

The Most Important Values to Live By

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“Open your arms to change, but don’t let go of your values.” – **Dalai Lama**

We face tough decisions every day. As a parent, husband and business professional I encounter several circumstances each day which test my patience, my character and my peace of mind.

For me, my values guide me and shape my priorities and reactions. They serve as my markers to tell me if my life is heading in the right direction and if it is out turning out the way I want it to.

When our actions and words are aligned with our values, life is generally good and we feel content, confident and satisfied. But when our behaviors don’t match-up with our values, we soon begin to sense an uneasiness that begins to swell and grow inside of us.

This uncomfortable feeling tells us that not all is good with the world right now. We feel out-of-whack; out-of-touch and generally

out-of-sorts. These feelings can be a source of anxiety and unhappiness.

Making a deliberate and conscious attempt to identify which values are the most important is needed to keep your anxiety low and your happiness and sense of personal worth and self-awareness high.

Regardless if we recognize them or not, values do naturally exist. Our lives can become less stressful, and more productive, when we acknowledge our personal values – and then make the attempt to live by and honor these values regardless of the circumstances we encounter.

The following values are the ones that resonate with me. These values are the most important for me to live by and the ones I want to pass along to my children and everyone in my life:

Appreciation. Taking a brief moment to say, “thank you,” or acknowledging the exceptional job the restaurant server did when waiting on you is not only encouraging for the beneficiary to hear; it fills your soul with more appreciation too.

Belief in Others. It can be your attitude; your resolve, that can lift someone up when they are down. Their doubt can be erased by your confidence. And something else amazing happens: *belief* is contagious – the more you believe in others; the more you will continue to believe in yourself.

Caring. Caring for others, as well as self-care, allows you to extend a helping hand and to pass along some unexpected grace. When we take the time to demonstrate we care; we demonstrate the fact there are still plenty of good people left in this world.

Commitment. Commitment shows loyalty and it can show bravery and tenacity as well. A commitment is a promise made and an expectation we have created. Honoring our commitments can make the difference between achieving what's most important to us or feeling disappointed and defeated.

Compassion. We are all part of this thing called the human condition. No doubt we have different skin colors, religious preferences and political points-of-view, but at the end of the day, we still need to take care of one another.

Cooperation. Even the most complex tasks and assignments can be made simpler when we focus on the solutions – together.

Courtesy. The next time you are approaching a door and someone is ten steps or so behind you, wait just one second longer before walking through. Instead hold the door for that one second. It's amazing how something that can happen in a blink of an eye can carry so much lasting value.

Dedication. No matter how the circumstances may change, unless you are in a physically or emotionally abusive situation, stay the course and never give up. I would rather be called a failure than a loser. Losers give up when things become too difficult. Failures are folks who have just not found success – but will. So, call me a failure if you like, because it implies I haven't stop trying.

Devotion. Some days are just naturally better than others. It's the same way in our interpersonal relationships and in our faith. Things can get unstable at times, but staying devoted to a cause or to a person through the uncertain times is our rock to

grasp when our faith and our foundation is shaky.

Effort. No matter the outcome, there is always value in the effort when the effort is authentic and well-intended.

Forgiveness. To be clear, the purpose of forgiveness is not to absolve someone of the sin(s) committed against you; but to free yourself from the pain and the anger that is keeping you stuck. When you forgive, you are better able to let go of the past and keep moving forward with your life.

Friendship. Friends support us and they provide an unfiltered view of our actions when asked. Friends sustain us through difficult periods and join us for the events we celebrate.

Gratitude. It is with a grateful heart that helps me to see so much abundance in my life. My value of gratitude reminds me that what I have today can be taken away tomorrow.

Honesty. To live authentically; to live honesty, keeps our hearts and souls pure and our minds free of doubt or uncertainty.

When we are honest, we *know* we are doing the right things.

Hope. Hope is the fuel that keeps us moving forward when we are the most tired. Hope reassures us that sometimes it's not a matter of *if* but only *when*.

Integrity. What defines our character and our integrity is not measured by what happens to us; but rather by how we react and respond to what happens to us.

Listening. As a parent, one of the best gifts I can give my children is to listen; to really listen to what they are saying and to be fully present in the moment with them.

Love. The presence of love in our life, the love we have for our families, our friends, our faith and for ourselves, is the single most important source of light and energy we can tap into when we have the need to be filled-up; or when we see the need to fill someone else up with grace, hope and our love.

Optimism. I was born and raised in the South. An expression I heard often went something like, "When God hands you lemons, you make lemonade." The value of

optimism is clear here - take what you have been given and make the best of it.

Patience. Patience is a value which can also improve productivity because it creates a better state of mind, a clearer state of mind, for better decision making.

Respect. We are all different, yet we are all the same in the sense we want to be respected for how we think and believe. When we show the proper respect we are not only validating the other person's dignity, we are also enhancing our own.

Right Choices. It's not that we always have to get it right; in fact it's not reasonable to think every choice we make will be the *right* choice. But when we have completed our research, performed our discernment, and have listened to our inner wisdom the hope is we are guided to the right choice. Acting on this choice is where the true value exists.

Sacrifice. Sometimes it's appropriate to put someone else's needs before your own. This is the meaning of sacrifice. Along with sacrifice comes some discomfort; perhaps even some pain. This is what makes sacrifice a value to live by.

Tolerance. There are people who make us angry and we just can't seem to see eye-to-eye with on an issue. Rather than showing contempt, tolerance is a better alternative. It shows respects, patience and courtesy – all important values in their own right, too.

Unity. There is indeed strength in numbers. Working together to solve a common problem ensures a greater chance of success. Making the effort to bring people together will always be more effective than finding ways to pull people apart.

Vision. Vision is created by our dreams and daydreams, alike; Vision provides the avenue to take our lives to wherever we want them to go. Our vision reminds us that we are always capable of learning and growing into who we want to be.

Thanks

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