



# Elections and You

## Understanding how our values impact our decision making

Values are a set of beliefs and principles that guide our actions, behaviors and goals. We use them to define ourselves and our identity, so they act as a framework for understanding ourselves and making sense of others. Living with values is more than just talking about them: they inform our decisions, intentions, desires, thoughts, and language. The list of values is long but some examples can be: authenticity, justice, accountability, fairness, trustworthiness, humility, optimism, and community, to name just a few.

Time and new experiences change our values and beliefs. It is our task to clarify our values as an ongoing process. This process should include reflecting on significant experiences and their importance in our lives, recognizing people we admire and the qualities we like about them, and identifying short and long term goals for ourselves. Clarifying our values can help you choose friends, partners, jobs and more as you assess what values they have and you identify how they align with yours.

Values are also an integral part of our community. They foster our sense of connection and belonging and strengthen the bonds of the people living in them. Having a set of shared values in your community serves as a navigational device that helps you make decisions that instill safety, collaboration, communication, and engagement. Shared values also facilitate trust among members and between the members and their leaders.

For this reason, having a leader that reflects and upholds our beliefs is important for us to feel safe and have a sense of unity and purpose within our community. Choosing a leader based on our values, as opposed to promises, should be a thoughtful and careful process.

Here are some questions to ask yourself to help clarify your values and use them to make a decision as to what leader would uphold and respect them.

- What core values are most important to you when thinking about the future of your community or country?
- How do these values influence your views on current issues?
- How do your values guide the way you engage in political conversations with others, especially those with differing views?
- What kind of leadership qualities do you value most in leaders or political figures?
- In what ways does your political engagement align with the kind of world you want to help create?

