

Values, Decisions, and Inner Peace  
or  
Who Am I and Where am I Going?

Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles. – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Have you ever stopped to really think about who you are and where you are going in your life? It is not something we like to dwell on very much. The answers aren't always so clear or easy to make in this sometimes frightening world. We might have a good idea of some aspects of our life, like what we want to do academically or professionally. But many parts of our lives remain undiscovered. This may be due to fear of finding what might be there, or it may be because we simply don't know how to look. Several of our great thinkers had these wise words regarding how we become who we are. Think about these quotes for a moment:

- The mind is everything; what you think, you become. – Buddha
- You are today where your thoughts have brought you. You will be tomorrow where your thoughts take you. – James Allen
- We become what we think about. – Napoleon Hill
- A man is what he thinks about all day long. – Ralph Waldo Emerson
- As a man Thinketh in his heart, so is he – David, the psalmist

These men understood that what happens in our regular thinking patterns; brings about the type of person each of us becomes. Sometimes it is difficult to make the best decisions. We find ourselves struggling to choose between several alternatives. But it is our decisions that we make on a moment to moment basis create the future that we will live. All decision making comes down to how we value those things on which we are deciding – always. When you know what is most important to you, making decisions is a

simple process. When you aren't sure what you value most in a situation, making the best one for you is more difficult.

Think about the people who we tend to respect the most in our culture. They are usually those who have clearly defined values and live by them. Mahatma Gandhi was a perfect example of a person who was very clear about what was most important to him. Despite going up against impossible odds, living according to his highest values ultimately brought about the freeing of an entire nation. Gandhi was very clear about his values. He knew that his choices and behavior followed them. He was driven by his values instead of being driven by his emotions or the circumstances in his environment.

Why should we discover our Values?

There is a principle in Buddhism called Dharma. It is a rather complex principle, but one aspect of it has to do with the idea of a jigsaw puzzle. Consider the possibility that each one of us that has ever lived is a specific piece of an enormous puzzle of several billion pieces (one for each person). This is a very large puzzle. Consider, further, that your own personal piece of this gigantic puzzle is a specific size and shape and fits correctly in only one precise place in this puzzle. Your piece of this puzzle does not fit in any other place on the puzzle board. In other words, you are not able to be another puzzle piece; you can only be your own. Dharma teaches us that when you find out what your puzzle piece is all about, you find satisfaction in life; you feel fulfilled, happy, content, and worthwhile. When a person aimlessly wanders about not even knowing about the pieces of the puzzle, or tries to be someone else's piece, thinking that is the appropriate way to be and do things, this person is likely to find confusion, unhappiness, despair. As Thoreau said, "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." This is what he was

talking about. People are not living according to their own puzzle piece, which is uniquely theirs and entirely necessary to find out. This is stressful.

What happens when we do live according to our own puzzle piece? The natural consequences are inner peace, wisdom and happiness. We feel fulfilled and satisfied with ourselves and the direction in which our life is going when we are certain about who we are. What happens when we don't discover our real purpose for being? What are the consequences of not knowing what our inner nature is and following that path but instead, following someone else's perfect way which is not perfect for us? Anthony Robbins describes what commonly happens when people don't take a good look at who they are and where they are going. He calls it the Niagara Syndrome and it goes like this:

“...Life is like a river, and most people jump on the river of life without ever really deciding where they want to end up. So, in a short period of time, they get caught up in the current: current events, current fears, and current challenges. When they come to forks in the river, they don't consciously decide where they want to go, or which direction is right for them. They merely "go with the flow." They become a part of the mass of people who are directed by the environment instead of by their own values. As a result, they feel out of control. They remain in this unconscious state until one day the sound of the raging water awakens them and they discover that they are 5 feet from Niagara Falls in a boat with no oars. At this point, all they can say is, "oh, shoot!" But by then it's too late. They are going to take a fall. Sometimes it's an emotional fall. Sometimes it's a physical fall. Sometimes it's a financial fall. It is likely that what ever challenges you have in your life currently could have been avoided by some better decisions upstream.” (Robbins, 41-42).

A similar analogy is about the person who spends his entire life climbing up the ladder of success only to realize, when he arrives at the top of the ladder, that his ladder which he has been climbing for such a long time, is leaning against the wrong wall. We commonly call the experience this person has when he comes to this realization of leaning against the wrong wall, or coming upon the waterfall, a midlife crisis. This

person goes through deep emotional trauma asking himself such penetrating questions as, "How did I get to this point in my life?" Or, "What have I done with my life?" As Tony Robbins mentions, making the choice to flow in a different river or climb up the different ladder would have resulted in a far different experience.

Knowing what our values are and then learning to live by them is one of the most powerful ways to gain inner peace and decrease stress levels. Not only does this apply to the bigger life decisions, but our everyday choice making as well. As an example, consider the man who deeply values his relationship with his wife and kids. He is a family man. But frequently, during his workday, he spends excessive amounts of time with other women, taking them out to lunch and buying expensive gifts for them. If this man has a conscience of any kind, he will very likely feel quite unpleasant feelings within himself because his actions do not match the things he considers that are most important. Another person who values honesty highly will feel some very uncomfortable feelings when she cheats on a test or shoplifts a nice shirt that she really wants. When our actions are not in line with our values, the natural emotional consequence is stress.

On the other hand, the person who values the personality trait of love and compassion, and who spends large amounts of time volunteering in a hospice will find deep feelings of peace and contentment because her actions are in line with her behavior. The more our behavior is out of line with our values, the more stress and inner chaos we will feel.

This chapter is about helping us find out what is our own puzzle piece and then discovering what this piece of the puzzle is all about. It is a chapter on real self-discovery. Because once we find out who we really are and what our life is about, we can

then make choices that support that life instead of a life where we are wandering aimlessly like a boat with no rudder to guide it along.

#### Author's anecdote

On one occasion, when I was about 24, I was jogging. I was nearing the end of a fairly long run. I was feeling very good as the endorphins were cruising and second wind was well in place. I was at that place where I felt like I could jog forever. I wasn't really thinking of anything in particular when suddenly an overwhelming thought occurred to me. It sounded something like this, "Damn! This is my life I am living here! My life is nobody else's to live. I can only live this life and all I will ever have is my life. But when I go along with the crowd, I'm not living my life. When I follow the direction that my parents, my teachers, my coaches think is best for me, I am not living my own life. My life is mine to choose. And if I don't start choosing, it's going to pass me by." I knew then and there that I did not want to come to the end of my life and think that I had settled for mediocrity; that I had gotten so caught up in the day-to-day stuff that I had lost all awareness of what was really important to me. I did not want my final words, when it was time to depart from this life, to be, "if only."

I warn you. Look at every path closely and deliberately.

Try it as many times as you think necessary.

This question is one that only a very old man asks ...

Does this path have a heart? If it does, the path is good;

if it doesn't, it is of no use. – Carlos Castaneda

Finding out what's most Important – Our Values

In order for us to make positive change in the direction of our own true path, there are several beliefs that we must firmly maintain in our minds that will support us as we begin our journey. Here are these beliefs:

1. We must first believe that we are capable of changing now. Regardless of our current situation we have the capacity and the ability to make any changes that we feel are appropriate.
2. We must also have the belief that if we are going to create long-term change in our lives, that we are responsible. Nobody else is going to do it for us. It requires our own decision, our own motivation, and our own action.
3. We must have the belief that if we set our sites in a new direction, and then move confidently in that direction, we will successfully arrive near the place we wanted to go. Henry David Thoreau wrote: "I learned this, at least, by my experiment; that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with success in uncommon hours."

4. We must be certain that our values determine our actions and behaviors. We may not be clear about what we value, but our choices are dependent on what we feel is most important to us. In other words, all decision making is based on values clarification.

It is appropriate to ask, at this point, what a value really is. Rokeach said that values are “enduring beliefs that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence. Allport described a value as “a belief upon which one acts by preference.” When we place importance on something that we cherish we are valuing that trait, ideal, or characteristic.

Rokeach, in his book titled *The Nature of Human Values*, says there are two kinds of values that people have: "instrumental values" and "terminal values". Instrumental values consist, primarily, of personal characteristic and character traits. Terminal values are those things that we can work toward or we think are most important and that we feel are most desirable. The following two tables illustrate examples of instrumental and terminal values.

#### Instrumental Values

	Ambitious (Hard-working, aspiring)
	Broadminded (Open-minded)
	Capable (Competent, effective)
	Cheerful (Lighthearted, joyful)
	Clean (Neat, tidy)
	Courageous (Standing up for your beliefs)
	Forgiving (Willing to pardon others)
	Helpful (Working for the welfare of others)
	Honest (Sincere, truthful)
	Imaginative (Daring, creative)
	Independent (Self-reliant, self sufficient)
	Intellectual (Intelligent, reflective)

	Logical (Consistent, rational)
	Loving (Affectionate, tender)
	Obedient (Dutiful, respectful)
	Polite (Courteous, well-mannered)
	Responsible (Dependable, reliable)
	Self - controlled (Restrained, self discipline)

#### Terminal Values

	A world at Peace (free of war and conflict)
	Family Security (taking care of loved ones)
	Freedom (independence, free choice)
	Equality (brotherhood, equal opportunity for all)
	Self-respect (self esteem)
	Happiness (contentedness)
	Wisdom (a mature understanding of life)
	National security (protection from attack)
	Salvation (saved, eternal life)
	True friendship (close companionship)
	A sense of accomplishment (a lasting contribution)
	Inner Harmony (freedom from inner conflict)
	A comfortable life (a prosperous life)
	Mature love (sexual and spiritual intimacy)
	A world of beauty (beauty of nature and the arts)
	Pleasure (an enjoyable leisurely life)
	Social recognition (respect, admiration)
	An exciting life (a stimulating active life)

Instrumental values involve ways of being that help us arrive at terminal values.

They are ways of triggering our terminal values. Terminal values are end states of feeling; they are the emotional state that you prefer experiencing. Terminal values make our life fulfilling and worthwhile. Instrumental values help get us there. A list of additional terminal values might include good health, power, passion, adventure, spontaneity, control, and many others.

Where do our values come from? We tend to base our values on several sources, namely, our culture, our parental and familial influences, our teachers, friends, and other similar environmental influences such as television, the internet and a host of other media outlets. Most of our values remain at the unconscious level. We don't spend conscious time deciding if the things we see and hear are valuable to us. Interestingly, advertisers fully understand this principle. If they promote an idea for a sufficient amount of time and with enough appeal, they can convince someone to believe in nearly any value. Smoking is a perfect example of this. The people who produced tobacco realized that their product is not very healthy choice and that people, if they really knew, would not be inclined to use their product. But with the right advertising, which was designed to convince us of the value of smoking, millions of people have taken up a habit that most wish they never started in the first place. If a person never felt that there was any value in lighting up this particular plant and sticking it in his mouth to inhale the fumes that come from the burning plant, he would never choose to do it in the first place. The value he places on doing it always determines whether he will do it or not.

We rarely question most of the values that we live by. For example, you might value the relationship you have with your family without really wondering why. All of your life your parents have espoused the importance of having a strong familial bond between you and the rest of your family. As a result, you similarly adopt this value.

Another aspect of values is that they tend to be fairly stable throughout your life. There may be minor changes in those things that are most important to you, and how much you value one thing over another may change during different stages of your life,

but the things you value most tend to change very little throughout most of a person's life.

#### Discovering your personal values

Finding out what is most important to us may seem like an overwhelming task, at first. There are so many things to consider. All we are really asking ourselves to do is answer one simple question: What is most important to me in my life? We will use the following activities to help us develop a clear picture of what our own values really are.

#### Activity #1 – the I-beam

This mental activity involves using your imagination. Begin by putting in your mind the picture of an I-beam. An I-beam is a common item used in construction to build large buildings. If it is lying on the ground horizontally it looks like the capital letter "I." We start with this I-beam resting on the floor. Imagine yourself standing at one end of this very long I-beam. This I-beam is about 120 feet long. I am standing at the other end of this I-beam and have \$50 for you. All you have to do is walk across the I-beam. Would you do it? You probably would without even thinking twice. Now we raise the I-beam to about 5 feet in the air. We support the I-beam on both ends and there are ladders which you can climb up to get on to the I-beam. You are at one end of the I-beam and I am at the other. At 5 feet in the air would you walk across this I-beam for \$50? You might, and you might not. What if I tell you that if you cross the I-beam at 5 feet in the air I will give you \$500? Would this change your decision to cross it?

Now I am raising this I-beam to 20 feet in the air. We support the I-beam at both ends with two very strong supports. There are ladders that we climb up to reach both ends of the I-beam. You are at one end of the I-beam and I am at the other. I tell you that you can have the same \$500 if you cross the I-beam. Would you cross it at that height for

\$500? What if I said you could have \$500,000 for crossing the I-beam suspended at 20 feet in the air, would this change your decision to cross the I-beam or not?

Next, we take this I-beam and suspend it in the air 100 stories high supported, once again, on both ends. We place very tall ladders to climb up to each end of our I-beam. Once more, I ask you the question would you cross this I-beam, at that height, for \$500,000? What if I raised the dollar amount to \$50 million? Would that change your decision? What if it was a little windy and raining just a little bit? All you have to do is cross this I-beam and \$50 million is yours. Do you cross it?

Now let's say that several people whom you love very much are standing at my end of the I-beam. You are still at the other end and we are still 100 stories off the ground. It is still a little bit rainy and windy. Your loved ones are starting to lose their balance because of the wind in the rain. If you don't walk across the I-beam to save them, one or more of them might fall to the ground from that high place. Would you cross the I-beam to save them? If you are like most people, you wouldn't hesitate to answer this question. Of course you would cross it.

Are there other things in your life that are worth so much, that have so much value to you, that you would be willing to risk your life, as you were willing to do with your loved ones? Perhaps there are friends or other people in your life that have that much value to you. Perhaps there are character traits like success, happiness, or peace of mind that might be worth risking your life to achieve. Take a moment to write down what some of these might be.

Activity #2 – Your own funeral

Dr. Stephen Covey suggests another way to uncover those things that matters most to you. With your eyes closed, imagine in your mind, while someone else reads to you, the following scenario:

See yourself going to the funeral of a loved one. Picture yourself driving to the funeral parlor or chapel, parking the car, and getting out. As you walk inside the building, you notice the flowers and the soft organ music. You see the faces of friends and family you pass along the way. You feel the sense of sorrow that permeates the room for losing this special person. You also sense the shared joy of having known this person that radiates from the hearts of all the people there.

As you walk down to the front of the room and look inside the casket, you suddenly come face to face with yourself. This is your own funeral and all of these people have come to honor you. They are here to express their feelings of love and appreciation for your life.

As you take a seat and wait for the services to begin, you look at the program in your hand. There are to be four speakers. The first speaker is someone from your immediate family – perhaps your mom or dad, a brother, sister, aunt or uncle, a cousin or grandparent. The second speaker is one of your best friends, someone who is going to tell about the kind of person you were. The third speaker is from your work or an instructor in your school. The fourth is someone from your church or community organization where you have been involved in service.

Now think deeply. What would you like each of these speakers to say about you and your life? What kind of son or daughter would you like their words to reflect? What kind of friend would you like to have others say you were? Were you there for others

when they needed you? Did you care for them and trust them and have a deep respect for them? What would your best friend say about you at your own funeral? What about someone who is a neighbor who knows of you, but doesn't know you really well? What contributions would you like them to have said you made to other people's lives? What achievements would you want them to remember? (Covey, 1989) Jot down some of your thoughts and impressions as you imagined this scenario.

Activity #3 Use the list of instrumental and terminal values:

Read through the list of terminal and instrumental values in the tables above. Put a check mark by each of the values listed that are real for you.

#### Developing your Personal Values

Now that you have begun to think about what might be your highest values, let's proceed to discover how we start to make them work for us at a conscious level. We do this by following these 3 important steps:

Step 1) Identify your Values: Go through the 3 scenarios described above: I-beam, Your Funeral, and the list Instrumental & Terminal Values. Based on these three resources, write down on a piece of paper, in no particular order, what came to you as being your highest values. Write down as many things that you can think of that have value for you. It doesn't matter how many you have. It only matters that they are yours.

You may find some inconsistencies. That is, you may find that you have some values but you aren't doing anything about them at the present time. That is okay; list them anyway, if they are important to you. For example, you might value your health very highly, but you may not be doing anything at the present time to increase your current level of health and well-being. You still hold that as a value for you.

Step 2) Prioritize your values: Now you will take the list of values and prioritize them in order of importance to you. The item that is the very most important goes at the top of the list. The next important value goes on there next, and so on through your entire list.

You may ask why this is an important step. The answer is this: If you are clear about the order of your highest values, no decision is difficult. This holds true for the so-called big decisions as well as the little decisions. To illustrate, imagine that you have, as one of your highest values, the characteristic of seeking excitement and being a thrill-seeking risk taker. You may also have the value of security and stability as another value, but you have determined that this latter value is not held nearly as highly as the first. If you happen to be in school and are studying to be an accountant who will spend a large portion of most of your professional life sitting behind desks crunching numbers, you will probably find very little satisfaction in that type of career path.

Another example where knowing the order of values applies in our apparently smaller decisions. Imagine that one of your values is high-level health and well-being. Another one of your values is that of being social and having a good time with friends. One of your buddies calls you up and says that she is having a huge party on Friday. You know what kind of parties she throws – plenty of drinking and all the other things that go along with plentiful alcohol. Whether you will go or not is an easy decision depending on which value you hold more highly. If the higher value is socializing than your good health, then the obvious choice is to go to the party. If you value your health more highly than socializing, you probably won't show up at the party.

Imagine that you were offered a very high paying job that required you to live in another country where you didn't know the language and didn't know anyone else. Whether or not you would accept the job would depend entirely on which values you valued the highest. If you value adventure and risk taking along with an increase in your bottom line financially more highly than some of your other values, you would probably consider the proposal. If you valued security, safety and a rich family life more highly, you would probably pass up this job offer.

How you prioritize your values is up to you. This must be your decision. The order of your values will probably change as you go through different stages of your life. For example, while you are in school and perhaps not married, the value of a family relationship might not be ranked as highly as your academic development. Later on, as you perhaps create a family and develop your career, these values will become more important to you. These might be on your list now, but they aren't ranked as highly.

Step 3) Write a clarifying paragraph for each value. In this step, you will figure out what each of your values means to you. You will describe what it means to be living that value perfectly. One suggestion is that you write these clarifying paragraphs as affirmations. An affirmation is made up of three features. 1) Your affirmation should be written as a positive statement. If one of your values happens to be that of maintaining high-level health, your statement might sound something like this, "I eat food that is healthy for my body, I exercise regularly, and I rest my body well to rejuvenate and recharge myself." You would not write your statement to sound like this, "I don't put bad food in my body. I never go through a day without exercising and I don't let stress get the upper hand." You might think that this still seems like a useful affirmation. But the

reality behind it is that our subconscious mind doesn't hear the words "don't," "never," "won't," etc., when we are trying to plant in our mind the seeds of positive. We are developing a mental image or picture of what it would be like in reality. It may not currently be happening, but if we have the correct picture clearly in our minds, we are much more likely to act on that picture. This happens best when we write these statements in a positively. 2) The second feature of our clarifying affirmations is that they are to be written as "I" messages. You will notice that this is the way it was written in the statement used above where it read, "I eat food that is healthy for my body, I exercise regularly, and I rest my body well to rejuvenate and recharge myself." We wouldn't say, "People who are healthy eat good food and exercise regularly. You also relax when you are stressed." When we put ourselves into the affirmation, we draw our own behavior in line with the value. If our affirmation reflects someone else's behavior, our mind is less likely to be convinced that it is we who are making the change. 3) The third feature of our clarifying paragraph is that it is to be written in the present tense as if it is currently happening. Let's read the affirmation on high-level health again: "I eat food that is healthy for my body, I exercise regularly, and I rest my body well to rejuvenate and recharge myself." You will notice that this is not written to say, "I will eat healthy food. I will exercise. I will do things to manage my stress levels." The psychology behind this is similar to the other two. When we tell our mind, over and over, that something is currently happening, just like the advertisers do, we will tend to believe it and we will be more likely to act in ways that assume this is the case. When we place the realization of that value in the future, our mind considers it as something that will be happening sometime in our future, never in our present. When you read your affirmation to yourself,

it should sound how you would like it to be if you were living that value perfectly considering these three features of effective affirmations.

It should be reiterated that you shouldn't be discouraged if you write a clarifying paragraph and you realize that you are not even close to realizing a particular value. That is okay. It took Ben Franklin nearly 50 years of regular practice until he recognized that he had realized his values. We don't need to be in any more of a hurry than he was. As the great Taoist philosopher Lao tsu said, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." The important thing is to begin.

#### Applying your personal Values

Ben Franklin showed us how powerful this process can be. When he was 27 years old, he had a midlife crisis. He was working in a printing plant in Philadelphia. He felt like he hadn't accomplished anything. At that time, Ben asked himself some important questions that made him think about what his life was really about. He discovered that there were 13 values that were supremely important to him and by living according to what he felt each one meant, would cause him to, in his words, "become a perfect mortal." In his autobiography, he called these his 13 virtues.

Once Ben Franklin had decided on his highest values, he then described each one in a short paragraph so he was absolutely clear what each of them meant to him. He then organized his life in 13 week cycles. Each week, he would mentally focus on one of his values as the underlying foundation for all of his activity. He was trying to pull his performance in line with his values. At the age of 79, Ben Franklin wrote that he had come to an important conclusion. He said that he felt that he had achieved oneness with his governing values. His values and his behavior were one and the same. He had earned the right to the consequential feeling of inner peace. As a result of doing this, Ben

Franklin contributed a great deal to make the country of America better, his own life more productive, and our lives happier. He knew what he was about and created a lifetime of achievement and success based on how he lived according to those things that mattered most to him.

With a clearer understanding of how value clarification works in our lives, we can begin to see why other people do what they do. Have you ever seen someone do something and ask yourself in amazement why they would ever consider doing such a thing? Ultimately, we are always doing things that will fulfill our highest values. We probably don't realize that that is what we are doing at the time, like continuing an addiction or being mean to someone we love. But each of our actions serves to try to fulfill those things that we value. Knowing what someone else values highly can help us support them in their decision making. We can also spend time with them doing things with them that will help them feel fulfilled as they do those things that meet their values.

A ship without a rudder wanders aimlessly in the sea. Similarly, if we don't know why we are here and what is most important to us, we spend a lot of time in our lives wandering and wondering what we should be doing. This process that people like Ben Franklin practiced puts the rudder in the water and helps us move in the direction that is best for each of us on a personal level.

Playing with your values to create the best life you can imagine

Tony Robbins builds upon this activity of determining the order of our highest personal values by going one step further. He asks a very important question: "If I were to really design my own life, if I were going to create a set of values that shape the ultimate destiny I desired, what would they need to be?" He asks us to look at our values

and see if we can rearrange them (change their order), add others and subtract some, in order to have the largest impact on our own lives.

What would be the value that you would place as the single most important thing that would propel you toward living your life the most fully? What would be the next most important thing that you could integrate into your life that would have the greatest positive affect? Perhaps you have always felt that freedom is the most important thing to you. And maybe this freedom has resulted in a level of loneliness that is uncomfortable for you. If you were to include the value of intimacy as a higher value than freedom, your new focus would fill that gap that you feel is currently lacking.

Author's Anecdote: One example where this understanding would have been helpful came in a class that I was teaching in which we were working with these principles. One student went through the entire process of finding her highest values, putting them in order, and then attaching a clarifying paragraph to each value. As I looked at her list, I saw that she had some major discrepancies between what she valued and her daily behavior. I also noticed that both her values and her behavior were quite mediocre. Her number one value in her life was her dog. This was the most important thing to her. She really loved her dog, and I respected that fully, but it seemed that she was setting herself up for long-term depression if something happened to that dog. Her other values that she listed were uninspiring by any standards. Her life was similarly uninspiring. She was letting life happen to her like waves knocking her over, one after another. She was not the captain of her own ship. If she would have looked at her values and asked herself this question, "What would my values need to be in order to create my Ultimate Destiny, in order to be the best person I could possibly be, in order to have the largest impact in my lifetime? With this question in mind, she would probably have made a far different list of values, in an order that served her fully to rise above her mediocre level in which she currently functioned. She would have charted for herself a different destiny.

Summary

A ship without a rudder wanders aimlessly in the sea. Similarly, if we don't know why we are here and what is most important to us, we spend a lot of time in our lives wandering and wondering what we should be doing. This process that people like Ben Franklin practiced puts the rudder in the water and helps us move in the direction that is best for each of us on a personal level.

There is tremendous power in discovering and living according to our highest values, and experiencing inner peace as the natural consequence. Many companies and corporations around the world have gone through this same process of finding what is most important to them and then striving to live according to that understanding. This is commonly called such things as a mission statement, a constitution, or way of being. Ben Franklin was involved in this process with a collection of other wise gentlemen of his time in a way that affects nearly every aspect of our days. After many months of very hard work, our forefathers created what we know as the United States Constitution. This document of national values guides the creation of all laws that are made in every court of law in the entire country. Similarly, on a personal level, our own “personal constitution” can be our inner guide to all decisions that we make during our lifetime. It isn’t an easy process, which is probably why so few people take the time to do it. It is easier to just go with the flow and watch to see where the current takes us. But those who go through this process, be it a major corporation or an individual like you, find tremendous worth in selecting the path of their choosing. They find their own piece of the puzzle and experience the joy and satisfaction of a fulfilling life.

What have you done by following through on this process of discovering and developing your values? These may become the basis for every decision that you make. Your task now is to follow through, as Ben Franklin did, and internalize your values. By looking at them often and thinking deeply about what they mean to you, little by little these will become part of you. You will become the type of person you most want to be. You will experience the type of life you really want and you will be the one in who is the captain of your ship.

Chapter Quotes:

Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are. – John Wooden

Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.  
-Mahatma Gandhi

This above all, to thine own self be true, for it must follow as dost the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man. -Shakespeare

The measure of a man's real character is what he would do if he knew he would never be found out. -Thomas B. Macaulay

Allport, G.W. (1961). Pattern and growth in personality. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Covey, S. (1989). The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. Simon & Schuster, New York, NY.

Robbins, A. (1991). Awaken the Giant Within. Summit books. New York, NY.

Rokeach (1973). The Nature of Human Values. Free Press, NY

The above Chapter was taken from:

<http://faculty.weber.edu/molpin/healthclasses/1110/bookchapters/valueschapter.htm>

For an easy to use web site to help with values clarification go to

<http://www.franklincovey.com/msb/>

to build your own Mission Statement and do a personal values clarification exercise.