

Values

Values are basic and fundamental beliefs that guide or motivate attitudes or actions. They help us to determine what is important to us. Values describe the personal qualities we choose to embody to guide our actions; the sort of person we want to be; the manner in which we treat ourselves and others, and our interaction with the world around us. They provide the general guidelines for conduct.

Values in a narrow sense is that which is good, desirable, or worthwhile. Values are the motive behind purposeful action. They are the ends to which we act and come in many forms. Personal values are personal beliefs about right and wrong and may or may not be considered moral. Cultural values are values accepted by religions or societies and reflect what is important in each context.

Values are essential to ethics. Ethics is concerned with human actions, and the choice of those actions. Ethics evaluates those actions, and the values that underlie them. It determines which values should be pursued, and which should not. Those who value courage are willing to stand up for what they believe, even in the face of strong condemnation. Courage is a moral value when it deals with right and wrong conduct.

Value specifies a relationship between a person and a goal. It is relational in the sense that what one person values may not be what another person values even in the same situation. For example, a person who values honesty might blow the whistle on financial wrongdoing by a superior whereas another person who values loyalty may remain silent. This is an example of values conflict. The honest person may believe there are limits to loyalty and keeping quiet about a wrongful act out of loyalty might harm others. The loyal person may believe in the importance of keeping one's confidence even if it might harm others because of the trusting relationship.

Some values stand up well over the test of time; they are always good or rightful behaviour. Honesty and kindness are two such examples. It is difficult to imagine having a satisfying relationship without them because they build trust in relationships. There are always exceptions but they are rare. For example, if a criminal out to do harm to your friend knocks on the door and asks whether you have seen the friend, you are probably not going to say yes and rationalize it out of a sense of honesty. Here, the greater good, so to speak, is to protect your friend from harm.

From a virtue perspective, it is most important to distinguish intrinsic from extrinsic value. Intrinsic value is something that has value in its own right, such as honesty and kindness, whereas extrinsic value is doing something for another reason (i.e., wealth, fame etc.)

Resources:

Values Discussion Cards

Values Discussion Questions

Defining your list of values and beliefs

<https://soulsalt.com/list-of-values-and-beliefs/>

What Are Your Personal Values? How to Define & Live by Them

<https://business.tutsplus.com/tutorials/what-are-personal-values--cms-31561>