

Social Analysis Systems^{2.0M}

Concepts and Tools for
Collaborative Research and Social Action

<http://www.sas-pm.com/>

Name of this technique: Lessons and Values

Author(s) and correct citation: Jacques M. Chevalier, ‘SAS² 1.0: Lessons and Values,’ in *Social Analysis Systems²*, <http://www-sas-pm.com/>.

Acknowledgements: *Lessons and Values* is a SAS² adaptation of a technique used in the field of personal construct psychology (see *Readings and links*).

What is the goal of Lessons and Values?

Lessons and Values helps you manage a difficult problem by becoming aware of the moral values that you hold and applying the lessons you have learned about those values, with positive results.

What are the guiding principles of Lessons and Values?

- When you state your position on a core problem or action, you may make rigid **demands** or major **concessions** that do not reflect the moral values you hold and the lessons you have learned about applying those values. Negotiations based on this win-lose approach may produce poor results. They leave no room for compromise and lead to solutions that may not last.
- Value-based discussions may be more effective because they encourage you to speak openly about the moral values and rules of conduct you support. These include **core values and rules** that others may share and that you may have applied in other situations with positive results.

- People apply the values they hold by organizing them in a **hierarchy**, from the most important to the least important. Also, they often maintain a **balance** between the different values they hold and adjust them to the needs of each situation.

Here's how to use Lessons and Values

1. Identify a situation involving a **problem** that you find difficult to resolve. Also identify your **response** to the problem or your **position** on how to handle it. Define the problem and your response or position as clearly as possible so that the participants can identify the values at stake. Record your problem and your position or response to it on a card using a few key words or a short sentence. For example, as a group you're worried about a plan to cut trees in a forest park, and you take the position that no one should be allowed to extract resources from the park.
2. Identify why it is important that you resolve the problem. If the response is a negative statement, find positive terms to describe the **value behind your response**. For example, you may say that it is important because 'this will affect forest resources.' In positive terms, this means that 'preserving forest resources is important to us.' Record this on a separate card using key words or a short sentence.

Make sure that participants do not confuse the idea of 'value' with the price that something is worth on the market.

When using a 'why' question to identify someone's values (such as 'Why do you take this position?'), be aware that people may give you answers that explain what causes something to exist or what their interests are.

If you're the facilitator, do not express positive or negative comments or judgments when you are talking about stakeholder values. See Attachment A.

3. Draw a **logical tree** diagram. Place the problem and response card at the bottom of the tree and the value card immediately above the problem (see example in Step 7).
4. Identify why the value identified in Step 2 is important to you. Ask the question in a different way, such as 'What does this mean?', 'What will happen if we apply this

value?', or 'What is there to gain from this?' Record the **new value** on its own card and place it above the other cards.

If a value sounds too concrete or like a cliché, use the **Laddering Up** technique to make it more meaningful. Ask 'Why do you think this (name the value) is so important?', 'Why is this (name the value) essential in life?', or 'What happens when people have this (name the value)?' These questions may help you identify a higher value that expresses the participants' fundamental beliefs. For instance, participants may say that having a 'large grant' and 'new staff' implies 'having more resources, which is important to us.' If asked 'Why is it essential to have more resources?', the group might answer that with more resources they can do a better job and have a better chance of having a positive impact and 'contributing something' to society. The last value mentioned here is higher in the hierarchy of values expressed by this group. You will recognize values that are higher up the ladder when they express things that are deeply felt and are central to the image that participants have of themselves. Also participants view these values as self-evident, essential in life, and applicable to everyone (see Jankowicz 2004: 192-94).

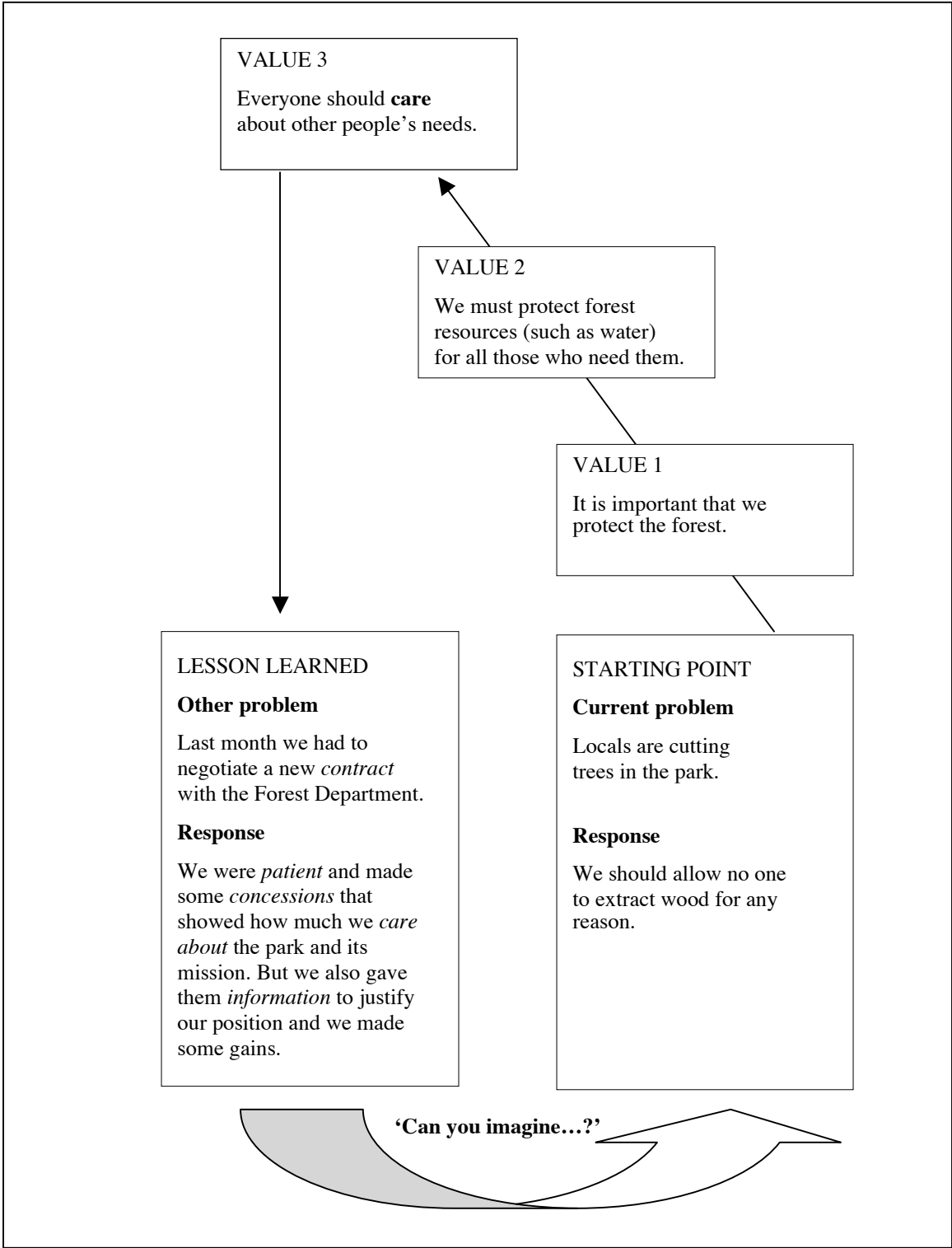
5. Repeat this process until you reach what you believe to be a **core value** you hold. It will be the one you place at the top of the tree. If there are two core values that are relevant to your problem, place both of them at the top of the tree, and then follow Steps 6 to 11.
6. Identify at least **one situation where you apply this core value** with confidence and good results. Describe what you do in that situation.

If the description is vague, use the **Laddering Down** technique to make it more meaningful and detailed. Ask 'What do you mean by this?', 'Can you give an example of this?', or 'How can you tell this response was more equitable?', for instance.

7. Go back to the problem identified in Step 1 and imagine that you're using a **similar response and the underlying value** to resolve it.

If you're the facilitator, be brief when asking this question, don't advocate anything, and make sure there is enough time for people to reflect and respond.

Here's an example of a *Lessons and Values* diagram:

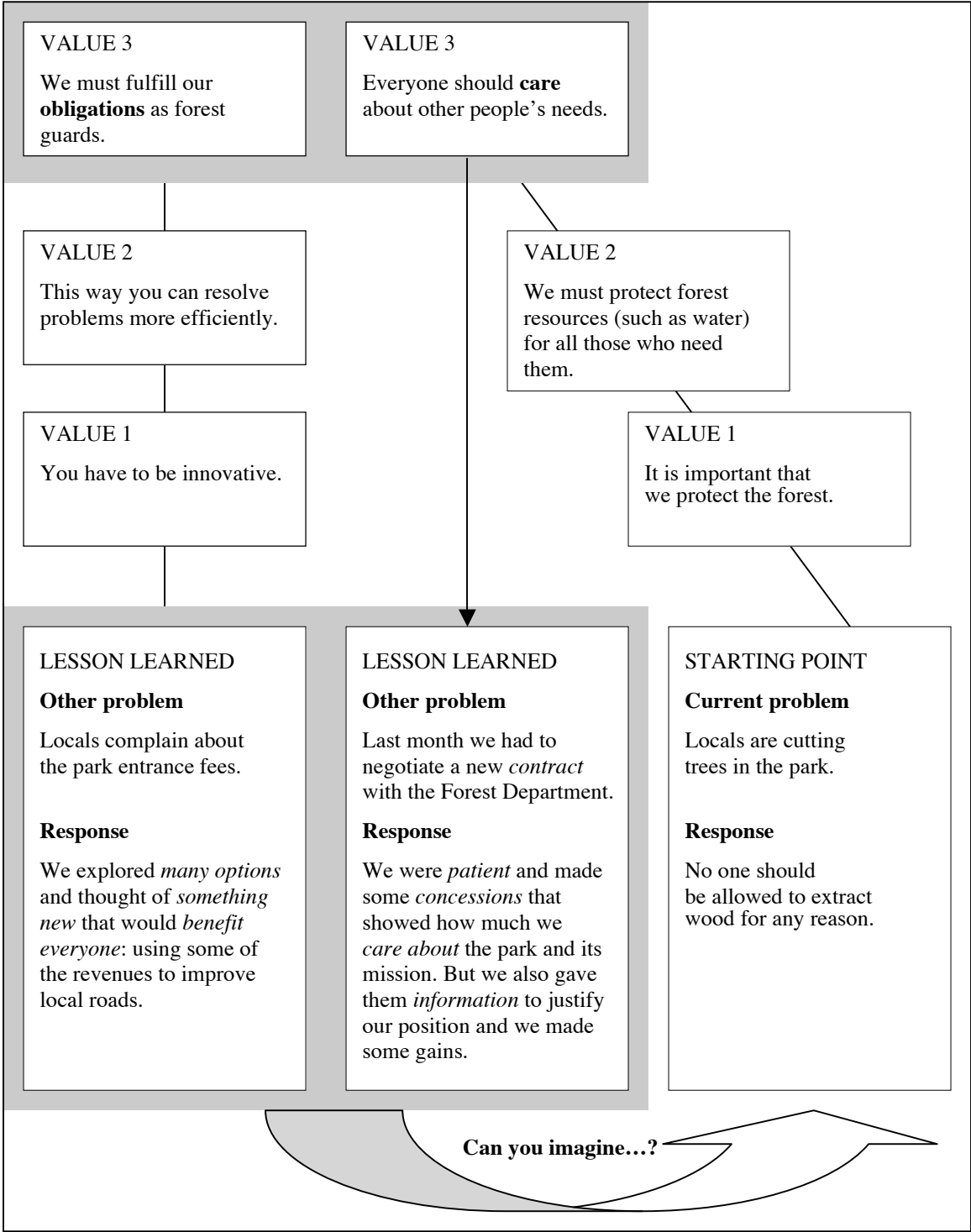


Summary of the example: As forest guards you worry about what will happen to the forest if local people cut trees in the park. You take the position that no one should be allowed to extract wood for any reason. You believe it is important to protect forest resources for those who need them, such as city residents whose water supply comes from a river that has its source in the park. Caring about other people's needs is important; it's part of being human. This is a value that you put into practice last month when you negotiated a new contract with the forest department. You were patient and made some concessions that showed how much you care about the park and its mission. At the same time, you gave them information to justify your position and you made some gains. The question now is whether you can imagine using a similar strategy to resolve your current problem ...

Other values and other lessons learned

8. If you wish to further explore your values and apply lessons you have learned, identify a problem that is closely related to your initial problem and that you found *easier to resolve* with positive results. Describe what you did in that situation. Record the **problem and your response** on a new card using key words or a short sentence.
9. Draw another logical tree diagram and repeat Steps 2 to 5 until you reach what you believe to be the **core value** expressed in your response to this problem. Place this value at the same level as the core value you identified in Step 5, at the top of the tree. See example in Step 10.
10. Go back again to the problem identified in Step 1, and imagine that you're using **this response and the underlying value** to resolve the problem. If this response and the value associated with it are very different from those identified in Steps 5 and 6, ask yourself how you may combine or maintain a balance between the different values you hold and apply them to the problem.

Here's an example of a *Lessons and Values* diagram involving two core values: caring for other people's needs and fulfilling one's obligations. These two core values create different responses and lessons that may be combined to resolve the problem:



11. To explore other sets of related problems, values and responses, repeat Steps 8 to 10.

Making this process work for you

For simpler versions

- Do Steps 1 to 7 only.

For more advanced versions

- Take more time to gather the information you need to complete the exercise.
- During the exercise, discuss and record the views that participants express.
- Write a description for each value.
- Identify more values and responses used in other situations.

Readings and links

Blowers, G.H. and O'Connor, K.P. *Personal Construct Psychology in the Clinical Context*, Ottawa, University of Ottawa Press, 1996, 140pp.

Jankowicz, A.D. (2004) *The Easy Guide to Repertory Grids*. Chichester, UK, Wiley. See www.wiley.co.uk/easyguide

Attachment A: Styles of questioning to reveal underlying values

Name of the approach	Purpose of the approach	How to use the approach	Examples
<p>Encourage</p> <p>So that people begin to discuss their values.</p>	<p>Conveys interest. Opens up communication.</p>	<p>Don't agree or disagree. Use neutral words. Ask questions with a positive tone.</p>	<p>'I see, could you tell us a little more about this?'</p>
<p>Paraphrase</p> <p>Restate in your own words the speaker's message to reveal what you think is the underlying value or principle.</p>	<p>Shows that you are listening and understanding. Clarifies meaning and interpretation.</p>	<p>Restate the basic ideas and dig a little deeper.</p>	<p>'Let me see if I understand you...'</p> <p>'In other words...'</p> <p>'So what you might be saying is...'</p>
<p>Recognize emotions</p> <p>Note the deeper feelings beneath the speaker's comments.</p>	<p>Shows that you are listening and understanding. Helps the speaker evaluate their own comments after hearing them from someone else.</p>	<p>Distinguish between the content of a message and the emotion associated with it. Select a word or phrase that describes the exact feeling and level of intensity.</p>	<p>'So when... happened, you felt irritated...'</p> <p>'You seem to be somewhat...'</p>
<p>Reframe</p> <p>Reword the speaker's criticism or negative comment in the positive.</p>	<p>Shows that you are listening. Helps identify the underlying values or principles.</p>	<p>Use positive statements to restate the speaker's intent. Eliminate negative messages.</p>	<p><i>Statement:</i> 'I'm getting really tired of these meetings. Nothing ever happens.'</p> <p><i>Reply:</i> 'So you think it's important that meetings be productive?'</p>
<p>Summarize</p> <p>Identify the main points of the speaker's message, with a focus on values or principles.</p>	<p>Reviews and pulls together important ideas.</p>	<p>Restate and summarize the major ideas and feelings.</p>	<p>'Would I be right in thinking that the main ideas you have expressed so far are...?'</p>

Source: adapted from Michael Warner, Richard Roberts with Joan Gregus, edited by Joan Gregus and Richard Roberts, Tools and Training, Module 6 (6.28), Business Partners for Development, Natural Resources Cluster Secretariat, http://www.bpd-naturalresources.org/html/tools_train.html

Illustrations

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