

Lead with Values

By Julie Donley, RN ~ Success Expert & Author of [Does Change have to be so H.A.R.D.?](#)



What is important to you in life? Do you know what your values are?

Values are those things that are priorities. These can be anything from nature and beauty, adventure, learning, having fun, or honor and integrity. You know these things because when you see them in others, they bring you joy. When you experience them for yourself, they bring you joy. And when you don't have enough of them in your life, you feel empty, like life has lost meaning.

Too often, however, we live life without our values leading the way. Perhaps you never sat down to examine and clearly identify what you value most.

Perhaps you are quite clear what you value but life's challenges have gotten in the way and the choices you have made have led you further from what is important to you. This happens when your needs are strong and seem so important that they trick you into focusing your attention on satisfying them in the moment and you stop making choices based on your values.

Needs *feel* strong. Personal needs are feelings that you are lacking in some way and they make it seem like they have to be satisfied immediately or else. Because your self-worth cannot function with a void, you will go out of your way to fill that void and satisfy that need. The need can be for recognition or for attention; you might feel the need for power or to be in control.

Whatever the need, if you make that need most important, then you put your values second and this costs you dearly.

Real needs such as shelter, clothing and food are survival needs and they are essential for life. When you are in survival mode, it is easy to put emphasis and focus on meeting these basic needs first and putting values second. Beauty hardly seems important if you are starving. Although even in doing this, there is a chance you can lose yourself and lose that part of you that loves and trusts and has faith because your values are not being honored.

The more you focus attention on something, the bigger it grows. So if you focus on getting needs met and not on fulfilling your values, then your needs seem to grow bigger and bigger. What you are truly focused on is the 'lack' or the 'void' and your attention goes toward filling that lack.

Values, on the other hand, fill you up without much effort. If connection is important to you, for example, then focus your attention on finding ways to connect with people throughout your day. Do this instead of thinking about how lonely you are without a life partner. Look for the love you already have in your life and the more you find it (it is everywhere!), the bigger it will grow and the more satisfied and fulfilled you will be even without a love partner.

Susan put 'survival' over her values by staying at a job that did not fit her value structure. It was a cut-throat environment with bullying and backstabbing. Instead of leaving, she tolerated it for quite some time with the 'excuse' that she needed the job to survive; she needed money.



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While that may be true, she did need to make money to pay her bills; she didn't honor herself. And when we don't honor ourselves, we lose ourselves. The cost is high.

Susan had succumbed to the environment and did not see that there were choices – the choice to leave. Once she decided she could no longer put up with it – the stress was impacting her health – she began to seek new employment. This created a shift in her where she reclaimed her power and rediscovered her values. She found a job whose culture more closely matched her values. She felt free, lighter and happier than she had in years. It was as if a huge weight had been lifted from her shoulders.

All that time, she needed to shrink, to pretend, to 'walk on egg shells'. She could not be herself for fear of verbal assault or of not fitting in or being ridiculed.

This is no way to live!

When your values lead the way, you never forget who you are. It is easier to stand up for yourself. You do what is 'right' which means you live in integrity. There is freedom here.

When you live by needs – the need to impress or to gain something from others, you put your power in the hands of others and it hurts. Needs are illusions; you have all you need. There is always enough – more than enough – and you are complete. If you feel you need something, it is best to ask for someone to meet that need for you; own it, in other words, rather than being at the mercy of it.

Living by your values ensures that you are free to be you and that you enjoy yourself. Leading by your needs, however, will feel as if you have to chase something and that you are not good enough without this thing that seems to be missing. It is not a relaxed feeling; it is a stressful feeling.

What do you value? What is most important to you as you go about your daily life? First identify the value and then find ways to incorporate that value into your life each day. You will find over time that you spend less time worrying about whether there is enough or if you are good enough, and instead, you'll enjoy life more.

Julie Donley, MBA, BSN, RN is a psychiatric nurse, success expert and author of several empowering and motivating books including [Does Change have to be so H.A.R.D.?](#) and [The Journey Called YOU: A Roadmap to Self-Discovery and Acceptance](#). Julie is named one of the top 100 thought leaders in personal development. For self-help resources and to learn more, visit www.JulieDonley.com. Media can access her online press kit at www.juliedonley.presskit247.com.

