



**Happiness@TheSpeedofLife Newsletter**  
**Edition 38: Values Drive Happiness**

**1,776 words of content -- approximate reading time required: 7.1 minutes. And isn't your happiness worth it?**

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Welcome to my e-newsletter, which focuses on defining and applying the Principles of Happiness and Positive Emotion in your life and work. Please forward to a friend who needs more happiness.

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**I. HAPPINESS PRINCIPLE #2: LIVE YOUR VALUES**

In the past two weeks I've had similar conversations with a family member, a new coaching client, and a networking colleague. One is seeking more happiness, another wanting to manage time better, and the other confused about what to do next in his life.

All three conversations surfaced confusion around what to do next -- and each time I asked the question, "what is most important to you?" I got a variation on "I'm not sure!"

"Well, what are your core values?" Reactions varied, from a blank look to a frustrated, "I knew you were going to ask me that!" Well, yes, I am a coach and I do sort of gravitate to foundational issues like that. And don't try to tell me you don't have personal values, because everyone has them.

But a huge chunk of the population treat their core values as a distant cousin -- they don't know a lot about them, they don't visit them very often, and are often uncomfortable when they're hanging around. The tragedy here is that core values often have a LOT to do with your experience of happiness. The better you understand and honor your core values, the easier it is to make important decisions and know what is right or wrong -- for you.

Core values are not rocket science or mystery. They are simply the words you choose that will, for you, remind you of what you have defined as important. There are no right or wrong or "best" choices of core values. You get to choose the words that work for you and the meaning they have. But choose you must -- and the articulation of your core values can drive your happiness!

It's like this: when you take an action or make a decision that is out of alignment with what you say is important to you, you will more likely notice that you feel badly about the decision or about your behavior. On the other hand, when you honor a value, you are far more likely to feel good about your actions, which make it easier to live in a more positive emotional state.





Further, when you find yourself at a crossroads or decision point in your life (which can occur multiple times in a day!) your values can help you make the best decision FOR YOU.

For example, if you say family is a value, do you manage your work schedule to spend time with your loved ones, or do you call home at 8PM to say, “sorry, I have this really important project...”? If you say learning is a value, do you read a lot and seek to deepen your knowledge or do you spend your evenings worshipping “reality” TV? Think about it.

### **What are values?**

Values are *the principles, standards, or qualities considered worthwhile or desirable by a person* (or organization or even a culture). Your Core Values are what YOU believe in, what YOU use as a checklist to make decisions about what is important to YOU.

True core values possess three characteristics; they are *vital, global, and personal*. Oh, and they most often show up as a noun (grammatically speaking, that is).

They are **vital** because you cannot live without them, they are necessary to your very existence, like your own form of oxygen. Let’s say that Creativity is vital for you. That value is so fundamental that life for you would be meaningless without it. This does not mean that it happens all the time, or that you act consistently with it all the time. Still, you cannot imagine life being worth living without that value, or at least the possibility of it.

**Global** means that your core values apply everywhere, all the time, whether you are at home, at work, or in line at the movie theater. Maybe Respect is one of your Core Values and you are in a store and notice someone ahead of you swearing at the cashier. You will notice it and it will bother you. Depending on the circumstances, you may or may not take action. At the very least, you will feel bothered. This is an indication that a Core Value is being affected.

Core Values are **personal** because they are based on YOUR life experience. This only means that if you and, say, a co-worker both have the same Core Value, you might each describe it differently because you have different experiences and different words have meaning for each of you. Underlying the descriptions is the same essential value.

If a value does not meet all three criteria, it may not really be one of your core values. Most people carry five to seven core values.

And in the spirit of self-disclosure: Yes, mine are written, and yes, I know them by heart, use them regularly, and review them every year. See below for my list.

### **Do This For Yourself!**

First, **commit your values to paper**. If you’ve never written them out, this step may take some time. Download a two-page exercise that may help you (pdf file) at [www.theexecutivehappinesscoach.com/resources/values.pdf](http://www.theexecutivehappinesscoach.com/resources/values.pdf).

Identifying Core Values is a dynamic process meaning there is no “right” answer. Some people know what their Core Values are right away, and others need time, even months, to find the word(s). As long as you have a word(s) that gives you a sense of Core Value, that’s fine.









View past editions at <http://www.TheExecutiveHappinessCoach.com/newsletter/archives.cfm>

Drop me a line anytime with your feedback and queries! Jim  
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**Happiness is a decision, not an event.  
How will YOU decide today?**

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