



Milena

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Engineer, researcher, creator, obsessed with lists of 10 ideas.
Jan 26 · 3 min read

What are your values (but really)? Find out in 10 seconds...



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I recently heard an [interview with Meadow DeVor](#), where she said something that blew my mind.

She said that we have no idea what our values are. However, if you open your bank statement and see where did your money go, you will have a pretty good clue what do you value.

Wow!



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I have never heard such a thing. More often, I encountered lengthy lists of values and got prompted to choose between options like “transparency”, “authenticity”, “determination”. Seriously? I have always perceived this exercise as fluffy and sort of useless.

When I thought a little bit more, I realized that it's not only how we spend our money, but also how we spend our time and energy that indicates what we value.

Meadow is a money coach, so she put emphasis on money. Regardless, her definition of values is more reasonable and practical.

Values are not some abstract words that we are throwing around because they sound cool. Values are what we are practicing, confirming and devoting our precious resources to on a regular basis.

Having a list of 5 fluffy values could easily be misleading. It can make us fool ourselves. *We will think that it is enough to put something on our list of values, instead to devote a necessary energy and resources to make it work.*

I can claim that my health is a top value, but if I am regularly burned out, overworked, heavily caffeinated and tipsy on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, what does it tell? It tells that I value work and entertainment over my health. If I claim that relationships are my value, and I spend time with people I love staring at the phone, it means that I value hyper-connectedness over my relationships. *If I spend my days on email, instead of doing difficult and uncomfortable work, it suggests that value looking good and putting out the small fires over a big progress.* If I claim that I am deeply worried about the poverty in the world, yet all of my money ends up in Nordstrom, it is clear that I value clothes and appearance a little bit more.

This is not supposed to be a moral lesson. It does not mean that you should be valuing this and not that. This idea should prompt all of us to stop fooling ourselves. To stop pretending and hiding behind a nice sounding list of values. Our values are where we put our resources.

The first step toward finding out what your values really are is making the inventory. Where do your time, money, and energy end up? Look at your bank statements, schedules, calendars, track the time you spend on your computer and on your phone. Observe yourself carefully. What are you doing regularly and how are you allocating your resources? These are your values, for better or worse. This is the List #1.

Next, make a wish list of your values. This is a List #2. It is the equivalent of the typical value exercise. Remember, this is not the list of your values, but the list of things your noble, imaginary self values. The real you did not get there just yet.

Think of the ways to bridge the gap between the two. The best way to do it is to allocate some resources from List #1 to the List #2. Can you refrain from spending \$10 on something from the List #1 and spend it on something your value wish list? Can you allocate 1 hour toward something on the List #2? *Remember, none of us has an endless amount of time, money and energy, but how we choose to spend them makes all the difference.*

Top highlight

Bridging the gap between the two lists is the best thing you can do. It puts you in integrity with your best self. It helps you practice the things you claim that you wish the most. It helps you become who you ultimately want to be.

. . .

Before you go

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Jessica Frazier

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“Values are not some abstract words that we are throwing around because they sound cool. Values are what we are practicing, confirming and devoting our precious resources to on a regular basis”.

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1 response



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Jessica, thank you so much for your response. Yes, yes, yes, to practice what you preach is the essential piece of integrity. I agree 100%.

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