

CAREER BY DESIGN: MISSION STATEMENT MODULE

Crafting and memorizing your personal mission statement helps you remember your top five values and make decisions consistent with those values. For example, my personal mission statement is ...

I am happy, healthy, and peaceful being with people I love, in a place I love, doing creative and expressive work I love, all with financial freedom.

There are several elements to this mission statement.

- This mission statement includes my core values using words that resonate with me. I know that *happy*, *healthy*, and *peaceful* are states of being I value no matter what I am doing.
- I also find I have much more energy when I love something or someone. Energetically, I run more on love than on fear, challenge, or competition.
- I value working with people who are my friends, whom I trust, whom I care about and who care about me. I spend a lot of hours working, and those relationships matter as much to me as my big R relationships with family. And I value being near and with family members.
- I did not realize that *place* was an important value until I lived and worked in rainy, gray, cold, dreary, isolated places. I now admit to being solar-powered (I live in the desert) and seek physical spaces that are aesthetically pleasing to me. I also value living, working, and being in communities that are multicultural and inclusive. The value *place* captures all of that for me.
- For many years my work was quantitative (I am a recovering finance professional), and data-research driven, in part because I put away my more creative–expressive side to find work that would bring me money, status, and approval. I also had an internal fear that “artists starve.” So I did not choose to be creative and expressive although both of those attributes are part of my personality, nature, and talent base. After I started the *Career by Design* process, I reclaimed those aspects of self and reaffirm them as core personal and professional values.
- I knew that I cared about money, but like many people in the United States, I was also ambivalent about holding money as a value. Only you can sort out what your feelings, thoughts, and beliefs truly are about money. With work and time, I came to know that what I truly valued was enough money to feel free to make decisions and live my life according to my values. Some people truly want wealth—and they know what that is. Others do not care too much about money at all. But for most of us, money represents, or allows us to have, something of even greater value. For me, that was freedom. If you notice that you make life and work decisions that seem to compromise your values because you need money, dig a little deeper into your values to uncover what is really important about money for you.

- The phrasing of the mission statement is in the powerful, positive, present tense. Use words such as “I am” or “I allow” or “I accept.” Avoid “I want”, “I will try”, “I hope”, “I wish”, “If I’m lucky”, “I have to”, “I must”, “I should”, “I need”, etc. Avoid negative, doubtful, questioning terms. Affirm your mission in the now.
- My values are in priority order.

Enough about my mission statement! Start drafting your personal mission statement below.

Mission Statement Worksheet

List your top five values.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Mission Statement Draft

Mission Statement Refined

TIP: Use Your Values-Based Mission Statement for Decision Making

One excellent way to use your values-based mission statement is as a criteria matrix for making important job decisions. For example, working with my mission statement from the values chapter, “*Being with people I love, in a place I love, doing creative and expressive work I love, all with financial freedom,*” four of my values are clear:

1. people (relationships)
2. place
3. creativity
4. financial freedom

When I am deciding between jobs, assignments, new contracts with clients, etc., I use those values in a decision matrix. For example, when I was considering two job offers recently, my decision matrix, based on my mission values, looked like this . . .

VALUES	JOB 1	JOB 2	STAY
People			
Place			
Creative Work			
Financial Freedom			

I ranked each of the options by each of the values. So for people, **Job 1** had a lot of people I knew from previous interactions and I enjoyed working with them. For **Job 2** I did not really know anyone. Both **Jobs 1** and **2** would require me to move away from my relational support system, so staying was actually my top choice for the people criterion: In the people row, **Stay** got 3 points, **Job 1** got 2 points, and **Job 2** got 1 point. I gave the highest number of points to the option with the greatest value to me, based on my people value.

I used a similar method for place. **Jobs 1** and **2** required moving, but **Job 2** was an international assignment that was exciting but in a big, noisy city. **Job 1** was in the United States, but in a colder climate. I love where I live and work now. So **Stay** got 3 points in the **Place** row, **Job 2** got 2 points, and **Job 1** only 1 point.

For creative/expressive work, **Job 1** involved research and consulting, using skills I have, but not very creative. **Job 2** was teaching—something I love doing, but not always as creative as what I do now. And again, I love the mix of creative/expressive work I have

currently. So **Stay** got 3 points, and I gave only 1 point to both **Jobs 1** and **2**. (You can decide how to weight all of your criteria. It is *your* matrix).

Finally, financial freedom. Both **Jobs 1** and **2** were offering me a lot more money and financial security than I have in my current situation. But my core value is not financial security; it is financial *freedom*. For me that means the freedom to do what I love without taking a job that distances me from key relationships, my intrinsic creative interests, or in a place I do not love. So I ended up giving all three choices 1 point because they balanced each other out—more money and security versus less money with freedom.

VALUES	JOB 1	JOB 2	STAY
People	2	1	3
Place	1	2	3
Creative Work	1	1	3
Financial Freedom	1	1	1
TOTAL	5	5	10

Using this matrix, I soon realized that staying in my current situation was most consistent with my core values. I am also more content with staying in my current job because I know I am consciously choosing to stay. *Choosing* is empowering psychologically.

In my own life, in the past, I often changed jobs or locations because someone offered me more money, status, or approval. I would seriously consider taking jobs or assignments just because I was happy they wanted me and I had invested energy in convincing them during the interview process that I was the right person for that job. But whenever I used my personal mission statement with my values as the decision criteria, I made what I know was truly the best decision for me. I espoused values about relationships, but moved frequently based on promotion opportunities even when those moves damaged relationships. I suffered doing work I could do, but not work I loved, because somebody paid me to do it. But as I discovered, and as we move into the other parts of *Career by Design* process it will become increasingly clear to you, compromising on core values in career decisions is neither the path to satisfaction nor success.

Here is a blank **Values-Based Decision Matrix** for you to use with your top five values and personal mission statement. Consider using this the next time you need to make a values-based choice. Remember! Staying (no change) is always one of the choices to consider.

Mission-Based Decision Matrix

VALUES	JOB 1	JOB 2	STAY
TOTAL			