

## What are Values?

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Sarah here. Kicking off our new blog with a post about a topic near and dear to my heart. Values. When you hear the word “values,” what comes to mind? Qualities that are virtuous based on religion? Or maybe you think about characteristics that embody morality? While the word “values” often gets associated with morality, spirituality and religion, we want you to expand your definition of the word.

Oxford Languages defines values in part as the following: “a person’s principles or standards of behavior; one’s judgment of what is important in life.” Based on this definition, it’s clear that values are highly *personal*, that values have to do with importance or *meaning* in life and that values relate to *behavior*.

Values provide us with direction in life. Think about a compass. A compass doesn’t specify what your endpoint should be- it only shows you what direction you’re going. Values are like your personal compass in life- there to show you whether you’re heading in the right direction based on what matters to you. And given that values are about life’s journey—not about a specific destination—*we cannot ever fail at them*. We may get off track or get lost, but if something matters to us, our values will help us return to our path.



Sometimes it’s helpful to think about values as the adjectives we want to describe us in life. They’re the qualities we want to possess, the characteristics we want to demonstrate, or what



we want to be evident in our actions and relationships. For example, in the domain of family (which is of high importance to me), I aspire to be loving, loyal and close. I also value reciprocity, sharing, openness and humor in my family relationships. I get to decide the relative importance of a given life domain and I get to choose what is important to me in that area.

We're going to be talking a lot about values over the coming months. Understanding your own values can help you evaluate whether you are behaving in ways and making choices that you feel good about in your life. For now, we just wanted to introduce you to this broader definition of the word and get you thinking about what matters to you.