

Choices and Values

Summary

Students will decide what they value and how values affect their choices in everyday living.

Student Handouts: What's Important to Me?, Value Characteristics, What is a Value?

Teacher Instructions

Have students fill out the checklist 'What's Important To Me?'

(Note: before copying, review list for any that may not be appropriate for your community and delete or change.)

Ask students to go back through the list and pick the four to five values that are the most important to them and write the numbers in the blanks at the bottom. Then have them refer to the 'Values Characteristics' handout, find the numbers they have chosen on the left side of the page and write the corresponding words on the lines at the bottom of the page.

Refer students to 'What is a Value?' Discuss the definition of values. Do the students think the four or five they have selected are the qualities that motivate them to act as they do? Have students share their values with a friend. Did they have any the same? (It is natural for people to associate with people who share the same values).

Choices and Values: What's Important to Me?

Take a few minutes to think about the meaning of the items listed below. Indicate with a check mark the items that are important to you.

1. ___ A physical appearance to be proud of	22. ___ A secure and positive family life
2. ___ To graduate with honors	23. ___ An enjoyable, leisurely life
3. ___ Being an honest person	24. ___ Unlimited travel, fine foods, entertainment, recreational, and cultural opportunities
4. ___ To have political power	25. ___ Getting things changed for the better
5. ___ Being known as a "real" person	26. ___ A beautiful home in the setting of your choice
6. ___ A meaningful relationship	27. ___ A chance to develop creativity/potential in any area
7. ___ Self-confidence and personal growth	28. ___ Owning a possession of great value
8. ___ Enjoyment of nature and beauty	29. ___ To speak up for my personal beliefs
9. ___ A life with meaning, purpose, fulfillment	30. ___ To have better feelings about myself
10. ___ Continuing to learn and gain knowledge	31. ___ To be needed and to be important to others
11. ___ A chance to help the sick and disadvantaged	32. ___ To become a good parent
12. ___ To be attractive to others	33. ___ To have a better relationship with my parents
13. ___ Some honest and close friends	34. ___ To be sexy
14. ___ A long and healthy life	35. ___ To persevere in what I am doing
15. ___ A meaningful relationship with God	36. ___ Time for prayer
16. ___ A good marriage	37. ___ To give of myself freely in helping others
17. ___ Satisfaction/success in the career of your choice	38. ___ A safe and secure environment
18. ___ An equal opportunity for all people	39. ___ To be loved by a special few
19. ___ Freedom to live life as you want	40. ___ To be trusted by others
20. ___ A financially comfortable life	
21. ___ Accomplishment of something worthwhile	

List below the number of the four or five items that are most important to you:

A. _____ B. _____ C. _____ D. _____ E. _____

When you have listed the 4 to 5 items that are most important to you, refer to the "Value Characteristics" sheet and write the appropriate characteristics related to these numbers.

Choices and Values: Value Characteristics

NUMBER	CHARACTERISTIC
5	Sincerity
3, 40	Honesty, Integrity
7, 30	Emotional well-being, Stability
8	Artistic appreciation
2, 10	Education, Intelligence, Wisdom
11, 37, 18	(Altruism) Compassion, Fairness, Justice
1, 12, 34	Appearance, Beauty, Approval
6, 13, 31, 39	Love, Friendship, Personal closeness
14, 38	Health, Personal safety, Security
15, 36	Religion, Spirituality
16, 22, 32, 33	Family, Love, Emotional security
9, 17, 21, 27	Fulfillment, Intellectual and Vocational achievement
19	Personal freedom, Independence
20, 26, 28	Financial security, Money, Status
23, 24	Pleasure, Travel, Material satisfaction
4, 25	Power, Achievement
29	Courage
35	Perseverance

Write the characteristic that corresponds to the numbers you selected on the checklist.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What is a value?

Values are those inner standards from which you receive the motivation to act as you do and by which you judge behavior (both yours and others).

Values signify what is important and worthwhile. They serve as the basis for moral codes and ethical reflection. Individuals have their own values based on many aspects including family, religion, peers, culture, race, social background, gender, etc. Values guide individuals, professions, communities, and institutions.

1. A value must be chosen freely. If you don't cheat because someone tells you not to, or because you know you will get into trouble with some authority figure, say, you are not freely acting on your values of honesty and integrity.
2. A value is always chosen from among alternatives. If you don't cheat because you are taking a test in an empty room without any resources, you cannot say you chose not to cheat. There must always be an alternative in choosing your value.
3. A value results from a choice made after thoughtful consideration of choices. If you don't cheat because it never occurred to you to do otherwise, there is no value at play. If you cheat thoughtlessly or carelessly, it does not reflect a value. Only when you carefully consider alternatives and consequences and then make a choice is value reflected in that decision.
4. When you value something, it has a positive quality for you. If your decision not to cheat is something you feel good about, then it is based on a value. You like yourself for your honesty and integrity. You prize them and cherish these qualities in yourself.
5. You are willing to publicly stand by your values. Not only are you proud of your choice not to cheat, you will speak about your position and even try to convince others not to cheat. You declare in your actions and your words that you value honesty and integrity.
6. When you have a value, it shows up in every aspect of your life. You don't just talk about having honesty and integrity – you live it. You will spend time and energy on developing your honesty and integrity. You will associate with people who also value honesty and integrity. You will make sacrifices (money or otherwise) to live by your values.
7. Values show up again and again in your actions. Not cheating on one thing does not mean you hold a value. Only when you make the same kind of choices over and over again in similar circumstances is value at play. Because of your honesty and integrity, you don't cheat on anything. From small quizzes to big tests, from board games to big contests, your value is in effect in every circumstance.

Adapted from materials found on: <http://www.mtsu.edu/~u101irm/valuedef.html>

*Originally from Louis E. Rath, Merrill Harmin, and Sidney B. Simon, **Values and Teaching**, Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1978.*

Values Prioritization

Summary

Students are asked to prioritize their own values and reflect on the importance of values in individual and group decision-making. Students are asked to link outcomes important to them with values they may hold.

Teacher Instructions

Students are asked to prioritize their own values and reflect on the importance of values in individual and group decision-making. Students are asked to link outcomes important to them with values they may hold. This activity follows the 'Choices and Values' one.

Student Handouts – Values Prioritization, What is a Value?, Values Definition Table, materials from Choices and Values activity

Ask students to offer their definitions of the word 'value'. What do people mean when they say things like 'family values', 'school values', 'religious values' etc?

Review the 'What is a Value?' sheet that lists the criteria for values to clarify what makes a value a true value.

Provide the 'Values Definition Table' and explain that 1) students might use it as a resource when they're having difficulty verbalizing what the value at play might be, and 2) as lengthy as this list might be, it is still an incomplete one, and it is important that they continue to think about the criteria for values in coming up with values relevant to a given situation.

Review the 'Choices and Values: Value Characteristics Sheet'.

Ask students to prioritize their top values on the Value Characteristics Sheet. Have students rank their values in order of importance.

Discuss what students felt they learned from the activity of prioritizing values – Was it difficult? What was challenging about it? Did they learn anything new about themselves and their own priorities?

Variation

Values Auction

It is often advisable to keep the individual values of students private. However, in some contexts, teachers and students may be comfortable talking about student values as a group. One variation of prioritization is an 'auction'. Have students prioritize their values as above, and then conduct the auction for values. If they had '100 points' to spend, and if 20 points meant that they could definitely 'keep' that value, how would they assign their points?

For example, if honesty, family, and perseverance are non-negotiables, a student might set aside 60 points to guarantee that they will win these and keep these. With the remaining 40, they might hope to bid and get resilience, spirituality, intelligence, and fairness. They will have to do some thinking on their feet if the bidding reaches a point where they will need to "let it go" or keep bidding because it's that important.

The prioritization exercise shows that values will influence what we do, what the most important things in life are to us as individuals. Also, the activity illuminates that we might have some shared values, but it is unlikely to have two people who hold the EXACT same value sets. This factor comes into play when we make decisions as a group or make decisions that impact a group.

Alternatively, wait until after the lesson to introduce the criteria and definitions, in order to give clarity to discussion points, to come to a common understanding, and to explain that the exercise hits a small subset of the true range of values possible in our lives.

This activity is a good one to precede discussion of stakeholders and values in ethical dilemmas.

Note: Values clarification was a popular exercise in the 1960's and 1970's. However, the use of such exercises became contentious in the later part of the century. Today, the scholars in values clarification emphasize the need to share with students that not all values are relative – within particularly social contexts, certain values have primacy. Additionally, values clarification methods in and of themselves are not sufficient for developing appropriate values and moral behavior in young people, but need to be combined with values learned from family, religious and spiritual leaders, and from the larger community and society in which the individual operates.

For more information, see

Kirschenbaum, Howard, A Comprehensive Model for Values Education and Moral Education, Phi Delta Kappan; v73 n10 p77176 Jun 1992, <http://www.hi-ho.ne.jp/taku77/refer/kirsch.htm>

Baer, Richard A., Jr., Teaching Values in the Schools, American Education; v18, n9, p11-17, Nov 1982, <http://www.hi-ho.ne.jp/taku77/refer/baer.htm>

Contributed by Rosetta Lee, Seattle Girls School, Seattle, WA

Values Prioritization

Values Auction and Discussion

You have 100 Resource Points to spend. Using your Resource Cards, bid on the values that are worth most to you. 20 Resource Points purchases a value automatically, whereas only the top bidders will get to claim the values for point values below 20. List values you want to bid for, and circle values you won through bidding.

Values I want to bid for:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Discussion Points:

1. Why did we do a “bidding” for these values, do you think? How does the bidding represent what we do with values in real life?
2. What might the “resource cards” represent in real life? How and what do we spend to gain and develop our values?
3. Where do our values come from? Who or what influences the values we have, get, keep, or discard?
4. Is your set of most important values the same as someone else’s? How might these similarities and differences play out in decisions we make as a group?
5. (Optional) How does class or economic resources affect our ability to gain some of these values? What do you think about this issue?

Contributed by Rosetta Lee, Seattle Girls School, Seattle, WA

Modified from a Handbook of Personal Growth Activities for Classroom Use, by R. and I. Hawley, and Open Minds to Equality: A Sourcebook of Learning Activities to Affirm Diversity and Promote Equality, by N. Schniedewind and E. Davidson.

Bidding Resource Points

Resources 5 points	Resources 5 points	Resources 5 points	Resources 5 points	Resources 5 points
Resources 5 points	Resources 5 points	Resources 5 points	Resources 5 points	Resources 5 points
Resources 5 points	Resources 5 points	Resources 5 points	Resources 5 points	Resources 5 points
Resources 1 point	Resources 1 point	Resources 1 point	Resources 1 point	Resources 1 point
Resources 1 point	Resources 1 point	Resources 1 point	Resources 1 point	Resources 1 point
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Resources 5 points	Resources 5 points	Resources 5 points	Resources 5 points	Resources 5 points
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Values Definition Table

Value	Definition
Acceptance	Having people receive you well
Accomplishment	Doing or finishing something well
Accountability	Feeling obligated to or being willing to accept responsibility
Adaptability	Ability to change behavior to fit new situations
Adventurousness	Tendency to do new and daring things
Allegiance	Loyalty or feeling obligated to be loyal
Altruism	Caring for others without regard to yourself
Ambition	Eagerness or strong desire to achieve something
Appreciation	Ability to see the quality and the importance of people and things
Aspiration	Strong and persistent desire for high achievement
Assiduousness	Quality of never quitting, being persistent, and working hard
Authenticity	Quality of being trustworthy or genuine
Autonomy	Quality of being independent
Benevolence	Tendency to do kind and giving things
Camaraderie	Goodwill and lighthearted connection to friends
Caring	Feeling and showing concern for others
Changeability	Ability to adapt to different circumstances
Charity	Generosity toward others
Chastity	Innocence and purity
Cheerfulness	Quality of being lighthearted; lessening gloom
Citizenship	Exercising the duties, rights, and privileges of being a citizen
Clear Thinking	Acting intelligently without mental confusion
Collaboration	Working cooperatively with others
Commitment	Feeling bound in mind or heart to someone or doing something
Community	Sharing, participation, and fellowship with others
Compassion	Being deeply aware of and wanting to lessen the suffering of others
Competence	Being qualified to do something
Competitiveness	Doing something better than others
Composure	Maintaining a peaceful or calm state of mind
Concern	Taking an interest in someone or something
Conscientiousness	Doing things very carefully and thoroughly
Consideration	Thinking through things carefully, being thoughtful
Consistency	Doing things reliably and in the same way
Constancy	Remaining faithful to a person or an action in the face of change
Cooperation	Working willingly with others to accomplish something
Courage	Ability to face danger, fear, and obstacles with confidence

Value	Definition
Courtesy	Consideration for others
Credibility	Having people believe you
Decency	Conforming to the standards of proper or modest behavior
Dedication	Devoting energy and time without concern for yourself
Democracy	Believing that everyone deserves the same rights and respect
Dependability	Being reliable
Determination	Having strong will, purpose, or character
Diversity	Respecting and wanting difference and variety
Easiness	Being relaxed and informal in attitude or standards
Education	Gathering and growing knowledge or skill through learning
Efficiency	Ability to make things happen with a reasonable amount of effort
Empathy	Ability to identify with other people's situations and feelings
Encouragement	Ability to get others to take action
Equality	Believing that everyone deserves the same treatment
Equity	Wanting things to be just, impartial, and fair
Excellence	Having qualities to an unusual degree
Fairness	Doing things consistently with rules, logic, and ethics
Faith	Confident and complete belief in someone or something
Faithfulness	Sticking firmly and devotedly to someone or something
Fidelity	Faithfulness, loyalty, or devotion
Flexibility	Ability to respond to change
Forgiveness	Willingness to stop blaming or being angry with someone
Fortitude	Ability to face danger, pain, or obstacle with calm resolve
Friendship	Having a relationship based on mutual respect and good will
Generosity	Willingness and desire to give
Gentleness	Being mild, calm, and docile
Genuine	Being true and not fake
Giving	Offering knowledge or things without expecting anything in return
Goodness	Being kind, thoughtful, or honest
Goodwill	Friendly attitude that says you wish good things to happen to others
Gratitude	Feeling thankful for or appreciating things, people, or their actions
Hardworking	Working hard, well, and tirelessly
Helpfulness	Giving useful help or advice in a friendly way
Honesty	Acting straightforwardly and fairly
Honor	Being upright in character and having personal integrity
Hope	Feeling that something you want can be yours or will happen

Value	Definition
Humility	Feeling that you are not better than others
Industriousness	Working hard and regularly
Ingenuity	Having inventive skill or imagination
Initiative	Ability to energetically start and follow through with a plan or task
Integrity	Strictly following what you believe is right and good
Joy	Intense happiness
Justice	Strictly following what you believe is fair and just
Kindness	Wanting to be good, kind, and giving to others
Law-Abiding	Following all the rules and laws of society
Liberty	Choosing freely to act, believe, or express yourself in your own way
Love	Feeling strong desire or attraction toward a person or idea
Loyalty	Feeling devotion, attachment, and affection toward a person or idea
Mercy	Forgiving someone even though you have the power to punish them
Moderation	Having neither too little nor too much of anything
Morals	Your own belief about what is right or wrong that guides your actions
Obedience	Following the rules of what is required in a given situation
Optimism	Expecting the best possible outcome with bright hope
Patience	Waiting and withstanding without complaining or getting angry
Peace	Being free of conflict and violence
Perseverance	Sticking firmly and consistently to a course of action or belief
Promise-Keeping	Keeping your word that you will certainly do something
Prudence	Doing something right because it is the right thing to do
Punctuality	Adherence to the exact time of a commitment or event
Purity	Having done no wrong
Reason	Ability to think through and make good decisions
Recognition	Having people see and give you credit for all you have done
Reliability	Doing things consistently so that others can depend and trust you
Repentance	Feeling sorry and wanting to right past wrongs
Resilience	Ability to bounce back quickly from change or bad circumstances
Resourcefulness	Ability to act effectively and creatively, especially in tough situations
Respect	Showing polite attitude toward people or things that are important
Responsibility	Being accountable and answerable for something
Righteousness	Being without guilt or sin
Sacrifice	Willingness to give up a thing for something else more important
Self-Control	Being able to control your emotions, desires, or actions
Self-Discipline	Ability to make yourself do something even if you don't want to

Value	Definition
Sensitivity	Being aware of the needs and emotions of others
Serenity	Being calm in mind and even in temper
Sharing	Wanting others to take part, enjoy, or use together or in turns
Sincerity	Genuineness and honesty; not fake
Sobriety	Being calm, cool, and serious; freedom from extreme passions
Stamina	Having the physical or mental strength to do something for an extended period
Stewardship	Carefully conducting, supervising, or managing something
Supportive	Giving support and help
Thoughtfulness	Tendency to anticipate people's needs or wishes
Tolerance	Recognizing and respecting the beliefs and practices of others
Tranquility	Being calm and peaceful
Trustworthiness	Having people believe you and have confidence in you
Understanding	Having a positive, truthful relationship with others
Wisdom	Ability to make good decisions based on experience and learning
Additional Values	

List adapted from http://www.ethics.org/resources/values_defined.html. This is NOT a complete list of values, as a true list would be almost endless. When in doubt, see if the quality in question is a value by checking with the seven criteria for values ('What is a Value?' Handout)