

THE GOLDEN LIFE

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An established principle of leadership is to know your values. I disagree. Values are indeed the raw materials of a golden life, but just *knowing* them is not enough. You also need to decide how to use them. You do that by looking at the role your values play – or could play – in helping you achieve fulfillment. We call this *living your values*. You are living your values when you're not only clear about what you value but use it a basis for action.

TO WHAT DEGREE ARE YOU LIVING YOUR VALUES NOW?

When you live your values, they define who you are, not just who you want to be. If *family* is one of your top values, to what degree are you prioritizing your family? Are you spending time with them? Are you enjoying them, helping them, involved with them? If *trust* is one of your top values, are you being trustworthy? Are you trusting others? Are there any ways in which you might not be, or are there ways trust is being violated in your life? Questions like these aren't meant to grill you or shame you; just to compare. Asking this question helps you hold up your life against your values to see how well they match. Then you know where to make adjustments to feel more fulfilled.

HOW WOULD LIFE BE DIFFERENT IF YOU WERE LIVING YOUR VALUES?

When you live your values, they become an integral part of your life. How would it look for you to live your values? How would your personal life be different? How would your professional life be different? How would you act and be different as a leader? Knowing the answer to questions like these helps you make positive changes in keeping with your values. Practicing this kind of thinking, you can give up complaining about the parts of life that seem meaningless and actually bring them some meaning.

HOW CAN YOU LIVE YOUR VALUES NOW FOR A MORE FULFILLING EXPERIENCE EVERY DAY?

When you live your values, you use them to make decisions. Your values are like the gas in a car. When you apply your values to your life, you drive positive energy into everything you do. Otherwise you're just idling and wasting power. Your values are especially helpful in making decisions, choosing perspectives, and resolving conflicts.

- **Using your values to make decisions.** Your values can help you make the big and small decisions that define your life. When you have to make a decision, big or small, ask yourself: How do your values influence this decision? Being explicit about your values gives you a basis for comparison when considering the opportunities that come along.
- **Using your values to choose your perspective.** Fulfillment doesn't just come from using your values to decide what to do. It also comes from using your values to decide how to think. When you're feeling challenged or struggling with a difficult situation, the question to ask is: How could your values enhance this moment? Even a chore like raking leaves takes on meaning when you connect it to a value of having a pleasant, comfortable home, and working for hours on the copy for a web page seems more palatable when you realize it fulfills your value of having a professional presence in the market. The right perspective can be the difference between a mundane and a fulfilling life.
- **Using your values to resolve conflicts.** Values serve a practical purpose in relationships: they help you resolve difficult issues. Many conflicts stem from a values clash. One person values speed, the other values meticulous correctness. One person values serenity; the other values excitement. One value crashes into another, creating tension and slowing progress. Simply by naming the values ("It seems like we have a values clash. I value loyalty, and you value freedom.") you can move quickly into more productive questions (like "Is there a way we can meet both of our needs?" and "How can we get around this issue?"). Often these questions will lead to answers. If not, you'll need to consider which values are worth taking a stand and which must be subjugated for the sake of a solution.

It's not always possible to honor your values; that's why feeling fulfillment is a *practice*. You practice aligning your choices with your values. The more you practice, the better you'll become at creating a life of fulfillment every day.

Take some time now to reflect on your values.

1. To what degree are you living your values now?
2. How would life be different if you were living your values?
3. How can you live your values *now* for a more fulfilling experience every day?

There's an ancient Hindu story about the gods arguing over where they should keep the secret of happiness. Afraid that humans didn't deserve or couldn't handle this secret, they

debated where to hide it. At first they considered putting it at the top of a high, high mountain, but reasoned that humans would eventually be able to find it. Likewise, they might find it in the darkest forests or at the bottom of the ocean. Finally, an idea struck one of the gods:

“I know the perfect place. We will hide the secret of happiness in the deepest depths of their own hearts. They will never bother to look there.”

It’s not easy to find the secret of happiness and fulfillment. But you have the ability to do it; the answer lies within you.

An entire process for identifying and living your values including a free audio Values Visualization and a companion worksheet is available at www.TheInnerEdge.com.

Please join us for The Inner Edge Book Club! This month we will be talking about the process of living your values, and learning to shift your current reality into an experience of joy and fulfillment. For more information, [click here](#) or email info@TheInnerEdge.com.

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