



Values – What is Important?

Introduction: As a group discuss who or what can get an emotional reaction from you? It can be a positive emotional reaction or a negative one (*Happy* or *angry* for example)

Group Leader – Follow the each step below in leading the group through this discussion of values, substance use and addiction:

1. As the group shares about people and situations that may elicit an emotional reaction, try to identify the VALUE associated with the emotional reaction. Think about *WHAT IS IMPORTANT?* – List each identified VALUE on the board

Some examples of statements of emotional reaction and underlying values:

Statement	Underlying Value(s)
“Getting arrested really gets me angry”	Freedom, Justice
“When I have money coming in I feel a sense of accomplishment and pride”	Money, Security
“When someone lies to me I cannot stand it”	Honesty, Trust
“Knowing that my family cares about me makes me happy”	Love, Family
“Being sick or injured is scary”	Health, Life

2. Continue to list VALUES on the board. Once the group understands the idea of identifying values, continue to list more values on the board until you have at least 12 or more that that group can discuss.
3. Once you have a good list of values on the board, discuss as a group how substance use can adversely impact a person’s values. In other words: How can substance use (or addiction) cause someone to hurt, jeopardize or compromise what is important to them? Consider how some of the values that the group has listed so far can be affected by addiction.

Overcoming Substance Use Issues and Addiction by Considering VALUES:

- Learning to change negative BEHAVIORS is essential to the positive change process. What are some behaviors that can be associated with problematic substance use?
 - Lying, loss of control, overspending, risk taking, stealing, criminal activity, etc.
- BEHAVIORS are strongly impacted by FEELINGS
 - For example, consider how you behave when you are angry or when you are happy or when you are excited or bored...*Our feelings have a huge influence on our behavior*
- FEELINGS can be challenging to change.
 - Feelings can be deep-rooted and even be impacted from things in our past, like our childhood
 - It’s not so easy to just “be happy” or “stop being angry” just because it is the right thing to do. Feelings can be very strong and can take time and effort to manage
- Our THINKING often fuels our feelings. Therefore since it can be difficult to change our feelings, the best way to work on that is to try to change your THINKING. We have more control over our thinking
 - For example, consider some of the thoughts that come to mind when you feel angry or happy or sad or other emotions.



- Finally, it is our VALUES (what is important to us) that has the greatest impact on our THINKING.
 - For example: How often do you think about what is important in your life? (If you value money, you probably think about money. If you value your career, you probably think a lot about your career. If you value drugs, surely you think a lot about drugs...etc.)
- The final overview of how this all plays out is illustrated this way:

VALUES – (effects our) → THINKING (effects our) → FEELINGS (which effects our) → BEHAVIOR

- **It all starts with our VALUES**
- **If we want to change our behavior we need to change our VALUES**
- **Overcoming addiction starts with our VALUES – What is important**
- **Getting better is all about establishing new VALUES.**
 - **A person can stop using substances temporarily but if their values do not change that person is just “white-knuckling” the situation using will power alone.**
 - **Lasting change means setting new priorities – Realigning what is most important in life (Shifting our VALUES in a more positive direction for more positive results)**

One final illustration to demonstrate how one’s perspective on values can completely change one’s outlook on a situation:

The Two Ditch Diggers – Two men are on the side of the road with shovels. Each one is digging a large hole. You walk up to the first man and he is digging slowly. He looks irritated and frustrated. You ask this first man: “What are you doing?” He angrily grunts out his answer: “I’m digging a hole!”

You then walk up to the second man who is also on the side of the road in another large hole digging. However he doesn’t look upset or angry but rather he looks focused and determined as he is working enthusiastically at a good steady pace. You ask the second man “What are you doing” and he looks back at you with a smile on his face and proudly says “I’m helping build a hospital!”

The moral of the story: Although each man had the same task to do, each man’s sense of value greatly impacted his overall perspective and behavior.

Closing thought:

How can you reprioritize, readjust and refocus you own values to positively impact your own life now and in the future?