



VALUES CARD SORT
(from *Stop Self-Sabotage*)
By Dr. Judy Ho

In this exercise you will choose the values that are important to you and prioritize them. The Values Card Sort is such an important exercise because it gives us a tangible way to connect with our Values, which can feel somewhat abstract if you haven't taken the time to really consider them and to observe the ways they play out in your daily life. Because values influence our behaviors and decision-making, it would be very difficult to permanently change problem behaviors if we didn't carefully and thoughtfully consider our values. Knowing what we value most in our health, work, relationships, and other important areas of life makes it much easier to respond to circumstances, opportunities, and difficult scenarios with integrity and authenticity. It helps us to be always aware of who we are and who we want to be, making it easier to resist the pull of a quick fix, or avoiding a discomforting thought or feeling, if we know that doing so would go against our personal ideals.

Although values clearly influence our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, we don't often spend a lot of time explicitly contemplating our values despite the influence they have on our decisions, from the work we engage in to the people we associate with and the way we live our lives in general. By taking the time to name and sort your values, you

can then use them as a touchstone when you make decisions about what goals you will pursue in your life. Goals that are firmly rooted in values will be that much more self-sabotage-proof. There is something about the tactile experience of sorting through the cards that makes this exercise all the more powerful, especially as values can often feel abstract. There are thousands of possible values, but I have found that narrowing it down to thirty-three of the most common values has worked best for my program.

Directions: Cut out the cards below and sort the cards into three categories under the cards labeled: Most Important, Moderately Important, and Least Important. I want you to do this evenly, so that there are eleven cards in each category. Having an equal distribution among the columns is the classic way to do this sort. Not only is it aesthetically pleasing, but doing so forces you to prioritize. Although most or all of the values could be listed as “most important” for this exercise, to be effective, you need to rank them how they rate in your life right now, in this moment. Sort each of the cards into the categories of most important, moderately important, and least important to you. There are no right or wrong ways to prioritize—just be honest.

Putting Values to Good Use: Now that you’ve identified your top values, it’s time to put them into action. Remember, values bolster motivation and willpower consistently if they are explicitly identified and kept on your radar on a daily basis. You can’t simply state your values and move on; you have to live them every day. Looking at your card sort or keeping the most important values card with you in your wallet or purse can help sharpen your awareness of your values and remind you about how you should be conducting yourself throughout the day.

The card sort also helps with sharpening your focus when writing and specifying goals. It is immensely helpful if you are able to identify your most cherished values prior to making any specific goals, because values-directed goals are more likely to lead to the

greatest satisfaction as you pursue and ultimately achieve them. If your goal is developed in relation to your values, the goals tend to be much more meaningful and important in your mind. You will be more likely to be willing to put in the hard work, take risks, and place yourself in potentially uncomfortable situations in order to reach your values-driven goal.

Although many of your most important values may stay the same over long periods of time, they can shift periodically, and how you prioritize your values may also change depending on what's at stake in a particular situation or whether a defined goal is particularly important at a specific time in your life. I recommend redoing the Values Card Sort exercise once a month, to be sure you are aware of the values that are most essential to you at a given time. In addition, it's helpful to write down your top eleven values in an ordered list in your journal, as well as to copy the list onto another sheet of paper and keep it in a place where you can view it frequently, such as your nightstand, your bathroom mirror, or your refrigerator. When there are changes, date and write the new list in your journal and revise any other copies of your top values that you have around the house.

The Values Cards are below.

<p style="text-align: center;">MOST IMPORTANT</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Place 11 cards underneath this card on the left)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">MODERATELY IMPORTANT</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Place 11 cards underneath this card in the middle)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">LEAST IMPORTANT</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Place 11 cards underneath this card on the right)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">ACCEPTANCE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To be open and accepting of myself, others, and life events</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ADVENTURE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To actively seek, create, or explore novel experiences</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">AESTHETICS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To appreciate, create, nurture, and enjoy the arts</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ASSERTIVENESS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To stand up for my rights and proactively and respectfully request what I want</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">AUTHENTICITY</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To act in ways that are consistent with my beliefs/desires despite external pressures</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">CARING</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To be caring toward myself, others, and the environment</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">CHALLENGE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To take on difficult tasks and encourage myself to grow, learn, and improve</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">COMMUNITY</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To take part in social or citizen groups and be part of something bigger than myself</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">CONTRIBUTION</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To help, assist, or make lasting positive differences to others or myself</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">COURAGE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To be brave and to persist in the face of fear, threat, or difficulty</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">CURIOSITY</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To be open-minded and interested in discovering and learning new things</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">DILIGENCE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To be thorough and conscientious in what I do</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">FAITHFULNESS</p> <p>To be loyal and true in my relationships with people and/or a higher power</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">HEALTH</p> <p>To maintain or improve the fitness and condition of my body and mind</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">HONESTY</p> <p>To be truthful and sincere with others and to have integrity in my actions</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">HUMOR</p> <p>To see and appreciate the humorous side of life</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">HUMILITY</p> <p>To be humble, modest, and unassuming</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">INDEPENDENCE</p> <p>To be self-supportive, autonomous, and to choose my own way of doing things</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">INTIMACY</p> <p>To open up and share myself emotionally and physically in my relationships</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">JUSTICE</p> <p>To uphold fairness and righteousness for all</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">KNOWLEDGE</p> <p>To learn, use, share, and contribute valuable knowledge</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">LEISURE</p> <p>To take time to pursue and enjoy various aspects of life</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">MASTERY</p> <p>To be competent in my everyday activities and pursuits</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ORDER</p> <p>To live a life that is planned and organized</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">PERSISTENCE</p> <p>To continue resolutely despite difficulties and challenges</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">POWER</p> <p>To strongly influence or wield authority over others and projects</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">RESPECT</p> <p>To treat others considerately and to be tolerant of those who differ from me</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SELF-CONTROL</p> <p>To exercise discipline over my behaviors for a higher good</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">SELF-ESTEEM</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To feel good about my identity and to believe in my own worth</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SPIRITUALITY</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To grow and mature in the understanding of higher power(s)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">TRUST</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To be loyal, sincere, and reliable</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">VIRTUE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To live a morally pure and honorable life</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">WEALTH</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To accumulate and possess financial prosperity</p>	