

Identifying Shared Values

Objective

To strengthen your relationship by identifying values you share with your partner.

You Should Know

You and your partner each bring your own values to the relationship: the principles, goals, and beliefs that shape choices, actions, decisions, and motivations. The way you communicate about values impacts your relationship and your future. You might not discuss conflicting values until a situation makes it necessary (for instance, discussing parenting values when a baby arrives).

In successful relationships, partners determine that their conflicting values are acceptable or tolerable and are worth the effort. They communicate in ways that are respectful and supportive of each other's values while focusing on what is best for their relationship. They encourage each other to reach individual goals, instead of trying to change your partner.

What to Do

Make a copy of this worksheet for each partner. After you have both completed it, share your responses without judging or criticizing.

Using the following list, determine which values are most important to you. As you review the list, consider these questions:

- What really matters to you?
- What sort of person do you want to be?
- What personal strengths and qualities do you want to develop?

Rate each value based on its importance: E= extremely important, I = important, and N = not important.

_____ Acceptance/self-acceptance

_____ Assertiveness

_____ Authenticity

_____ Cooperation and collaboration

_____ Caring, compassion, and kindness

_____ Family

_____ Contribution and generosity

_____ Furthering my education

_____ Courage

_____ Creativity

_____ Curiosity and discovery

_____ Dedication and commitment

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| _____ Excitement and adventure | _____ Fairness and justice |
| _____ Faith and spirituality | _____ Flexibility |
| _____ Freedom and independence | _____ Friendship/belonging |
| _____ Forgiveness | _____ Fun and pleasure |
| _____ Gratitude and appreciation | _____ Health (physical and mental) |
| _____ Honesty/trust | _____ Love/romance |
| _____ Mindfulness | _____ Order and structure |
| _____ Persistence and resilience | _____ Personal growth and development |
| _____ Career/professional development | _____ Recreation and leisure |
| _____ Respect/self-respect | _____ Responsibility |
| _____ Safety and protection | _____ Sensuality and sexuality |
| _____ Supportiveness | _____ Wealth |
| _____ Success/achievement | _____ Adventure/travel |
| _____ Balance | _____ Community involvement |
| _____ Joy/happiness | _____ Humor/laughter |
| _____ Leadership | _____ Peace/harmony |
| _____ Popularity/recognition/status | _____ Reputation |
| _____ Stability/security | _____ Other: _____ |

What are your three most important values?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Compare your answers. Which values do you and your partner share?

Did this exercise help you communicate your values and goals to each other? Explain.

Which values do you and your partner agree are the most important for a happy and healthy relationship?

Of your conflicting values, which are you willing to support, tolerate, and respect? Explain.

What are some ways you can support your partner's different values and goals, while remaining true to your own?

Did either of you identify values that the other finds unacceptable or intolerable? Explain.

Reflections on This Exercise

What did you learn from this exercise?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What else can you do to make progress in this area?
