

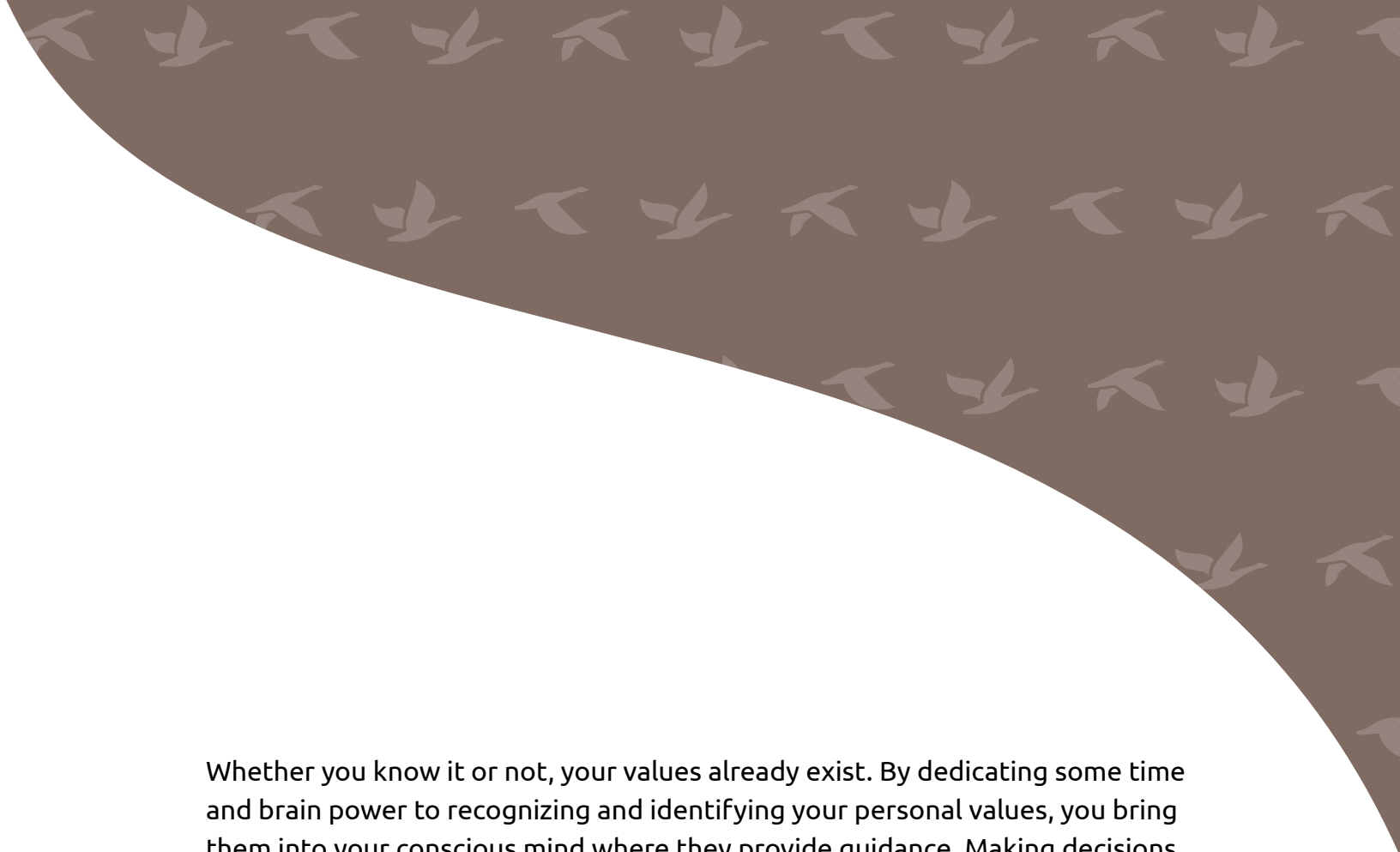
WHAT'S MOST  
IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Identifying your  
personal values



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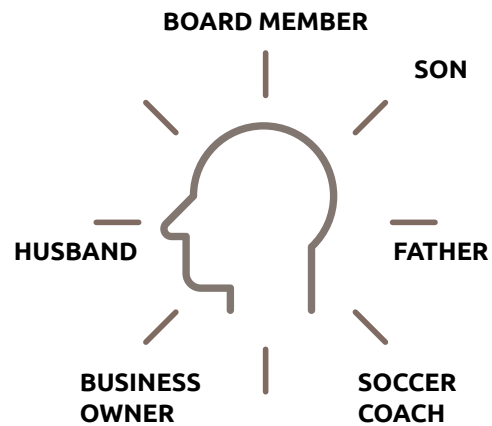
Whether you know it or not, your values already exist. By dedicating some time and brain power to recognizing and identifying your personal values, you bring them into your conscious mind where they provide guidance. Making decisions that keep you true to yourself and aligning your behavior with your intentions leads to a more peaceful, harmonious existence and far less stress.

So what exactly are personal values? Personal values are those people, beliefs and things which you have identified as being of the utmost importance. They are a combination of both the tangible (i.e., people, positions, property, possessions, etc.) and the intangible (i.e., concepts that describe who you want to be in the world). To get you get started, we're going to use two different approaches to help you begin exploring your personal values.

# PART 1: THE ROLES YOU PLAY

## Step 1: Brainstorming

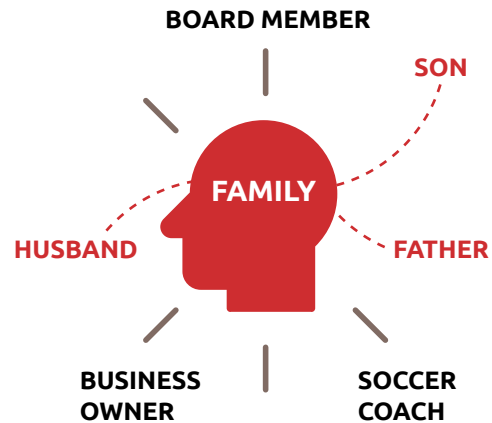
One approach is to take a look at the roles you play and use them as a starting point for identifying your personal values. Toward that end, take a few minutes to brainstorm about all the roles you play and jot them down. Start with your professional role and go from there. What else do you do - are you a spouse? A parent? A coach? A board member? Think about your schedule. Do you volunteer? Do you play a sport or compete regularly? Do you have a hobby you dedicate time to? Are you an active member of a congregation? What do you have a passion for? If you are an avid art collector, put that down. Write down any and all that come to mind.



## BRAINSTORM YOUR ROLES

## Step 2: Create Categories

There's a good chance that there will be some relationships or overlap between one or more of your roles. To address this, the next step is to group roles together in whatever way makes sense to you. Review your list, looking for themes and similarities. For instance, if you have father, husband and son on your list – you can keep these separate or categorize them into “family” or even extend the idea to “family and friends.” Soccer coach could be its own category or it could be a part of the father role.



Look for less obvious themes too. Maybe you are on the board of a local land trust that promotes land conservation and on the Environmental Commission of your town. In this case, “environmental stewardship” or “preserving the future” might be the category you identify. A commitment to bigger-picture ideas can be harder to identify – but be sure to look for concepts like Community service, Philanthropy, Growth & Development, Financial independence, etc. Again, group these so they make sense to you; circle those that belong together and give a label to the category.

**JOT DOWN THE CATEGORIES HERE.**

Next, take a few moments to look closely at your list of categories and consider these questions:

- Which gives you the greatest pleasure?
- Which enriches your life?
- Which makes you want to get out of bed each day and gives you meaning?
- Which gives you a sense of pride and/or accomplishment?

From your list of categories, circle up to 6 of these, forcing yourself to focus on the most important to you. Do not circle a category because you feel you should. If it isn't important to you and/or doesn't enrich your life, don't circle it. (Note: If you have fewer than 6 categories, that's fine.)

### Step 3: Further Define Your Roles

Now that you have begun identifying what's important to you, the next step is taking each value (i.e., category) you identified and writing a first-person, present-tense value statement that declares your intention. After that, further define the value by explicitly stating what the value means to you.

Why do you have to clarify and further define each category? Because saying "I am physically fit" isn't enough. You need to create a picture of exactly what that means to you. You can use a couple of sentences or bullet points or whatever you are most comfortable with. You may also want to review the attached list for adjectives that help you further describe and visualize what you are working toward. Think hard about how you want to perform those roles (i.e., a loving spouse, a patient father, a dependable friend, etc.).

#### Examples of value statements

- I am an affectionate, understanding spouse.
- I constantly challenge myself.
- I am a patient, loving parent.
- I am committed to my family and friends.
- I am physically fit.
- I am a professional that strives for excellence in everything I do.
- I have strength of character.
- I am financially independent.

#### What does "physically fit" mean to you?

I am physically fit. I stay within 10 pounds of my chosen weight goal and I exercise at least 3 times per week for at least 30 minutes.

**Or**

I am physically fit. I compete in 6-8 events per year including 1 marathon, placing 3rd or better in at least half of the events.

**WRITE OUT YOUR VALUE STATEMENTS AND BEGIN TO DESCRIBE WHAT THEY MEAN TO YOU.**

**VALUE**

**DEFINITION**

## PART 2 – WHO DO YOU ASPIRE TO BE?

A second approach to this exercise has you thinking about who you want to be in the world. What impact do you want to have on those around you? How would you like others to describe you?

In a sense, you are considering which adjectives should apply to everything you do and every interaction you have. Think about the value statements you just wrote – which adjectives would you want to apply to all of them – something you always strive to be? Review the attached list for ideas but don't feel bound by it.

What do you want to bring to the world?

- I am honest.
- I am generous.
- I bring love and understanding.
- I am open-minded.
- I live joyfully.
- I seek truth.
- I have integrity.
- I am adventurous.

**Select any adjectives that resonate so strongly with you they feel like a fundamental part of who you are or who you want to be.**

Abundant	Composed	Equitable	Just	Reliable
Accountable	Confident	Ethical	Kindly	Religious
Accepting	Considerate	Excellent	Logically	Resilient
Adaptable	Consistent	Fair	Loving	Respectful
Adventurous	Contentedly	Faithful	Loyalty	Responsible
Affectionate	Cooperative	Flexibly	Maturely	Self-aware
Altruistic	Courageous	Friendly	Merciful	Selfless
Ambitious	Courteous	Fulfilled	Mindful	Sensibly
Appreciative	Creative	Fun	Modest	Sensitive
Approachable	Credible	Generous	Noble	Serene
Attentive	Curious	Gentle	Nurturing	Sincere
Audacious	Daring	Genuine	Open-minded	Smiling
Aware	Dedicated	Good-natured	Optimistic	Spiritual
Authentic	Delighted	Gracious	Outrageous	Supportive
Balanced	Dependable	Happy	Outstanding	Sympathetic
Benevolent	Determined	Hard working	Passionate	Tender
Blissful	Devoted	Harmonious	Patient	Thankful
Bold	Devout	Honest	Peaceful	Thorough
Brave	Dignified	Honorable	Persistent	Thoughtful
Calm	Diligent	Humble	Philanthropic	Tolerant
Candid	Disciplined	Humorous	Poised	Trusting
Caring	Discreet	Imaginative	Powerful	Trustworthy
Cautious	Eager	Impartial	Proud	Unbiased
Charitable	Easy-going	Independent	Principled	Unconventional
Cheerful	Efficient	Influential	Professional	Understanding
Collaborative	Effortless	Empathetic	Progressive	Unique
Collected	Elegantly	Innovative	Prosperous	Unruffled
Committed	Empathetic	Inspired	Reflective	Whole-hearted
Compassionate	Enthusiastic	Joyful	Relaxed	Wisely

Depending on how many you've circled, this next step may be difficult – pare it down to the two adjectives that best describe who you strive to be in the world. Take the time to further define and clarify these values as well.

**VALUE**

**DEFINITION**



## **PART 3 – PRIORITIZE YOUR LIST**

At this point, you've got up to six categories representing your most cherished roles and up to two adjectives that describe who you want to be in the world. Now you are going to combine these into one list, prioritizing them with the most important in the first slot. (Note: If you have more than eight, that's up to you. However, I would caution you not to go over ten as too many will undermine their effectiveness.)

Identifying your personal values is just the beginning. Their power comes from the guidance and grounding they provide for you. To do that, they must stay top of mind, impacting decision making and guiding behavior on an everyday basis.

## MY PERSONAL VALUES

1

2

3

4

5

6

7



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