

Your Values: What Makes You Unique

Your Values: What They Are and Why They're Important

There are lots of things that make you you. How tall you are. Your favourite color. That day in Kindergarten you spilt your milk in your lap and everyone laughed.

But really, most of these things don't matter.

Of the things that do matter, probably nothing matters more than your values: the things you value, the things you believe and the things you believe in.

We live in a pretty awesome world. And one of the things that makes the world awesome is the sheer choice of things you can spend your life doing. Far too much choice to say yes to everything, not to mention that some things – like being a heavyweight boxer and an Olympic sprinter – simply aren't compatible.

So, for better and worse, we all have values – consciously or otherwise. We all have things we value, and prioritize, more than others. We all make choices that define who we are and the life we're trying to live. These are the things that really matter.

Defining Your Values

Trying to define your values is especially important as an artist. You find success as an artist because you aren't like anyone else. Because you combine all the possible things in the world in a way they've never been combined before.

One of the most effective ways of getting there is to understand what it is you're trying to combine. A bit of self-awareness brings all kinds of benefits to your creative life – and your personal and professional lives too – because living your values is far easier when you're aware of them. That's why committing them to paper is a great place to start.

Whether it's a manifesto, a credo, a mission statement, a call to arms, or something else altogether – we strongly suggest you devote some quality time to creating one. It takes confidence and courage to live your values regardless of all the other pressures around you, and a strong value statement is a key step in finding that bravado inside.

So here's how you do it: you just do it. You throw caution to the wind and let yourself create something that's totally personal to you. You stop filtering yourself and you try to find words to describe the things you already know, deep down, are a fundamental part of who you are.

Overleaf there's a list of ideas that might help you do that. But they're not just there to be cut, copied and pasted. This is *your* value statement. It has to come from you. There are no rules but your rules.

So kick back. Explore. Try something out to see what happens. What you make is for your eyes only, so you have nothing to lose and nothing to fear. You might be surprised and excited by what you find out about yourself.

Five Steps to Defining Your Values

Step one: Create your space. Make sure you're relaxed and in a quiet space where you won't be disturbed. This is important – this time is about you and nobody else. Also – it's not a Golden Rule, but this exercise is usually better done without digital tools. So maybe put the screen away and take out the pen and paper instead.

Step two: The long list. Ask yourself what's important to you. They might be specific ideas or trends – hip-hop, country music, life-affirming songs – or something deeper – love, togetherness, risk.

Step three: Some reflection. Take a step back and think about the list. Maybe you'll start to see ideas that sort of belong together. Maybe you'll see ideas that, on reflection, aren't as important as you initially thought. There's no right and wrong – this step isn't about judging, it's about taking a step back so you can do some editing.

Step four: The short list. Group as many of the ideas together as you can. Get a sense of which are the real core values. Maybe that means eliminating some. Maybe it means having one key idea that branches into other specific ideas. Your goal is to refine and simplify: you want to end up with a simple, bold statement about who you are.

Step five: Commit to it. Get creative. It's not just about having values that are personal to you, it's about expressing them in a way that's personal to you. Paint, plasticine, marker pen, charcoal, chalk – whatever feels like a good way of expressing it. Let it develop. Take as many goes as you need to get it in a form you're happy with. Then commit to it. Put it in a place you'll see it. Let yourself be reminded by it regularly.

If you're having real trouble getting started, that's OK. Let it feel difficult. Acknowledge that this process isn't always easy. Understand that defining your values is a life-long process – who you are and what you value will change over time. Just give it your best shot. That's all you can do.

If it helps, here is a list of some basic values some artists share. See if any of these spark your imagination:

Adventure	Faith	Integrity	Rock
Ambition	Family	Love	Soul
Community	Fun	Pop	Spirituality
Country	Happiness	Positivity	Strength
Courage	Hip-Hop	Power	Togetherness
Creativity	Honesty	Quality	Truth
EDM	Humor	Rap	Wisdom
Emotion	Individuality	Reggae	

Happy creating!