



HIERARCHY OF VALUES

From the work of Joe Gerstein, MD

As written by Lorie Hammerstrom and Jim Braastad

Joe Gerstein, a very generous man who was a major player in the founding of SMART Recovery®, served as its first President and a long-time member of the Board of Directors, has a great little tool that he has used with people in the SMART Recovery® meetings he's facilitated. It's called the "Hierarchy of Values," and it goes something like this:

Take a few minutes or so and make a list of the things that are important to you. Once that is completed, pick out the five things that you would place at the very top of the list—the five things that are **MOST** important to you. There is no "right" or "wrong" answers, as these are the things that are most important to **YOU!**

(**NOTE:** If you haven't already done so, please take the time to create your own "Top Five" list before you read on. This exercise will have more meaning and a greater impact if you take the time to determine and write out your "Top Five" before continuing.)

For the purposes of discussion, here's a sample list (in no order of importance):

1. Family
2. Friends
3. Happiness
4. Health
5. Independence; self-sufficiency; well-being

What's missing? Is it missing from your list as well? What Joe has noticed is how rarely people put alcohol (or whatever other substance or maladaptive behavior) in the list of things that they deem "most important" to them. Yet often their actions would suggest otherwise...that it was the most important thing in their lives!

When we sit down and really think about what we value most in our lives, it's (most likely) safe to say that our DOC (drug of choice) isn't one of them. Yet every time that we use, we are placing those things in jeopardy; we are gambling with the things that we treasure and hold dear, putting them at risk with the potential of losing them.

So effectively, when we choose (and yes, it **IS** a choice) to drink or drug (or whatever other maladaptive behavior), we are choosing that over the things we value most! Even if that choice is made mindlessly or without thought, it doesn't change anything—our DOC is being chosen over what we deem to be most important!





HIERARCHY OF VALUES WORKSHEET

What I value most
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

