

Identifying Your Individual + Family Money Values

This exercise is all about putting your money where your mouth-- and heart-- is. We've already done some legwork to think about your ideal life, so you know that getting control of your money is an important step to making your dreams happen. But what does that look like in the day-to-day?

That's where identifying your money values comes in-- to help guide you toward purchases that match your values and your hopes for your life.

So what kind of big picture goals might you have?

- Paying off debt, including credit card debt, student loan debt, a vehicle, or a home
- Saving for a particular goal, including a vacation, new vehicle, or down payment on a home
- Fully funding retirement, including IRA accounts, 401Ks, or contributing enough to receive an employer match

What kind of values might you have? These are the expectations you hold yourself to when you make financial decisions.

- You might value experiences over things-- and even identify which experiences are most meaningful to you (hobbies? travel? a night out on the town?)
- You might value having a minimal and uncluttered home
- You might value reducing the environmental impact of your purchases, such as by purchasing secondhand or purchasing organic goods
- You might value supporting small or local businesses and artisans
- You might value getting the "most bang for your buck" financially and "shopping around" to get the best deal
- You might value financial generosity with loved ones or charitable organizations

If you are in a relationship, chances are that your values are not identical to your partner's, but you should be able to find some common ground. *(For example, my husband is totally on board with secondhand goods, as long as he doesn't have to put in any effort to find them!).*

EXAMPLE MONEY VALUES STATEMENT

As a family, we value...

Experiences over things

- Experiences aren't necessarily enhanced by trinkets-- so we avoid gift shops at zoos, museums, etc. and don't collect souvenirs on trips.

Making material purchases with consideration to impact (over price)

- Impact on people-- such as items that are fair trade or from companies that “give back” to the community in some way.
- Impact on planet-- what materials is this made of? Are they made of natural or recycled materials? Can these items be recycled at their end of life? Is this a “throwaway” quality product, or one that can be used and passed down?
- Impact on household-- for us, this means:
 - Is it healthy? Are the products safe for little hands and free of as many chemicals and plastics as possible?
 - Does this bring value to our life?

Participating in a circular economy

- Where possible, we consume secondhand products-- I ALSO value my time, so I won't drive 80 miles or search for hours to secure something secondhand... but checking secondhand is a first step for bringing most things in.
- We make intentional decisions about a product when it's no longer serving a purpose for our family-- while we sometimes sell items, we more frequently pass items on to neighbors through our Buy Nothing group to bless others and give back to our community.

Contributing to our family and community

- We make monetary contributions to charitable organizations that are meaningful to us
- We are generous and intentional gift-givers who prioritize experience gifts or requested gifts.

How does this money values statement affect purchases?

First and foremost, is this purchase within our budget for the month?

Then...

Is this a **one-time** or **infrequent experience**? (Such as a sporting event, concert, or vacation)

-- If so, does the enjoyment of the experience justify the cost?

Is this a **frequent or repeated experience**? (Such as takeout coffee or a restaurant meal)

-- Would I get more enjoyment out of my experience if I did it less frequently?

-- Would I enjoy something that costs less just as much? For example, getting an entree but not an appetizer at the restaurant, or making specialty coffee at home.

Is this a **consumable good? (Candles, lotions, etc.)**

- What need is this meeting?
- Have I used up any "stockpiles" of this item and similar items?
- Is this a non-toxic and sustainable option?

Is this a "durable" (or long-lasting) material good? (Such as clothing, kitchenware, or furniture)

- What need is this meeting in my home?
- Have I tried to use what I already own first? Have I tried to source this item (or a similar item) secondhand, where appropriate?
- Is the product environmentally sustainable and made of non-toxic materials? (Bonus points for supporting small businesses or B Corps)

Is this something that contributes to our community?

- If it's within our budget, go for it!

AND, in each of these cases (above and beyond basic necessities), do I want this "thing" more than I want the money to go towards my bigger financial goals?

What sort of money values do you want to matter to your family?

First, recognize that you may not always be living by the values you want to hold quite yet.. that's okay!). If you aren't sure yet, check out this list for ideas that resonate with you.

Prioritizing experiences-- individually, as a couple, or with family	"Buy it Once"-- make high-quality purchases intended to last	Paying off debt and/ or establishing an emergency fund
Saving for travel-- domestic or international	Spend more for the newest trends or technology	Make designer or name-brand purchases
Investing in children's activities (sports, summer camps, classes, etc.)	Shop secondhand where possible	Only make purchases "on sale" or when you are getting a "deal"
FIRE (Financial Independence, with the possibility of retiring early) or saving for traditional retirement	Purchase organic, fair trade, or other eco- and socially minded products	Purchasing only what you need, when you need it (no "just in case"!)
Save for children's college or launching funds	Supporting local or small businesses	Buy things to "treat yourself" after a hard week or an accomplishment
Spending money in exchange for time- ex. hiring a housekeeper	Spending the least possible for products or services	Make monetary contributions to religious institutions or charities

You may have noticed that some of these values are at least somewhat in conflict with each other. *For example, if I value spending the least amount of money possible, that might lead me to purchase an item from Amazon instead of the local, family-owned store that can't quite compete with big-box retailers on price.*

This isn't about deciding which of these values is "right" or "wrong"-- it's all about what matters to you and your family in a particular place in your life.

With each of the values you selected, how do you see this contributing to you and your family's happiness and well-being? How do these values contribute to your community?

Money Values	Why this matters + how this contributes to your community or family's well-being