

Rehearsing Values-Based Behavior

Objective

To identify your values and turn them into action to effectively manage challenging situations.

You Should Know

When you encounter stressful situations, your emotions can take over and make it hard to find solutions. You may keep repeating the same arguments with a spouse or family member because you are too angry or hurt to come to a resolution. Or, you may want to start dating again after a breakup, but worry about the rejection and hurt you might experience.

By reminding yourself what is important to you – your values – it can be easier to manage life's challenges. Values are the principles, ethics, or standards that make your life meaningful. Your values are what you consider to be important or beneficial, and may include things like being a good parent, practicing a religion, or serving your community. Choosing behavior that is based on values instead of emotions enables you to react to stressful situations in a way that reflects who you are, instead of what you feel.

Review this list of values and rank the top 3 that are most important to you.

- Having a good relationship with a spouse or partner.
- Starting a new romantic relationship.
- Having a close relationship with your parents or siblings.
- Parenting.
- Having good friends.
- Living in a safe and comfortable home.
- Advancing your education or training.
- Having a fulfilling career or advancing your career.
- Experiencing financial security (decreased debt, increased savings).
- Engaging in hobbies and interests that enrich your life.
- Practicing your faith through spirituality or religion.
- Engaging in community service or civic engagement to make a difference.

__ Being physically healthy and fit.

__ Being emotionally healthy and strong.

__ Engaging in self-care, including making time for yourself.

__ Other _____

My top three values:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Creating a Life Based on Your Values

Now that you have your top three values, think of one measurable intention or goal for each of them. For instance, if you chose 'Education' as one of your top three, your intention could be "go back to school to complete my bachelor's degree."

Next, list a few realistic action steps to help you reach your goal. For example, if you want to go back to school, your steps might include "request my transcript" and "apply for financial aid."

Value #1 _____

My intention: _____

My action steps: _____

Value #2 _____

My intention: _____

My action steps: _____

Value #3 _____

My intention: _____

My action steps: _____

Rehearsing Values-Based Behavior

It is common to feel resistance when you try to turn your values into action. You may second-guess your abilities, worry about being judged by others, or feel shame. By identifying the negative thoughts, and rehearsing solutions to overcome them, you will have more confidence to meet your goals.

Here's an example of Ariana, who rehearsed her values-based behavior to address a stressful situation at her job.

Ariana has been very frustrated with her coworker, Jack, who is a member of her project team. While Jack is a hard worker, he often leaves the office before finishing his tasks so he can pick up his child from daycare. Ariana often stays late to complete Jack's portion of the project, which includes spreadsheets – a task she hates. She has reacted by either speaking rudely to Jack or ignoring him for hours at a time. Jack has been angry and defensive in return. Their manager has noticed the tension between them and told them to find a workable resolution.

Ariana identified "career" as one of her top values. Her career intentions include "being a problem-solver" and "being dependable." She thought about how she could use her value and intentions to improve her relationship with Jack, while reducing the stress she felt about her projects and workload. She also realized that she often feels uncomfortable confronting others and typically reacts with frustration, anger, and avoidance. She felt disappointed in herself for not acting more professionally.

Ariana rehearsed explaining her feelings of frustration to Jack and apologizing for her behavior. She practiced asking Jack what she could do to alleviate his workload while being equitable with their responsibilities. She thought about suggesting ways to help Jack prioritize his tasks so he could work on the spreadsheets himself – leaving Ariana with some of his tasks that were less demanding. She also thought about small tasks she could delegate to Jack to make her own workload more manageable. She visualized a more collaborative and pleasant office environment for both of them.

What You Should Do

Name: _____ Date: _____

Now it is your turn to rehearse your values-based behavior. Think of a situation where you want to act and react with your values, not your emotions.

What is the situation? (Be specific: where are you? who you are with? what are you and others doing and saying?)

Which value and intentions have you identified to respond to this situation?

What steps will you take to turn those intentions into action through your words or efforts?

Notice the thoughts and feelings that come up for you; for example, you might have a fear of failure or feel anxious. Then, choose to simply accept them. What thoughts and feelings do you feel? Can you accept them? Explain.

Imagine successfully completing your goal while rising above those emotions. How would you feel?

Visualize others reacting positively to your actions. What would that look like?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?
