

## Priorities and Values Worksheet

We all have within our psychological systems a set of priorities. These are things to which we attend based upon their importance to us. When the priorities are out of order we feel uncomfortable and work to reorder the work to get the priorities right. We may re-order the priorities to make us feel better for the short-term. Understanding what your priorities are and why they are priorities is the first step in getting the long-term goal of comfort established. The following is a process that takes a while to work out. Follow the steps and take your time. The outcome is well worth the effort.

Steps to establishing an accurate list of priorities:

1. Take a piece of paper and draw a line down the middle.
2. On the top line write "Priorities" across the left side and "Values" on the right side.
3. Write out an item in your life that you give time and effort to, because you want to or have to, in the "Priorities" column. This can be anything such as "improve relationship with spouse", "buy a boat", "improve relationship with God", "Fix-up rental property for more rent", read War and Peace", "work", "mow the grass", or "set up new computer software."
4. Beside each item, as you write a priority item, list the reason(s) that item is a priority. Beside "mow the grass" you might put, "Makes the house look good, gets my wife off my back, lets the neighbors know that I care about our neighborhood."

Priorities	Values
Relationship with wife	More peace, she needs the attention, love, good partner
Buy a boat	A place to relax, like to ski, water is always fun
Relationship with God	More peace, curiosity, health concerns, family rituals
Rental property fix-up	Money
Read <u>War and Peace</u>	Interesting discussion last night, good for me
Work	Money, integrity, sense of accomplishment
Mow the grass	Makes the house look good, gets wife off my case, lets the neighbors know that I care about the neighborhood
Set up new computer programs	Need to keep up to date

Figure 1

5. As you go down the list, take your time and think through each item. Do not try to rank order the priorities, just put them down as you think of them. If you have as many as 15, quit. Fifteen items is enough to start and may be enough all together.

At this point, your worksheet will look something like Figure 1.

6. Let the list just sit for a day. As you go through your normal daily routine, pick up on things that you may think are priorities and be ready to add them to the list. At the end of the day, put the other items on the list. If more than 15, let them all stay for now. Using a set of index cards or slips of paper, put one priority on an index card or slip of paper. Arrange the slips in an order that meets your Ideal Ranking of the priorities you listed. Run through the slips again. Remember, this is your personal order of the priorities, no someone else's, it is your ideal. An honest list at this point will be the basis for all work to come.

7. Using a second sheet of paper, make ten columns with the second column wide enough to write in the priority descriptor. The first column will hold the ranking number. Fill in these two columns. The columns after the priorities will be used for numbers also. Figure 2 is an example of how the page will look with the lines and priorities with rankings written in. This is called the "Priorities Ranking and Analysis" sheet. If you have more than 15 items, cut off all after 15. Save them to add later if you want, after you have completed some of the first fifteen.

Priorities Ranking & Analysis									
Rnk	Priority Descriptor	<u>1</u>	<u>△</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>△</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>△</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>△</u>
1	Rel'ship with God	4	3	4	3	1	0	1	0
2	Rel'ship with wife	2	0	3	1	2	0	2	0
3	Work	1	2	2	1	4	1	3	0
4	New comp. progrm	3	1	1	3	3	1	4	0
5	Rental property	7	2	6	1	6	1	5	0
6	Buy a boat	6	0	7	1	9	3	7	1
7	Mow the grass	5	2	9	2	7	0	8	1
8	Read <u>War &amp; Peace</u>	9	1	8	0	8	1	6	2
9	Start exercise prgm	8	1	5	4	5	4	9	0
	Total <u>△</u> 's		12		16		11		4

Figure 2

8. Now look at how you responded to your priorities over the previous week. You will be ranking how you responded to the priorities. Start by picking the one thing that received the most regard or was not second to anything else. As you work your way down the list, look for the item that got the most regard as far the time needed to work on or complete the item and how that time spent affected the other items on the list. Work may take nine hours a day, which is a lot of time. If you spent an hour at work talking to your spouse or friend, then work was not the priority. If you stayed late 15 minutes to finish something instead of going home on time, then work was higher than the relationship with your spouse. After you have ranked each item in the "1" column, go back and find the absolute difference between the "Rnk" number and the "1" number and put that in the next column, "△" column. After finding the absolute difference for all items, add the numbers

in the "△" column and put the sum at the bottom. You will not need this number for a while.

9. Look at the absolute differences. The largest number is the worst out of order with your ideal. This needs work to get back in order. Larger numbers at the top of the list are more important than numbers at the bottom of the list. Work on the higher, larger numbered items to get them back in order with your ideal. Each week you can rank that past week and see how you are getting your life back in order with your own ideal. As the total number approaches zero, you will find that there is less distress in your life.

10. Some items will be completed and come off the list. If you finished item 4, move 5 to 4, 6 to 5, etc. As you find a new priority, put it in the list where it belongs and move all the lower items down one item. You may find that you have one or more items ranked inappropriately, revise the order. This is your list and there to help you. Keeping the list up to date is your choice and responsibility. The benefits are worth the work.

Continue to do the analysis on a weekly basis until you have a good handle on the process and reduce the absolute difference total to a low number. To continue, Just get another sheet of paper and draw more columns. After you have reduced the absolute difference total to a low number, re-evaluate on a monthly basis using the same pattern as weekly. If you find that you begin to get out of order with your priorities list, go to bi-weekly analysis or even back to once a week analysis until order returns.

*R. W. (Bill) Buck, Jr., M.Ed., L.P.C. - Relationship Counselor*

*211 East Six Forks Road, Suite 210-B, Raleigh, North Carolina 27609 - (919) 821-7755*

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