Inquiring Minds

Definitions

Your mission, vision, and values are guiding stars. What's the difference?

Mission = your purpose or calling in life. It's what you were born into this world to do. It's what is most meaningful to you. It's what Simon Sinek calls your WHY. Your mission is your origin story and can be found throughout your autobiography within the defining moments of your life.

For example, my mission is to encourage the light in others to shine brighter so that together we can make the world a better place.

> *Note: your mission may not be what you do for your paid work. Some people's mission is to build community and they do that through volunteering. Some people's mission is artistic expression and they have a job they like well enough to give them the freedom to create art outside of work.*

Vision = your dream of a better future. It's Martin Luther King's saying, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." Your vision is an inspiring and compelling portrait of a better future that is idealistic, for the greater good, and ultimately will outlive you.

For example, my vision is a future in which every person will be seen, known, and valued for the contributions they make and the human being they are.

Values = the core beliefs and ways of being that are most important to you. They are your natural inclinations and beliefs you have been drawn toward your whole life, from childhood to today. They summarize who you are, what you want, and how you choose to live.

For example, my values are community building, inquiry, growth mindset, adventure, and thought leadership.

The rest of this document will explain how to define your values. Why not define your mission or vision? Because the process of finding your mission is a collaborative one, best done through conversation. And your vision may change over time with new experiences and opportunities.

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Naming Your Values

> *"Our values should be so crystallized in our minds, so infallible, so precise and clear and unassailable, that they don't feel like a choice — they are simply a definition of who we are in our lives. In those hard moments, we know that we are going to pick what's right, right now, over what's easy. Because that's integrity — choosing courage over comfort; it's choosing what's right over what's fun, fast, or easy; and it's practicing your values, not just professing them."*
>
> Brené Brown, *Dare to Lead*, p. 189

If you haven't already done so, do the hard work and name your values. Follow these steps to identify your values:

1. Look at this list of possible values and circle any words that attract and naturally appeal to you. You'll probably end up with 15-20 things circled.
2. Prune your list.
   - Beware of anything that is a "should" (e.g. you "should" be a leader); your values are not dictated by others.
   - Beware of anything that only shows up in one context (like work) but is absent in others (like home); that's a role you are playing, not a value.
   - Beware of anything you need to be happy; that's a need, not a value.
   - If it defines who you were as a child, it's probably a value.
   - If it's who you are at your best as an adult, it's probably a value.
   - If it's a filter you use to make really hard decisions, it's probably a value.
   - If the word brings up a feeling of deep self-identification, it's definitely a value.
3. Fine tune your list to no more than five. If there are related words, group them. If anything seems missing, add it. It often helps to have a best friend or trusted confidant look over your list to see what they think.

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Lean into Your Values

Tell your loved ones and friends about your values and make them public so they can support you. Then lean into your values a little more each day. Live by them as you navigate the hard choices in life.

To begin, choose the 6-8 areas that make up your life (for example work, family, health, friendship, and play), and consider where your values are and are not expressed in each one. Write down each area. Beside each, how do your values show up in this area? Are any of your values absent? What might that mean, if anything?

What could you do to bring your values, in some way large or small, into every area of your life?

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Why might that be meaningful to you?

"I know I'm in my values when a decision is somewhere between tough and really tough. I wish doing the right thing was the easy thing, but it rarely is." (Brené Brown, *Dare to Lead* p. 197). What could you do to remember to lean into your values when faced with uncertainty?

What did you learn about yourself as you did this exercise?

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