

How Important It Is ... Really!

By Jeanne Loehnis

Decisions, decisions! Each day as we navigate the steps along our life's journey, we are making decisions which range from the very small and daily repeated: "What should I wear? What do I want for dinner?" to the life changing "Should I get married? Do I want to have children?" And, of course, everything in between!

How do you make your decisions? Do you let the heat of the moment and temporary emotional distress drive them? Do you stop and analyze at every turn, spending endless hours in turmoil as you check out your options from every possible angle? Do you imagine the best and the worst possible outcomes and finally, perhaps in fear and because you have run out of time, just "do whatever"?

What is it that drives your decision making process? Does it differ for you depending on the magnitude of the decision? Should it?

In life coaching, we talk about two types of agendas in our clients' lives:

the little "a" agenda and the big "A" agenda

The little "a" agenda includes the day-to-day topics that a client brings to the coaching that are consuming time and energy. These could include whether or not to take that night class or challenges around a loved one's illness or deciding which job offer to accept. Life is filled with these, not always insignificant, situations.

The big "A" agenda, on the other hand, is formed by digging deeper and looking long term at what is truly important, what values the client holds dear, what it is that must be present in order to live a fulfilling and passionate life. The big "A" is not necessarily about "goals" but, rather, that within us that is driving our desire for those goals. For example, the graduate level student is completing work on a Ph.D. in Psychology not because they want a sheet of paper but because they are passionate about helping people obtain mental health and the education is what is required in order to start a practice.

And the little "a" agenda is not necessarily insignificant just because it isn't "big"! In fact, how we handle our little "a", our day-to-day experiences, has a huge impact on the realization of our big "A"! And, knowing our big "A" and using it as a focal point while we navigate the little "a" agenda of our lives, will make it easier to reach day-to-day decisions which insure that we actually experience personal fulfillment.

What is your big "A" agenda? What are the core values that you hold dear? Here are some questions to help you discover what is truly important in your life:

1. Think back to a situation that you would define as a “peak experience”, one where you were genuinely and deeply moved, enriched, joy-filled. It was awesome. What values were present?
2. What do you obsess about or do compulsively? Look deeper. What do you value that your obsession is trying to uphold?
3. What makes you angry? What is it here that is critically important to you but not being honored?
4. What marvelous qualities do others see in you? How are you showing up in the world?
5. Beyond basic necessities, what is a “must have” in your life?

Take a look. What patterns show up in your answers? Can you identify four to six values that are core for you?

Now imagine making choices based on your values. Imagine choosing relationships, activities, employment, hobbies – everything – having weighed them against what is of core importance to you. Imagine choosing what you do because it is in alignment with what you really believe, what “lights you up”, what you truly value. How does this feel?

Living from core values is not always easy. It takes great courage, especially when others in your life disagree. Choices require both “yes, I will ...” and, therefore, “no, I will not ...” And sometimes the impact of the choice will not be realized for awhile – there may be “pain before gain” or a hurdle to jump over. It is often the perceived hurdle that keeps us from saying yes to choices that are truly in our best interest.

Are you willing to give it a try? The next time you find yourself with a decision to make and are tempted to say, “How important is it, really?” consider the fact that it might be **very** important. Consult your core values. Then, align your choice with your core values from a place of, “How important IT IS ... Really!”

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Paving My Own Way

*The situations in your life
are not the same as mine.
The people who are near you
I've not met nor chanced to dine.*

*The gifts that grow within you
may match mine in heart and depth...
But in scope and actuality
the differences are great.*

*Walkin' on. Walkin' on.
Blazing new trails each and every day!
Climbin' high and goin' far.
Growing wiser now with age.*

*Walkin' on. Walkin' on.
Paving a path that's for me alone.
Walkin' on and livin' free:
trustin' the Life that's guiding me.*

*So I have come now to believe
that I must pave the road.
Clear the path where none have gone
and make the way my own.*

*At times I trudge through weeds
and from low hanging branches duck
or gently move them, one by one,
that I will not get stuck!*

*My eyes cannot perceive a path
ahead that's true and clear.
But my heart and soul see surely:
I'm freed from every fear.*

*I've the Universe to guide me
and Its strength supports my steps.
This Divine Love never fails me.
In Love's presence I am blessed!*