

Mindful Work

Values and vision

It's too easy to live without passion and growth. We can easily succumb to routine, and we develop an array of distractions to keep us from coming face to face with the truth of our submission to being small. By failing to challenge ourselves to live as fully as we can, we're also cheating the world of our potential contribution.

Visioning is an amazing exercise if done well; it can inspire and clarify where we're going and why. When done with mindful awareness, by stepping back and investigating our passions and capacities with honesty and equanimity, the energy that can be released is awesome.

We recommend three stages in the visioning process as defined below. It will be very helpful to do this work with a colleague, using mindful listening and coaching skills.

Stage 1: Values

The starting point is our values. What's most important to you, about how the world should be, and which underpin the way you behave, act and live your life? You already have these values – they influence all your actions, such as selecting friendships or the work you're drawn to. So the work is to uncover, dust off and articulate these values with real clarity. Then write them down.

Exercise:

You can use the reference sheet (final page of document) which helps you select your values. Start with a long list, then take those you have selected and choose the top five. Now write a sentence that embodies those key values.

It helps to think of real events, when you have been at your most effective, and when you have felt least satisfied with your actions. What were the core principles that guided you when you were most effective? What was missing when you were dissatisfied?

For example, if one of my core values is altruism, how would I really feel when a new funding offer for my mindfulness course is made, but from which I personally will not benefit? If you are unshaken, it's probably one of your core values; but if there's some doubt, it may fall into the 'should' category (which is demotivating!). Now re-write the sentence that defines your deepest, un-shakeable values.

Stage 2: Defining your vision

A vision is what you hope the world will look like. That's just how things will be, not how it can happen or what your role in making it happen can be (that comes next).

You can make this vision as grand or as prosaic as you like, from creating world peace to spending more time with the kids. Just be aware however, that the bigger the vision, the more it may motivate you, and the more others will buy into it too (ok, some people will think you're crazy, but it will be fun to show them that you're not). The vision could be around a work project, your role, the work environment, or anything else.

Exercise:

A leap of imagination is now required. Close your eyes, and take a time machine leap to a point ten years from now (or choose a timescale which seems right to you).

Envisage the world, or your world around you, when this vision has become real. Be clear about it in three ways:

- 1. Envisage it in detail. What do things look like, how are people behaving, what are you doing, and what do you look like? Get into as much detail as you can – what kind of tea cup are you drinking from?*
- 2. How are you feeling about what's around you, what's happening, and your part in this? Use your body awareness skills to really sense what it's like in your body and your breathing. How relaxed, energised and focused are you?*
- 3. If someone was introducing you at a seminar as one of the authors of this new, better reality, what would they say? Or if you had 20 seconds in a lift with a key potential supporter, and had to summarise what's been achieved, what would you say?*

Stage 3: Your part in that vision

Now comes the action plan – you know what matters to you most, and using this as a guiding light, you're clear what you'd like to see happen – so now you define how you play a part in making this future scene a reality. You can start planning from either end ie from now forwards, or from the future backwards. If you're not clear what the next step is, use the future backwards model. This is described below.

Exercise:

Go back to your vision description. Identify with your future self within this vision. With the help of your mindful listener or coach, describe:

- 1. The key **skills** that you have developed, which have enabled you to play a vital role in making this thing happen. If you were advising someone else, who, in the future scenario, is now where you once were, what would you suggest to them as the best way to develop these skills?*
- 2. The key **relationships, partnerships or associations** that you made to unlock this scenario.*
- 3. Your key **actions, plans, or building blocks** in working towards this scenario. With these insights, define what needs to happen, when, and how. Stay in the realms of the possible and the practical, but also in the aspirational!*

Ask your colleague to help you keep to the plan. Take a first step, however small, today!

Values sheet

Using the sheet of values below, put a ring around those which are most resonant for you. Then choose your top five.

Ask yourself if the way you have acted today is really guided by your values? Widen this evaluation to the main areas of your life. What does this tell you?

Accountability	Decisiveness	Humility	Sensitivity
Accuracy	Dependability	Joy	Serenity
Achievement	Determination	Justice	Shrewdness
Adventurousness	Diligence	Leadership	Simplicity
Altruism	Discipline	Love	Soundness
Ambition	Diversity	Independence	Speed
Assertiveness	Dynamism	Ingenuity	Spontaneity
Balance	Effectiveness	Insightfulness	Stability
Being the best	Efficiency	Intelligence	Strength
Belonging	Empathy	Intuition	Structure
Boldness	Enjoyment	Loyalty	Success
Calmness	Enthusiasm	Making a difference	Support
Carefulness	Equality	Mastery	Teamwork
Challenge	Excellence	Openness	Thoroughness
Cheerfulness	Excitement	Order	Thoughtfulness
Clear-mindedness	Expertise	Originality	Timeliness
Commitment	Exploration	Perfection	Tolerance
Community	Expressiveness	Positivity	Traditionalism
Compassion	Fairness	Practicality	Trustworthiness
Competitiveness	Focus	Professionalism	Understanding
Consistency	Freedom	Quality-orientation	Uniqueness
Contentment	Fun	Reliability	Usefulness
Contribution	Generosity	Resourcefulness	Vision
Control	Growth	Restraint	Vitality
Cooperation	Happiness	Rigour	
Correctness	Hard Work	Security	
Courtesy	Helping Society	Self-control	
Creativity	Honesty	Selflessness	
Curiosity	Honour	Self-reliance	