

Qualities of Effective Values Conversations

The key to having effective values conversations often lies more in the quality of the conversation than the content of what is being said. Effective values work isn't about coming up with specific values words; it's about bringing those values to life in the room. Some of the qualities that make for effective values conversations include: vitality, choice, present moment orientation, and willing vulnerability.

Below are some examples of questions that might elicit each quality. "X" refers to a specific value or valued quality the client has already described.

Vitality: Effective values conversations have a quality of being "alive." They also can have an expansive quality. There is a sense of freshness, curiosity or exploration. They are NOT overly intellectual or problem solvy. Examples to elicit vitality could be:

- Tell me about one of the most rewarding days you've had at your job. What did it feel like to be you that day?
- If someone were going to describe how you are on your very best days at work, how might they describe you?
- [With the person's eyes closed] Think back to a moment in your career when you felt you were really living out X...Now, let your face take on the expression you would have in that moment. Show me what I'd see on your face at that moment if you really let it show. Notice what that feels like right now in your body.

Choice: By choice, we are speaking of the experience of values being freely selected, without avoidance, rigid rules, or social manipulation. This is about creating a sense of infinite possibility. You want to explore what they would choose to have their life be about if *anything* were possible. Examples to elicit choice could be:

- Tell me what it's like when you are really engrossed with your work, when you're not doing something because you have to, but rather because you're captivated by it? What are those times about for you?
- When no one knows what you are doing, what kind of person do you feel most proud of being?
- Imagine you could completely start all over again, reinvent yourself in your job. It's a clean slate and you can embody any qualities at all that you want as this new you. How would you want to reinvent yourself to be?

Present Oriented: While conversations about values extend into the future, something that is valued is valued *now*. Values work brings the extended moment into the present in the service of building larger and larger patterns of action linked to valued life directions. Examples that can bring the conversation into the present include:

- If you were going to do something in the service of X right now in this conversation, what might you do?
- Why did you choose to be here right now doing this exercise with me? What would you want this to be in the service of right now?
- [Have them close their eyes]. Imagine that you are sitting in your office and you are sitting across from the very last client you are ever going to see in your entire career. This is it. How would you want to be in that session with this last client that you'll ever work with?

Willing Vulnerability: You can only be hurt in areas you care about. Thus, values conversations can often be bittersweet. But the *willing* part of this vulnerability can also bring an incredible power, courage and even fierceness that comes when you are willing to do whatever it takes to stand for what is most dear. Examples to elicit this willing vulnerability include:

- [If tears or sadness show up] What does this pain tell you about what matters to you?
- If you knew that every day you could come home from your job and know that all those hours had been spent in the service of X, would that be a worthwhile day at work? What is it like thinking of having days like that?
- [If the person talks about having lost contact with a particular value] What are you missing out on right now because you've lost contact with X? How would your life be different if you got to be more X in your work?