

VALUES

In living

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Love
 Knowledge
 Security
 Freedom
 Health
 Ambition
 Religion

OF ALL WORDS in our everyday language, probably none means more things to more people than VALUE. The ideas and images value produces are virtually endless and often contradictory. Values may be unstable we note as we look about us in our fast changing, unstable world. Increasing numbers of writers are calling attention to the fact that old values are being taken away. The serious part is there may be no clear cut new ones taking their places, and without values we are lost. We have nothing to guide us in making decisions.

What Is The Meaning Of Value

A value means that which we hold as good, which we prize or cherish. It's a feeling we have concerning the goodness or badness, the rightness or wrongness of an object or kind of behavior. Values can be utilitarian, aesthetic, spiritual or psychological. It can be of the moment or eternal. It can be prized by one individual, a family, a community, or a nation.

Values Are Basic To Good Management

We must know our values, what is important to us, before we can have good management. But first, what is management? In simple terms good management is using what you have to get as much as possible of what you want.

Management involves choice making. If choices are based on values held by the individual, you would expect him to be satisfied with his decisions. If action

is taken without consideration of one's values, there can be little satisfaction. In this way values help us judge our action. Values are the guide posts, the reasons, or "why", we decide to do the things we do.

Home management varies from good management in any business in that the first objective in the home has been to allow for and to encourage maximum potential of human development of each individual family member. Attention centers on family life as a whole. In business, attention primarily is on making money.

Some people think they can get away from management by not thinking about it. But choices have to be made each day, whether they are wise or unwise, satisfactory or not. Family life could go on for years without anything being done about clarifying values and establishing goals. No one requires an accounting of them—no landlord, no tax assessor, no supervisor. But the family that decides which things are important and best for it, and then works toward achieving its goals, is the family most likely to get what it really wants.

In making use of value in choice making, we see that it is a guide for action. But value also is justification for action. We use value to justify action we have already taken, are taking, or are going to continue to take. For example, a family which values security may have a goal of home ownership. A low income farmer may value his independence and freedom. But, if he gets a chance for factory work, he values being able to do things for his family. Thus, he justifies his change in action.

In using value to justify action, we are setting ourselves right with the world, giving ourselves a feeling of personal integrity. We aren't satisfied to do something or to buy something, but we must explain why. The human mind has to seek its own security. We take the family to the lake for a day's outing. We explain it was good for us to get away—just what we needed.

Values Vary Among Individuals Or Families

One family may prize comfort as a value and become interested in improving the home or buying new furniture or equipment. But, for another family, making changes would be too disrupting. It finds comfort in the usual surroundings. We have little real knowledge of what causes people to hold certain values in very high regard while some other people hold the same value in low regard. We only know that values vary among people. This is likely good, for values must be your own not someone else's. But, values can be modified:

By change in age—As a child grows older there can be no maturing if values were not modified, or if he were not able to lay aside some values and take on new ones. The ability to know true value is closely linked to maturity, as Margaret Meade the famous anthropologist, often has pointed out.

By education—Children are first influenced by the home, then church, school and community.

By change in social and economic status—An individual who places a high value on financial security will increase his savings rather than his level of living when income increases. Or, if he places a high value on social position, he may be content with his original level of savings and spend the increase on a new home, new furnishings, or a new car.

Our practices are at almost constant variance from our stated values. We value an orderly society and make laws to enforce orderliness. However, we often drive as though laws were written for the other fellow.

Our Changing World

America has a moral culture, Margaret Meade tells us. By this she means we accept right and wrong as important. No other people or nation think of life in as habitually moral terms as do Americans. Of

course there are times when values have been broken, but at least those persons knew their actions were sinful. Now there are times when people are not so sure of what is a sin, or so it seems as we read of various national scandals. Among several high schools, parents have gotten together to draw up a code of ethics for the young people. It is interesting that they need a code of ethics, but much more interesting that they are not sure what should go into the code.

We were guided by certain ideas of good and bad as frontiers were pushed farther and farther west. It was good to work hard, to produce much, to save money, to do without. It was good to see an individual prosper through his own efforts. Now our values of thrift, hard work and individuality are getting us into trouble. Industry, and the farmer too, produces more than can be sold. Instead of giving us stability, they actually tend to cause conflict.

We like efficiency and progress in our homes, too. We like our shiny kitchens and mechanical aids that make work easier and give us more leisure. Is leisure good? Packaged foods take less time to prepare. But, what about the loss of status for women who depended on old family recipes in baking and preserving. Today we find ability in the kitchen is in management rather than in processing.

Our values have not kept pace with technology. We can't have all the efficiency and progress we want and at the same time have all the stability we want. Instead of clear-cut values we have indecision. We are uneasy, for as individuals we know that mature stimulating people and clear-cut values go together.

In an area where young couples are moving in and out frequently, each brings to the community its set of values. Uncertainties develop because some values conflict with present reality and some conflict with each other. A stable, well integrated community is a comfortable place to live, for there exists a single clear-cut set of standards and values.

To discover what our values are, we need to ask questions. How will this object affect my life? By its usefulness? Its convenience? Its beauty? In thinking of our friendships, our pleasures, our careers, our politics and our faith, there are questions we can ask, too. Which comes first? Which are commitments? Which are durable? Which are transitory? Which are you willing to work for, to sacrifice for? Which are really important to you?

As so many other women are doing, you take a job outside your home. Is it because everybody else is doing it? Do you need the money? Is it for a higher level of living? To help buy a new house? For college

education for the children? Is it to get away from housekeeping? Or child care? If you ask yourself the right questions, it is easier to determine what you really want to do to establish your goals.

Which Of These Values Are Important To You?

VALUES

Security, ambition, prestige
 Family affection, love
 Comfort, health, religion, art, play, equality, freedom
 Knowledge, efficiency
 Religion, love of mankind
 What other values do you have?

POSSIBLE GOALS

Home ownership
 Raising a family
 Home atmosphere
 Education
 Community Service

Factors Which Influence Our Values:

Families are larger
 Life span is increasing
 Young people are marrying earlier
 Incomes are higher—but many families have low incomes
 More people are getting better education

People move oftener, often at great distances
 Technology brings rapid changes—age of abundance
 More people have leisure time—time for what?
 Advertising and TV persuade—sometimes misinform

YOUR VALUES ARE SHOWING

- | | Yes | No | | Yes | No |
|---|-----|-----|---|-----|-----|
| 1. Would you boast that your children never get themselves messy or dirty? | ___ | ___ | 6. Do you think your best silver too good just for family use? | ___ | ___ |
| 2. Is yours a really democratic household, with all members consulted when the decision will affect everyone? | ___ | ___ | 7. Is your motto "anything goes" when you eat in the kitchen? | ___ | ___ |
| 3. Does your entertaining fit your house and your pocketbook? | ___ | ___ | 8. Do you pick up constantly after your husband and children? | ___ | ___ |
| 4. Do you consider your possessions more important than your family? | ___ | ___ | 9. Would you leave a family construction project in a corner of the living room for days, if it needs to be finished or maybe just admired? | ___ | ___ |
| 5. Can you cope graciously with the appearance of a slightly grubby boy in play clothes when the house is immaculate, you're dressed to the teeth and important company is there? | ___ | ___ | 10. Do you plan household jobs so you can have daily "time that is yours" to read or pursue your hobby or muse or what not? | ___ | ___ |

