

## PRINCIPLE-CENTERED LEADERSHIP: HONORING OUR VALUES

A new year, rich with the promise of new beginnings, has arrived! Don't we all love the idea of new beginnings?!? A new year brings with it a sense of anticipation and the possibility of creating the kind of lives we desire. It is an opportunity to look back to where we have been and to look ahead to what we hope to become, accomplish, or achieve. But as we set goals and formulate plans for a new year, we should base them on the personal values that will make them the most effective and enduring.

**Values are** those elements deep within us that we consider meaningful. They are those things that really matter to each of us ... the ideas and beliefs we hold as special. Integrity, for example, is a value; so is hard work.

While values may be ethical or moral, religious, political, cultural, social, and/or aesthetic, each of us has a core set of highly personal values that influences everything we say, do, or believe, whether or not we are consciously aware of that influence. Our set of values is diverse and may include such values as spirituality, competency, individuality, equality, integrity, service, responsibility, accuracy, respect, intelligence, dedication, diversity, forgiveness, mercy, solitude, godliness, endurance, charity, gratefulness, love, joy, peace, harmony, stability, faithfulness, tranquility, friendship, family, communion with nature, beauty, appreciation, affection, intention, purpose, enjoyment, fun, humor, loyalty, credibility, passion, innovativeness, adventure, tradition, teamwork, excellence, accountability, empowerment, quality, efficiency, dignity, collaboration, stewardship, empathy, accomplishment, courage, wisdom, independence, patience, sensitivity, sense of completion, security, generosity, challenge, influence, learning, compassion, discipline, order, generosity, persistence, optimism, dependability, diligence, and flexibility, among many others.

Which of the values do you personally espouse?

Your **unique set of values** is at the heart of your personal mission or philosophy of life. Values are the essence of who we are as human beings. They represent our highest priorities. They make it possible for us to live noble and rich lives that are purposeful and dynamic. They provide the motivation we need to move in certain directions. Without them at the helm, we are like vessels tossed on the waves of the sea, driven here and there by ever-changing elements.

When we consider the people we most admire or who have had great impact on the lives of others, we will often find they were people who have dedicated their entire lives, or even given up their lives, to pursue their values. In contrast, failure to pursue values tends to produce dull, mediocre lives that are meaningless and empty. They lack purpose, direction, and commitment. I feel reasonably sure that you desire more for your life than that!

Since values powerfully influence our lives, it is important that we **become more aware** of them. Powerful people possess self-awareness. They center their lives on values. They continually think about their beliefs and the things they cherish in order to effectively establish them as the infrastructure of a life well lived.

Please take the time to be consciously aware of your deepest values. Lacking awareness, you may allow urges and passions to take precedence over the truths or principles that give life meaning and purpose. You may also discover that over the course of time you have casually accepted the values of others while compromising your own. You can't live your life based on the values of another! We've all probably tried to do that from time to time in order to please others or to conform to a certain standard, but before long we find ourselves frustrated, fatigued, and fruitless!

**Identify the values** that are personally meaningful to you; then **honor them** by consciously implementing them in your day-to-day lives. Honoring our values by visibly living them each day is a powerful tool for effective living. Honoring them produces greater fulfillment, success, achievement, and balance because our values become an inexhaustible source of inner power that energizes us, drives us to new heights of success, and brings deep fulfillment in our lives. With the release of fresh energies into our lives, we feel more alive and vital. We live in harmony with those things that really matter to us.

For instance, people who value integrity are true to themselves. Who they are inwardly is who they are outwardly. Placing a high value on exemplary character, they evaluate their thoughts, words, and actions with integrity as the guide. People who value excellence maintain high standards and refuse to settle for second best. They look for ways to raise the bar in their lives in order to excel in all areas. People who value relationships treat others with respect and seek to truly understand others. They are sensitive to the feelings, values, interests, and well-being of others. They feel a sense of responsibility for family, friends, co-workers, their organization, community or country. Those who value family may sacrifice their personal interests for the good of others. On the other hand, people who place a high value on pleasure, and have made it the center of their existence, tend to evaluate their circumstances, relationships, behavior, or plans for the future based on the amount of pleasure they might receive.

Occasionally, we may have some values that conflict with one another. We discover we are out of harmony with those things most important to us. We need to **recognize the conflicts** and determine which ones are most important to us – the ones that we most believe in and which define our character, or the person we most desire to become. Trying to live out conflicting values, on the other hand, can lead to untold misery and disaster at worst, and frustration, restlessness, insecurity, and loss of power at best. Resolving these conflicts requires discipline and possibly giving up some activities or relationships, or at least relegating them to a position of lesser importance, but in the long run, we will not be disappointed.

It always pays to honor our values. At the end of the day when we look at ourselves in the mirror, we can feel content and at peace because we have lived according to the values and principles of our higher being.

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