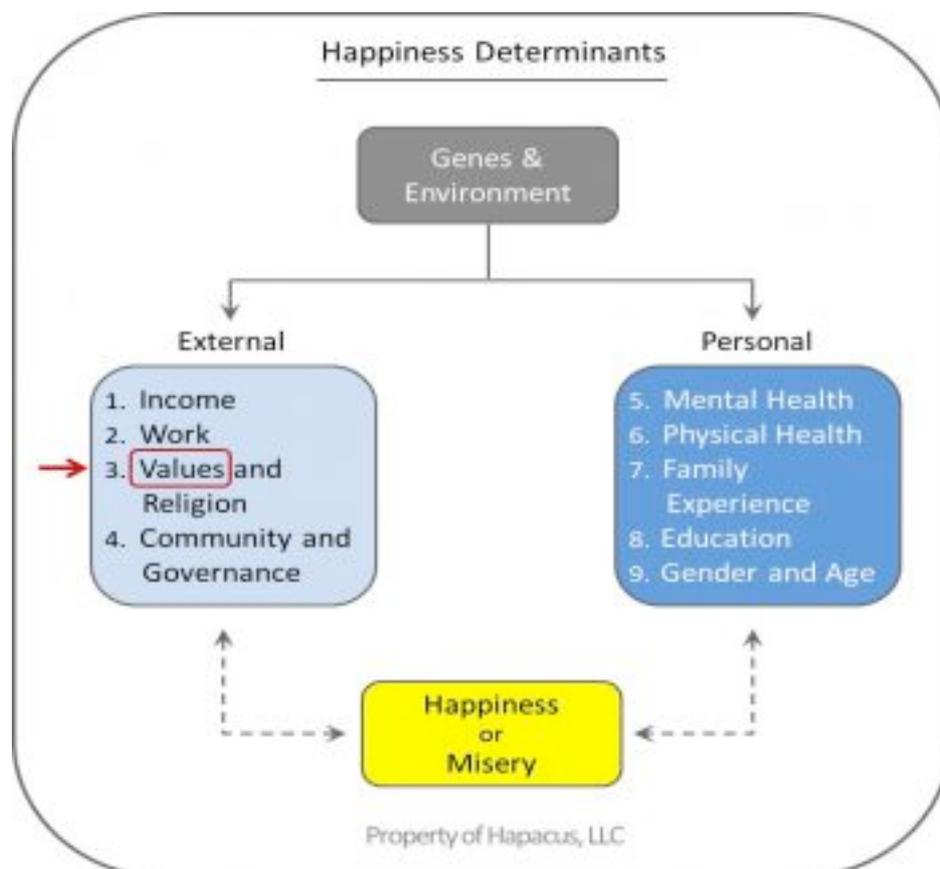


Happiness: Universal Values as Road Signs

Everyone has road signs posted along their life's journey. The science of happiness calls these road signs *Values*. Whether you get your values from religion or from another source, your values help guide and direct you on your path to happiness. You respond differently to life because of your values. For example, if your highest value is *family*, you will make different choices than if your highest value is your *physical appearance*.

Understanding what you value is critical to increasing your happiness. Mental health experts behind the World Happiness Report specifically identified *Values* as one of the determinants that directly impacts your happiness. The science of happiness defines values as: broad goals that apply to many different situations and remain consistently stable over time. Coming to understand what your own values (broad goals) are can help you shed light on the road signs you are using to navigate your life.



Perhaps a good place to start exploring the road signs (values) you have posted along your life's journey is to consider the findings of researchers who have studied the values of thousands of participants across many countries. These researchers have found that, despite our differences in language and culture we share 11 values in common. These values have been described as *Universal Values*.

UNIVERSAL VALUES	Description	Rank
1. Affiliation	Having satisfying relationships with family and friends	
2. Community Feeling	Making the world a better place through giving and activism	
3. Conformity	Fitting in and being accepted by others	
4. Financial Success	Being financially successful	
5. Hedonism	Having many sensually pleasurable experiences	
6. Image	Having an appealing appearance that others find attractive	
7. Physical Health	Being physically healthy and free of sickness	
8. Popularity	Being admired by others, being well-known or famous	
9. Safety	Able to live without threats to personal safety and security	
10. Self-Acceptance	Feeling competent, self-aware, self-directed & autonomous	
11. Spirituality	Developing a spiritual/religious understanding of the world	

Although these 11 values (broad goals) have been found to be universally shared across countries and cultures, they still vary from person to person. While you might feel passionate about Physical Health, your best friend or spouse might feel equally passionate about Community Feeling. This list of Universal Values is not meant to suggest that one of you is right and the other is wrong, it is simply a starting point for uncovering and identifying the values each of us has posted (often subconsciously) along our happiness journey.

Not understanding the underlying values that direct your thoughts and actions is a lot like driving a car in the dark with only your fog lights on. If you want to make real progress on your happiness journey, you must take some time to turn your headlights on so that you can more clearly identify the road signs guiding and directing your travels.



With light shining on these signs (values) you might decide that some of your road signs aren't helping you get where you want to go. With that new information you can make the necessary changes in your priorities so that you have a better alignment between your values and the happiness you want to achieve.

TECHNIQUE: The right column of the *UNIVERSAL VALUES* table has a column with the header *Rank*. This column is blank so that you can consider how you would prioritise each of these values in your own life.

Step 1 – Personal Ranking

Take a moment to write down your personal ranking for these 11 values. Then consider if you have your road signs (values)

arranged in a way that will help you achieve greater happiness. For example, if you discover that Popularity is number 1 in your list of values you might want to consider whether this road sign is helping or interfering with your efforts to be happier. If you are honest with yourself, this exercise will help you identify which priorities might need to be rearranged.

Step 2 – Loved One's, or Colleague's, Ranking

Share this exercise with your spouse, partner, family member, friend or work colleague and ask them to rank these 11 values according to their priorities. Then compare rankings and discover where your values overlap and where they are different. This exercise will help you identify your differences and draw attention to the values you share in common.

(Adapted from: <http://www.hapacus.com>)

Dr. John Barletta MAPS
Clinical Psychologist
Level 1, Suite 2
3 Days Rd, Grange 4051
☎ 3356 4400
john@johnbarletta.com
www.johnbarletta.com