

# **RULES FOR PLAYING THE VALUES GAME**



The purpose of this game is to let you discuss values and group norms. By doing so, you will not only become more aware of what you aspire to, but you will also come to appreciate other people better. Furthermore, this game is an aid for reaching consensus in your group, team or organisation about the values and norms that you all consider to be important. The game does not steer you towards or impose any particular value or norm.

The Values Game consists of 140 cards, divided into three groups. There is a blank card in each group, in case anyone wants to make an addition. The groups are:

1. **Values** (symbol: compass; 63 cards). A value is something that you find important to aspire to and that directs your actions. Examples are freedom, responsibility and trust. The classifications of values that we have made are as follows:
  - a. *General values*. These are values that apply to individuals as well as to organisations. We have divided these between relational values (numbers. 1-43) and non-relational values (numbers 44-48). Relational values are those values that primarily relate to dealing with others.
  - b. *Values applying to organisations* (numbers 49-58).
  - c. *Values applying to individuals* (numbers 59-63).

Of course you are free to deviate from our classifications and make your own.

2. **Group norms** (symbol: roundabout – the various directions you can choose; 38 cards). These are the rules that dictate what kind of behaviour is good or bad, wanted or unwanted, allowed or forbidden. Norms are derived from values. For example, the norm 'you must fulfil your promises' is a concrete outcome of the value 'reliability'. The norms we have chosen are specifically focused on working together in teams or groups.
3. **Subjects** (symbol: coloured figures; 40 cards). These represent areas in which values can be expressed in concrete terms, and are intended to make the discussion about

values more specific. Our starting point for selecting the subjects was that they had to be provoking, so that they would challenge you to discuss them with each other.

In the following methods of play, values are central to method 1 (focused on the individual) and 2 (focused on team or organisation). In method 3, values and subjects are combined. Method 4 is used to discuss group norms. With each method you can change the number of cards that you work with or that you select, at your discretion.

## **METHOD 1: PERSONAL VALUES PROFILE**

### **Purposes**

1. Becoming aware of the values that are important to you.
2. Gaining insight into the mutual connection of these values.

### **Explanation**

Your values indicate what you find important to aspire to. They are therefore an important tool in making choices in your life. Creating a personal values profile (your own list of values) can help you focus on what really matters. It makes it clearer to yourself what you stand for, which can give you more confidence.

Creating your own list of values is not always an easy task. An important principle when choosing values is that you should be proud of every value that you choose. Your values make you happy and bring colour to the person you are. You are willing to propagate and defend these values if the situation requires it. You act in accordance with your values.

Your values profile can change over time. When you are young, you usually adopt many values from the family in which you grow up. As you get to know yourself better, it becomes clearer to you which family values do or do not suit you. In addition, personal experiences or events can cause you to delete some values from your list and replace them with others. Therefore, it is interesting to consider your life history from the perspective of the development of values.

### **Conditions**

1. The players do not have to know each other. However, if they do, it will make applying this method more interesting.
2. Number of players: 1 or 2. Preferably use the method with a coach or a conversation partner. If there is no official coach, you in turn act as a coach.
3. Required: the 'value' cards, except numbers 49-58; pen and paper.
4. Playing time: 45-60 minutes.

### **Method**

1. Place all of the cards face up on the table.
2. Select a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 10 values that are important in your life. Try to rank the values in order of importance, starting with the most essential one. Place the selected cards in front of you and discard the other cards. Write down the result.

3. You will now make a personal values profile by exploring the connections between the various values. Write down the answers to the following questions:
  - Are there any values that you actively promote in your life? If so, what is the effect of that?
  - Are there any values that are interrelated? If so, which ones? Put these together.
  - Are there any values that can clash? If so, which ones? Give an example of a situation in which that happened, or could happen.
  - Are there any values in your profile that you have adopted from the family you grew up in (family values)? If so, which ones?
  - Are there any values that were not family values and that you started to find important in response to personal experiences or events? If so, which ones? What experiences or events do they relate to?
  - Take your discard pile. Does it contain important family values that are no longer part of your profile? If so, which ones? Put these aside. What experiences or events have made these values less important to you?
  - Are there any values that you find difficult to live by? If so, which ones? Explain why you find this difficult and illustrate this with an example.
4. Switch roles and repeat steps 1 through 3.
5. Exchange your most important conclusion. Also evaluate the application of this method.

## **METHOD 2: ORGANISATIONAL VALUES**

### **Purpose**

Reaching mutual consensus on the most important values of the organisation.

### **Explanation**

Just like people, organisations (or teams) can also adopt a values profile: a list of values that guide everything the organisation does. Establishing such a profile makes it easier for everyone who works there and also for the customers, assuming that those values are expressed in the way the organisation deals with its employees, customers, products and services. For many organisations, however, it is not easy to turn their values into practical action.

Not all organisations have a clearly described values profile. This often leads to a degree of uncertainty, resulting in communication problems or slow decision-making. In addition, it can cause employees to use their own values as a guideline, which leads to large differences in how they work or deal with customers.

### **Conditions**

1. The players must work for the same organisation. The organisation has not yet established a list of organisational values-
2. Number of players: 3-10.
3. Required: the 'value' cards, numbers 1-58, pen and paper for every player. Sticky notes.

4. Playing time: 45-75 minutes.

## Method

1. Place all of the cards face up on the table. Consider the following question: which of these values are important to me within our organisation? Make a list of six values and rank them in order of importance.
2. Each player receives a number of sticky notes. These notes are placed on the selected value cards. Write your name on each note plus the ranking of the respective value on your list. If another player has already attached a note to a particular value, add your name and ranking below it. Discard any cards that have no notes attached.
3. Discuss the chosen values. The aim is to reach a consensus on a list of 8 values that are considered important for the organisation.
4. Have a look at the result from step 3 and discuss the following questions:
  - a. Are there any values that relate to each other? If so, which ones? One way in which values can relate is if one serves the other, i.e. courage helps to demonstrate openness.
  - b. Are there any values that could possibly clash? If so, which ones? Give an example of a situation in which that happened or could happen.
5. Everyone answers the question: Which value from the final list do you find easy to apply and which value do you find difficult to apply? Why?

## Note

This method can also be used to make a values profile for your team.

## Game variation: organisational values in practice

If the values of an organisation are clearly described and you want to discuss the extent to which they are being put into practice, proceed as follows:

1. Take the 'value' cards, numbers 1-58, and select the values of the organisation.
2. Make a note of the extent to which you believe that each value is actually being put into practice: almost always (+), sometimes (+/-) or almost never (-).
3. Everyone receives a number of sticky notes. These notes are stuck on the values cards. Write your name and your assessment of the value on each sheet: +, +/- or -. If someone else has already stuck a note on a certain value, write your name and your rating below it.

4. Discuss the results per card. Illustrate your opinion by using examples. What is the effect of the presence or absence of the value on you, your colleagues and the results of your work?
5. What are your conclusions? Are there points where improvement is needed? If so, how could each of you contribute to this?

### **METHOD 3: VALUES AND SUBJECTS DISCUSSION**

#### **Purpose**

Getting to know each other (even) better.

#### **Conditions**

1. The players do not have to know each other.
2. Number of players: 4 – 8.
3. Required: the 'value' cards numbered 1-43 as well as the blank card; all of the 'subject' cards (including the blank card). If you prefer, you can use your own selection of subjects.
4. Playing time: 30-60 minutes.

#### **Method**

1. Place the 'value' cards (numbers 1-43 and the blank card) as well as the 'subject' cards separately face up on the table.
2. Each player selects a subject they would like to exchange views on with their fellow players.
3. The first player starts and shows the selected subject card. Next, each player selects a value that is important to them regarding the chosen subject. It is possible that multiple players will choose the same value. The card is placed next to the subject.
4. In turn you explain your choice. The player who selected the subject starts. Explain in what way this value determines your thoughts and actions with regard to the chosen subject. The others can ask questions.
5. When all the players have had their turn, return the chosen values to the rest of the cards. What conclusion can you draw from the discussion?
6. Repeat steps 3-5 for the subjects that the other players have chosen.
7. If you want to, you can repeat steps 2-6 by having each player select a new subject.
8. Share with each other what was most striking to you in the discussion as a whole or in what was said individually.

## METHOD 4: DISCUSSING GROUP NORMS

### Purpose

Discussing the way that individual team members experience group norms.

### Explanation

Group norms indicate what team members expect from each other about how they should behave. Therefore, they determine what behaviour is right or wrong, permitted or prohibited, wanted or unwanted. These rules of conduct are often unspoken, which is why they are also referred to as 'unwritten rules'. Team members don't usually talk about them, but do act accordingly. For a new team member, it takes some time to become familiar with these unwritten rules. They can be derived from the behaviour that people repeatedly show: patterns and habits. They have emerged over time and are part of the culture of a team.

Group norms can create order and stability in a team, but they can also be confusing. It makes sense from time to time to consider whether they are (still) supportive or have become obstructive. Discussing this is necessary if important changes take place in a team, for example if its core assignment changes. Changes like that usually require changing the group norms as well.

An important question when discussing group norms is: How do you determine whether a group norm is required? On the one hand, the unwritten rules must support the goals of the team and its right to exist. On the other hand, the organisational values determine which group norms are required: after all, a team is part of an organisation.

If a team does not function well, it usually has something to do with the group norms. These are generally not easy to change, because they are persistent patterns that are unconscious and therefore difficult to grasp. In order to change them, these unwritten rules must first be brought out into the open, so that everyone becomes aware of them and they can be questioned.

Many of the group norms in this game contain the word 'must'. That was chosen deliberately. On the one hand, it was chosen because many people experience the unwritten rules in a team as compulsory (as in you 'must' follow them), and on the other hand to make the discussion about group norms as clear as possible. It is important to explain this to the players, as some people may struggle with the word 'must'.

### Conditions

1. The players form a group or team and are willing to look critically at the group norms.
2. Number of players: 4-8.
3. Required: all of the 'norm' cards (including the blank card); pen and paper for every player.
4. Playing time: 30-60 minutes.

## Method

1. The cards are placed face up on the table.
2. Each player writes down two group norms that they would like to discuss. For each norm, select one of the options below:
  - You are happy with this norm because in your opinion it supports the team.
  - You would like this norm to be demonstrated more, because then the team would function better.
  - You wish that this norm would no longer be demonstrated, because then the team would function better. The norm therefore has a restrictive effect.

Pile the selected cards. Discard the remaining cards. It is possible that more than one person has selected the same card.
3. Pick up a card from the pile and discuss it. The player (or players) who has (have) chosen this card give(s) an explanation. The following questions can be helpful:
  - In what way is the norm being demonstrated in everyday practice?
  - What is the effect of the norm on you?
  - What is the effect of the norm on the results of the team?
  - What are the pros and cons of applying the norm (in the long term)?
4. Decide together on what you want to do with the discussed norm, based on the classification in step 2: keep it the way it is, apply it more often or stop applying it. If you find it difficult to agree on which category a certain norm belongs to, it is often because team members do not agree on the goals of the team. In that case it is useful to discuss those first.
5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 until all the cards have been discussed. The selected cards are now divided into three groups. Pick one norm from the group 'apply more often' or 'stop applying' that should be a priority to work on. The following questions can be helpful:
  - What could be a first, feasible step towards your goal (apply more often or stop applying)?
  - What behaviour do you have to let go of to achieve your goal?
  - How are you going to confront each other when the old behaviour comes up again?
6. Evaluate this method of play.

## THE VALUES GAMES MANUAL

The Values Game can be used in a wide variety of work situations as a tool to help enable a structured, in-depth discussion on values and norms. To get the most from The Values Game in working situations, it is recommended to study the Values Games Manual, which is available separately. This manual contains 20 ways of applying the Values Game, instructions for applying the game safely and effectively and some theory about values and norms.

Examples of applications of the Values game are: becoming aware of one's own values and norms, working together in teams, career planning and coaching. The manual also contains the Norms matrix (game board, A2 format). This game board is a practical tool that makes it easier to discuss group norms.

### **Distribution**

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