

# Everything I Have Learned About Values

## What are Values?

By Richard Barrett, Chairman and Founder, Barrett Values Centre

I used to refer to values *as a shorthand way of defining whatever is important to you*. Thus, for example, the terms *integrity, trust, honesty, and creativity* could all be regarded as values. The Oxford Dictionary has a similar approach; it defines values as “one’s judgment of what is important in life”.

Having worked with and studied values for more than 25 years, I have realised that values are much more than *what is important*; they are ***the energetic drivers of our aspirations and intentions***. They are the source of all human motivations and decision-making.

If you want to feel the energy behind your values, do the following. Invite a partner or a friend to choose three values that are important to them. Then, choose three values that are important to you. Talk to each other about your respective values, explaining why you believe each value is important. You will notice, as you are doing this exercise, an increase in the conversational energy, and when you have finished, you will notice a feeling of closeness to the person you have been talking to. You will also notice that you share some of the same values.

The reason your energy increases when you talk about your most important values is that your values define who you are at the deepest level of your being. When you talk about your values, you are exposing your soul to the people who are listening. Consequently, being involved in a conversation with another person about your respective values is one of most intimate conversations you can have.

If you want to improve your relationship with someone—your spouse, your children, your business partner, your staff—have a conversation about values. One of the best ways to start such a conversation is to carry out a Personal Values Assessment. You can do this by going to [www.valuescentre.com/pva](http://www.valuescentre.com/pva) and completing the short survey. A few minutes after completing the survey you will receive a report listing your top ten values by level of consciousness. You can then share your results with the other person, and they can share their results with you.

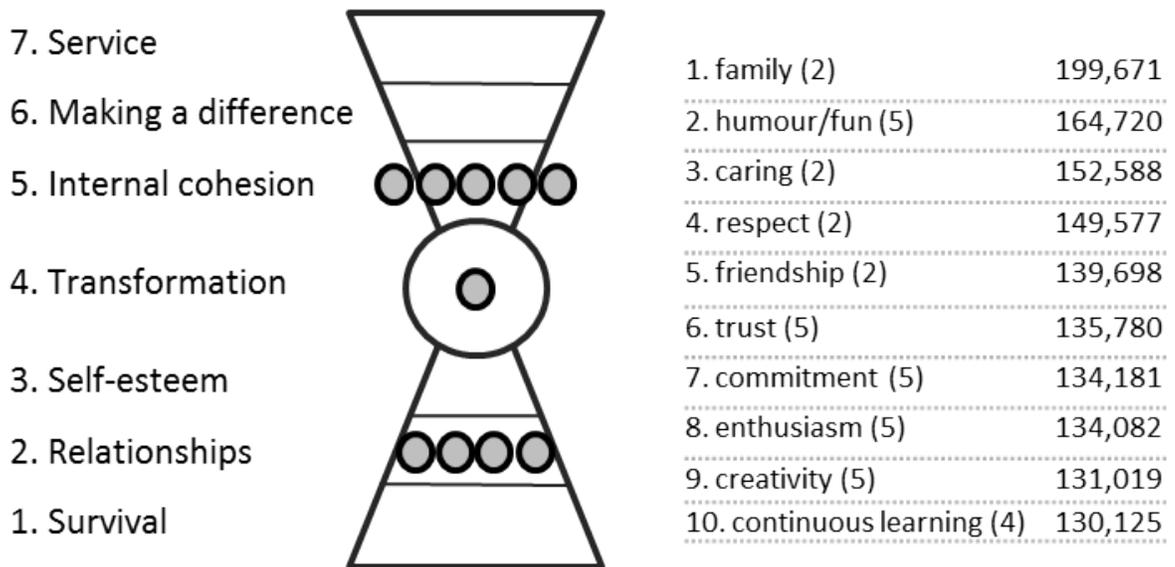
Most people are not aware of their values. This is because they have never reflected on what is important to them. Taking the time to do a Personal Values Assessment allows you to discover who you are and what motivates you.

Who are we collectively?

At the time of writing, more than 500,000 people had completed a Personal Values Assessment. The top ten values of these people are shown in Figure 1.1 along with the number of people who chose each value. Because of the large number of people who have completed this survey, I tend to think of these values as the values of humanity.

Figure 1.1 is a visual representation of the Seven Levels of Consciousness® model. Each shaded dot represents one of the values listed alongside the diagram. The Level of Consciousness is indicated in brackets, for example, *family*, *caring*, *respect*, and *friendship* are found at the Level 2 Relationship level. It is interesting to note that these values are given a higher priority (they got more votes except for *humour/fun*) than the values at Levels 4 and 5 and that the highest scoring value at Level 2 is *family*. You may find it interesting, when you have completed the Personal Values Assessment, to compare your results to the top ten average of these 500,000 people.

Figure 1.1: Top ten values of 500,000 people



After downloading the data for the 500,000 people, we fed the top ten values back into the Personal Values Assessment as if they were a single individual, and below is the report we got.

*From the values you selected it is clear that you are a person for whom meaning is important. You have a strong set of moral standards which are important in how you treat others and how you wish to be treated.*

*Your values show:*



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- *Having meaningful close relationships with others is important in your life and is central in the decisions you make.*
- *Living with a passionate and an upbeat, fun-loving approach is important to you.*
- *Relationships are a central focus in your life, and you show concern and consideration for those around you.*
- *You demonstrate dedication in all that you do.*
- *Seeking new opportunities to develop and grow keeps you constantly challenged.*
- *You can think imaginatively and use your skills to produce new ideas.*
- *Building confidence in others and wanting others to feel they can rely on you are key factors in your interactions.*

*The type of values you selected indicates that the connections you build with others and your individual capabilities are equally important to you.*

I believe this values profile tells an interesting story about humanity in general. Five of the top values are about how we relate to the people in our lives—*family, caring, respect, friendship, and trust*. This suggests that inter-personal safety is a fundamental priority for most people. Historically, personal safety has always been linked to belonging and identity.

Five of the top values are about how we relate to ourselves (who we are)—*humour/fun, enthusiasm, commitment, creativity, and continuous learning*. This suggests that self-expression is also a fundamental priority. However, the results indicate that we prioritise inter-personal safety over self-expression. Only when we feel safe, do we feel free to express who we are.

This suggests that Maslow's theory is correct. We prioritise safety—a deficiency need over self-actualisation—a growth need. Furthermore, the ability to develop and grow through continuous learning is of significant importance to us.

The conclusion I reach from this data is we cannot grow and develop unless we feel safe. Once we feel safe, then self-realization becomes our main priority. If we want to build a positive future for everyone, we must create the conditions that allow people to feel safe, especially our children, and support everyone in their self-expression. Feeling safe is intimately linked to belonging and belonging is intimately linked to identity.