**Building Self-Esteem Through Living By Values**

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Building self-esteem is a lifelong process, and progress is not always a straight line up. We will face obstacles and challenges along the way that will test our own concept of self-worth. However, learning how to keep our core sense of self worth can help us to whether those storms when they arise. One of the most simple, yet effective, ways that I teach my clients to build core self-esteem is through living in line with their values. “Values” are  basic and fundamental beliefs that guide or motivate attitudes or actions. They help us to determine what is important to us. When our actions are cohesive with our identified values, then our self-esteem will grow. When our actions do not line up with our values, it can be damaging to our own sense of worth.

Values can help us determine between right and wrong, can allow us to prioritize and motivate us toward action. If you search for a list of values, you will likely find hundreds of possible results. Some commonly held values can include: hard work, honesty, family, education, relationships, helping others, ethics, career, health and fitness, fun, adventure, responsibility, efficiency, and many more. We all have our own unique values, which can come from our own backgrounds, family or cultural influences, and our deeply held core belies. What your values are can be unique to you. Think of them as your road map to guide your actions. When we act in a way that supports our values, we tend to feel pride in ourselves, building self-esteem. For example, if a person values helping others, and spends time volunteering, they will likely feel very fulfilled. Their values helps drive their life’s purpose. When we behave in ways that are not in line with values, it damages our self-esteem. If a person values being fiscally responsible, but impulsively spends a lot of money on something frivolous, they will likely experience more feelings of guilt, or even shame, than a person who does not hold that same value would.

In working as a mental health therapist, I use a values assessment to help my clients identify what their personal values are. When we look at the results, the client struggling with low self-esteem often realizes that their actions of late have been out of line with their values. This can lead to a cycle of self-doubt, shame, and self-criticism, further impacting self-esteem. I recommend using a values assessment tool to help you identify your top values, but you could also do it on your own. List out the values that come to mind as being important to you, and write down as many as you can. Next, prioritize that list into a ranked top ten values. For each value identified, give yourself an honest assessment of how much energy and action that you have been putting into that value by scoring yourself on a 0-10 (0 being no effort or action at all; 10 being the most effort and action possible). This will give you clarity into which values have been neglected, and what you can focus on creating goals for. When you’ve determine which values that you need to add more energy into, create a plan of one simple action that you can take that will be in line with that value.

Another simple way that we can improve living by our values is to ask ourselves a simple question when we make any choice- “Is this moving me closer to my values, or away from them?” When you use your values as a guide for your actions and choices, your self-esteem and confidence will grow exponentially.

Please find below a list of values assessment tools:

* **Valued Living Questionnaire (VLQ)**

https://www.div12.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Valued-Living-Questionnaire.pdf

## **The (Schwartz) Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ)**

https://wiki.mgto.org/doku.php/portrait\_value\_questionnaire\_pvq

## **The Personal Values Assessment (PVA)**

https://www.valuescentre.com/tools-assessments/pva/

## **the Portrait Values Questionnaire**

https://datadatabase.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/schwartz-value-inventory.pdf