
Understanding Yourself: Values

Decisions about your future specialty, residency program, and practice environment are all based on your personal view of the world. Before you can make sound decisions about your future, it's important to have a clear understanding of that personal view. A self-assessment is answering the question, "Who am I?" It involves a thorough assessment of your interests, values, personality, and skills in order to have a baseline of information about yourself before you begin to explore specialty areas and residency programs. You may have a pretty clear idea of who you are, and which practice area/specialty you want to pursue. However, you will be faced with many choices and a great deal of information over the next few years, and your current notions may be challenged. A thorough self-assessment will assist you in having some basic information about yourself to determine your fit in a specialty as you get more experience and move toward your specialty decision.

The results of the assessments completed in this step will be used during the "Choosing a Specialty" phase, as you compare your personal characteristics with those in the specialties you are considering. Keep in mind that the closer the match between your interests, values, personality, and skills to the work of the specialties in question, the more satisfied, productive, and effective you will likely be.

Assessing Values

Values are defined as the principles that influence the most important aspects of your life. They affect your actions, attitudes and behaviors. Values impact more than just broad areas such as relationships, finances, mental health, physical health, religion, work, educational pursuits, and aesthetics. They also influence those with whom you choose to spend your life, where you live, and how you spend your free time.

Medical students often feel very concerned about choosing a specialty and ending up on the right career path. To deal with this concern you must know your values, or what you see as important about your future career in medicine. Commitment to a career, work setting, or environment depends on your values, often more than other factors such as interests or abilities. Every decision you make is a reflection of your values. This is certainly true of career choice. For instance if you value autonomy highly, finding a work setting that allows you to work the way you want with less influence from others will likely lead to greater satisfaction regardless of the specialty you choose. The more you incorporate your most highly regarded values into your work, the happier and more fulfilled you're likely to be.

The Values Auction exercise will help you understand the impact of values on your career decisions and encourage you to choose and rank the values most important to you. It will help you begin to look at what is most important to you and how much you are willing to "spend" to get what you want out of your career and specialty choice.

Remember that your values reflect your life experiences up to this point and are unique; no answers are right or wrong. Your values may change as you encounter new experiences and circumstances.

Values Auction

You have \$5,000 for this auction. In the first column below, plan how you will “spend” your money. What will you bid on? How much of your \$5,000 are you willing to spend on an item? Minimum bid is \$100, with bid increments of \$100.

As the auction occurs, note for yourself which items you bid on and which items you end up “purchasing.” Keep track of how much money you actually “spend” and how much you have left. If you don’t get an item, you can reallocate those funds to your choices as the auction is taking place. You will have to think and act quickly!

Values	Budgeted Amount	Top amount I bid	Purchase Price
Attaining a sense of accomplishment			
Opportunities for continuing promotion			
Recognition as a member of a particular group/team/staff			
Work that emphasizes helping others			
Relative independence from others			
Work that pays well			
Creating new ideas, programs, or organizational structures			
Interacting with people who are different from me			
Power to decide organization policies and courses of action and/or control over your own decisions			
Ability to establish my own work schedule			
Work that can shape the attitudes or opinions of others			
Work that pursues greater understanding in a given field			
Work that expresses my personal or cultural values			
Ability to control the work activities of others			
Work that affords public recognition for what I accomplish			
Work that allows for group collaboration and pleasant interpersonal interaction with colleagues			
Relative assurance of job stability			
Work that fully makes use of my unique abilities and acknowledges my intellectual expertise			