



Values to Carry You Through Life

Why have values?

Honesty

Courage

Self-discipline

Dependability

Sensitivity

Sense of fairness

Values (revisited)

Why have values?

Your values (dictionary meaning: principles or qualities) determine the kind of person you are. They help you make decisions regarding your relationships with friends, parents, siblings (brothers and sisters), and society in general. Your core values determine how you

react to situations that test your character.

For example, suppose you find a wallet or purse on the sidewalk and you decide to open it. Inside you find money, credit cards, and a driver's license. You now have the following choices:

- Do you call the person and let him or her know?
- Do you keep the money and mail back the rest, so the person at least won't have to replace the other items?
- Do you take the money and dump the wallet or purse?
- Do you pocket the cash, use the credit cards to make fraudulent purchases, and dump the rest?



What would you do if you found yourself in the above situation?

Now, let's see how you would conduct yourself.

- If you're the type who feels compassion for others, you'll notify the owner. If you feel that it is not right to keep someone else's belongings, you have honesty and integrity, and you'll return everything.

- If you lack values and believe in “Finders keepers, losers weepers,” you will pocket whatever is of use and dump the rest.
- If you really lack values and have dishonest intentions, you could commit fraud by using the unfortunate person’s credit cards to order goodies for yourself.

You are the one who decides what values you have. In turn, your values determine how you live your life.

Your values also determine how you treat your boyfriend or girlfriend, brothers, sisters, parents, husband or wife, children, friends, employer, boss, and just about everyone else. *Values are destiny.*

Some of the most important values that define your character are honesty, courage, self-discipline, dependability, sensitivity, and a sense of fairness. These are the building blocks for your life.

Let’s look at the importance of each one.

Honesty

Think about the previous example, in which you found someone else’s wallet or purse and considered various options. If you’re truly honest, you’ll resist the temptation to keep the contents, and you’ll return everything to the rightful owner. (What would you want someone to do if they found your wallet or purse?)

As you progress through your teen years, the honesty issue extends to greater and greater areas of your life. For example, you might be in a position to cheat on exams, copy someone else’s term paper, or cheat on your girlfriend or boyfriend.

Being honest means refusing to lie, steal, or indulge

in activities that you know are not ethical (or, in some cases, legal).

It really takes a lot of courage to stay honest.

Remember this. It takes a long time to build an honest reputation, but it takes only one dishonest action to destroy it.

Courage

Picture this. Your friends are getting high, or vandalizing, or indulging in some other illegal activity. They want you to do the same.

You know it's not the right thing to do.

If you walk away, they'll taunt you, call you a coward, drop you from their group, or even threaten you.

So now you're faced with a situation that requires *courage*.

You know the right thing to do. And to do the right thing, you'll need a lot of courage. You'll have to stand up to them, even if they call you a coward.

Frankly, if you walk away and refuse to join them, *you* are the one with courage. They are the cowards, because they have no self-discipline. They are doing things that you know, and they know, are wrong.

You'll definitely encounter situations requiring courage throughout your life. Some of the tougher decisions will come years from now, so learn courage now.

Self-discipline

Interestingly, you'll need self-discipline not only in your teen years, but throughout your adult life as well.

In your teen years, self-discipline concerns such things as:

- Sticking to your homework schedule instead watching TV or hanging out with friends
- Eating in moderation
- Making friends who are less “cool,” who take their studies seriously and want to make something out of their lives
- Not making constant demands on your parents for the latest and greatest clothes, shoes, music, and CDs
- Investing your free time in learning some skill or language
- Planning ahead for your future and not giving in to distractions
- Making your college plans

The better you get at disciplining yourself, the more control you’ll have in your life.

Look around you. Do you see adults in financial trouble? You probably do. Or people with no savings, their careers in ruins, working terrible jobs, and enduring a meager existence? In the worst cases, they may live on welfare.

Ask yourself how they got into such a terrible mess.

Most of these people could have avoided their misery by showing some self-discipline. Unfortunately, many adults continue to behave like irresponsible kids and make foolish decisions, such as buying beyond their means, not saving for retirement, and not planning their careers properly. These people are in serious trouble.

The sooner you learn to discipline yourself, the better off you’ll be in life.

So just for fun, try a new “trick” the next time you’re offered something you know isn’t really good for you

(chocolate, for example). *Don't take it.* It might bother you at first, but in time you'll get used to disciplining yourself. The more practice you get with self-discipline now, the easier it'll be years later.

Self-discipline is not easy, and it's not always fun. But people who learn to control their urges have better control over their lives. They stay out of trouble and avoid the misery that always seems to follow people who lack self-discipline.

Dependability

To depend means "to place trust or reliance."

Since you probably "depend" on your parents (or guardians), you know the importance of being dependable. So, shouldn't you be the same?

To deserve the reputation of being a dependable person, you need to keep the promises and commitments you make.

For example, you promise to call your mom if you decide to stay out late with your friends.

You forget. Your mom worries about you.

Do you think you'll be considered dependable after that? Probably not. The next time you make a commitment to your mom, she's likely to doubt that you'll follow through on your promise.

The sooner you get the reputation of being dependable, the better off you'll be. Your peers, friends, parents, and teachers will treat you with more respect. You might even start enjoying special privileges; for example, your parents might be more generous with their car, or give you additional freedom. Best of all, they might treat you like an adult.

Interestingly, one of the key attributes that employers look for in prospective employees is dependability.

Acquire this value and you'll really have a head start on everyone else.

Sensitivity

Dictionary meaning — “awareness of the needs and emotions of the others.”

Other words with the same meaning are compassion, sympathy, and understanding.

Sensitivity is another quality that takes you far in life. By showing sensitivity or compassion for the feelings or needs of others, you'll be a better person. And other people will see that and respect you for it.

You may encounter situations where your friends make fun of someone weaker, or insult someone of the opposite sex. At such times, you'll need not only sensitivity but also courage to defend the person under attack.

Don't think that you'll be considered a “sissy” if you show sensitivity.

On the contrary, you'll earn a lot of respect from people around you.

Sense of fairness

This is one of the most important values.

Once you get the hang of fairness, your life will be enriched — maybe with money, but definitely in your relationships with friends, family, and with others. It will help you even more later in life, when you work at a career or run your own business.

To get a sense of fairness, you need to have honesty,

54 Raising Yourself

courage, self-discipline, and sensitivity — some of the other values we've discussed already.

Think of the following scenario. You're the captain of a sports team and have the authority to select the players. As you fill up the available slots, you are confronted with the following situation:

- Two players are competing for the same spot;
- One of them happens to be a good friend of yours;
- The other happens to be a better player.

As captain of the team, you must choose one of them. It's not an enviable task.

Which player do you select? If you select your friend, you are showing favoritism.



If you select the better player, you are doing what is best for the team. *And you are also showing a sense of fairness.*

Of course, this could come at a price. Your friend might not be your friend anymore, you could be branded a traitor, and your other friends might criticize your decision. But your sense of fairness is more important.

Besides, there are other people to think about besides your own friends and acquaintances. You have the team to think about, and they are depending on you.

Such difficult decisions are bound to confront you throughout your lifetime. Have a sense of fairness and make your decisions accordingly.

Values (revisited)

The importance of values cannot be overstated.

They make you what you are. *They define your character.*

As you go about “raising yourself,” get your value system right first. It is your value system that helps you make the right choices as you go through life.

Read books and articles about people with the kinds of values and character you admire. Make them your role models and try to be like them.

As you are confronted with tough decisions that make you choose between right and wrong, think about how your role models would act.