

Excerpt from [Coach the Person, Not the Problem](#) (pages 105-107)

Life Values

Your strongly held beliefs about what is most important represent your live values. Your values impact your choices of work, friends, relationships, and a desired future. You are generally happy if you live in alignment with your values.

Some values hold more weight than others, and values can change in priority over time. Events and age will change your perspective on what you hold most dear. As I grow older, activities that improve my health hold more value. Since I have no children and my parents have died, my value for family has weakened and my value for friendship has increased. These days, my passion for learning is greater than the desire for winning that drove me in my twenties and thirties. Bringing values to light in a coaching conversation can help clients realize what values are growing in strength and which ones are receding.

The desired outcomes of a coaching session should reflect something your clients value, such as having more love, peace, adventure, freedom, achievement, balance, or success. Once your clients articulate what they want as a coaching outcome, explore why this value is important to them, especially now. To feel satisfied and happy, what they want should support a life value now or in a defined future.

Here is a list of common life values:

Achievement: Successful completion of visible tasks and projects

Advancement: Getting ahead, aspiring to higher levels

Adventure: Challenge, risk-taking, testing limits

Aesthetics: Desire for beautiful surroundings, artistic expression

Challenge: Testing physical or mental limits

Community: Neighbors or coworkers who are familiar, friendly, and helpful

Competence: Being good at what you do, capable, effective

Creativity: Finding new ways to do things, composing, discovering

Environment: Respecting the earth and living in safe, comfortable spaces

Fairness: Respecting everyone's rights

Family: Taking care of and spending time with relatives

Freedom: Ability to make one's own decisions and choices *Friendship:* Close companionship, ongoing and supportive relationships

Health: Maintaining and enhancing physical well-being

Helping: Taking care of others, assisting others to flourish *Honesty:* Being sincere and truthful, keeping promises

Humor: Fun, lightness, spontaneity

Independence: Self-reliance, autonomy

Inner harmony: Freedom from inner conflict, feeling integrated or whole

Integrity: Acting in line with beliefs, doing what you said you would
Intellect: Learning about and discussing an area of knowledge
Intimacy: Deep connection with others
Peace: Harmony among people and groups
Perseverance: Pushing through to the end, completing tasks and goals
Personal growth: Continual learning and personal development
Pleasure: Personal satisfaction, enjoyment, delight
Position: Being highly regarded in one's social group
Power: Having the authority or ability to direct events or make things happen
Prosperity: Flourishing, being well-off, easily obtaining desires
Religion: Deep connection with one's faith
Security: Freedom from worry, safety from threats
Spirituality: Belief in the divine and an unseen nonhuman power
Stability: Certainty, predictability
Teamwork: Cooperating with others toward a common goal
Tradition: Respecting the way things have been done in the past
Winning: Success when competing, coming out on top

The downside of values is their rigidity. If you believe others should have values similar to yours, you might not be able to connect and collaborate with those who have different values, whether at work or at home. I often find in coaching that when clients can't accept other people's or an organization's values, they hold on tightly to what they believe is right and resist seeing another way forward. They won't compromise. They only want to convince others their values are wrong. All I can do as their coach is to reflect their stance. They have to decide what to do with the impasse.

On the other hand, when those close to you or your work thinks you should do or not do something that conflicts with what you most value, you won't be happy if you live by their requests or give away too much when you compromise. Be clear with people why you value what you do. If you give up what makes you happy for too long, it could impact your health as well as your outlook.