

Live by your Own Values



Explanation

This is the ACT process of values-orientation. This means having a sense of the things you value rather than merely following orders or operating based on external social ideals.

This is based on our need for a sense of meaning and self-directed purpose.

In the absence of a self-directed purpose, one may fill this need by turning to external standards of what one is told one "should" want.

In our world of social media and rampant consumerism, this often manifests as a drive to acquire consumer products.

This need for purpose may also manifest as compliance or simply going through the motions of doing what one is supposed to do.

Both of these routes ultimately lead to this need not being met, resulting in a sense of emptiness or boredom.

Developing a clear sense of one's own values provides a sense of self-directed purpose.

Exercise

Think back to a moment where you felt alive and engaged. Notice the details of this moment. What were you doing? Who was with you? What did you feel?

Slow down and see if you can emotionally connect to what you value about this moment. This same exercise can be applied to painful moments, pulling out values by noticing what was missing in those moments.

Values can also be found by looking at one's role models. Pick a person you admire. What qualities of theirs do you admire?

Slow it down, emotionally connecting with the aspects of this person you admire. Now consider what values come from these qualities. Some examples might be compassion, creativity, genuineness, and selflessness.

Now how might you be able to live by these values yourself?

Why it works?

Connecting with one's values leads to more psychological flexibility by offering a 'why' to fuel the 'how' and the 'what'. We often prioritize knowing what result we want and how we will get that result, neglecting why we want it.

Living in alignment with our values provides motivation in addition to psychological flexibility when obstacles arise. Like the game being more fundamental than the final score, values are more fundamental than the end goal. You do not have control over the end goal. You only have control over the way you engage in the task.