes in how people respond to stress and threat in some studies. Effects vary across people and situations, and this exercise is not intended to replace psychological treatment.

Go at your own pace

Writing about difficult experiences can bring up emotions. Pause whenever you need to, or come back to the exercise when it feels manageable.

When you finish

Take a moment to notice how you feel. A little grounding, movement, or time away from the page can help you transition back into your day.

SOURCES

Cohen, G. L., & Sherman, D. K. (2014). The psychology of change: Self-affirmation and social psychological intervention. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 65, 333–371.

Hayes, S. C., Strosahl, K. D., & Wilson, K. G. (2012). *Acceptance and commitment therapy: The process and practice of mindful change* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.