



The Valor Compass

Overview

At Valor our mission is to *empower our diverse community to live inspired, purposeful lives*. We believe achieving this mission is only possible if we conceive of our role as a school to be bigger than simply educating minds. For this reason we have intentionally created a model or framework, the Valor Compass, to guide growth and development towards well-being in all aspects of what it means to be human.

The Valor Compass

The Valor Compass is a visual representation and metaphor for the approach we take to development, growth, and learning in the Valor community (see below). The Compass is a rich symbol that has embedded within it dimensions, disciplines, and habits meant to guide development towards an *inner Compass*; a personalized way finding tool. Aspiring to develop, both individually and in relationships, within the broad strokes of these dimensions, and within the finer details of the disciplines and habits, constitutes “Working the Compass”.



Compass Dimensions

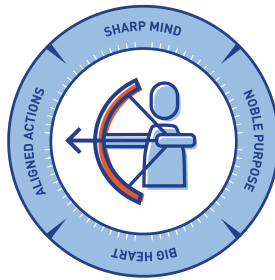
At its broadest level, the Valor Compass is comprised of four basic dimensions: mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual. These dimensions are the most fundamental and irreducible aspects of our everyday human experience. We believe that well-being and excellence depend on balanced and integrated mastery in each of these four dimensions.

Compass Disciplines

The Compass Disciplines represent what excellence looks like in each human dimension (see below). The Compass Disciplines are the ideal foci of individual and communal growth within our community and serve as guideposts for all that we do. These disciplines are intentionally aspirational and serve as reminders of who and how we want to be in the world.



The Compass Disciplines work together in the following way: At any moment I can find my True North, balance my Sharp Mind and my Big Heart, draw on my Noble Purpose, and choose to act in a way that is aligned with my best intentions [Aligned Actions]. This process is always available and demonstrates how an *inner Compass* is put to work (see below).



Compass Habits

While we encourage each community member to discover and develop his/her own unique habits of well-being and excellence, we have selected a set of core Compass Habits that we believe are essential to developing an *inner Compass*. These 10 Compass Habits are defined within the Valor Compass, with two Compass Habits corresponding to each of the five disciplines. We define the Compass Habits as Habits of Center (Presence & Balance), Habits of Mind (Curiosity & Diversity of Perspective), Habits of Heart (Courage & Kindness), Habits of Being (Identity & Joy), and Habits of Doing (Determination & Integrity); collectively we refer to these as the core Compass Habits. Below are brief descriptions of the Valor Disciplines and corresponding habits. Definitions of each core Compass Habit are also provided.

True North: Habits of Center



The discipline of True North is represented by the star at the center. At Valor we recognize the foundational importance of **Habits of Center - balance and presence**. We must balance our intentions with our actions, our hearts with our minds, and our individual needs with those of the community. We must also be present with ourselves and others to respond from an aligned place within. Remaining balanced and present requires that we establish a sense of center where we integrate our growth and learning in a conscious way. At Valor, we call this center **True North**. We adopted the term True North from its use in navigation, where it is recognized that finding true north is essential for accurate navigation. We believe this is a powerful metaphor for our lives and we encourage and nurture each person to find and know this center point and to use it to consciously set the direction of their lives.



Presence: A state of awareness defined by paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to what is occurring moment-to-moment (inspired by Jon Kabat-Zinn)



Balance: A state of being regulated that creates a sense of inner calm and well-being

Sharp Mind: Habits of Mind



The Compass Discipline of **Sharp Mind** is defined by the pursuit of knowledge and skills, individually, within a group, or within the larger community. This discipline is brought to life through **Habits of Mind - curiosity** and **diversity of perspective**. Honing the discipline of a Sharp Mind requires finding the balance between honoring the multiplicity of perspectives available, while remaining humble about what is still left to be learned.



Curiosity: A state of open-minded, non-judgmental exploration and discovery in pursuit of greater understanding of one's inner experience, relationships, and the world



Diversity of Perspective: The act of seeking multiple perspectives with the understanding that all perspectives are both true and partial, in order to take action to protect and empower oneself and others in the service of social justice

Big Heart: Habits of Heart



The Compass Discipline of **Big Heart** is defined by having the courage to stand in uncertainty, while being kind to one's self and others. Having a Big Heart also means having compassion for one's self, the needs of others, and the world at large, and garnering the courage to step in to be a part of the solution. This discipline is brought to life through **Habits of Heart - courage** and **kindness**.



Courage: A state defined by appropriate risk-taking and embrace of one's worthiness in the face of vulnerability



Kindness: A state of gentle, supportive, and generous engagement with oneself and others, rooted in basic, human goodness, and in pursuit of deeper connection and awareness

Noble Purpose: Habits of Being



The Compass Discipline of **Noble Purpose** is defined by being connected to one's deepest values, living from one's best, authored self-story, and bringing joy into the world. This discipline is brought to life through **Habits of Being - joy** and **identity**. Honing the discipline of Noble Purpose requires finding the balance between remaining doggedly connected to one's purpose, while allowing one's self to be impulsively joyful.



Joy: A state of full immersion - with full focus, involvement, and enjoyment - in an activity that is aligned with one's deepest values; a form of inner interpretation of events that leads to willing engagement in the full range of life experiences



Identity: A value-based self-story and meaning-making framework that drives thought, emotion, and action

Aligned Actions: Habits of Doing



The Compass Discipline of **Aligned Actions** is defined by working steadfastly towards action/intention alignment, being engaged and supportive of one's community, and showing a willingness to contribute, through actions, to the greater good. This Compass Discipline is brought to life through **Habits of Doing - determination** and **integrity**. Honing this discipline requires finding a balance between achieving at one's highest level while remaining true to one's deepest values.



Determination: The habit of "sustained passion for a particular long-term goal or endstate, coupled with a powerful motivation to achieve that objective" (Angela Duckworth)



Integrity: A state of inner alignment between values and action that leads to a sense of wholeness and authenticity

The Valor Compass in Context

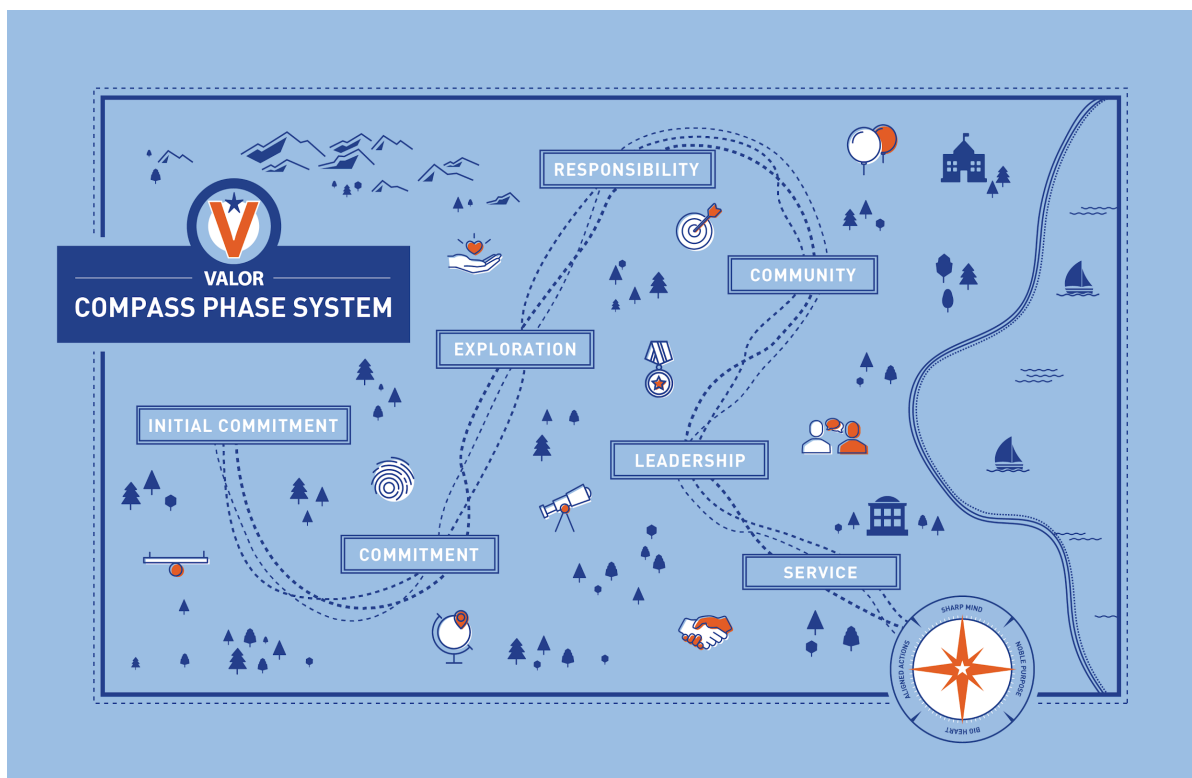
We recognize that everyone at Valor exists within multiple communities. The communities in which we reside, learn, heal, and play can be considered our contexts. The Valor Compass, and resulting *inner Compass*, is a tool to be used “in service of” and within various contexts. A person’s *inner Compass* can be used in service of academics (i.e., Compass-in-Academics), relationships (i.e., Compass-in-Relationships), athletics (i.e., Compass-in-Motion), social justice, college-readiness, and any other major life context. Each of these contexts may call forth additional necessary habits and mindsets. We intentionally define and develop some of the core Compass Habits in several of these contexts as well.

Working the Compass: Compass Phase System and Circle

Inner compass-building is a lifelong endeavor. However, at Valor, the continual process of developing and refining ourselves over time takes place by “working the Compass”. For scholars this takes place along a 5th - 12th grade trajectory and for faculty this takes place year-to-year.

Compass Phase System

Working the Compass individually happens through the Compass phase system (see below). The Compass phase system is comprised of a variety of developmental phases that outline one’s development in each discipline of the Valor Compass. Collectively these phases make up the Compass phase system. In 5th grade scholars enter the Initial Commitment Phase and through a competency-based, self-directed, and gradual release model, continue working the Compass all the way through the Service Phase. Each phase provides opportunities to do phase work, or participate in signature experiences, for each of the five Compass Disciplines. Leaders within each phase “unlock” privileges within the community. Scholars with a deep sense of agency are recognized and celebrated. Scholars who have not yet developed such a robust sense of agency are supported and guided by these leaders and by their mentors. Samples of the phase system, phase work can be found [here](#). One of the primary places where scholars do phase work is in Compass Class.



Circle

Working the Compass communally happens primarily through the practice of Circle (see below). Circle is a value-based, community development approach for self-understanding and organizational development and is a mechanism to catalyze a commitment to growth. It represents a group of people who are committed to pushing themselves and each other to be exemplary as individuals, in relationships, and in the community. Phase work, described above, is completed individually by scholars and faculty and engaged with in Circle. All faculty participate in faculty Circles and mentors facilitate scholar Circles. The Circle participants bring the content of Circle via "Circle work" for a rich, collective experience. A more detailed description of the Circle practice can be found [here](#).

