



# 8 Key Barriers to Living Your Values

by Helen Harrison

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Welcome! I'm Helen Harrison.

Have you noticed that people say they have a particular value yet seem not to display it consistently? This may even be true of yourself! It certainly is of me.

And I think we are all being our human selves.

YET I still was curious to discover what might be behind these inconsistencies. This report covers the same material that is in one of the sections in my ebook "Working with Values", which covers my current thinking.

Here is a summary from what I have observed – of myself and others.

1. **Strength:** just because a particular value is important to you does NOT mean you are good at it! This falls into three categories!

- **You may be great at demonstrating certain aspects of your core values, but not others.** For instance, 'trust' is an important value to me. Yet not only am I inconsistent in trusting myself but also in others. I trust my husband with my life – but not with the life of a particular plant in the garden when he is strimming! The poor man gets reminded most times even though I know his memory is much better than mine.

Another example is intuition. I know people who are great at using their intuition on small things - like bringing some bread to a friend's picnic even though they've not been asked to, and then finding that the friend had forgotten to pack theirs! Yet they are very wary to trust it for the big/serious matters in their life, such as a job offer. Logically, it appears to 'tick all the boxes' and yet they have a felt-sense it's not right. However, they accept the job and then find it isn't what they expected.

- **You're great at following your core values in certain parts of your life, but not in others.** Even though you may want to – for instance, you may be great at love/real connection with your family and friends, but not at work. Another person I know has 'well-being' as one of her values. She's really good at making sure she has a great balance between work and the rest of her life, but boy does she struggle with eating a balanced

diet and the right quantity for her lifestyle! And she knows she is not living her value of 'well-being' for herself through this behaviour.

2. **Appropriateness:** it's not necessarily appropriate to demonstrate some values all the time. Back to 'trust' as an example. Would it be appropriate to be trusting of everything and everybody? No! And remember I mentioned the person who had 'frankness' as a core value and recognised that it doesn't have to be used all the time. You may want to give someone feedback about their behaviour that is having a detrimental effect. However, it wouldn't be appropriate to raise it with lots of other people listening. Timing matters.
3. **Rights and responsibilities:** some people appear not to realise that there are often rights and responsibilities around values. When applying values, people quite often focus more on their rights than their responsibilities. One client I worked with wanted people to show respect for him – and yet when speaking to others quite often he was not showing respect. He was **completely unaware** of this fact. He hadn't realised that values, certainly some in any case, go both ways.

Here's another example. 'Acceptance' was a core value for one client. After a particular discussion about an example she gave, she recognised that she was demanding that other people accepted her as she is but not doing it herself – either accepting others as they are or even herself as she is! She hadn't noticed this beforehand. Now she is committed to demonstrating acceptance of others as they are and hoping this will inspire reciprocation over time. This is not an excuse for avoiding giving feedback about the repercussions of how they are!

4. **Give-and-take/compromise:** compromise can come into play. For instance, 'well, she hasn't shown any respect for me so why should I show any respect for her?' or 'he disrespected me so I did the same back, and some'.

I mentioned give-and-take in an ezine article ['give-and-take: its power in relationships'](#)) – the fourth point in that article considers the consequences of

exchange being out of balance negatively so a downhill spiral can develop. Between intimate partners, it is typical to give a bit more each time: so there is a dynamic imbalance, with an increasing positive volume of giving and taking. Or, if negative giving and receiving, a downhill spiral. This would eventually damage the relationship. One person has to break the cycle of hurt if they wish to have an enjoyable future together.

If a relationship matters a lot to some people, they are more likely to put aside their need to support a particular value or two. This is likely to be to a certain degree rather than completely subjugate/ overpower the value. Quite often I have heard people say of a friend 'well, she's changed since she's being living with x'. Probably what's happened is that her priorities have changed. What was important when she was single has less importance now she is in a significant relationship. In all probability she has unconsciously reviewed her values!

Compromise also happens at work:

- **We're told to work in a particular way:** for instance, we may be told to never admit the organisation is in the wrong even though it may be, or that you have to work unpaid overtime even though your family life matters to you
- **'This is the way things are done here' (even though it may be contrary to avowed culture, written procedures etc):** for example, cutting corners, or doing what's good for the company and to the detriment of their customers, or taking business pens and paper to use personally at home or using work time on personal matters without permission
- **Working within the organisation's values:** It's fair enough that organisations have core values, which they want demonstrated in what and how work is achieved. But what happens if they become or are in conflict with your own personal values? What then? I suspect it depends how much of a compromise you have to make.

5. **Need to belong:** belonging is such a powerful need. Wanting to demonstrate that you belong in a particular group can override your own values. It is possible that some of the MPs, unconsciously or consciously, did what they did with their expense claims so they felt they 'fitted in'. I am not suggesting this validates their inappropriate behaviour – I am just bringing to all our attention the influence that belonging to a group has on our behaviour. Even to the extent of superseding values that are hugely important to us.
  
6. **Different interpretation:** you may have a different interpretation about what the value looks like in day-to-day life. At work this may be compared to what the organisation expects. Some organisations are much better at being very clear about what they mean by their values. The Inc company decided their value “We aim to WOW!” meant in everyday terms things like “be incredible about follow through. Go beyond the call of duty. Do that one extra thing that most other people would not do. Write thank you notes. Pay massive attention to detail. Help our community. Don’t compromise our values” - to mention a few!

There can also be different interpretations between individuals!

7. **Negative consequences:** the consequences of living the value make life less comfortable. If one of your core values is around, for example, honesty/authenticity, there could be uncomfortable consequences. For example, you have to say things that you find difficult to say (or would rather not say as it might upset someone). Or it could mean that if you applied the value, you would have to admit to others a characteristic/behaviour you have about which you feel embarrassed. Or you may feel obliged to become a ‘whistleblower’ about what’s happening in your employing organisation.
  
8. **Mindset:** sometimes you may just not have the energy or inclination to put into practice your value! Of course, your mindset is affected by your thinking, which is just your perspective of reality at that particular moment.

I only recognised these factors because I was puzzled by the fact that people, including me, don't always put their values into practice.

And I'd be so interested in any more factors that can act as barriers, which you know about!

**All these influences are quite often taking place without us realising it!**

Knowing about these barriers has helped me notice more quickly when they're happening. I can then decide what I wish to do about it, if anything. In other words, I have more active choice.

**So how can you as an individual, manager or coach use this knowledge?**

Here are some ideas:

- **when you notice that a person isn't, or you aren't, being how they/you normally would be**, internally check if any of the above barriers may be impacting them/you. And/Or you can actually ask the person what might be in the way of them being their normal selves
- **when you gain a better understanding of a situation**, you are more likely to be able to help the person work out what needs to happen, if anything, to improve things
- **we can increase the times we actively choose our responses** through developing our understanding of our own values - and those linked to the groups within which we work and live.
- **We can practise our values to greater effect!** So for the client I mentioned who had a core value 'acceptance', it took her a bit of time first to notice when she wasn't showing acceptance and then learning how to be from a place of acceptance.

For another person, they had a core value which they put into practice in their non-work life and realised they wanted to bring it into their work. It was 'love'. And it took time to find out how they wanted to demonstrate this value at work and in their work.

Ah, I've now moved into the benefits of working with values! Which is also covered in my ebook "Working with Values".

You may be wondering "What else is covered in your ebook?" Well the other topics are:

- Considering what values are
- How to discover your values
- How to create a metaphor for each value
- Types of values
- Comparing values and strengths
- Comparing values and beliefs
- Comparing values and needs
- Example situations of actively using values – work situations, job search, finding your niche and creating a website.

To find out more about the ebook 'Working with Values' go to

<http://www.CoachingCards.co.uk>.

Do contact me at [Helen@CoachingCards.co.uk](mailto:Helen@CoachingCards.co.uk) with any comments or queries.

Enjoy yourself.

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Helen H." with a small flourish at the end.

I'm **Helen Harrison**, experienced in the human resources (HR) profession, including as a Director in an international public company. I've enjoyed working

with a broad range of companies, large and small, most of them experiencing different types and levels of change.

During this time I learnt that good things happen for both individuals and the organisation when people get a real buzz out of their work and time at work. And it's great to help this to happen!

You won't be surprised to find out that I now have a particular passion for work being like an absorbing pleasurable hobby – a completely enjoyable and satisfying experience - adding value to people's lives and organisations' performance.

Individuals and organisations that want to have such experiences, call on all my knowledge and experiences I've gained through living and working in this world of ours.

I find living my values in work is an important part of finding work both enjoyable and satisfying. And I also recognise that it's one of my ways of having thoughts (and consequent feelings) that support me.