

Chapter 2
M.V.P
Morals, Values, Principles

Morals, Values, and Principles are all part of a close knit family. *Principles* are defined as, “a basic truth, law, or, a rule or standard of good behavior”. *Values* are, “principles, standards, or quality considered worthwhile or desirable”. The definition of *Morals* is, “rules or habits of condition, or the principle taught by a story or event”.

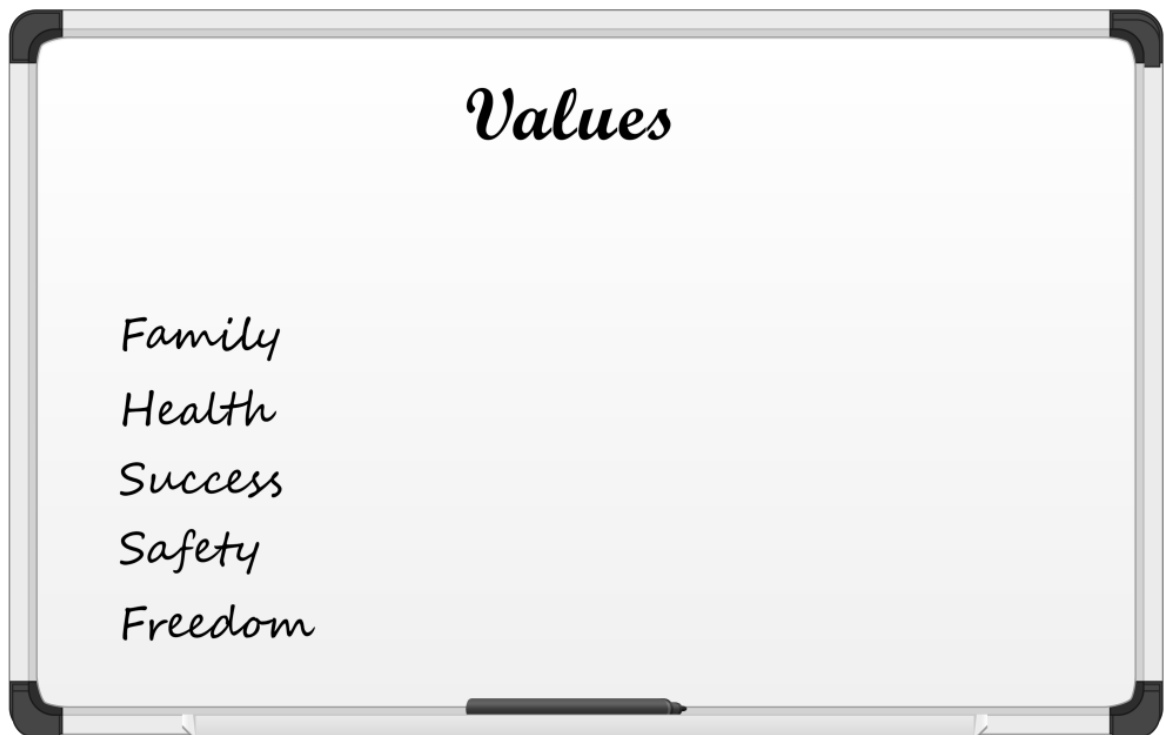
To elaborate on these definitions provided by *Merriam-Webster*, I would consider *Morals* to be personal guidelines that draw the line between our *most deep beliefs* of what is wrong and what is right. *Values* are *desires* that we cherish closely in high regards. The way I describe *Principles* is, *the reason for the reason* (What I mean by that is they are the initial basis for how behavior is, or should be conducted).

Let me break these terms down on a more personal level to where you can relate. Growing up I spent a lot of time living with my Grandparents; Michel and Patricia Comer. They both put vigor effort into instilling precious *morals* into my consciousness. My Grandparents taught me to believe that it is wrong to lie, cheat, and steal. They taught me that *respect* and *integrity* are some of the most important characteristics of a man. I was also taught to stand up for what I believe in by being a *leader* and not a *follower*. I proudly *valued* these morals immensely as I applied them as the *principles* to living a lifestyle that would please my family.

Later down the road I gravitated towards “running the streets” and began to *value* the “fast life”. I glorified the lifestyle of fast money and fast women as I thought it to be the **only** way of living. The *principle* of the situation was to get as much money and have as much sex with as many women as possible, as fast as possible. Valuing this negative lifestyle I began to go against my deeply rooted *morals*. Although I may have enjoyed the initial pleasure of accumulating large amounts of money and having meaningless sex with numerous women, the behaviors I performed to attain these things at times were wrong and afterwards left me filled with compunction. I found myself chasing *unhealthy values*. Values set the tone for what we conform to believe in and how we choose to get there, therefore if we intend to live a *positive, meaningful, successful* lifestyle it is essential that we pursue *healthy values*.

While I was serving state time in Faribault Correctional Facility I was mandated to enroll into an 8-12 month *criminal and addictive thinking* treatment program. I was very reluctant at first; my core beliefs didn't support the idea that I had a problem. I only believed that I committed some crimes, got caught, and was serving the time to pay for it. I thought this with a "so-what" type of attitude. The last thing I wanted was a label put on me as some kind of mentally ill, drug addicted, treatment patient. However, for the sake of me truly wanting to turn my life around and become a better person for my children and family I decided to let down my guard, sign the enrollment papers, and open up to the treatment process.

So anyways, back to the point I'm trying to make here. I remember being in the orientation lecture conducted by the program's lead therapist and he asked us all a simple question, "What do you value in life?" Instantly we all started roaring out answers as the therapist began to write on the whiteboard...



The therapist turned away from writing and said to us, “these are all great examples of *healthy values*.” Then he followed the praise by saying something that was disturbing to hear but was **real** none the less. In his own words he said, “while you all were freely running the streets as *criminals* and *addicts* these ideal **healthy values** were viewed in your eyes as *false values* your *true values* consisted of **unhealthy values** that look more like this” he began to start writing on the board again...



<i>Values</i>	
<u><i>Healthy</i></u>	<u><i>Unhealthy</i></u>
<i>Family</i>	<i>Homies/Gangs</i>
<i>Health</i>	<i>Drugs</i>
<i>Success</i>	<i>Crime</i>
<i>Safety</i>	<i>Criminal Code</i>
<i>Freedom</i>	<i>Fast Life</i>

The therapist concluded by sharing with us that if we have any desire to endure a lifestyle that includes us refraining from returning to prison, we have to transform our state of mind to *acknowledge, prioritize, and pursue* **healthy** values as our “true values”. The room halted to a cold abrupt silence. We were all impacted by this powerful statement. As I continued to analyze the information at hand I referred to my own personal experiences to relate. It was apparent to me that I was indisputably employing unhealthy values as my true values.

First of all instead of me putting my *family* above all, I was more interested in hanging out with my homeboys. I'd wake up, get dressed, and head straight to the block where we would parlay, sell drugs, and entertain the females of the neighborhood. Many nights I didn't return home or even show the decency to call and check in. Meanwhile, I was deserting the ones that actually cared for me. I left my Grandparents at home with caretakers as they suffered from life threatening illnesses, I deprived my two children of quality time to bond with their Father, and I neglected an amazing girlfriend during my long sprees of hanging out with my so-called "friends". Along with selling drugs, these long days and nights included me using drugs as well. I would smoke blunt after blunt like I didn't need lungs, I drank alcohol like water, and popped pills as if they were candy. These habits demonstrated minimum concern towards my *health*. I continuously put a tremendous amount of effort into committing crime. Although I've been convicted of numerous charges, I got away with far more than has been accounted for. This is a reflection of me not aspiring for *success* in anything positive, because if I did have such aspirations, all I would have to do is put the same amount of energy and effort into establishing and accomplishing positive goals rather than negative ones. Crime brought with it the "criminal code". By me supporting the criminal code I put my *safety* in disregards. For example, after being the target of a shower of bullets while parked at a gas station my vehicle was identified which later lead to me being apprehended and questioned about the event. After viewing the surveillance video, investigators wanted to know who was shooting at me. Even as I knew exactly who it was aiming to kill me I believed in the criminal code and chose to stay silent. The decision put my safety at risk because it left enemies free to roam the streets with opportunity to potentially take another shot at me on any given day. Examining the facts in perspective I realized putting these unhealthy values ahead of healthy values caused me heartache, remorse, shame, and dismay, not to mention costing me my *freedom*. It was evident that I had to re-evaluate my **true** values and make a *change*.

Win Lose

*One day I heard somebody say
When you win, you really lose
That's something I didn't understand at first But
believe me it's actually true
I was in the streets, I was living the life Everything
seemed to be cool
I had it all, my pockets filled with green
But inside I was feeling the blues
I won respect, I earned my stripes
I upped my weight, I served the hypes
But I lost once I lost my sight of what was wrong and what was right
I won; I was out there getting that bread
I lost; my kids needed me home instead
I won connections I met the plug, all I did was push a pack
I lost quality time with my Grandparents, now
they're gone and can't come back
I won; every time you seen me I was driving the fly'est whips
I lost; always driving paranoid cause I never drove legit
I won; I hit that lick and counted out them bands
I lost; they caught me slipping and jumped me over their grams
I won; having sex unprotected without catching a disease
I lost; women having babies claiming the Daddy was me
I won soon as I doubled up, excess on the scale
I lost when the feds caught up to me, my body held as bail
I won a family they were by my side, down for any cause
I lost their trust and respect; I played the game all wrong
For every action there's a consequence
Sometimes you win, but lose
The decision of choosing what's winning or losing
Can only be made by **you***

—Michel Durell Comer