

Read the text and do the following activities:

Why society needs a more scientific understanding of Human Values

When we talk about “human values” we tend to mean important **abstract** ideals. Things like freedom, equality, security, tradition, and peace.

Politicians mention values all the time, while all kinds of organizations claim to put “key values” at the heart of whatever business they are in. This makes perfect sense, as values are relevant to everything we do. They help us to choose careers, romantic partners, homes, consumer products, and the broader ideologies by which we live.

But public debate often focuses on perceived **threats** to different values – while rarely recognizing the problem of really understanding the values themselves.

What does it mean, for example, for terrorism to threaten the value of “freedom”, but for national defense measures to **promote** the value of “security”? What does it mean for war to threaten “peace”, but promote “democracy”? What does it mean for Arctic oil exploration to threaten the “environment”, but promote “wealth”.

(...) Another complication comes from people interpreting values in different ways. We can never know precisely what people mean by different values they say they hold. For instance, we might agree with a friend that “equality” is very important, but we may have different ideas about what equality means in real-life situations.

One important factor that determines whether people act on their values is whether they have recently been thinking about them. Someone who has spent time thinking about protection of the **environment** is more likely to recycle a waste sheet of paper than someone who has been preoccupied with saving money.

The time spent thinking about protection of the environment acts as a **reminder** that this value is important, which makes people **mindful** of it during their next opportunity to act accordingly.

Being aware of a value is not enough, however. A person also has to decide that the value fits the situation.

(Extract of the article. By Maio, G. 2018)

<https://theconversation.com/why-society-needs-a-more-scientific-understanding-of-human-values-82537>

Activity 1

Find in the text the meaning of the following words (choose the correct meaning):

- 1) **Abstract**
- 2) **Threat**
- 3) **Environment**
- 4) **Mindful**
- 5) **Reminder**
- 6) **Promote**

Activity 2

Answer the questions:

- 1) According to the text, why are human values important?
- 2) What is or are the complications about them?
- 3) What helps us to apply them in real life?