

What Actually Matters to Me?

Explore your values, what brings you fulfilment, and how to make choices that are right for you.

Values • Clarity • A More Fulfilling Life

It is surprisingly easy to build a life around what matters to everybody else. Family expectations, work, finances, caring responsibilities, social rules and the quiet pressure to keep up can gradually shape our choices. We can become very good at doing what is expected while becoming less certain about what is genuinely important to us.

This guide is not asking you to abandon responsibilities or make dramatic changes. It is about creating enough space to hear your own priorities again. Values can act like a compass: they do not tell us exactly what will happen, but they can help us notice whether the direction we are travelling still feels like ours.

1. Values are not achievements

A goal is something we can complete: finish a course, move house, save money, change jobs. A value is a quality or direction we want to bring into our life, such as connection, honesty, creativity, fairness, learning, stability, compassion or independence. We can live a value in very small ways even when circumstances limit what we can change.

When I think about a life that feels right for me, what qualities are present?

What matters to me even when nobody else sees or praises it?

2. What have I been taught should matter?

Many of our ideas about a 'good life' arrive before we have had the opportunity to question them. Success might have been defined through money, qualifications, marriage, parenthood, home ownership, appearance, productivity or being useful to other people. None of these things is automatically wrong. The important question is whether they matter to you, rather than whether you have simply learned that they should.

Things I have been taught I should want, achieve or prioritise...

Which of these genuinely matter to me, and which feel more like somebody else's measure of success?

3. Where does my time actually go?

Our calendars can reveal a gap between what we say matters and what receives our time. That does not mean every hour should be spent on meaningful activities; life contains administration, work and chores. Instead, notice whether the things that matter most have any protected space at all.

Most of my time and energy currently goes to...

4. What gives something meaning?

Fulfilment is not the same as constant happiness. Some deeply valued parts of life are tiring, complicated or emotionally demanding. Caring for somebody, learning a skill, building a relationship or doing meaningful work can all involve discomfort. A useful question is not simply 'Does this make me happy?' but 'Does this feel worth my energy, and does it connect with something I care about?'

Things that leave me tired but still feel worthwhile...

Things that leave me tired and increasingly feel empty or disconnected...

5. My values shortlist

Read these slowly and circle or note the ones that feel important now: connection, compassion, creativity, curiosity, family, friendship, honesty, humour, independence, justice, kindness, learning, loyalty, peace, purpose, security, stability, adventure, contribution, courage, health, rest, belonging and freedom. Add any words that are missing.

The five values I want more visible in my life are...

If I had to choose just three for this stage of my life, they would be...

6. Values in everyday life

A value becomes useful when we translate it into ordinary behaviour. If connection matters, that might mean sending one message or protecting time with somebody important. If creativity matters, it could mean twenty minutes making something. If rest matters, it might mean stopping before everything is finished. If honesty matters, it could mean saying what you actually have capacity for.

One small action that would express each of my three values...

What tends to get in the way of these actions?

7. The cost of saying yes

Every yes uses some combination of time, attention, money, energy or emotional capacity. Sometimes the cost is worthwhile; sometimes we agree automatically and only notice the cost afterwards. Intentional living includes recognising that choosing one thing often means choosing less of something else.

What am I regularly saying yes to that leaves too little room for what matters?

8. A decision through my values

When you face a decision, try moving beyond 'What should I do?' Ask: Which option is most consistent with the person I want to be? Which value does each choice support? What does each choice cost? Is fear making the decision for me, or is fear simply present while I make a decision that still matters?

A decision or choice I am currently thinking about...

Which of my values are involved, and what does each option support or cost?

My values compass

More of / Less of / Protect / Make time for / Say no to

A message from Maggie

You are allowed to decide that something which once mattered to you does not matter in quite the same way anymore. You are also allowed to value things that do not look impressive from the outside. A quieter life, more time, stronger relationships, creativity, security, rest or simply feeling more like yourself can matter every bit as much as achievements that are easier to measure.

You do not need to redesign your whole life after completing this resource. Choose one value and let it become a question you carry with you: *Is there a small way I can make room for this today?* Over time, those small choices can help your life feel more recognisably yours.

Space to Breathe Therapy

Reflective & Intentional Living