

# THE VALUES CARDS INSTRUCTION BOOK

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## Introduction

Welcome to The Values Cards.

These simple cards look rather unassuming, don't they?

Who would guess they have the power to change lives by realising motivation and unlocking personal potential? Who would guess they can uncover deeply buried, perhaps never articulated motivations that have the ability to guide people out of confusion, anger, fear or depression?

Used well, these colourful cards - each bearing a single value - can help provoke and explore what really matters to an individual, a couple, or a group. Quite simply, these values cards are agents of change.

We hope you find them as versatile as we do: they can be used in a variety of settings or contexts to help people get clear on what matters to them.

## What are Values?

Values are what we hold as precious to us. They are a preference or an internal reference point for what we believe is good, right and important. They are like a compass that can keep us on course. They influence our attitudes and behaviour. They guide our approach to life and relationships. They inform our way forward through the many choices we are offered every day, as we react and interact with others and situations.

For instance, an important value for you could be that you value honesty. You pride yourself on being honest with others, and it is something you expect and hope you get from others. But one day you are less than honest with your manager, because you fear a repercussion about a job you know you have not done well. Suddenly you know you have contravened an important personal value. You feel instantly uncomfortable. You have not acted according to one of your guiding values. When we are not acting in unison with them, we don't feel right.

Aligning our lives with our values helps us make important decisions and feel and act grounded and focused. It inevitably leads to more happiness, achievement and contentment.

## Why use The Values Cards?

Your values cards can help you and/or others:

- identify and articulate what matters most;
- prompt discussion;
- evaluate whether or not you or someone else is being genuine about and living according to your/their values;
- improve the ability to recognise, accept and express values in others;
- enhance understanding, empathy, communication and interpersonal skills;
- focus on and improve individual and group/team behaviours.

## When to use The Values Cards

Use your values cards whenever you are uncertain or unclear about the way forward, or when you are in conflict with someone else, or you want to understand someone else better.

Or use them to get a discussion started in a group or a team or in a classroom, to provoke reflection and opinion and productive debate.

A word of warning though: be prepared to be surprised - in a good way! Your values cards are an amazing way to quickly get to know the essence of yourself or another person. They open up a world of meaning that may cause you to re-evaluate what you thought you knew about yourself or someone else.

## How to use The Values Cards

There are essentially two ways to use The Values Cards:

1. You can display or share them with others and use them as prompts for discussion, or
2. You can use a method of detailed sorting. This technique is from psychology and it is also called forced choice. It's a process by which you keep choosing cards that matter to you, sometimes selecting and sorting several times. What remains after this detailed sorting are the cards representing your most important values.

The detailed sorting method is explained on Page 3.

## The Blank Cards

If you find a particular value is not represented in the pack, there are three blank cards included. Write your value/s using a non-permanent marker on the write-on/wipe-off laminated surface.

## Settings

Your values cards can be used in many different settings: in classrooms, in teams for organisations and clubs, in therapy for one on one sessions or in couples counselling, or just on your own.

If you are using the cards to uncover your values, or the values of someone else, in a solitary or therapeutic setting, you are likely to get the best results by using the detailed sorting method.

If you are using the cards in a classroom or a team, you can use the detailed sorting (this will take longer), or you can use the cards as prompts for discussion.

To use the cards as prompts, a group leader can select the values they think are needed in that particular setting. Then they can display the cards in full and invite others to choose the cards which appeal to them, discussing their choices and what it means to them.

In a group setting, always give people an option to pass when it is their turn. Not everyone feels comfortable

in sharing their values in a group. Values cards activities should never be forced upon anyone.

## **Allowing Enough Time**

Timing is important with values cards. They deliver great results when someone is having difficulty articulating what matters in their personal life, work or relationships.

If working with the cards using detailed sorting, allow enough time for those present to select thoughtfully their most important cards – probably at least 30 minutes. If working in a group, allow up to an hour or more for everyone to make their selections and talk about their cards.

## **Feelings May Arise**

Sometimes, using your values cards may provoke strong emotions. It's important for those present to acknowledge and respect these reactions and give those involved a chance to talk about their thoughts and feelings if they wish.

If you are using your values cards in a group setting, please remember to remind everyone that what is said in the group should stay in the group.

## **The Activities**

There are three symbols used for the activities:

- i* - Introduction to the activity
- > - Instructions
- ? - Possible questions arising from the activity

## **Exploring Your Own Values**

*i*

Perhaps you feel at a cross roads regarding a job, a relationship, or a life direction?

>

Using The Detailed Sorting Method:

With the issue in mind, take your values cards in hand. Clear your mind of everything else as much as you can, and make your selections quickly, instinctively.

1. Begin sorting them into three piles comprising:

- really important;
- slightly important;
- unimportant.

2. Discard the slightly important and unimportant piles.

3. Take the really important pile and sort through again. Put aside those you chose because you felt compelled to choose them to solve an issue troubling you. So if you chose the value “safety” because you live alone in a rough neighbourhood, put them aside for later. You should have a what's left pile.

4. Take the what's left pile and sort them according to what is most important to you. Sort until you have your 10 most important to you cards. If it seems you are missing a value, refer back to your troubling issue pile to add a card. Or write on a blank card if a value is not represented.

5. Spread out your cards in front of you and if you want, arrange them in any order that makes sense to you. Some may be linked, like compassion and love, so put them near each other.

6. Now select again, down to five cards.

7. And then select again, down to three. These three should be your core values.

8. Finally, pick one, your number one, most important card, the most vital value in your life. And this card represents what is most important to you personally, whether it be about a relationship, work or life.

?

Does this surprise you?

Does this change your plans?

How do you want to change?

Where to from here?

Congratulations, you have just survived the detailed sorting of your values cards! It takes time, it can feel frustrating and even tedious, but it does help you narrow down your values.

Once you know your number one value, you can plan and act in accordance with it. You might like to write down the steps you need to take (they can be small steps so you don't scare yourself) in order to move in the direction you want, according to your number one value.

You can begin to choose whether a path will go in the direction of your number one value or not, and whether the time you are spending is helping you realise what really matters to you. Or, you can choose not to act in accordance with it, but now you will know why you experience internal conflict.

For instance, you may find when you do your card sort, say about work, that security is your number one value. But you know your present work is not secure, it's a short contract and you are a third way through it. But maybe you love the job, it's good experience and it looks great on your resumé. So you agree with yourself to continue the contract, even though your inner conflict tells you it doesn't coincide with your value of security. Knowing why you experience conflict and making a rational and informed decision about your present circumstances allows you to move forward in spite of your now known number one value. You should feel better because you understand yourself better.

If you find your number one value in relationships is support, and your best friend is rarely available to you when you need them, you now know exactly why you are so dissatisfied with them.

Knowing your number one value in relationships is support, you can make an informed decision about whether or not you want to continue to spend time with them, or whether another friend would better meet your need for support.

In short, knowing your values gives you a short cut to making good decisions. It gives you a blueprint for how to live your life.

Please keep in mind that it is normal for personal values to change as you grow and encounter new situations. When you find your values are not really representing what matters to you, reassess them and create new values.

## **Exploring Other People's Values in Therapy**

*i*

Used in a therapeutic setting, either one on one or with a couple, the method for using the cards is once again the detailed sorting method.

If an individual or a couple is unsure about what matters, and they need assistance in orienting themselves in the direction they want to take, the values cards will help.

**Important:** Qcards strongly advises that only qualified professional therapists use the values cards for therapeutic purposes.

## Therapy with Individuals

>

If working with an individual, guide them through the instructions for The Detailed Sorting Method as described on page 3, asking them to select down to the most important value of all for them. Use the blank cards if required.

Discuss their number one value.

?

Does this surprise them?

Does this change their plans?

If so, how do they want to change?

Where to from here?

## Therapy With Couples

*i*

In couples counselling, values cards are useful for uncovering motivations that are creating conflict or could be leading them in different directions. If a couple finds they have different values, it does not mean they are not meant to be together.

Rather, it enhances their understanding of themselves and each other and what each brings to the relationship. Understanding and respecting each other's values gives them something with which to work. From this point, they can negotiate and compromise and work to find common ground.

>

Individually, couples can work through the cards to find their values regarding their relationship, as well as for other domains of their lives, such as finances, children, extended family, leisure activities and so on. They can also sort the cards according to what one thinks the other wants. For couple "A" and "B" it would work like this:

1. "A" sorts the cards according to what they think "B" would want;
2. "B" sorts the cards as "B" would want;
3. "B" sorts the cards as they think "A" would want;
4. "A" sorts the cards as "A" would want.

Discuss what is uncovered and consider compromises and negotiation where necessary.

?

Are they surprised by the values uncovered?

Can they see a way forward with compromise?

What steps do they need to take now?

## Finding Your Team's Values

*i*

In this context, a team can mean a group of people within a club, business or any organisation where an understanding of and a sharing of values can help them achieve their objectives.

A team leader who leads according to their stated values – they do the right thing for the right reasons and they don't compromise their values – is likely to be an inspiring leader who has the respect of others.

Therefore, a team leader who initiates a discussion about values by revealing their own values to the group is leading by example and clarifying team goals.

For instance, a sports club coach who states his number one value is not to win at all costs, but to play the game well with skill and integrity, is signaling to his team that he doesn't want unfair play which will result in the club being penalised. A team member who wants to win at any cost may need to reconsider that value or perhaps choose to seek out a club which shares their value.

A discussion on values in a team setting can uncover the psychological contract. Applied to an employee/ employer setting, this refers to the relationship between the two and it is about mutual expectations. Typically, the psychological contract is about the balance between what the employer expects and what the employee puts into the job.

The psychological contract can be applied to all team settings, and using values cards can be a great way to uncover mutual psychological contracts and clarify and focus on goals.

Your values cards can be used in various ways within a team context. Here are four activities that any team can use to clarify values at both individual and organisational levels.

### **1. Organisational Values**

>

1. Using the cards for inspiration, ask the team members to brainstorm values which they think should drive their club, business or organisation.
2. Use a whiteboard or give each team member a copy of the *Values Scoring Sheet* download. (see page 9)
3. Ask them to tick their top five choices on the sheet or write their own in the blank spaces.
4. Ask them to give each of their five selected values a score from 1 to 5 based on importance. (eg: 1 = low importance through to 5 = very important)
5. Collate the results and add up all the scores to see which values are shared or are very important to the majority of team members.

Discuss the outcomes as a team.

?

Do the highest scoring values match those of the organisation's existing values?

Is a review of the existing values in order?

Would displaying the top five values where everyone can see them be useful?

### **2. Give and Take**

>

If you have multiple packs of values cards, you can distribute them to individuals and ask them to sort them twice:

1. first sort to explore the values they want from the team and/or team leader;
2. the second sort is about what they are prepared to give to the team and/or team leader.

Share the information and discuss as a team.

?

Is what they want from the team leader realistic and fair?

Can the team leader deliver what they want or does the team leader have other values they consider more important?

Is there room for compromise from both sides?

Note: If you don't have multiple packs of cards, please refer to The Values Cards Downloads on Page 9.

### **3. The Values Exchange**

>

If there is conflict in a relationship:

1. Ask both parties to sort the cards according to what they think the other wants;

2. Now ask them to sort what they actually want;

3. Next, each person sorts what they want to give;

Share the information.

?

Are they surprised?

Were they accurate about the other person's values?

Can a compromise be reached?

#### **4. Team Discussions**

>

To use the cards as a prompt for discussion, a facilitator or group leader can select the values they think are needed in that particular setting. Then they can display the cards in full and invite others to choose the cards that appeal to them, discussing why they chose the card/s and what it means to them.

If a team member finds they don't share the values of the team, it doesn't mean they don't belong. Using the sorting method, they have an opportunity to reflect on what they are prepared to give. And remember, it is ok if they decide to pass on their turn at looking at their values.

There is nothing like a shared vision and shared values to bring a team together and inject cohesion that other teams will envy!

### **Values In and Out of the Classroom**

The best teachers and the best schools are values driven.

Wow! Big statement, eh? But if you think about it, it's true. The best teachers and the best schools are clear and focused and all heading in their same, right direction. How can they not achieve great results?

And the good news is your values cards can be used by both teachers and students, in and out of the classroom. Getting clear on values helps staff clarify personal workplace goals, isolate values that drive their school, and consider values that lie at the heart of teaching.

Introducing students to values is an initiation into acknowledging ethics and rules, necessary in order to relate to others, and understand and work within the systems of society. It also helps them learn more about themselves and make meaningful choices for their future.

#### **Values Outside the Classroom**

Here are three ways a group of teachers can use the values cards outside of the classroom:

##### **1. School Values**

>

Go to the Organisational Values activity on page 24 and follow the instructions with your group of teachers to investigate the values that drive your school. You may need copies of the *Values Scoring Sheet* download. (see page 9)

?

Do the highest scoring values match those of the documented existing school values?

Would you consider reviewing the existing school values?

Would displaying the top five values where everyone can see them be useful?

##### **2. Teacher Values**

>

1. Display the cards and ask the teachers to select three values that are really important to them in their own classroom.

2. Give each teacher a copy of the *Values/Impacts Sheet* download. (see page 9)

3. Ask them to list their three values on the sheet and the values' impacts in the spaces provided. For example, one of the values could be *encouragement*, and the value's impact could be *I always offer positive feedback in class*.

Share and discuss the results.

?

Do their classroom values complement the existing school values?

Are there more potential impacts to be discovered or developed for each value?

### **3. Values Challenge**

>

Ask the teachers to relate an incident at school where they confronted a problem that challenged any of their values.

?

How did they feel at the time?

Would a similar incident affect the other teachers in the same way?

What action did they take at the time?

Could they have handled it differently?

### **Values In the Classroom**

i

In the classroom values cards can be used as discussion prompts and also by using the detailed sorting method to stimulate thinking and discussion. Here are two ideas:

#### **1. Key Character Values**

>

In politics, history and literature classes, students can be asked to identify the values key characters displayed (such as the prime minister or a lead character in a novel), and whether or not they agree those values were right and effective at the time.

Discuss.

?

Would they have the same values as the characters?

In politics, do politicians sometimes have to compromise their values?

Is it ever acceptable?

What values distinguish the different political parties in your country?

#### **2. Personal Values**

>

Another method that involves the detailed sort is to give each student a pack of values cards. Include the blank cards so they can write a value on it if it is not represented in the pack. If you do not have multiple sets, you can make temporary sets by printing the All 56 Values Cards download. (see page 9)

Ask them to make the following selections:

Ask them to select five cards that best represent them as individuals. Discuss.

Ask them to select from the cards the personal value that they believe needs the most work from them. Discuss.

Ask them to select their strongest value, which they feel they most possess at the moment. Discuss.

Ask them to select down to one card, their most important value. Discuss.

Initiate a discussion about what their friends would identify as their core values.

Ask them if they always act in harmony with their core values, or if they do not always act in accordance. Discuss.

?

When do they act in harmony with their values? When do they not?

How did they develop their values?

What influenced them?

Can they see values changing over time?

The above are just suggestions. Feel free to make up other scenarios to use in the classroom. Really, the options are almost endless. Students tend to enjoy these exercises because it is encouraging them to talk about their favourite subjects – themselves!

## **Using The Values Cards Downloads**

The Values Cards Downloads are a collection of resources designed to enhance various uses of The Values Cards. They also make it possible to use just one set of cards in group settings.

The downloads are available FREE to all purchasers of The Values Cards using the code displayed on page 35 of the enclosed instruction book.

The following A4 sized downloads are available:

### ***The Values Cards Instruction Book***

(you are reading it now!)

### ***The Values Cards***

Full set of 56 cards (65 x 65mm) on five sheets, ready to print and cut out. Very useful if you need an extra set. Both colour and black&white sets included.

### ***All Values on One Page***

All the values on a single A4 sheet.

### ***Values Sorting Sheet***

All the values listed on a single sheet with columns for detailed sorting. The most economical way to achieve detailed sorting in a large group.

### ***Values Scoring Sheet***

For the Organisational Values activity on page 6 and the School Values activity on page 7, this sheet lists all 56 values with a scoring and notes column.

## ***Values/Impacts Sheet***

For the Teacher Values activity on page 7, and with the potential for use in other settings, this sheet lists all 56 values alongside an 'impacts' column to write in.

### **Accessing the Values Cards Downloads Free**

Visit [Qcards.com.au](http://Qcards.com.au) and follow the links to the Values Cards Downloads. Click on the 'Add to Cart' button and proceed to the checkout.

At the top of the checkout page is a coupon field to enter the code found on page 35 of the book enclosed with the cards.

Fill out the required details and note that the Order Total is \$0.00. Click the 'Place Order' button. As easy as that!

### **About the Author**

Marie McNamara is a former newspaper journalist who now works as an accredited mental health social worker in rural Victoria, Australia. She uses the values cards in her work with individuals, groups and couples. In her work and in her personal life she values honesty and kindness.

### **About Qcards**

Qcards is an Australian based publisher aiming to provide the best card sets available for promoting social and emotional well-being. Our cards are designed to be used by anyone as they require no expert knowledge and the booklets are written in plain English. Our first publication *The Bear Cards* has become an international success.

Qcards was established by John Veeken. John has over 25 years of professional experience in community based mental health care. He has also illustrated many children's books and health and well-being publications.

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