

How to assess your values to find the work that suits you best

Simply put, values are the things that are important to you in your life. They are your core beliefs and principles, and can be things like fairness, respect, creativity or even humour.

SEEK's Resident Psychologist Sabina Read says values are relevant to every area of our lives, from work and managing people, to parenting, decision-making and relationships. "Values are not about what we want to achieve, but rather about how we want to behave or act on an ongoing basis," she says.

And if we don't get to act in line with our values when it comes to work, this can have negative impacts, Read explains. "If we honour our values personally but ignore them professionally, we inevitably feel eroded, frustrated, resentful or empty," she says.

Choosing your values from a 'menu'

Despite the importance of making choices that align with our values, many of us struggle to identify what our core values actually are.

Read says much like ordering food from a menu, looking at a list can also give you options to think about when it comes to your values. "A values menu offers the same prompt, but we can also add to the list when we gain clarity about the kinds of values that matter most to us."

Here's a list of some key values to get you started in thinking about your own. Ask yourself *which of these things matter to me? What could I add?*

- **Adventure:** to actively seek, create or explore new or stimulating experiences
- **Assertiveness:** to respectfully stand up for my rights and request what I want
- **Authenticity:** to be genuine, real and true to myself
- **Caring:** to look after myself, others, the environment
- **Challenge:** to keep pushing myself to grow, learn and improve
- **Co-operation:** to collaborate and work well with others
- **Creativity:** to innovate or create things, to use imagination
- **Curiosity:** to be open and interested; to explore and discover
- **Fairness:** to do what is right and equitable, for myself and others
- **Humour:** to see and appreciate the playful or light-hearted side of life
- **Independence:** to be self-supportive and choose my own way of doing things
- **Open-mindedness:** to see things from others' points of view, and be willing to consider

new ideas

- **Power:** to strongly influence or have authority over others; to lead, organise or take charge
- **Respect:** to recognise and hold positive regard for myself and others; to be polite and kind
- **Self-development:** to keep growing, advancing or improving in knowledge, skills, character or life experience
- **Supportiveness:** to be helpful, encouraging and available to myself or others
- **Trust:** to be loyal, faithful, sincere and reliable.

"If you're feeling really stuck trying to identify your values, think about your proudest times at work, or the people you most admire," Read says. "Both of these should prompt the kinds of values you hold most dear."

How being true to your values can make work more fulfilling

Because our values tend to define what matters most to us, doing a job that [aligns with your values](#) means you're more likely to feel content and satisfied at work – and throughout your career.

For example, if co-operation or compassion are core values for you, being able to express these things through a job where you help and work closely with others could be rewarding. If resourcefulness is an important value for you, an ideal job could be one where you have to find clever ways to overcome obstacles.

Research for SEEK found 88% of people feel it's important for the values of their employer align with their personal values. And a further 90% feel that a company's values play an important role in their decision to apply for a role.

"Most employers welcome employees who know what makes themselves tick and being authentic ultimately results in increased productivity and wellbeing which serves everyone's needs," Read says.

And because they're key to the fulfilment or satisfaction you find in work, your values can be really important to lean on at crucial moments in your working life. "Being clear about our values can help decision making when we are job hunting, wanting to make changes to an existing role, interviewing or negotiating with a current or potential employer," Read says.

If you are weighing up a new role, [don't be afraid to ask about the values](#) of the organisation or the key people you'll be working with to help you determine if the role is a good fit for you.

Source: Independent research conducted by Nature of behalf of SEEK, interviewing 4000 Kiwis annually. Published February 2023.

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