

Unit 3. What are values?

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit you will be able to ...

- Explain the meaning and importance of our values. (LO 3.1)
- Examine different sources of values in our lives. (LO 3.1)

A. Enquire



Take a moment to answer the following questions:

- Which person (or group of people) in your life do you **value** most?
- Imagine your home is on fire and you can only save one thing. All the people are safe. Which one object do you **value** above all others to save? Why?



KEY CONCEPT

A **value** is a belief about what is right and wrong and what is important in life.

Values

Sometimes, when we hear someone ask 'What is its value?' you know they are talking about the **price** of something. For example, the value of a house refers to the amount of money it would sell for.

However, as you saw from the questions above, the word 'value' has another meaning too. It is this meaning of **value** we use when we are speaking about **morality**.

In Unit 2 we examined the moral choices we make. Your values influence these choices. The actions that a person takes show their choices. By looking at a person's actions you can understand the values they hold.



Your values tell us a lot about what kind of person you are, whether you are:

- Honest or dishonest
- Generous or selfish
- Compassionate or hard-hearted
- Courageous or cowardly

THINK ABOUT ...

Examine the first two examples and complete the other statements in your copybook.

Examples: If a doctor values her patients' lives, she will do her best to care for their health.

If a clergyman values his parishioners, he will set a good example for them to follow.

1. If a driver values road safety, she will ...
2. If an athlete values his fitness, he will eat properly and ...
3. If a singer values her voice, she will ...
4. If you value spending time with your best friend, you will ...

B. Explore

How our values develop

From the moment we are born we begin learning. We gradually learn the meaning of right and wrong and how to tell one from the other. We learn from different people we come in contact with and from experiences we have.

Four of the main ways we learn what is right and wrong are by:

- Following the **example** of people we respect and trust.
- Learning '**the hard way**', i.e. from the consequences of our own actions.
- Learning from the consequences of **other** people's actions.
- Accepting the **rules** laid down by those in authority, e.g. parents/guardians, teachers and so on.

Over time, each person develops their own set of values.

THINK ABOUT ...

(a) Work in pairs and describe each of the values below:

*Respect, Friendship, Consideration, Loyalty, Love, Kindness,
Sharing, Bravery, Honesty, Listening, Welcoming, Fairness*

(b) Pick the three values that are most important to you personally.

(c) Give one example of a choice you made based on these three values, i.e. 'I was fair when ...'

WHAT
ARE YOUR
VALUES



**KEY CONCEPT**

The **sources** of our values are the things that influence our standards about what is right or wrong.

Where our values come from

There are a number of important **sources** for our values. At certain times in our lives, some of these sources have a greater influence on us than others.

As you read through these sources, connect them with your life. How has each one influenced **you** and **your values**?

Sources	Influence on you	Influence on your values
1. Family – This is the first community you belong to. Here you learn how to treat others. For example, you should learn that it is good to share, to tell the truth and treat people with compassion and respect.		
2. Friends – Genuine friendships, particularly with those in your peer group, help you to grow in self-confidence. They should encourage you to become a good listener and a trustworthy friend.		
3. School – School authorities set rules to provide a safe environment in which you can develop your own particular talents. The aim is to help you enter adult life as a mature, responsible individual.		
4. Religion – This offers you insights into life's great mysteries. It can have a big impact on your whole outlook on life. It offers you a set of values to guide you when facing difficult moral choices.		
5. Mass media – Here we are talking about social media, internet, cinema, radio, television and so on. What you see, hear and read can influence your thoughts and actions, for better or for worse. You need to think hard about the ideas that some in the mass media want you to accept.		
6. The state – Through its laws, the state sets limits on your behaviour. If something is legal it is allowed, but if something is illegal it is not allowed. Often, people decide whether an action is right or wrong on the basis of whether it is legal or illegal. However, it does not automatically follow that if something is legal it is right, or that if it is illegal it is wrong.		

C. Reflect and Act

Displaying our values

By how we choose to act, we display our values to the world. Use the six sources of our values on page 94 as you do the following task.

Examine the list of actions **(a)-(j)** below. In each case:

1. Say what each action tells us about the values of the person doing the action.
2. Judge what the source(s) of the values for the action might have been.
3. Give a reason for your judgement.

Example: Refusing to gossip behind someone's back.

This shows that the person values loyalty and truthfulness. The sources of this value might have been their family or their friends. I think this because family and good friendships work best when we act in a way that is loyal and truthful.



- (a) Borrowing something without first getting permission.
- (b) Recycling waste material.
- (c) Lying to get out of trouble.
- (d) Neglecting to feed a pet animal.
- (e) Studying hard for an examination.
- (f) Drinking alcohol above the legal limit and then driving a car.
- (g) Keeping a sum of money you have found.
- (h) Paying your fair share in taxes.
- (i) Stopping a disagreement between two friends from developing into a fight.
- (j) Volunteering to work in a charitable organisation.

THINK PAIR SHARE

- Think alone about a person who posts anonymous, mean comments online. The comments are hurtful to another young person known to the poster. What **values** are driving the poster's choices to post these comments? What might the **sources of these values** be?
- In pairs, discuss your answers to these two questions.
- Finally, share your ideas with the class.



Additional activities in
Skills Book, page 22.