



YWCA CANBERRA

Online Mentoring for Women

Values & Strengths

The value of values...

Everyone has values. Our values are those things that are important to us – the things we value! Our values give us direction and provide us with a framework for our life. They shape who we are and how and what we think – whether something is right or wrong, important or not, or somewhere in between. It is often our values that motivate what we do.

Our values include our personal values, cultural values, family values, community values, political values, to name a few. Values can be as big as the global environment and as intimate as our daily meditation practice, as complex as human rights law and as essential as reading time with children.

Our values are integrally linked with our sense of integrity: if the way we are living is reflective of our values, this can help us feel satisfied, balanced and even; if our lives do not reflect our values, we might have less energy, drag our feet at work, and feel distressed.

It's important for us to spend time every now and again to reflect on what our values are – what's important to us – and think about whether our lives are aligned with our values.

Of course there may be times when we are living in alignment with our values but we're still feeling a little off balance, perhaps doing too much of what we don't really want and not enough of what we do. Sometimes being out of our comfort zone can feel hard too. Maybe when we are feeling challenged, it's more to do with requiring new skills or needing a boost to our self-esteem, rather than not being aligned to our values. Challenges are important to our learning and personal and professional development, so it's important to question where any discomfort is coming from.

But one thing is for sure – if we are living our lives fundamentally out of sync with our values, we are likely to feel weary, disempowered, sad and possibly even angry.

In order to really achieve our potential, we need to be living in alignment with our values.

Here are some questions you might like to work through to help generate some thoughts and ideas, and assist you in exploring your values.

- What are the things that are important to me in my life?
- What are the things that are important to me in the community or the world?
- What are the things I feel most strongly about?
- What are the things in my life that make me feel okay, happy, balanced, comfortable?
- What don't I have enough of?
- Is there anything in my life I would like to change?
- What do I need to do now?
- What do I need to think about later?

Identifying our strengths...

As well as identifying our values – the things that are important to us, it is important to identify our strengths – the things we are good at. It can really enhance our sense of self and improve our feeling of making a valuable contribution to our work, family or community when we are doing the things we are good at.

Of course challenges are important too, and we often need to work hard to become good at what we do, or we may be able to accomplish certain things perfectly well, but we would prefer to be accomplishing something else!

It can really help our level of satisfaction and sense of achievement to pursue those things that we have a natural inclination and aptitude for.

For instance, it may be unfulfilling for someone with an extroverted personality who loves to help people in need, to be largely office and computer-based, even if they are working for a leading charity organisation. Conversely, it may be difficult and stressful for someone who is more introverted to work on the ground in the community helping people in need, even if community development work is something they are passionate about. Perhaps their skills would be better served doing office-based work for that same organisation.

All too often, we study certain subjects or apply for certain jobs or stay in fields that we don't really like and we're not really all that good at, for a myriad of reasons: perhaps because of other people's expectations, such as our parents, teachers or friends, perhaps because we seek financial security, or perhaps we just haven't worked out what our strengths are yet.

It really is valuable to reflect on where your strengths lie – what you are good at – and seek to live or work in alignment with your strengths. The fear or challenge of any change you need to make may be far outweighed by the rewards and empowerment you may achieve from the experience!

In exploring and identifying your strengths, here are some simple yet potentially profound questions to ponder:

- What are your strengths?
- What kinds of things do you do well?
- What do you enjoy doing?
- What would your friends or family say your strengths are?
- And now ask yourself, are you living or working in alignment with your strengths?

