

# PATH<sup>2</sup>

## VALUES HIERARCHY EXERCISE

Values are what matter most in life. They are the notches on the yardstick we use to measure the success of our own lives.

When our lives reflect our values, we experience contentment. When our lives and our values are in conflict we experience stress, or even distress if they're far out of alignment.

The Values Hierarchy Exercise will lead you through the process of identifying your individual values in order of importance and help you to incorporate them into your daily life to experience greater contentment.

The Values Hierarchy Exercise is entirely subjective. It doesn't matter what anyone else says or thinks about your life, unless you feel that it should. You're the one in control of your life situation. This exercise will help you gain more control and apply it more effectively.

We don't think about our values in day-to-day life. They can seem abstract, whereas ordinary life is usually practical. But that doesn't mean that we should lose sight of them. While you complete this exercise, allow your mind to be free of limitations and acknowledge the importance of your feelings. This is an exercise of becoming reacquainted with your deepest self. Don't hold back. Be honest. Be thorough. Be excited about your future.

[WWW.PATHH.COM](http://WWW.PATHH.COM)



## PART I: IDENTIFYING YOUR VALUES

Awareness always precedes effective action. In order to create greater harmony between your life and your values, you first have to be aware of your values.

### 1. List and Abbreviate

Create a list of values. Begin with at least six and allow yourself as many as ten. For efficiency, list your values using the first letter of each. If you have values beginning with the same first letter, use the first two letters or however many you need to distinguish one from the other.

### 2. Define

Use your own words to define each value, although you can use a dictionary for help. Don't use any values in the definition of other values. This will create problems later on.

### 3. Compare

Compare two values at a time. Ask yourself questions like, "Which matters more to me?" and "If I could have only one of these, which would I choose?" Pay at least as much attention to how you feel as to what you think, because logic doesn't necessarily trump emotion in the final analysis. We often rely on reason in our day-to-day lives, but emotion is how we judge them.

(continued)



#### **4. Rank and Validate**

Rank your values in descending order, i.e. from most important to least important.

Look at your list as a whole and notice if anything feels out of place. Are they in the correct order? Have you forgotten to include a value that should be on the list? Have you included a value that shouldn't have made the list?

Revisit your final list several times when you're in different roles or different situations. For instance, look it over when you're at work and look it over when you're at home with your loved ones. Look it over when you're happy and look it over when you're upset.

The complexity of our lives means the Values Hierarchy Exercise will be challenging to complete. Within our lives we have competing interests, sometimes even conflict. But as you work through it, you will reveal more of yourself and clarity will follow.

**END OF PART I**



## PART II: INTEGRATING YOUR VALUES INTO DAILY LIFE

The aim is to fill your time with valuable experiences. Because a life that embodies your values generates massive contentment.

To achieve that you must first be aware of how your time is used now. Then you can compare that to your most authentic life, the ideal life that enables full expression of your values. Knowledge of how your reality and your ideal differ enables you to consider practical ways to close the gap. Finally, you can act on your insights with a plan to begin making the necessary changes to increase your quality of life.

Refer to The PATH<sup>2</sup> Good News: *Simplify the equation of life – add quality by subtracting the negative and pointless* for additional insights.

### 1. Account for Your Time

Identify substantial amounts of time you spend in places you dislike and doing things you dislike. Take special note of any instances where both intersect.

Perform the same analysis for experiences you enjoy.

### 2. Identify Valuable Experiences

Consider how the 80/20 Rule applies to your life. The rule means that 80% of what you value in life probably comes from 20% of your experiences. Identify that 20% by making a short list of what felt best about today, yesterday and various points in the past. Recall the most joyous or meaningful moments you've experienced then identify the values you were embodying at those times.

(continued)



### **3. Notice the Gaps**

Search your life for the areas where it is most at odds with what you love.

What do you complain about most often and most intensely, even if only to yourself?

If anything was possible, what are the most dramatic changes you would make to your life?

When you feel lowest about yourself, where are you and what are you doing?

Identify the unpleasant experiences you have time and again and identify what value was being threatened at those times. This step isn't pleasant, but it's indispensable.

### **4. Close the Gaps**

Will power plus creativity equals resourcefulness. That's all you need to create a more authentic life.

First, forget what's practical. Put yourself in a hypothetical situation where you are fully committed (that's the key ingredient of will power) to doing more of what matters to you and less of what bothers you or just wastes your time.

Now, come back to the real world and figure out how to make as many of those dreams realities, the big ones, as well as the little ones. Seize first the easiest opportunities to live more authentically. This will grow your sense of belief that your bigger dreams can also become realities.

There's no deadline for making the changes to live a more authentic life. But keep in mind that time is a non-renewable resource.

**END OF PART II**



## EXAMPLE OF A COMPLETED VHE

This is a sample Values Hierarchy Exercise with work shown to help you complete it efficiently and effectively. It uses a shortened list of only four values to demonstrate the process.

### PART I: IDENTIFICATION

#### 1. List and Abbreviate

Peace, prestige, creativity, togetherness

Pe, Pr, C, T,

#### 2. Define

Peace: a feeling deep inside that everything is and will be better than good.

Prestige: acknowledgment or praise from people I respect.

Creativity: manifesting inspiration in original ways.

Togetherness: sharing an experience with other people.

#### 3. Compare

Pe v. Pr: Peace ranks above prestige because I can have peace without prestige and it is a deeper and better feeling because it comes more from within me, rather than being dependent on what other people think about me.

Pe v. Cr: Peace ranks above creativity, but by a closer margin. When I'm in a creative zone I sometimes feel at peace, but not always depending on the circumstances. Conversely, when I feel at peace I feel satisfied.

Pe v. Tg: Peace ranks above togetherness because sometimes togetherness, the feeling of empathy or sharing an experience with others, occurs in unpleasant



circumstances, e.g. misery loves company.

Pr v. Cr: Creativity ranks above prestige because, again, creativity comes from within, although it can be inspired by outer circumstances, whereas prestige is dependent upon others who may or may not appreciate me.

Pr v Tg: Togetherness ranks above prestige because it's a feeling shared by two or more people, whereas prestige flows from one person to another. The reciprocal connection feels better than just receiving praise.

Cr v. Tg: Creativity ranks above togetherness because, again, it comes from within and even if I'm alone I can still have it, whereas togetherness can only be had when I'm with others. In addition, they both feel about as good, so I break the tie by choosing the one I can experience more often, creativity.

#### **4. Rank and Validate**

1. Peace, 2. Creativity, 3. Togetherness, 4. Prestige

This list feels right on second thought. Peace definitely tops the list. It just jumps off the page as the most important of the four. Creativity and togetherness are a close split, but I elevate creativity because it's less scarce. Prestige just doesn't move me in the same way as the other three, so it feels right at the bottom of the list, though I can't deny that I like being appreciated by other people. So it definitely should be on the list.

**END OF PART I**



## PART II: INTEGRATION

### 1. Account for Your Time

I usually spend the first 15 minutes of my day stretching and going through a mental script that helps me focus on the positive possibilities of the day ahead. I enjoy that time. After that I'm pretty much in work mode for the next ten or more hours, including my commute.

I don't like the long drive to work. Traffic irritates me. But when I take the train instead, I enjoy looking out the window at the world passing by.

My office is tolerable, but not enjoyable. It's the same thing with the nature of my work.

I enjoy walking around the city on my lunch break, sitting in a park when the weather is pleasant, being around all the other people who've left their offices. The buzz on the street at that time of day is nice.

By mid-day, I'm ready to leave and checking the clock until I actually leave in the evening. The nature of my job keeps me working alone for the most part and my work isn't sufficiently stimulating to keep me interested all day. I crave regular human interaction, not reams of paper.

Fortunately, I can leave my work at the office. So when I leave the building my mood improves. I really enjoy going for a run in the woods when I get home, or going to the gym if the weather isn't cooperating or it's dark.

My nights are pretty enjoyable. I love to cook and eat, so dinner is usually a fun production. My home is comfortable and I'm a bit of a homebody, so I like to just hang there a lot. But if I'm feeling like going out, town is close and there are fun restaurants and nice streets to wander.

I'm a night owl, so the last few hours of my day are usually when my creative brain turns on and I get lost in reading, writing or working on some project.





When I have more time off, like weekends, there are lots of fun things to do around where I live. When I take vacation time I love to go somewhere new and explore or go to the ocean or have an adventure outside.

## **2. Identify Valuable Experiences**

I love the quiet moments early in the morning when the world is waking up.

I love the warm sun and looking at the variety of architecture in the city as I make my way to work.

I love solving problems that come up at work. Unfortunately, there's a lot of rote work in between and some of the problems I'm assigned are boring.

The best part of my job is interacting with clients; particularly, knowing that my team and I exceeded their expectations. I'm not high enough up on the totem pole to get much client interaction, though. Mostly paperwork.

I actually love wearing a suit because it feels like today is special and I am going to do something significant. I also like clothes a lot.

I love anything to do with being out in nature – especially the woods, the water and the mountains.

I love putting personal touches on the spaces I live in.

I love to be silly and laugh with my family and friends.

## **3. Notice the Gaps**

I really dislike my office; the artificial light and recycled air is nauseating. It's even worse when the weather outside is beautiful.



I wish my work involved more interaction with people than with paper. I feel that's where my strengths and my interests intersect.

I spend more time at work and commuting than I would like. I usually have to sacrifice the things I like to do because I have to work fixed hours.

I wish summer was three seasons long and fall, winter and spring combined were the fourth season.

#### **4. Close the Gaps**

In my dreams, I'd relocate to the coast or the mountains somewhere near a big city. I'd find an office with a window that actually opened, or maybe leave the office behind.

I'd rethink the conventional wisdom about work in my field and taking a look at what kind of related contract work or even self-employment I could switch to so I could have more control over my time. I'd even consider a complete change in profession to something that offered more people work and less paperwork because I spend the vast majority of my time at work. That's a big shift to contemplate, but I'm not going to ignore it.

*Several months later . . .* Since completing the VHE, I have noticed that the status quo isn't good enough for me. The one thing (it's a big thing) that I really should change in my life is my job. Currently, work takes up most of my time and I don't love it. I do it because I guess I just followed the herd from school into the workforce without looking around at all my options and I weighed other's opinions (family, friends, teachers, bosses) maybe as equal to my own. Fortunately, I have the freedom to start a new career. Now, if only I can muster the courage to take the leap.

**END OF PART II**

**WWW.PATHH.COM**

