

Tools for Getting Unstuck: Moving From Core Values

Identifying Your Core Values, and Noticing When Decisions Honor Your Values

Often we are stuck because we have not clearly identified and embraced our core values as the cornerstone of how we make decisions. There are many ways to clarify our values. A few suggestions:

- Write down 2 or 3 peak experiences you've had in your life, times when you felt GREAT – like things were going just as you wanted them to go, you were full of energy and enthusiasm and joy. Then review those experiences and write down what values were being honored in those times (i.e. courage? emotional intimacy? respect? working together? beauty? being connected to nature? creativity? really being heard and seen? making big changes happen? solitude?)
- Write down 2 or 3 times when you felt unvalued, trapped, crazy, or otherwise miserable. What values were not being honored in those times?
- Review the lists above and see what other values come to you. Then take a look at the list and put stars next to your core values – the ones that are most central to who you are, the ones without which you would not be able to live with yourself.

Then, when you are feeling stuck, ask the question “Will this decision honor my values?” or “Which of my values will I honor by choosing A or B?” “What values will I disregard/ignore/dishonor by making this choice?”

Getting To Know Your Core Values

The stronger your internal connection to your core values, the easier it will be to make decisions that lead you to fulfillment. Here are some ways to get connected to your core values:

- Write each of your core values on a separate line. Then, for each value, create a value string by writing down the words you most strongly associate with that value. For example, my list for “community” might look like: Community/warmth/laughter/connection/friendship/working together/safety/singing). Other people's list for that “same” value would look different. Let there be images and “nonsensical” phrases and words there if they come – it doesn't have to “make sense,” it just needs to feel right to you.
- Values may have colors, shapes, textures, temperatures, even smells (I had a client whose core values included “cinnamon spice”). Try writing your values (or your values strings) in colored pencils, pens, crayons, watercolors, or on different colored small pieces of paper, perhaps cut into interesting shapes. Make a values collage, using images, colors, words, whatever speaks to you.
- Find pieces of music that call out one or more of your core values and listen, sing, dance, play along.

Invent and explore other ways to get to know your core values at the energetic/physical level. Find ways to be aware of them and interact with them every day and see what happens.