

# 7 Steps to Shape Great Character By Brian Tracy

How to define and live according to your personal values and actions

How would you describe your nature or disposition? If you're like most, it's difficult to explain. Your disposition is one part of the complex entity we call character. Here, speaker and top-selling author Brian Tracy helps explain the ambiguity of character and gives you ways to cultivate a respectable one.

Try these seven steps to help develop your personal character:

**1. Decide your high-level values.** What is character? Your character is the degree to which you live your life consistent with high, life-enhancing values. A person who lacks character is one who compromises on higher-level values, such as honesty, integrity, etc., in favor of lower-order expedience. Your adherence to what you believe to be right and true is the real measure of the person you have become to this moment.

**2. Define what “excellence” means to you.** Understand exactly what your definition of excellence is. Here's an example of one definition: “I set the highest standards for myself in everything I do. I do my very best in every situation and under all circumstances. I constantly strive to be better in my work and as a person in my relationships. I recognize that excellence is a lifelong journey, and I work every day to become better and better in everything I do.”

**3. Organize your actions.** Once you understand your high-level values, develop a clear organizing principle for your actions. Set a standard by which you can evaluate your behavior and create a framework within which you can make decisions. If you have a measuring rod against which you can compare yourself in everything you do, you can grade your activities, such as family, work, friendships, etc., in terms of “more” or “less.” Have a clear target to aim at and organize your actions around.

**4. Decide what you want for your family.** If family is a high-level value for you, then decide exactly what that looks like. “The needs of my family take precedence over all other concerns. Whenever I have to choose between the happiness, health and well-being of a family member and any other interest, my family will always come first.”

**5. Keep focused.** From that moment onward, it becomes easier for you to choose. If family is one of your values, then your family comes first. Until you have fully satisfied the needs of your family, no other time requirement will sidetrack you into a lower-value activity.

**6. Shape your own character.** The wonderful thing about values clarification is that it enables you to take charge of developing and shaping your own character. When your values and goals, your inner life and your outer life, are in complete alignment, you feel good about yourself. You enjoy high self-esteem. Your self-confidence soars. When you achieve complete congruence between your values and your goals, like a hand in a glove, you feel strong, happy, healthy and fully integrated as a person. You develop a kind of courage that makes you completely unafraid to make decisions and take action. Your whole life improves when you begin living your life by the values that you most admire.

**7. Take action.** Create a clear written description of your values and what they mean to you. From that point on, resolve to live consistent with your own definition. Second, discipline yourself to live in complete alignment with the values, virtues and qualities that are most important to you. This is the key to character.