



## AFFIRMING IMPORTANT VALUES

*"To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment."*

*—Ralph Waldo Emerson*

### OVERVIEW

Rank a list of values in order of importance to you, and then write a brief account of why your #1 value is important to you.

### PLANNING FOR IT

#### WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- After receiving negative feedback
- After a challenging encounter with a student, parent, colleague, or supervisor
- After teaching a lesson that didn't go so well

#### TIME REQUIRED

- ≤ 15 minutes

#### LEVEL

- Adult

#### MATERIALS

- Writing materials

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

You will:

- Reflect and write about what is most important to you

## SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management

## HOW TO DO IT

### REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

- Set aside 10-15 minutes of uninterrupted time in a quiet space to complete the reflection.
- Take a few deep breaths to center yourself.
- Be kind and gentle to yourself as you work through the exercise, letting go of any stress or tension you might feel.

### INSTRUCTIONS

- This practice is meant to be done whenever you feel defensive or threatened, or are feeling stress.
- The following is a list of different values, some of which may be important to you and some of which may not. Start by ranking them in order of their importance to you, from 1 to 11:
  - artistic skills/aesthetic appreciation
  - sense of humor
  - relations with friends/family
  - spontaneity/living life in the moment
  - social skills
  - athletics
  - musical ability/appreciation
  - physical attractiveness
  - creativity
  - business/managerial skills
  - romantic values
- Then, write a brief account (one to three paragraphs) of why your #1 value is important to you, including a time when it played an important role in your life.

### REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

- Was this reflection helpful? How do you feel after completing it? Did it put into perspective what is most important to you?

## THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

### EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

A [study](#) found that when participants received negative feedback on an essay they wrote—a form of self-threatening information—their blood pressure increased. But it recovered more quickly after they wrote about why their top value was important to them, compared to writing about why other people might hold a particular value.

### WHY DOES IT MATTER?

In their lives at school, teachers and other school staff members often encounter threats to the self--from receiving negative feedback, to difficult interactions with students, parents, colleagues, and supervisors, to being excluded in a social situations, e.g., the staff lunchroom.

In these moments, it's difficult to stay clear-headed, open-minded, and in control. We may get defensive or reactive, depriving ourselves of constructive lessons and harming our relationships with others.

Reflecting on what matters most may help us move beyond narrow self-image concerns. It can remind us of the other resources we have in our lives: how strong and capable we are, or how much support we receive from others. We start to realize that there's something we care about--whether it's cultivating relationships or creativity--that matters more to us than whatever difficulty we're experiencing in the moment.

Once we gain this broader perspective, we become more open to hearing negative feedback or potentially scary but useful information. We can take a wiser and more long-term perspective instead of getting bogged down in momentary negative feelings.

## SOURCE

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