Fear Example: Not Valued

Appears in #2, #3, #5, #6 | Areas: Pride, Security, Pocket Book

References: Common Fears | Fear Inventory – Drill-Down | Fear Inventory – 4-Column | 4-Column Expanded

This fear shows up most often in work and social settings – anywhere we expect to be recognized for our contribution. It is the belief that what I bring to the table is not enough to warrant attention, recognition, or reward. It shows up as resentment toward people who don't appreciate us and systems that don't compensate us.

From Column 3: *"I need others to see my value as a person to be okay."* – the security statement. My sense of safety depends on external validation.

Drill-Down

This table traces "not valued" through progressive "why" columns – each column asking *"Why do I have this fear?"* until the fear either repeats (~~strikethrough~~) or reaches a root.

(a) I Fear being…	(b) Why?	(c) Why?	(d) Why?	(e) Why?	(f) Why?	(g) Why?
not valued	not important	unwanted	alone	emotional pain	using	dying
not valued	dispensable	replaceable	~~unwanted~~			
not valued	worthless	~~alone~~				
not valued	invisible	~~unwanted~~				

Summary Chain

> ***not valued --> not important / dispensable / worthless / invisible --> unwanted --> alone --> emotional pain --> using --> dying***

Every branch converges on **unwanted**, which leads to **alone**. The fear of not being valued is not really about the job, the friendship, or the pay. It is about the belief that if others don't see my worth, I have none – and if I have none, I'll end up alone, in pain, and back in the cycle.

"Not valued" shows up most often in workplace and friendship contexts – anywhere there is an implicit exchange: *I give my effort, you give recognition.* When the recognition doesn't come, I don't just feel disappointed. I feel erased. The drill-down reveals why: "not valued" is a surface fear covering a core terror of being invisible, unwanted, and ultimately alone.

4-Column Brief

1. Fear of:

Not being valued – at work, in friendships, in family, in the fellowship. Being overlooked, taken for granted, treated as replaceable. The feeling that what I contribute doesn't matter, that I could disappear and no one would notice or care.

2. Why:

Pride, entitlement, self-seeking, self-pity, insecurity, dishonesty. I expect others to validate my contribution. When they don't, I interpret it as a judgment on my worth rather than a reflection of their own preoccupation. I have tied my identity to being recognized. I am dishonest about my motives – I tell myself I give freely, but I give with strings attached.

3. Self-Reliance:

I keep score. I do things for others with a hidden expectation of recognition. I resent people who don't acknowledge me. I withdraw my effort when I feel undervalued. I gossip about those who don't appreciate me. I demand raises, promotions, or thanks as proof of my worth. I compare what I give to what I receive, and the ledger is never balanced.

4. Better Way:

> *"Being all powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well." (◆ BB p.63)*

My value does not depend on others recognizing it. God sees my work. Do the next right thing whether anyone notices or not. Perform God's work well – not for applause, but because it is the role I was given. When I feel unseen, ask: "Am I doing this for God or for recognition?"

4-Column Medium

1. Fear of:

Not being valued – at work, in friendships, in family, in the fellowship. Being overlooked, taken for granted, treated as replaceable. The sense that my contribution doesn't register, that I could vanish and the machine would keep running without a hitch.

This fear appears in four resentment examples:

- #2 Mrs. Jones – Security: *"I need others to see my value as a person to be okay."*
- #3 My Employer – Security: *"I need to know I'm valued at work to be okay."*
- #5 Susie – where it shows up in friendships and personal loyalty
- #6 Mr. Brown Alternate – where it shows up in workplace dynamics and compensation

2. Why:

Character defects: Pride, self-seeking, entitlement, self-pity, insecurity, resentment, dishonesty, vanity, envy, comparison, score-keeping.

SDSF breakdown:

- *Selfish:* I give, but not freely. I give to get. My generosity has a receipt attached, and I expect payment in the form of recognition, gratitude, or admiration.

- *Dishonest:* I tell myself and others that I don't care about being appreciated – that I just want to do good work. But when the appreciation doesn't come, the resentment reveals the lie.
- *Self-seeking:* I position myself to be noticed. I volunteer for visible tasks. I mention my contributions in conversation. I make sure people know what I've done for them.
- *Fearful:* Underneath the pride is terror: if they don't see my value, maybe I have none. My worth is a house built on the sand of other people's opinions.

Areas of self affected:

- **Pride:** "Others should see my value." I believe my contributions entitle me to recognition. When recognition doesn't come, my pride is wounded.
- **Security:** "I need to feel valued to be okay." My emotional safety depends on external validation. Without it, I feel exposed, vulnerable, replaceable.
- **Pocket Book:** "My pay should reflect my worth." I measure my value in dollars. If the raise doesn't come, the promotion doesn't come, the bonus doesn't come – it's not just a financial issue. It's a statement about what I'm worth as a person.

The self-fulfilling cycle:

I do things for recognition. I wait for the acknowledgment. It doesn't come – or it comes but isn't enough. I feel unappreciated. I withdraw my effort, pull back, do less. I actually contribute less. I receive less recognition. I say: "See? They don't value me." The ledger confirms what I already believed. And the cycle starts again, except now I'm more resentful, more guarded, and less willing to give.

Behavioral patterns:

- Keeping a mental scorecard of what I've done for others versus what they've done for me
- Withdrawing effort, enthusiasm, or presence when I feel unappreciated
- Gossiping about people who don't recognize my contributions
- Comparing my compensation or recognition to others and feeling cheated
- Doing favors with strings attached, then resenting the strings
- Fishing for compliments or steering conversations toward my accomplishments

- Interpreting neutral behavior as deliberate dismissal
- Refusing to contribute fully until I feel "properly" valued

3. Self-Reliance:

I keep score. I do things for others with a hidden expectation of recognition. I resent people who don't acknowledge me. I withdraw my effort when I feel undervalued. I gossip about those who don't appreciate me. I demand raises, promotions, or thanks as proof of my worth. I compare what I give to what I receive, and the ledger is never balanced. I position myself to be noticed and then punish others with withdrawal when they don't notice.

4. Better Way:

> *"Being all powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well." (◆ BB p.63)*

The phrase "performed His work well" is the key. It does not say "performed His work well and received a standing ovation." It says: do the work. God provides. The recognition is not in the contract.

> *"We are not burning up energy foolishly as we did when we were trying to arrange life to suit ourselves." (◆ BB p.88)*

Score-keeping is exhausting. It burns energy that could go toward actual service. Every moment spent calculating whether I've been sufficiently appreciated is a moment stolen from the work itself.

> *"We are in the world to play the role He assigns. Just to the extent that we do as we think He would have us, and humbly rely on Him, does He enable us to match calamity with serenity." (◆ BB p.68)*

Prayer: "God, remove my need to be valued by others. Help me see that my worth comes from You, not from applause. Free me from the prison of score-keeping. When I feel

unseen, remind me that You see everything. Teach me to give freely, without a receipt. Direct my attention to the work You would have me do – and let that be enough."

4-Column Expanded

1. Fear of:

Not being valued – at work, in friendships, in family, in the fellowship. Being overlooked, taken for granted, treated as replaceable. The deep conviction that what I contribute is invisible, that I could be removed and the gap would close without a trace.

This fear appears in four resentment examples:

- #2 Mrs. Jones – Security: *"I need others to see my value as a person to be okay."*
- #3 My Employer – Security: *"I need to know I'm valued at work to be okay."*
- #5 Susie – the friend who takes advantage; value demanded in friendships
- #6 Mr. Brown Alternate – the workplace rival; value measured through compensation and position

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Why – Expanded

Character defects: Pride, self-seeking, entitlement, self-pity, insecurity, resentment, dishonesty, vanity, envy, comparison, score-keeping.

- **Pride:** I believe my contributions entitle me to recognition. When recognition doesn't come, I take it as a personal attack rather than a fact of life in a world where most people are preoccupied with their own concerns.
- **Self-seeking:** I don't give freely. I give strategically – positioning my contributions where they'll be seen, volunteering for visible tasks, making sure people know what I've done. My generosity is a transaction.
- **Entitlement:** I have decided what I deserve. When reality doesn't match my expectations, I don't question the expectations – I resent reality.

- **Self-pity:** "Nobody appreciates me. Nobody sees what I do. I give and give and get nothing back." Self-pity is self-centeredness wearing a victim's mask.
- **Insecurity:** I don't trust my own worth. I need external proof – constantly, from everyone – that I matter. One person's failure to notice cancels ten people's acknowledgment.
- **Resentment:** I catalog every slight. I remember every unreturned favor. I build a case against people who have done nothing wrong except fail to praise me.
- **Dishonesty:** I tell myself I give freely. I tell others I don't care about recognition. I pretend the favor was selfless when it had strings attached from the start.
- **Vanity:** I want to be seen as indispensable. The thought that the world would continue without me is intolerable.
- **Envy:** When someone else is praised, I compare their contribution to mine and conclude the praise was misplaced.
- **Comparison:** I measure everything – my salary against theirs, my title against theirs, the thanks they received against the thanks I didn't.
- **Score-keeping:** I maintain a mental ledger of debits and credits. The ledger is never balanced because I value my contributions more than anyone else ever could.

Cognitive distortions at work:

- *Personalisation:* "They didn't thank me because they don't value me." The absence of recognition is interpreted as a deliberate statement about my worth, when it is usually just oversight, busyness, or someone else's own self-absorption.
- *Filtering out the positive:* Ignoring the times I was valued, praised, thanked, or compensated fairly. Fixating on the one time I wasn't. The mind discards the evidence that contradicts the narrative.
- *Splitting:* "Either they value me fully or they don't value me at all." No middle ground. Anything less than complete and enthusiastic recognition registers as dismissal.
- *Emotional reasoning:* "I feel unappreciated, so I must be unappreciable." The feeling becomes the fact. Because I feel undervalued, I conclude that I am undervalued – without checking whether the feeling matches reality.
- *Should statements:* "They SHOULD recognize what I do. A good boss SHOULD give praise. A real friend SHOULD notice my effort." The word "should" is the engine of

resentment. Every unmet "should" becomes a grievance.

Areas of self affected:

- **Pride:** "Others should see my value." I believe I have earned recognition through my effort, my sacrifice, my contribution. When that recognition doesn't arrive, my pride is injured – not because the work was wasted, but because the audience wasn't paying attention. The injury is to my image, not to the work itself.
- **Security:** "I need others to see my value as a person to be okay." This is the Column 3 statement from Mrs. Jones (#2). My emotional stability rests on a foundation I don't control – other people's opinions. When they don't validate me, the foundation shakes, and I don't feel safe. I have made external recognition the condition of internal peace.
- **Pocket Book:** "My pay should reflect my worth." Money becomes the scorecard. The raise that didn't come, the promotion that went to someone else, the bonus that was smaller than expected – these are not just financial events. They are verdicts. They tell me what I'm worth in the only language I've chosen to understand.

Psychology:

Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) identifies three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The fear of not being valued strikes directly at competence (the need to feel effective) and relatedness (the need to feel connected and important to others). When these needs are chronically unmet – or when we perceive them as unmet – intrinsic motivation drops. We stop doing the work because the work matters and start doing it only when the reward is guaranteed. The joy of contribution is replaced by the anxiety of the transaction.

Equity theory (J. Stacy Adams, 1963) explains the mechanism more precisely. People constantly compare their input/output ratio to others'. When they perceive inequity – "I'm giving more than I'm getting, relative to what he's giving and getting" – they experience distress. The response is predictable: reduce effort, demand more compensation, distort the perception of the situation, or leave. In recovery terms, this is the scorecard in action. I measure my input against your output, and the ledger never balances because I overvalue my contribution and undervalue yours.

The hedonic treadmill adds another layer. Even when valued – even when the raise comes, the compliment comes, the promotion comes – the feeling fades quickly. The brain adapts. The recognition that felt like oxygen yesterday feels like background noise today. So I need more. A bigger raise. A louder compliment. A higher title. The need for external validation is structurally insatiable. No amount of recognition will ever be "enough" because the need is not really about recognition. It is about a void inside that recognition cannot fill.

Self-Reliance – Expanded

The self-fulfilling cycle:

I do things for recognition. I give effort, time, energy – but not freely. There is an invisible invoice attached. I wait for the acknowledgment. It doesn't come, or it comes in the wrong form, or it comes too late, or it's not enough. I feel unappreciated. The resentment builds. I withdraw my effort – I pull back, do less, disengage. I tell myself I'm "setting boundaries" or "protecting myself," but really I'm punishing them for failing to read the invoice. Now I actually contribute less. Others notice the withdrawal – or they don't notice, which is worse. I receive less recognition. I say: "See? They don't value me." The ledger confirms what I already believed. And the cycle starts again, except now I'm more guarded, more resentful, and less willing to give. The prophecy fulfills itself.

SDSF breakdown:

- *Selfish:* I give to get. My generosity has a receipt attached, and I expect payment in the form of recognition, gratitude, or admiration. When the payment doesn't come, I take my contribution back – emotionally, if not physically. I withhold my best work as punishment for not being appreciated.
- *Dishonest:* I tell myself and others that I don't care about being appreciated – that I'm just here to do good work. But when the appreciation doesn't come, the resentment reveals the lie. I pretend my motives are pure when they are transactional. I hide the scorecard from everyone, including myself.
- *Self-seeking:* I position myself to be noticed. I volunteer for visible tasks. I mention my contributions in conversation. I make sure people know what I've done for them – subtly, if possible, but not always subtly. I steer conversations toward my accomplishments. I drop hints about my sacrifices.

- *Fearful:* Underneath the pride is terror: if they don't see my value, maybe I have none. My worth is a house built on the sand of other people's opinions. Without external proof that I matter, I am left alone with the suspicion that I don't. And that suspicion is the one thing I cannot sit with.

Better Way – Expanded

> *"Being all powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well. Established on such a footing we became less and less interested in ourselves, our little plans and designs. More and more we became interested in seeing what we could contribute to life." (◆ BB p.63)*

The phrase "performed His work well" does not include "and received proper recognition for it." The Big Book's new Employer – God – does not promise applause. He promises provision. "He provided what we needed." Not what we wanted. Not what we felt entitled to. What we needed. And the result of working for this Employer is that we become "less and less interested in ourselves" – which is the exact opposite of score-keeping.

> *"We are not burning up energy foolishly as we did when we were trying to arrange life to suit ourselves." (◆ BB p.88)*

Score-keeping is arranging life to suit ourselves. It is trying to control the emotional economy – to guarantee that our contributions are properly credited. It is exhausting. Every interaction becomes a transaction. Every relationship becomes a ledger. Every day is an audit. The promise here is freedom from that audit.

> *"Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us." (◆ BB p.77)*

Maximum service. Not maximum recognition. Service is the purpose. Recognition is not mentioned. This is the reorientation: from "what do I get for this?" to "what can I contribute?"

> *"The growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs." (George Eliot, Middlemarch)*

This is the antidote to the fear of not being valued. The world is held together by people who were never recognized. The good that sustains us was done by people whose names we will never know. They did the work anyway. They lived "faithfully a hidden life." They rest in "unvisited tombs." And their faithfulness mattered – not because anyone saw it, but because it was faithful.

Connection to the actor analogy:

The Big Book describes us as actors in a play God is directing (◆ BB p.61-62). The actor who plays his role well does so whether or not there is a standing ovation. The quality of the performance does not depend on the applause. A great Hamlet is great whether the theater is full or empty. The actor's job is to play the role assigned – faithfully, with integrity – and leave the reviews to the audience. In our case, the audience is God. And God is always watching, even when no one else is.

The fear of not being valued is the actor demanding applause mid-scene. It breaks the play. It ruins the performance. And ironically, it makes the actor less valuable – because a performer consumed by the audience's reaction is not fully present in the role.

Prayer:

> *God, remove my need for others to see my worth. I have built my identity on applause, and it has made me a scorekeeper instead of a servant. Teach me that You see my work – every quiet act, every unreturned favor, every hidden effort. Free me from the ledger. Help me give without counting what I get back. When I feel invisible, remind me that the growing good of the world depends on unhistoric acts – and let me be willing to live a faithful, hidden life. Direct my attention to what You would have me be, not what others should say about me. Amen.*

Practical actions:

1. **Do one anonymous act of service.** Help someone and tell no one. Not your sponsor, not your group, not social media. Let God alone be the witness. Notice what happens inside

you when no one sees.

2. **Stop keeping score.** For one week, do not track who thanked you and who didn't. Do not compare your effort to others'. When the impulse arises, pray: "God, I release this ledger to You."
3. **When you feel unvalued, ask: "Am I doing this for God or for applause?"** The answer will clarify everything. If it's for God, the absence of applause is irrelevant. If it's for applause, the work itself was never the point.
4. **Write a list of ways you've been valued that you dismissed.** Compliments you deflected. Raises you called inadequate. Thanks you said didn't count. The evidence of being valued is usually there – we just filter it out because it doesn't match the amount we demanded.
5. **Pray before asking for recognition.** Before requesting a raise, a promotion, a thank-you, or an acknowledgment, pray: "God, is this about my needs or my ego? Am I asking because I genuinely need this, or because I need to feel important?" Let the answer guide the action.

Sources: Alcoholics Anonymous ("Big Book") pp.60-68, 77, 84-88; Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Step 7; Narcotics Anonymous Basic Text, Chapters 3-5; George Eliot, Middlemarch (1871); Edward Deci & Richard Ryan, Self-Determination Theory (1985); J. Stacy Adams, Equity Theory (1963); Hedonic Treadmill research (Brickman & Campbell, 1971)

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