9.3: Values

A special subset or type of beliefs is known as values. Values are:

- **Enduring**, or long lasting concepts of the nature of good as opposed to brief ideas. Resistant to change.
- **Salient**, important beliefs, inflexible beliefs about the worth given to people, events, things and philosophy in one’s life.

**Values are enduring.** Values stand the test of time, because they are tied to our basic human needs and because they are learned very early in life. Many of the values you possess are likely to be shared by other members of your family and community and have been passed down from one generation to another. They are the common bond that unites cultures and social systems and are seen as necessary for the continuation and survival of the culture and social system. Values are also enduring because no acceptable alternatives have been found for those values. What acceptable alternatives are there to values like freedom, or equality, or honesty, or being forgiving, or having self-respect, or being loved?

**Values are salient and lack flexibility.** Values are generally regarded as absolutes. Values have a tendency to take on the appearance of being certain, with little room for flexibility. Since values categorize things as good or bad, right or wrong, superior or inferior, there are rarely shades of gray. In this country, freedom of speech is valued. This, as with most values, seems to be an all-or-nothing situation, for it is difficult to establish partial freedom of speech, as the courts have attempted to do with the question of pornography. Once adopted, people will fight for, even die for, their values. This is especially valid for nationalistic and religious values.

**The Beliefs of a Snake Handling Preacher**

A Kentucky pastor who starred in a reality show about snake-handling in church has died -- of a snakebite. Jamie Coots died Saturday evening after refusing to be treated, Middlesboro police said.
On "Snake Salvation," the ardent Pentecostal believer said that he believed that a passage in the Bible suggests poisonous snakebites will not harm believers as long as they are anointed by God. The practice is illegal in most states, but still goes on, primarily in the rural South. Coots was a third-generation "serpent handler" and aspired to one day pass the practice and his church, Full Gospel Tabernacle in Jesus Name, on to his adult son, Little Cody.

"Even after losing half of his finger to a snake bite and seeing others die from bites during services," Coots "still believes he must take up serpents and follow the Holiness faith," the website says.

Because of their strength, it becomes very difficult to change values. Instead, if you are attempting to convince someone to accept a proposal, you need to demonstrate how that proposal fits in with his or her values. An astute political candidate who is running for office will try to convince you that he or she stands for your values, instead of attempting to convince you to accept his or her values which may be different. We often make the mistake of attempting to convince someone that our proposal fits in with what his or her values "should" or "should not be."

As Myers and Myers write in their book, Dynamics of Human Communication,

"Values indicate to those who share them what is desirable or undesirable, good or bad, moral or immoral, and therefore what one should stand for. They provide people with a guidance system which is supposed to enable them to choose the 'right' alternative when several courses of action are possible." ¹(Myers, 1992)

Two Categories of Values

Psychologist Milton Rokeach has done extensive work with values. In his works, he describes the two basic types of values that people possess: **Terminal** values and **Instrumental** values.²

**Terminal** values are the major goals in one's life. They represent lifelong desired end states. **Instrumental** values are short-term ways of living our day-to-day life. They are the "goods and bads" we follow each day.

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**INSTRUMENTAL VALUES**

- AMBITIOUS (hard-working, aspiring)
- BROAD-MINDED (open-minded)
- CAPABLE (competent, effective)
- CHEERFUL (lighthearted, joyful)
- CLEAN (neat, tidy)
- COURAGEOUS (standing up for your own beliefs)
- FORGIVING (willing to pardon others)
- HELPFUL (working for the welfare of others)

**TERMINAL VALUES**

- A COMFORTABLE LIFE (a prosperous life)
- AN EXCITING LIFE (a stimulating, active life)
- ACCOMPLISHMENT (lasting contribution)
- A WORLD AT PEACE (free of war and conflict)
- A WORLD OF BEAUTY (beauty of nature and the arts)
- EQUALITY (brotherhood, equal opportunity for all)
- FAMILY SECURITY (taking care of loved ones)
- FREEDOM (independence, free choice)

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¹ Myers, 1992
²
HONEST (sincere, truthful)
IMAGINATIVE (daring, creative)
INDEPENDENT (self-reliant, self-sufficient)
INTELLECTUAL (intelligent, reflective)
LOGICAL (consistent, rational)
LOVING (affectionate, tender, sexual)
OBEDIENT (loyal, dutiful, respectful)
POLITE (courteous, well-mannered)
RESPONSIBLE (dependable, reliable)
SELF-CONTROLLED (restrained, self-disciplined)

SELF-RESPECT (self-esteem)
HAPPINESS (contentedness)
INNER HARMONY (freedom from inner conflict)
MATURE LOVE (sexual and spiritual intimacy)
SECURITY (protection from attack)
LEISURE (an enjoyable, leisurely life)
SOCIAL RECOGNITION (respect, admiration)
TRUE FRIENDSHIP (close companionship)
WISDOM (a mature understanding of life)
SALVATION (saved, eternal life)

Remember, values differ from general beliefs in two important ways: **Values are enduring** and thus very resistant to change, and **values are inflexible**.(Rokeach, 1989)

**Reference**