

Integration Fifteen

WRITING A PERSONAL CREED

“What will you do with your one wild and precious life?”

- Mary Oliver

Throughout this learning journey, you have explored the terrain of self-awareness, self-development, and self-gift. As you move forward, we want you to integrate what you have learned about your core beliefs into a unifying creed. Look back and use previous exercises on clarifying your values, strengths, desires, and others.¹

This week’s Integration is to write your own personal creed.² There are lots of ways to do this, and we want you to craft yours in whatever ways works best for you, but we have a model to follow as well. Regardless of what format you choose, we recommend connecting your values to what self-gift and social change you want to contribute to the world.

Begin with short and concise sentences that describe one of these values or beliefs, and put each on its own, separate line. First, answer the following:

1. What do I believe about God/a higher power?
2. What does it mean to me to be successful as a human being?
3. What do I value and consider the highest goods in life?
4. What are my responsibilities to my neighbor?
5. What are my responsibilities to the poor and disenfranchised?
6. What do I want to give back to the world?
7. What are the elements of a life well lived?

Since your life is dynamic work in progress and not a finished product, it is helpful to revisit and revise this creed periodically. Choose how often you want to do this and hold yourself accountable to it.

This version of a creed is more about your core beliefs and values than the concrete practices that are prevalent in similar exercises such as personal mission statements. If you want to extend your creed into those dimensions, do so by answering the following:

8. What are my strengths?
9. Who are the role models and mentors who inspire me?
10. What practices and exercises will I employ in my everyday life?
11. What communities can I participate in and accompany?
12. What do I want to give back to the world?

¹ Specifically, your VIA signature strengths, your Clearness Committee feedback, and other reflections. If you haven’t clarified your values yet, look at [Brené Brown’s list of values](#) and circle every one that feels like a core value to you. Then group those into 3-5 categories and pick one word to summarize each grouping. Those are your core values.

² We are using “creed” as the preferred term, but the following terms have also been used for similar exercises: personal compass, ultimate concern, top-level goal, life philosophy, Lifeview & Workview, mission statement, identity statement, etc.

“That means letting go of the wish to become someone else and remembering that your own vocation—not someone else’s—is the path to happiness. You don’t need to use anyone else’s map to heaven, because God has already placed within your soul all the directions you need.”

- Fr. James Martin, SJ

Examples

- “I am a sinner...loved by God.” - St. Ignatius (and his longer [First Principle and Foundation](#))
- “To use psychological science to help kids thrive.” - Angela Duckworth
- “To help others find meaning in their lives.” - Viktor Frankl
- “If you want to win forever, always compete.” - Pete Carroll
- You can browse additional examples [here](#) and [here](#).

“The purposes of a person’s heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out.”

[Proverbs 20:5](#)

Writing a Personal Creed Tips

- **Other Creeds:** Explore the [foundational Catholic creeds](#), as well as the creeds of other major religious traditions, for inspiration.
- **Multiple Roles:** This [adaptation of Stephen Covey’s method](#) on personal mission statements is also useful in distinguishing the various roles you play in your life and how to combine them into one creed.
- **Visibility:** We recommend that you post your creed somewhere so that you can see it in some way each day - in your room, journal, office, etc. This will remind you to align your daily actions to your top-level goals and purpose.
- **Review & Revise:** Moreover, it can be fruitful to check up on your creed during quarterly or [annual reviews](#) to assess how aligned your life has been with your creed. Then you can adjust the creed or your habits to better align them.
- **Identity:** Explore James Clear’s [work on identity and habits](#) and Adam Grant on the [power of identity](#).
- **Listening:** Recall Parker Palmer’s perspective in *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*:
 - “Before you tell your life what you intend to do with it, listen for what it intends to do with you. Before you tell your life what truths and values you have decided to live up to, let your life tell you what truths you embody, what values you represent.”

“Don’t ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive, and go do that, because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”

- Howard Thurman