

THE VALUES FACTOR

The Secret to Creating
an Inspired and Fulfilling Life

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you shouldn't, the answer will almost always be the same: you are inevitably going to do what you truly value most. You may be frustrated with yourself because you *expect* yourself to live outside your own true highest values. But however you feel about your "shortcomings" or your "bad behavior," you will in fact continue to behave in whatever way aligns with your own true highest values.

By contrast, when you become aware of your own highest values and wholeheartedly pursue the goals that express them, your life will begin to embody the kind of fulfillment and inspiration experienced by history's extraordinary leaders and achievers. Awareness of their highest values is the secret of their achievement—and it can be the secret of yours.

This is why becoming aware of those true highest values is so important. This is why I have written this book: to share with you the power of the Values Factor.

How do you know when you are expressing your true highest values and when you are reflecting social idealisms? I'll offer some powerful exercises in the next chapter that will reveal your true highest values. Then, throughout this book, I'll show you how to use those most important values to help you reach goals that have been eluding you, from finding a life partner or establishing a business to saving money or losing weight.

Meanwhile, here's an important clue: anytime you find yourself saying, "I should . . .," "I need to . . .," or "I really must . . .," you can be pretty certain that you are talking about social idealisms or the values of some external authority instead of expressing your own true highest values. When you hear yourself saying, "I desire to . . .," "I choose to . . .," or "I love to . . .," then you know that you are talking about a goal that is truly valuable to you. Those are the goals you will inevitably achieve because they align with your highest values. But when you take on goals that are not aligned with your highest values, then you will, in all probability, struggle. External influences often seem to make it difficult to achieve your goals. Going within to

choose your goals means that those goals are far more likely to be achieved.

VALUES COME FROM VOIDS

One of the things that's most powerful about our values is how they reflect what has been perceived as lacking in our lives—the seeming difficulties, challenges, obstacles, sorrows, or voids. Whatever we perceive is missing sets off a powerful hunger for precisely that thing. The perception of lack or void creates a corresponding value that drives us until we feel fulfilled.

For example, when I was a child, I felt restricted by the braces I was forced to wear. I perceived that restriction as a void—a lack of freedom. At age four, I begged my father to release me from that void. I promised to keep my hands and feet straight on my own if only I didn't have to wear the braces.

My father agreed. I was so thrilled to have filled that void—to have replaced restriction with freedom—that I have placed a very high value on physical movement and travel ever since. As a child, I simply ran everywhere, glorying in my ability to move without braces. Throughout my boyhood and youth, I placed a very high value on physical activity and went on to excel at sports. As an adult, I value travel, and I have vowed to visit every country on earth. To this day, I love being unrestricted, either by my physical location or by any type of limiting belief. Today, the universe is my playground, the world is my home, and every city is another platform where I can share my heart and soul.

Isn't it remarkable to think that my lifelong value on *freedom* came at least partly from the early-childhood experience of a void—a perception of a severe lack of freedom? Thus at a very early age, I began to experience the way *voids* create *values*.

I soon encountered another void that became another equally

important value. When I was five, I entered kindergarten, where the teacher frequently had us draw pictures. For some reason, my drawings were like the ones made by the girls: houses and trees and sky and sun, which we colored green, blue, and yellow. I seemed to have some gift with perspective and dimension, and I liked drawing those things. The other boys, on the other hand, preferred sketching armies and cars, which they colored black and red. So during drawing period, I repeatedly went to sit with the girls.

Well, that didn't suit my teacher. "You're *not* a girl!" she scolded me. "And you belong with the boys!" For days, she would drag me over to the boys' side of the classroom, put a black or a red crayon into my hand, and tell me to draw like they did.

Even at that early age, I just couldn't do what other people told me to do unless I believed in it myself. I couldn't draw like the other boys, and as soon as the teacher walked away, I'd go back to sit with the girls. So eventually, I was made to sit in the middle of the classroom, by myself. "You're not a girl, and you won't play with the boys, so you're just going to have to sit in the middle!" the teacher scolded me.

Here was another confrontation with a void: not being allowed to be myself. I wanted to be creative in my own way so I could discover the activities at which I was truly exceptional. Instead, I was being asked to fit into what conventional society expected of me. From that void developed one of my highest values: I learned how important it was not to let authority stop me from being true to myself. I placed an equally high value on helping other people find the means to become *their* true selves. Being forced to sit in the middle as a so-called punishment also helped me value the idea of embracing all sorts of polarities in life, which in turn assisted me later on in finding the middle path with a more gender-balanced perspective for the rest of my life's journey.

In first grade, I encountered yet another void. I was supposed to learn to read, but I showed early symptoms of dyslexia, and I couldn't make any meaning out of the letters, words, or phrases on the page.

I couldn't pronounce the words, either, so I was diagnosed with speech problems. From the regular class, I was put into the remedial class, and from the remedial class, I was put into what they called the dance class. My parents were called in and told that I would never be able to read, write, or communicate. They were informed that I would never amount to very much or go very far in life.

From that series of voids, I eventually developed a very high value on reading, studying, learning, and teaching. And so every one of my voids created the values that continue to shape my life today. Although I was not supposed to go far in life, I went on to build a multimillion-dollar global business. Although I had difficulty reading and speaking, I became an internationally renowned writer and educator. And although I had once been called a dunce, I went on to graduate from college with honors, to teach myself numerous specialties as an expert in a number of different areas as I conducted advanced research in multiple fields, including philosophy, psychology, anthropology, physiology, chemistry, mathematics, physics, and astronomy.

Challenging as these childhood experiences seemed to be at the time, they were the essential voids that shaped my highest values. Because I had been previously blocked in my learning, I valued knowledge. Because I had been unable to communicate, I valued teaching and writing. Because I had felt trapped, I valued travel. And so I discovered this key principle: perceived *voids* create *values*. What you perceive as lacking—and want more of—determines what you value.

Significantly, this is a never-ending process. When one void is filled, another opens up, spurring you to new efforts—and new values. Indeed, some voids might never be filled. The artist hungry for self-expression, the mystic eager to know the secrets of the universe, the scientist ravenous for new knowledge, the person of service longing to help humanity—these people are driven by voids so great that their values become equally great. An entire lifetime might not be enough to fulfill their highest values.

Other voids can be filled more easily, so that the values they

engender are left behind. A young man might feel a void of self-confidence, so that he values impressing others or proving to himself what he can do. Later in life, he feels more confident, and so his values shift to other areas—serving others, perhaps, or raising a family, or founding a new enterprise. A young woman feels a void of self-love, so she values relationships that feed her need to be admired. Later in life, she appreciates herself more fully, and so her values shift to other areas—deepening her romantic and family relationships, perhaps, or expressing herself, or exploring new ideas in science or business.

Thus, some of our values change throughout our lives. Others remain an essential part of who we are. Either way, however, your perceived voids determine your values—and your values shape your life. That is why understanding your highest values and organizing your life to pursue them is the secret to living an inspired and fulfilling life.

THE POWER OF VALUES

If there is something that you believe you would love to have in your life—such as a more fulfilling career, a life partner, or greater financial freedom—I can tell you that the reason you don't yet have it in that particular form is almost certainly that you don't truly value it enough. There is something else you value more, and that is where your energy, time, money, and focus have gone, whether you are aware of it or not. When you *truly* value something, you are constantly on the lookout for opportunities to fulfill that value. You'll notice people, places, things, ideas, or events to fulfill your value that another person will surely miss. You'll mobilize your energy to take advantage of those opportunities. And you'll bring all your mental, physical, and spiritual resources to bear to make sure that you fulfill what you truly seek.

Your highest values determine your *attention, retention, and intention*: what you notice, what you remember, and what you intend or act upon. We hear a lot these days about Attention Deficit Disorder—the difficulties some people seem to have in being attentive and focusing steadily. But all of us have some degree of Attention Deficit Disorder for the things we don't value. For the things we do highly value, we have what I call Attention Surplus Order, which does a fabulous job of filtering your perceptions. Out of all the stimuli in your environment, the ones you notice are the ones that will help you fulfill your highest values. Your highest values will lead you to notice things that another person might miss—even if you tried to point it out!

I experienced a striking example of the power of attention a few years ago when a close friend was driving us to her favorite sushi bar in Houston. We were on a block crowded with stores of all kinds, but out of that myriad of choices, my friend zeroed in on a new shoe boutique that hadn't been there the last time she drove by. She not only picked that one tiny store out of the dozens of other boutiques on that busy block, she even noticed two or three particular pairs of especially desirable shoes in the shop window.

I, on the other hand, couldn't for the life of me see that store, even when she tried to show me where it was. I didn't share her high value for shoes, and so I couldn't break through all the "noise" in the environment to see what had immediately attracted her. Her values gave her Attention Surplus Order for those shoes. My values made it virtually impossible for me to see them at all.

On the other hand, I'm interested in city planning, so I couldn't take my eyes off the high-rise condominium that was being erected on the corner. I tried to talk to my friend about the things I had noticed—the design of the building and the way it was being sited relative to the street—but I might as well have been talking about a building in China. She had driven right past that high-rise and not seen it, while I rode right past that shoe store and missed it com-

pletely. Her higher values determined her attention. My higher values determined mine. Between the two of us, which one is more likely to find fabulous shoes? Her values are perfectly aligned with that goal. If I decide I want a pair of quality shoes, I may have to momentarily realign my values to fit that goal, or link that goal to my highest values so that my Attention Surplus Order leads me where I want to go. (I will talk you through this process many times throughout the book, helping you complete it in various key areas of your life.)

Your highest values also affect what you remember, creating what I call “selective biased retention.” That is, you are far more likely to retain information that you believe will help you attain your highest values and to forget information that does not relate to those values. My friend, to continue with the previous example, will probably never forget the address of that shoe store. I probably wouldn’t remember it if you paid me. Her memory leads her to fulfill her higher values. My memory leads me to fulfill mine.

We all know people who say, “Oh, I can’t remember anything—I have a mind like a sieve”—and then they rattle off the scores of their favorite teams, the results of their latest blood pressure test and cholesterol count, or the details of their child’s latest triumph in school. They may indeed have terrible memories for the things that don’t matter to them. But for what truly matters, they have selective biased retention—the ability to select and hold on to the information that supports their highest values.

Finally, your highest values create what I call “selective biased intention,” adding an extra power to those intentions that truly align with those most important values. If you place a high value on health, you’ll make sure you get to the gym, even if you have to give up some other pleasures to do so. If you place a higher value on “dressing for success,” you might skip the gym in order to stop by your favorite fine clothing store. If you want to know what you truly value, look at what you make time for. Your highest values lead power to those intentions, and so they are the ones you fulfill.

Think about the power we mobilize when we bring together attention, retention, and intention to fulfill our highest values! There is really no stopping us. A mother who has as her highest value her newborn child can sleep through a freight train and yet be awakened by the whimpering of her baby. A child who is immersed in a video game may not hear you ask, “How was school today?” but immediately looks up when you say, “Would you like to come with me to see that new movie you were talking about?” All of us have had the experience of forgetting the names of random guests at a party—except for that one attractive man or woman, whose every detail is vividly etched into our memories! We’ve all had the experience of being too tired to accept an invitation from one person—and then jumping off the couch and getting ourselves dressed to take up the offer of somebody else. What we value most shapes how we process information, what we remember, and how we act, so that our minds, emotions, and intentions all work together to fulfill those most meaningful values.

This is why your true highest values are infinitely more powerful than any social idealisms and why it is so important not to allow social idealisms to cloud the clarity of your most inspiring values. When you are guided by social idealisms, you might try to do what you “should” or “ought to”—but if your attempts at maintaining attention, retention, and intention are not aligned with your highest values, you are likely to make only a halfhearted effort and you often will not remain focused. By contrast, when you seek to fulfill your highest values, you focus instantly on whatever helps you reach your goal and you mobilize every bit of your mind, body, and spirit to help you get there.

That’s why the Values Factor is the key to achieving a fulfilling life. By becoming aware of your highest values, you mobilize your deepest power. It’s an unbeatable combination.