

The Valued Living Questionnaire

Another person whose life was transformed by reconnecting with his true values is Kelly Wilson, who entered my lab as a graduate student in the late-1980s and has been an important contributor to the development of ACT methods. Kelly altered the direction of ACT's development to include more emphasis on values. Before pursuing a psychology degree, he had suffered through a harrowing struggle with addiction, including lying on a bed in a detox ward in four-point restraints wondering how he might kill himself. It was only a couple of years after that, as he fought his way from addiction to succeeding in school, when he realized that he wanted to devote his life to helping others overcome psychological challenges. He read some of my early work on ACT and sought me out to help continue to develop it. After getting his degree, he created the The Valued Living Questionnaire (VLQ).

The VLQ asks a series of questions about what your values are and how much you have been living in accordance with them, evaluating that in a set of life domains, on a scale of one to ten. Taking the VLQ is a good first step in doing ACT values work, and you should fill it out now.

It is best to plan not to let anyone see this so you can answer as honestly as you can, setting aside as best you can social pressures and the wagging mental fingers of "should" and "have to." This is between you and you. If you find yourself beating yourself up in the process of filling it in, step back and remind yourself that values are what you choose to work toward, not what the mind says you have to do or care about or else.

My Flexibility Scores

Below are domains of life that contain values for some people. We are concerned with your quality of life in each of these areas. One aspect of quality of life involves the importance one puts on different areas of living. Rate the importance of each area (by circling a number) on a scale of 1-10. 1 means that area is not at all important. 10 means that area is very important. Not everyone will have notable values all of these areas, or care about all areas the same. Rate each area according to your own personal sense of importance.

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| 1. Family (other than marriage or parenting) | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 2. Marriage/couples/intimate relations | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 3. Parenting | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 4. Friends/social life | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 5. Work | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 6. Education/training | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 7. Recreation/fun | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 8. Spirituality | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 9. Citizenship/Community Life | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 10. Physical self care (diet, exercise, sleep) | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 11. Environmental Issues | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 12. Art, creative expression, and aesthetics | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |

My Flexibility Scores

In this section, we would like you to give a rating of how consistent your actions have been with your values in each of these domains. We are not asking about your ideal in each area. We are also not asking what others think of you. Everyone does better in some areas than others. People also do better at some times than at others. We want to know how you think you have been doing during the past week.

Rate each area (by circling a number) on a scale of 1-10. 1 means that your actions have been completely inconsistent with your values in this area. 10 means that your actions have been completely consistent with your values.

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| 1. Family (other than marriage or parenting) | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 2. Marriage/couples/intimate relations | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 3. Parenting | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 4. Friends/social life | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 5. Work | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 6. Education/training | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 7. Recreation/fun | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 8. Spirituality | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 9. Citizenship/Community Life | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 10. Physical self care (diet, exercise, sleep) | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 11. Environmental Issues | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 12. Art, creative expression, and aesthetics | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |

There are a number of ways to assess the results. The first is to look at all domains that have relatively high importance scores (a score of 9 or 10), and also have relatively low consistency scores (6 or less). These are clear problem areas, and I suggest starting your initial work with any one of them. Then you can move on to other areas.

It's also good to calculate your overall score. Multiply the two numbers from the first and second parts for each domain. So if for family, in the first part you scored it as 10 and in the second part you circled 4, for that domain you'd get 40. Add all of those numbers and then divide them by 12 to get your composite score. To get a rough sense of how your score compares to those of the broad public, the average composite result is 61. Do not begin beating yourself up if your score is lower than that. Practice some defusion from that negativity. This is a discovery process not a critique, and after all, you've embarked on this journey – give yourself some credit for that. You're here to embrace change.

If you scored quite a few of the domains as low in importance to you, you should consider whether you were being fully honest with yourself about them. It is perfectly reasonable to have some domains that are unimportant. You may not care about citizenship, or the environment, and if you do not have children, you may not care about the parenting practices of others, and so on. That being said, research suggests that if many of these domains are unimportant, that's a contributor to psychological distress. Use this assessment as an opportunity to admit your true values to yourself. Now, with a good idea of the values domain you'd like to start working on, you're ready to get going.