

Values cart sort exercise

This is an exercise to help you identify and prioritize some of the most important values you hold. Values may be considered as “guiding lights” or aspirational principles that are core to who you are as a person and can help guide your actions and decision-making.

Preparing for the exercise:

Values cards are available online at:

https://motivationalinterviewing.org/sites/default/files/valuescardsort_0.pdf

For those with access to a printer, the pdf can be printed so the exercise can be completed with tangible cards

Alternatively, you can create electronic or handwritten lists of the values listed and then sort them to each of three categories.

Engaging in the exercise

Work through the listed values and sort them into “very important”, “not important” and “not important”. The eventual goal is to narrow down a list of your top 5-10 most important values. Many people find it works well to do an initial sort of all the listed values and then go back and prioritize among the “most important” category if it contains more than 10.

Depending on the purpose of doing the exercise, it may be helpful to focus on most important values within a specific domain (e.g. professional life, personal life, parenting, etc.)

The listed values are not mutually exclusive and you may feel that some overlap and/or can be grouped together. In that case, focus on identifying a unifying value for those that are grouped.

As you engage in the exercise, consider the following:

- What do I feel in my heart of hearts about how important this is to me? What would I put if no one else was looking?
- What is my first inclination about how important this is to me? (don't spend too much time debating how to sort any one value!)
- Don't put too much importance on the descriptor listed for a particular value. Focus on what the idea means to you as you sort.