

Seven Requirements for Values

1. Prized and Cherished

The key here is the enthusiasm associated with a value. For example, people who enjoy being physically fit look forward to the hour or so each day that they work out. In talking with them, one can sense their passion for maintaining a trim and fit physical appearance and healthy lifestyle.

2. Publicly Affirmed

If something is a genuine value, then you are willing to acknowledge it. At the very least, this means that if confronted by another person, you would not deny one of your values.

3. Chosen Freely

Freely chosen values are those you have ultimately chosen *yourself* rather than following the subtle or overt influence of others. For example, young people who are coerced by their parents to play a sport or musical instrument often stop these activities once the coercion is removed. Later in life, they may return to these activities (or not), but this time by their own choice and because of their own values.

4. Chosen from Alternatives

Without two or more alternatives, there is no choice and really no true value. For example, in purchasing a car there are many alternatives from which to make a selection. Failure to recognize alternatives or to consider alternatives effectively eliminates choice.

5. Chosen after Consideration of Consequences

To create a true value, you must examine each alternative for its positive and negative consequences. Value requires choice, and choice requires reflection.

6. Acted Upon

You affirm your values by acting upon them. Unless you act upon something, it is not a value but merely a good idea or belief. For example, if you value your role as an American citizen, you could demonstrate it by voting. If you value a strong community, you could demonstrate it by performing community service.

7. Acted Upon Repeatedly and Consistently to Form a Definite Pattern

A single act alone does not constitute a value (but it's a good start). *Examining your life for patterns of repeated and consistent action will help you identify your values.* For example, if you consistently eat well-balanced meals, don't smoke, exercise regularly, get enough sleep each night, and keep dentist and doctor's appointments, then you undoubtedly value healthful living.