

VALUES GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE



What are values?

The word “values” is used constantly, but it is rare that we spend time thinking about our own personal values in a way that gives them relevance to our daily decisions or how we create greater meaning from them.

Many companies and politicians speak about values in ways that dilute their potential. Personal reflection, and a deep discussion amongst family or groups, offers a way to get to know each other better while also learning more about ourselves.

Values define who you are at the deepest level of your being. Over time, our values may change, and real-world challenges can make us choose between competing priorities.



Facilitator Notes:

Many organizations treat values as a final outcome and will put them on plaques, walls and in their communications. As a facilitator, we encourage you to make clear the “once and done” approach to values misses most of the beauty and insight that reflecting on values can add to one’s clarity in life.

The exercises are structured to break this “once and done” paradigm and to allow participants to experience the power of open and continued discussion of values. The purpose of our discussion today is not about a final set of values, instead the purpose is for reflection and an opportunity to listen deeply to how people define themselves.

If you tell someone “their values define who they are at their deepest level”, they may expect that they must get this list 'just right' and push back on the short times given for each exercise. It is important to emphasize, multiple times during this process, that these are not “final” values. We don't encourage values to be “final”.

For individuals: People change their opinions over time and may find other values that resonate with them even more powerfully.

For groups: Values should reflect what is important to the group right now. We encourage the group to first discuss and reflect on the values chosen, as some words may no longer reflect what is important to the group. An open and flexible mindset keeps a group nimble and focused on what matters the most now.

This is an opportunity to have some fun. When there is a sense of finality in choosing our values, people tend to get rigid and more serious about getting them “just right”. As a facilitator, we hope you can embrace the idea of spreading joy in this process.



Why group discussion?

When we spend time reflecting on our deepest values, we can gain clarity on what matters to us the most.

Having insight into our values can also help us make difficult decisions and understand why we resonate with some people and not with others.

Group discussions on values can also help us overcome challenges and disagreements.



“Values are the energetic drivers of our aspirations and intentions.”

RICHARD BARRETT

Barrett Academy for Advancement of Human Values

VALUES GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Group Discussion Guide on Values - Step by Step Process

Total time to complete: 60 Minutes

Supplies needed: Pen and Paper

Group Discussion (8 minutes)

Define what is a "value".

Ask people to take 1 minute and write down how they define the word "value". After everyone is done, go around the circle and have people share their definitions. When everyone has shared, ask 1 or 2 people to volunteer what they noticed about the similarities or differences of the definition.

Personal Exercise (4 minutes)

What are 5 of your top values?

Ask people to pick 5 words that they feel are important values to them. This is a good time to explain they are not committing to these 5 values forever and can change their values any time they choose to. People only have 2 minutes to write down their values, so help them understand they do not need to make them perfect for the purposes of this session.

Group Discussion (5-10 minutes)

Share your values.

Ask people to share their 5 values. To keep this session to 60 minutes, it is hard to go into why they choose each of those values. If you have the time, consider asking them to select one of their values and explain why they choose that word.

Usually, 1 or 2 values will come up over and over. You can choose one of these words on behalf of the group for the next exercise. You can also ask the group to select one.

Personal Exercise (3 minutes)

Ask everyone to spend 3 minutes writing down their definition for the value that was selected. Encourage them to avoid using the word itself in the definition.

Group Discussion (10-15 minutes)

Ask people to verbally share their written definitions for this value until everyone has shared their definition.

After everyone has shared, ask what they noticed about the different definitions shared. Are they identical? Are they different? Normally, there is a lot of variation in the definitions. If that happens in your group, ask what they make of the fact that people define this word so differently. If people can share their definition in 30-60 seconds, this gives more time for the discussion.

Personal Exercise (5 minutes)

Now that everyone has been exposed to more definitions of this value, ask them to write down an answer for both of these questions.

1. Describe a time when you choose to do something aligned with this value and how did it feel to you?
2. Describe a time when you choose not to make this value important? What values were more important at that time?

Group Discussion (10 minutes)

Encourage people to share what they wrote.

There may not be time for everyone to share everything they wrote. Ask a few people to share and to be mindful of time so more people can share.

Wrap-Up Discussion (5-10 minutes)

What did people notice in this session on Values? Did they find this discussion useful? In what ways was it useful?

About the US Values Alliance

The US Values Alliance is a collective of Values Based Practitioners who believe in the power of values and promote their use to unite, heal, and create a flourishing society. Please visit usvaluesalliance.com for variants of this Values Discussion Guide geared toward specific communities and other resources.