



## Episode 7: How To Connect to What Matters Most to You

Welcome to *In the Right Direction* podcast, where we believe you get to choose what's on your plate, you can manage the overwhelm, and that change is possible. I'm your host, Deb Elbaum, and I'm here to share insights and strategies to increase your happiness one baby step at a time. Let's dive in.

Hi everyone, it's Deb. Today we're talking about connection. Not connection with other people, rather connection to ourselves, our lives, and what matters most to us because we all want to feel like we matter. That our life has meaning, and that we're living and working and honoring our best and highest use, but unfortunately, in our world today, we sometimes have days where we feel just the opposite, where we wonder, "What am I doing here? What's the meaning of life?" and thoughts like those never serve anyone.

Here's the good news. Connecting to what's most important to us is easier than you might think, especially with the coaching concept and tool we're going to dive into today. This tool, that can help us feel more purposeful and give us more peace of mind about our life, is recognizing and connecting to our values. In today's episode, we're starting the conversation about our values. I define values as those qualities that are most important to us. They are our guideposts, what we stand for, and we all have a core set of values, whether we're aware of them or not. Some people have top values around freedom, family, or learning. Other people's top values are security, connection, or spirituality. Our values define us, and yet, when's the last time you actively thought about yours? When did you last ask yourself, "Which values am I currently honoring in my life, and which ones need more attention?"

Honoring our core values in our daily life reassures us that we're creating a meaningful life for us, an authentic life. When we're connected to and honoring our values, we feel more purposeful and often have more peace of mind. On the other hand, when our life does not reflect our core values, or when we feel our core values being stepped on, we feel disconnected to our authentic self. This can then show up in our behaviors and thoughts. We might get frustrated easily and succumb more quickly to feelings of restlessness and doubt. Identifying and living our core values helps move us from feeling disconnected to connected, from wondering if what we're doing matters to knowing in our heart that it does.

Here's an example from one of my clients. One of the clients I worked with was at a company that didn't share his values. He's a scientist with strong values around integrity, collaboration, and thoroughness, and the company he was working for at the time had different top values around competition and urgency. And because there was a mismatch of values, every morning my client woke up with a pit in his stomach. He dreaded interactions at work. In our coaching work together, he had the opportunity to clarify what he really wanted. He had the opportunity to think about his core values and the type of environment in which he wanted to thrive. He started looking for a new job, and on his interviews, because he had clarity around what was most important to him, he was able to pay special attention to the culture and the values represented. And when he started at his new company, he was so excited.

These days, he's incredibly grateful to work and advance science in an environment that values innovation, integrity, and shared success.

Do you know your top three core values? If yes, wonderful. If not, let's identify them. To help my clients identify their top values, there are two main coaching tools that I use. One is a values clarification worksheet. If you would like a copy of this, please head over to my website, [debelbaum.com](http://debelbaum.com) and you'll find the worksheet under the "Coaching" tab under "Resources" [NOTE: As of June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022, this worksheet can now be found under the "Resources" tab].

The second coaching tool is an activity called peak experience, and I'm going to take all of us through that in a moment. Heads up, this is a short visioning exercise where I'll ask you to close your eyes and let your mind explore, so make sure to be somewhere comfortable and someplace that's quiet. You might also want to have something to write on or with afterward to capture your thoughts. Again, this activity is called peak experience. I'm going to talk us through it.

Let's start by slowing down a little bit, by getting comfortable in our seat, feeling our feet on the ground and our body in the chair, and I invite you to take a few slow deep breaths in and out. Breathe in through the nose and out through your mouth. And again, in through your nose and out through your mouth, and last time in through the nose and out through the mouth. If your eyes aren't closed, I invite you to close them now and to let your mind imagine.

I invite you to turn the clock back and look at a time in your life when you felt your full power, a time when your spine and arms and fingertips were tingling with excitement, a time when you simply didn't care what anyone thought of you. You are absolutely alive. As you see this time in your mind's eye, answer these questions to yourself. Where were you? What were you doing? Who was around you? What was your impact on them? What mattered most about this time for you? Take as long as you'd like to think about that, and when you're ready, open your eyes.

I invite you to write down your thoughts and whatever ideas you want to capture. Our peak experience often reflects our core values. If your peak experience reflects the values that are most important to you, what top three values do you see in your peak experience? Write them down, and remember that while we always have core values, they can absolutely change over time. Things that might have mattered deeply when we were younger might be less important as we get older. That's completely normal. What's important is that by doing this peak experience activity, you have a starting point to connect to the values that matter most to you.

After you write down your top three values from your peak experience exercise, think about your life today and how resonant those values still feel. Are some of them still important to you today? Do you need to add some others to your list of your top three? The goal is to come up with your current top three values. After you've done that, the next step is about translating this list into action. It's about recognizing which of these values you're honoring right now, and which ones might be a little rusty, a little neglected. If you have core values that are being neglected right now, it's time to take action. It's time to do something, big or small, to honor that part of you so that you feel more connected to your authenticity.

Here's an example of how to put a core value into action from my life. When I've done this peak experience exercise in the past, I often think back to a time when I was a senior in high school. I was on the leadership team of a regional youth group. I see myself connected to others, leading others, laughing with friends, and creating experiences for the other members in the group. I see a time when we all had permission to be authentic, ourselves. The top three values I might choose from that peak experience are authenticity, connection, and joy. When I think about my life now, those still ring true. And I know that I'm definitely honoring authenticity and connection. I feel solid about that, but joy on the other hand... Sometimes I think my soul is longing for a bit more joy. This is where I can do something, take action, to connect to that value. For me, joyful would be reading a new fiction book, or going to a beach, or connecting to a childhood friend.

We can all turn our values into action. We can intentionally choose to do things that honor what is most important to us. And this makes us feel connected to our authentic selves. Let's bring this to you and your life. This week, I invite you to take 15 minutes to do this peak experience activity. Better yet, do it with a friend or colleague and share your stories so that you can help each other listen for and identify your top values. Then reflect on your life today and see where and how you can honor one of those values a little bit more.

I guarantee if you're able to do that, you'll feel happier and more purposeful. And remember, if you prefer worksheets to a visioning exercise, please go to my website [debelbaum.com](http://debelbaum.com) and you can find the values clarification worksheet under "Resources" under the "Coaching" tab [NOTE: As of June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022, this worksheet can now be found under the "Resources" tab]. Thank you all for listening and being part of my community. Thinking of my listeners makes me feel connected, purposeful, and yes, even joyful.

Until next time!