**Core Values Exercise**

**Explanation**

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Do you know what your core values are? What are the things that are near and dear to your heart? Your values are an important part of your life, and they’re a crucial part of understanding your book. Whether you’re writing fiction, memoir, or self-help, your values will show up in the subjects you choose to write about, in the characters your describe in your work, and in the way you approach the writing itself.

When you are writing about things that don’t match your core values, you won’t be able find the flow. As an example, if one of your core values is authenticity, and you’re trying to write something just to make a quick buck, I promise you the writing will not go well.

The Core Values Exercise will help you figure out what your core values are, and help you align and focus as a writer. Even though you might think you already know what they are, this exercise will make you look a bit deeper. The values cards are linked on my website under Free Tools.

Sit with a journal, and write down the subject of the book your writing, and any issues you may be having.

Now, as you sit with your book. Do the following exercise. First, you have to print out the table of core values, and cut each one out, so that you’ll have basically a deck of Core Values cards.

There are three categories that you will sort the cards into – Very Important to Me, Important to Me, and Not Important to Me. As you look at each card, take only 10 seconds or so to place in a category. Go on your basic gut reaction. There are over 80 cards to sort so just keep moving through them quickly and try not to let your thoughts about the word slow you down. Go with where your body tells you to stack it.

Now that you’ve done the sorting, take away all the cards under the Important to Me and Not Important to Me categories. Set them aside and pick up all the cards under Very Important to Me. How many of the 80 plus cards do you now have? You probably have 20-30 cards or more. You’ve done well at thinning out what doesn’t have much meaning for you. Now, look at these values in a different light. If you want to make certain that your values act like compass points for your roadmap of life, is it easier to follow 30 arrows at once or would the direction be clearer with less arrows? Sort the remaining cards a second time with this thought in mind, “What could I not live without?”

You’ve narrowed the path for your choices for your book now. Take away the cards under Important to Me and Not Important to Me. Set them with the first batch you removed and look at what cards you have left and how many there are. At this point, most people are down to around 12-15 cards. That’s a lot easier target than 20-30. It makes it less of a shotgun approach to your book’s core values.

One more time! Take your remaining cards and sort them with the thought of what do you want them to say at your funeral. How do you want to be remembered? What is your legacy for your time on the planet? This final sorting usually gets rid of most materialistic stuff and brings out the authentic You. Now that you have uncovered your core values, ask yourself these four questions:

· How am I showing this value in the book I’m writing now?

· How am I showing this value in the characters I’m creating, or the case studies I’m quoting?

· How can I show this value in the book more in the future?

· How can I revise my outline, or book, so that it is more in line with my core values?

Journal any ideas that come to you. This is not a quick fix exercise. You’ll find that over the next few weeks new ideas come to you. The whole point of this exercise is to unleash your creativity, and create more alignment and therefore more flow in the writing. The more you align everything you do in your life with your core values, the greater success you’ll have.