9.5: How Are Values Learned?

The process of learning values and organizing them into a defined value system takes place through a learning process. The book, Values Clarification: A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students, describes four methods of learning our values.¹

**Moralizing** is the method by which values are transmitted in a direct manner from a parent or parent-like figure to the child or childlike figure. It is the quickest, and simplest method, where one person just tells the other which value(s) to uphold. Often this method is the “don’t do as I do, but do as I say” approach.

**Modeling** says that by watching the actions of the parental model, the child will learn which values are correct. In this method, the parent-like figure holds him or her up as a model of what is acceptable as good or bad, right or wrong. A young boy may determine how to treat his girlfriend by how his father treats his mother. This is the “don’t do as I say, do as I do” approach.

**Experimenting** states that each individual must find his or her own appropriate value system, for no two people necessarily have one system. The process of discovering one’s values is one of trial and error, experience and experimenting, and sorting through the options available. Life’s experiences will teach one what is good and bad, right or wrong.

**Clarification** teaches the consequences of accepting or denying a particular value. For example, instead of Moralizing that the value of always telling the truth is important, the Clarification process discovers the positive and negative aspects of always telling the “truth.” The person then can make the choice to accept or reject the value. Instead of teaching a person which values to accept or reject, this approach describes a method one can utilize to discover one’s values.
The 8 Rules George Washington Carver Lived By

9.5.1: "George Washington Carver" (Public Domain; Arthur Rothstein via Wikimedia Commons)

- Be clean both inside and out
- Neither look up to the rich nor down to the poor
- Lose, if need be, without squealing
- Win without bragging
- Always be considerate of women, children and older people
- Be too brave to lie
- Be too generous to cheat
- Take your share of the world & let others take theirs

The acceptance or rejection of new beliefs is affected by our value system. Beliefs that are consistent with or correspond to our value system are more readily accepted than those which contradict our value system. If you have accepted the value that getting a good college education is very important you will have stronger adherence to future beliefs which reinforce that position. If a person tells you that they believe college to be a waste of time, you will initially reject that belief merely because it contradicts a value you hold.

Reference
