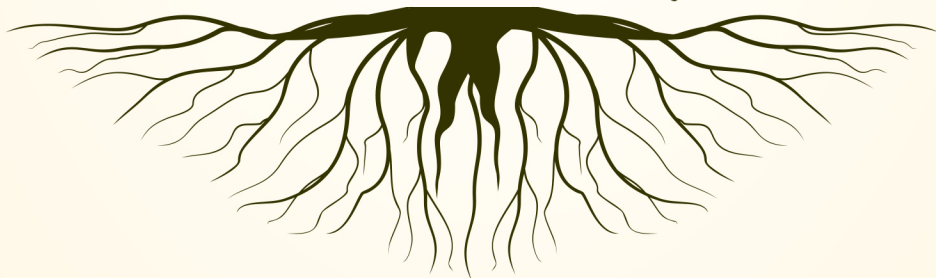




VALUES

To live by



FRANK SONNENBERG

Praise for

VALUES

To Live by

“Frank Sonnenberg’s *Values to Live By* is a master class in practical wisdom, offering actionable advice to cultivate integrity, character, and purpose. It will empower you to become someone others admire and aspire to emulate — a must-read for anyone striving to lead by example and make a lasting impact.”

JOHN E. MICHEL, Brig. General USAF (Ret),
President, Food is Love Foundation, and founder, Soulcial Kitchen

“I read everything Frank Sonnenberg writes for his profound insights into effective leadership and strong values. Whether you lead your own life or thousands of others, *Values to Live By* offers practical tips for living with purpose and integrity.”

LARAE QUY, Founder, Mental Toughness Center, author of *Secrets of a Strong Mind*, and member of the *Forbes Business Council* and *Harvard Business Review Advisory Council*

“In *Values to Live By*, Sonnenberg beautifully captures the essence of our shared humanity — mind, spirit, and heart — in the pursuit of a purpose-driven life. This book will impact your life and the world around you. A truly worthwhile read.”

M. NATHANIEL BARNES, Former Ambassador and
Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Republic of Liberia

“I’ve witnessed how values directly influence leadership and outcomes. *Values to Live By* offers a clear and compelling call to action for executives striving to lead with purpose and integrity. Bravo!”

DEBRA N. MCGUIRE, FASAE, MBA, IOM, CAE,
President and CEO, Private Directors Association

“Unshakable values form the foundation of a meaningful life. In *Values to Live By*, Frank Sonnenberg highlights this truth and provides a practical blueprint for applying it daily — a powerful guide for cultivating integrity, purpose, and lasting fulfillment.”

JOHN SPENCE, one of the world’s top business and leadership experts

Praise for
VALUES
To live by

“Frank Sonnenberg’s 12th book may be his best yet. In our interconnected world, sharing life’s most valuable lessons is vital. *Values to Live By* can help you find (and follow) your North Star — an essential read for leaders and parents.”

THOMAS A. CAPONE, CEO, Global Distance Learning Association

“Frank Sonnenberg’s latest masterpiece — a practical guide for living life fully with clarity and integrity. Essential for *all* young adults with an unwavering commitment to a career, including dance and the arts. A must-read for mastering the rhythm of success!”

roberta mathes, Artistic Director of Dance, bergenPAC Performing Arts School and Faculty, *Steps on Broadway*

“As a strong advocate for value-driven cultures, I believe it’s critical to define and live your values in every aspect of life. Frank’s must-read essays inspire this practice, offering clear, relatable examples to guide you and your children.”

**ANNETTE FRANZ, Founder and CEO, CX Journey Inc.,
Internationally recognized customer experience expert, and author of two books**

“This book challenges leaders to make values the cornerstone of their decision-making. It’s a vital resource for executives focused on gaining influence and inspiring others. I strongly recommend it for anyone looking to lead with purpose and achieve meaningful results.”

DR. OLEG KONOVALOV, called “the da Vinci of Visionary Leadership,” and one of the top global leadership experts

CONTENTS

Introduction: The Value of Values	XIII
Life Lessons	1
Why Moral Authority Matters	3
Moral Authority Is Earned	7
Norms: The Hidden Forces Shaping Your Life	11
Happy People Know This...Do You?	15
Do You Feel Overwhelmed?	19
Are You Letting Yourself Down?	23
Are You Discounting Your Real Value?	27
Believe That You Can, and You Will	31
Where Does Confidence Come From?	35
Quitting Doesn't Always Make You a Quitter	39
Beware: Bad News Travels Fast	43
Small Ways to Leave a Lasting Impression	47
23 Ways to Disappoint People	51
Back to Basics: The Roots of Success	55
Could You Be Wrong?	59
This Should Come as No Surprise	63

When You Do Nothing, Nothing Happens	67
Invisible Costs Can Cost You a Lot	71
Step Outside Your Comfort Zone	75
How to Make People Doubt You	79
Are You Always a Little Late for Everything?	83
What's the Lesson?	87
You Can Learn a Lot from a Lousy Role Model	91
Are You Nurturing or Coddling?	95
Timeless Truths for Growing Minds	101
Guiding Principles to Share with Your Kids	105
The Cost of Poor Communication	109
The Art of Effective Communication	113
Why Didn't You Tell Me?	117
Focus on the Process, Not the Goal	121
Get Paid for Performance, Not Presence	125
What Counts That You're Not Counting?	129
The Importance of Relentless Follow-Through	133
Does It Pay to Nickel-and-Dime?	137
Why Aren't People Buying What You're Selling?	141
You Think You're Getting a Deal...But Are You?	145
Plug the Holes Before Filling the Bucket	149
Spending Money Doesn't Always Cost You	153
Are You a Giver or a Taker?	157
The New Math Adds Up to More	161
How Much Is Money Worth to You?	165
The Top 20 Reasons People Quarrel	169
Silver Linings: Finding Hope in Every Cloud	173

Here's to the Unsung Heroes	177
Ready or Not, the Future Is Coming	181
You Made Your Bed...	185
Can the Pursuit of Excellence Be Counterproductive?	189
Here's an Important Reminder	193
It's Time to Hit the Reset Button	197
How to Live Forever	201
Take the Moral High Ground	205
Resources	207
Do You Have the Discipline to Do What's Right?	209
Close the Gap Between Who You Are and Who You Want to Become	213
Tradition — Honoring the Past, Guiding the Future	217
16 Traits of a Highly Productive Person	221
The 13 Key Ingredients of a Strong Work Ethic	225
How to Prepare for Tough Times	227
It's Easy to Lose Sight of the Things That You Can't See	229
Teach Your Children "How to Fish"	231
14 Things You Can't Afford to Take for Granted	235
Good Friends Are Priceless	239
Are You Always on the Run?	243
17 Ways to Unleash Your Potential	247
Acknowledgments	253
About the Author	259
Other Titles from Frank Sonnenberg	261

Moral Authority Is Earned

Moral authority is the invisible hand that guides ethical behavior, rooted in a person's character, actions, and values. Unlike formal power, it doesn't rely on titles or positions but on trust and respect earned over time. Those who wield moral influence inspire others to follow, not through coercion, but by example. It's the essence of genuine leadership, where integrity and principles hold sway over mere compliance.

When individuals or institutions consistently act with honesty and compassion, they earn the moral high ground, influencing others naturally. In essence, moral authority is the silent leader that shapes values and inspires righteous actions. In a world often dominated by superficiality, ethical credibility stands as a beacon of true influence.

You can't demand moral authority; you earn it.

Beyond Titles: Why Principled Leadership Defines True Leaders

Moral influence isn't automatic. You must prove that you're worthy of it. People, companies, or nations *earn* moral authority by being:

Authentic. Genuine people live by their principles. Their words and actions consistently reflect their true values and beliefs.

Virtuous. Honorable people do what's right rather than what's convenient. They don't twist the rules for personal gain.

Trustworthy. Upstanding people earn trust by demonstrating their worthiness of it. Trust must be carefully constructed, vigorously nurtured, and constantly reinforced.

*“Those who wield moral influence
inspire others to follow, not through
coercion, but by example.”*

Capable. Accomplished people have a proven track record of success. They possess the knowledge, skills, and experience to replicate that success.

Honest. Honorable people are open, straightforward, and transparent. They don't distort the truth or exaggerate claims to enhance appearances.

Open-minded. Open-minded people gather information from diverse sources, solicit input from those of varied backgrounds and viewpoints, and assess it based on its merits rather than its alignment with their own beliefs.

Courageous. Brave people stand up for what's right, even when it's inconvenient.

Honorable. Virtuous people instill confidence by consistently honoring their promises and commitments. Their word carries the weight of a contract.

Humble. Unassuming people are quietly proud. They're modest about their achievements, grounded in their values, and have nothing to prove to others.

Fair. Fair-minded people are open-minded, evenhanded, and unbiased. They don't show favoritism — they treat everyone equally and justly.

Consistent. Upstanding people are predictable — you always know where they stand. They don't sway with the wind, even when it's convenient to do so.

Altruistic. Selfless people are driven by a cause greater than themselves. They prioritize the well-being of others, often placing others' needs above their own.

Discerning. Reputable people refuse to let toxic individuals pollute their attitude, dampen their drive, or corrupt their morality. They choose to surround themselves with people who uphold high standards of honor and integrity.

Accountable. Responsible people own their actions and accept the consequences, instead of shifting the blame to others.

Principled. Morally upright people — role models — embody many of these qualities, setting an example for others to emulate. As Nobel peace prize winner Albert Schweitzer said, "Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing." ❖

Happy People Know This...Do You?

Have you ever noticed how much people complain? Even on the most beautiful days, some folks find a cloud in the sky. This type of negativity not only drains energy but also perpetuates itself, potentially plunging those people into a funk. Instead of fixating on all the ills in the world, focus on being constructive and making a positive impact. Happy people know this...do you?

Consider the time you dedicate to fulfilling your personal needs compared to satisfying the needs of others. You might wonder, if you don't prioritize your own needs, who will? But the truth is that the more you enrich the lives of others, the happier you'll be. As Dr. Ben Carson said, "Happiness doesn't result from what we get, but from what we give."

15 Ways to Make a Meaningful Impact Today

Some people believe they can't positively impact others' lives because they aren't rich, successful, or powerful. They tell themselves, "I'm just one person. What difference can I make?" or "The world is so vast, what effect can one person have?" Yet, as the Dalai Lama wisely said, "If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito."

*While it's tough to change the world,
you can change the world around you.*

Here are 15 ways to leave your mark:

Become a mentor. A small investment of your time can be life-changing for someone. Take a mentee under your wing, provide guidance, serve as a sounding board, and help them achieve their true potential.

Entrust someone with responsibility. Display your confidence and trust by giving someone more responsibility.

Be a kind neighbor. Add a personal touch to the impersonal nature of the world. Welcome a new resident to the neighborhood. Offer to cook dinner if they fall ill, lend a tool when needed, recommend a reliable contractor, or simply drop by to say hello.

Volunteer within your community. Don't wait for someone else to raise their hand — take the initiative and raise yours first.

Comfort someone in need. Be their rock when the ground feels shaky. Offer companionship, listen with empathy, provide a comforting embrace, or lend practical help. A heartfelt note can also express your care and concern.

Find someone who could use a smile. You don't have to be rich to give; your gift can be as simple as a smile.

Spend quality time with someone. Make a meaningful connection. As Jim Rohn, entrepreneur and author, said, "Time is more valuable than money. You can get more money, but you cannot get more time."

Make someone feel special. See the goodness in others, help them feel good about themselves, and bring out the best in them.

Help someone deal with disappointment. Provide encouragement, inspire them to learn from their mistakes, and help them move forward.

Teach someone the ropes. Remember how daunting it was when you first started a new activity or job? Share your passion, knowledge, and experience to jump-start their journey.

Be available for someone who's lonely. Open your heart when theirs feels heavy. Make it clear they're not alone.

Be a catalyst for action. A good intention is like an idea that you keep to yourself. If you don't act on it, it's as if it never existed.

Organize a fundraiser. Give to those less fortunate than yourself. It only takes one person to change a life — and that person may as well be you.

Share your values. Demonstrate that the world is driven by heart and integrity, not just algorithms. Underscore the message that moral character matters.

Create a legacy. Make a meaningful impact on the world; it is our duty to enrich the future for generations to come.

Think of Others Rather Than Yourself

One day, when you're feeling unappreciated, down in the dumps, or questioning your life's purpose, instead of dwelling on your troubles or focusing on your own needs, try making a difference in someone else's life. You'll find that enriching others will lift your spirits and bring you deep joy and fulfillment. As Booker T. Washington said, "Those who are happiest are those who do the most for others." Happy people know this. Now you do, too. ❖

Why Didn't You Tell Me?

Have you ever thought of saying something but never got around to it? A compliment, a thank you, or an apology? Maybe you were busy, had other things on your mind, or simply put it off for another day. Sadly, the moment passed, and the opportunity to tell that person was gone forever. But at least you had good intentions, right?

What did you miss by letting that opportunity slip away? You had the chance to brighten their day, acknowledge their extra effort, or thank them for making a difference in your life. You might assume they already know the impact they had, so it doesn't matter. But does it?

Let Your Voice Be Heard

What do you lose by failing to thank an employee for going the extra mile, expressing love to your spouse, or telling your mentor how they impact your life?

You miss the opportunity to strengthen relationships, offer well-deserved recognition, and encourage continued excellence. You also fail to show that you value their goodwill and miss out on how good it could make you feel.

Consider the time, attention, and care these people demonstrate. Yet, you don't make the effort to show your appreciation.

23 Ways to Show Your Gratitude

Here are 23 opportunities to recognize excellence, express your thanks, and demonstrate that you care:

Affection. "I love you."

Achievement. "Great job. You knocked it out of the park."

Growth. "You've shown incredible growth this past year."

Effort. "We appreciate how hard you tried."

Hard work. "Thanks for the effort."

Cooperation. "We couldn't have done it without you."

Impact. "We'll never forget what you did for us."

Tough love. "Thanks for pushing me to do my best."

Mentoring. "Thanks for showing me the ropes."

Parenting. "Thanks for passing on your values."

Sacrifice. "You gave up so much for me."

Friendship. "Thanks for being there when I needed you most."

Career support. "Without your support, I wouldn't be here today."

Motivation. "Thanks for lifting me up when I was down."

Role model. "I've always looked up to you."

Personal growth. "I learned so much from you."

Recommendation. “They were fantastic. I highly recommend them.”

Apology. “I’m so sorry that...”

Reliability. “I can always count on you.”

Advice. “Your advice really paid off.”

Success. “I’m so proud of you.”

Opportunity. “You took a chance on me when no one else did.”

Recognition. “You’re going to be a star.”

If You Think It, Say It

You have a lot on your plate. The last thing you need is another task on your list — especially since showing gratitude, though important, can feel optional. It’s true, that skipping it won’t set off alarm bells and the world won’t come to an end. But that small gesture can mean a lot.

If you keep your thoughts to yourself, they’re worthless.

It’s not enough to *think* about how much you love someone or how well they’re doing. Take a moment to tell them — people can’t hear what you *don’t* say.

Good intentions are meaningless without action.

Unless you prioritize expressing gratitude, it won’t happen. There will never be a perfect time — other than now. Make it a priority. It’s not only common courtesy to acknowledge achievements, thank someone for their support, or recognize someone for a job well done — it will nourish your soul. Make acknowledging others a habit, not an afterthought. As the saying goes, “If you have something to say, say it to yourself. Then say it to the world.” ❖

Small Ways to Leave a Lasting Impression

When manners are discussed, most people think about how to behave at the dinner table. Common behaviors that come to mind include chewing with your mouth closed, refraining from reaching across the table, and leaving your cell phone in another room. In addition, people think about such niceties as saying “please” and “thank you,” giving up your seat to someone, and cleaning up after yourself. Yet, despite caring about how they’re perceived by others, people often overlook the impression that their own manners make.

In short, manners are a simple way to cultivate respect, build positive relationships, and create a hospitable community. However, even though it doesn’t take much effort to behave properly, it’s mind-boggling what some people do in public. Good manners are a choice. And some people choose no!

If manners say a lot about people, what do they say about you?

Irritating Behaviors That Drive People Up the Wall

Some people display a complete disregard for others. All they care about are *their* likes and dislikes, *their* personal needs, and *their* comfort. It’s as though they live in their own world, completely unaware of those around them. One might think they act this way

because they don't know any better, but many of these individuals simply don't care.

That's the thing that confounds me. They work hard to make a good impression, yet they undermine that effort by being impolite and inconsiderate.

According to an unscientific poll, here are the top 15 behaviors that drive people up the wall. If you're guilty of these things, you may want to reevaluate your behavior...

Do you:

Groom yourself in public? Do you clip your nails, floss your teeth, or clean your ears in public, or do you do those things in private?

Forget to pick up after yourself? Do you clean up after yourself, or expect others to do it for you?

Shout across the room? Do you approach someone when you're talking to them, or do you raise your voice to be heard?

Possess poor hygiene habits? Do you have healthy self-care habits, or do you have body odor, bad breath, unwashed hair, dirty hands and fingernails, or soiled clothing? (Yuck!)

Treat people like second-class citizens? Do you treat *everyone* with dignity and respect, or do you look down your nose at people?

Talk on speakerphone in public? Do you take calls in private, or do you talk on your cell phone near others?

Invade people's personal space? Are you aware of how your behavior impacts others, or do you engage in actions like smoking in someone's home or walking barefoot in the office?

Show up chronically late? Do you arrive at appointments early or

show up late — hopefully with an apology? As the saying goes, “If you show up on time, you’re late.”

Cough and sneeze without covering your mouth? Do you cover your mouth when you cough and sneeze or do you *willingly* spread germs.

Cut in line? Do you wait your turn or think the rules don’t apply to you?

Refuse to pull your weight? Do you *watch* people work their tail off or do you jump right in and work alongside them?

Eat like a slob? Do you chew with your mouth closed or can people see and hear what you’re eating a mile away?

Take things that don’t belong to you? Do you borrow things and return them promptly, or do you only return them when asked?

Let your kids run wild? Do you *discipline* your kids when they do something wrong, or do you let them do *anything* they want — unsupervised?

Communicate poorly? Do you know how to have a balanced conversation, or do you interrupt, dominate, and attack others for their opinions?

Good Manners Make a Great Impression

Some things in life don’t require an explanation — manners are one of them. It ultimately comes down to whether you consider the needs of others or only yourself. While people may not tell you that you’re ill-mannered, I assure you they notice. What does your behavior reveal about your upbringing, your respect for others, or you as a person? As Turkish playwright Mehmet Murat Ildan said, “Good manners open the closed doors; bad manners close the open doors!” What impression are you leaving? ❖

Take the Moral High Ground

Taking the moral high ground goes beyond simply doing what's right; it's about staying true to your values. Here are 20 ways to uphold that commitment:

1. Stand tall when others sink to new lows.
2. Let your humility do the talking when others beat their chests.
3. Be the warm hug when others offer cold shoulders.
4. Shine the light when others spin shadows.
5. Be the giver in a world full of takers.
6. Whisper when others roar.
7. Pour honey when others serve vinegar.
8. Be the calm voice of reason when chaos reigns.
9. Let facts speak when others peddle opinions.
10. Deal a fair hand when others stack the deck.
11. Spot the rainbow when others are fixated on the rain.
12. Stay objective when others show bias.
13. Cut to the chase when others beat around the bush.
14. Draw strength from self-pride as others beg for attention.
15. Be all ears when others can't stop talking.
16. Keep your cool when tempers flare.
17. Let success speak for itself when others seek applause.
18. Keep hope alive when others lose faith.
19. Stay true to your values when others sell out for a quick buck.
20. Lead by example when others lose their way. ❖

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Frank Sonnenberg is an award-winning author and a well-known advocate for moral character, personal values, and personal responsibility. He has written 12 books and has been named one of “America’s Top 100 Thought Leaders” and one of “America’s Most Influential Small Business Experts.” Frank has served on several boards and has consulted to some of the largest and most respected companies in the world.

Additionally, his blog — FrankSonnenbergOnline — has attracted millions of readers worldwide. It was recently recognized as one of the “Best Leadership Blogs,” “Best Self-Improvement and Personal Development Blogs,” and “Best Inspirational Blogs” in the world.” ❖

OTHER TITLES FROM FRANK SONNENBERG

BECOME

Unleash the Power of Moral Character and Be Proud of the Life You Choose

LEADERSHIP BY EXAMPLE

Be a Role Model Who Inspires Greatness in Others

THE PATH TO A MEANINGFUL LIFE

LISTEN TO YOUR CONSCIENCE

That's Why You Have One

SOUL FOOD

Change Your Thinking, Change Your Life

BOOKSMART

Hundreds of Real-World Lessons for Success and Happiness

FOLLOW YOUR CONSCIENCE

Make a Difference in Your Life & in the Lives of Others

MANAGING WITH A CONSCIENCE (SECOND EDITION)

How to Improve Performance Through Integrity, Trust, and Commitment

IT'S THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS

Over 100 Thought-Provoking Lessons to Inspire a Richer Life

MARKETING TO WIN

Strategies for Building Competitive Advantage in Service Industries