



VALUES, PRIORITIES and SUBSTANCE USE ISSUES

Values and Priorities -

Almost everyone would agree that there are many people, ideas, goals, and other things that we value and are important to us. We tend to direct our mind (mental focus, attention, thinking) and our heart (feelings, desires, passion) toward the things that we value – (See diagram on the right)

- We all have a limited amount of time and energy. When we are functioning well, we divide up our resources to make sure we are prioritizing our areas of value such as family, work, health, recreation, hobbies, etc.



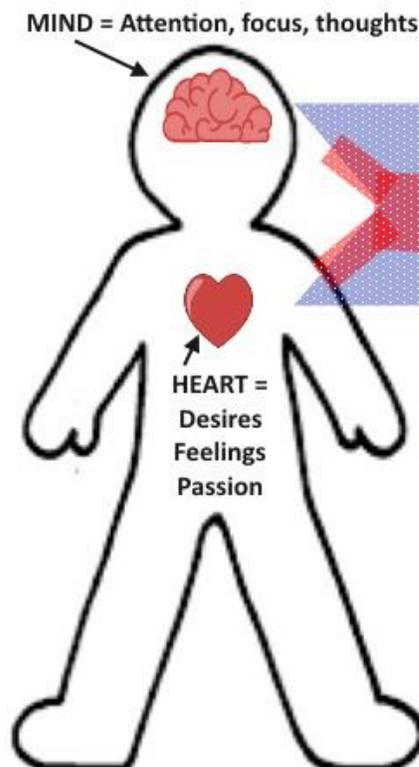
VALUES

Family
Relationships
Career
Hobbies
Health
Beliefs
Interests
Goals/Dreams
Etc.

Values, Priorities and Problematic Substance Use –

When someone is misusing substances that does not mean that values necessarily change right away. Often what happens is that when substance use becomes more and more problematic, the substance use can hijack some of what we set our mind and our heart on.

- When substance use becomes a problem, it can steal some of the time, energy and other resources we may have used for other more important life areas.
- The worse a substance use problem gets, the more it may take from other more important life areas. A “functioning addict” is able to use substances and still save something for other areas but this can get harder to do as addiction progresses with time



VALUES

Family
Relationships
Career
Hobbies
Health
Beliefs
Interests
Goals/Dreams
Etc.



The Role of Values and Priorities during the Process of Changing and Healing

Re-prioritizing our values is an incredibly important part of the change process when healing from a substance use issue. Escaping a lifestyle damaged by addiction involves getting back to what is most important in life. However, this is not automatic. Just because a person stops using or abusing substances, that does not mean that it is easy to just jump back in to life. To understand this better, consider the illustration below which involves thinking about when you were a student in school. Think about and discuss the following:

- **Did you ever stay out of school for an extended period because of being sick? What was it like to come back after being out?**



Most people would agree that getting back into the routine of going to school, learning, and studying is a challenge after being out sick for a while. Usually the longer someone is out, the harder it can be to get back into the healthy routine of school again.

The same can be true with addiction. The farther that addiction takes and individual away from the “normal” day to day concerns, values and priorities, the harder it can be to come back. That is why it is a process that takes time. That’s why it is okay if it may be taking a while to get your priorities in order, early in the change process when dealing with addiction. What you can do each day is make sure to stay focused on re-prioritizing your values in a positive way and then work on making the changes you need. It’s a process.



Creating a V-MAP - Values Motivational Action Plan

Your values can serve as the driving force to keep you motivated in a positive direction. One way to keep your values and priorities in front of you and in your daily consciousness is to have a Values Motivational Action Plan. Complete and discuss your VMAP on the following page.



VMAP - Values-Motivational Action Plan:

- Value – Something important to you that you need to focus on
- Goal– Where you see yourself
- Objectives – Plan – What are some things you can start working on to achieve your goal

There are 4 spaces to use. Try to do at least 3

Value	Goal	Objectives - Plan
Example: <u>Family</u> – I want to have a happy family with no legal involvement	Reunify with my kids and live all together again	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Complete my treatment program successfully2. Get a new network of friends and supports who don't use drugs so I do not relapse.3. Get my driver's license back so I can drive my kids where they need to go4. Find a new place to live that is better suited for me and my children5. Go to court and get kids back and have legal case closed for good