



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

EPISODE N° 139

5 Questions to Define Your Core Values

FRENCH KISS LIFE

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5 Questions to Define Your Core Values

Did you hear? We are hosting a *French Kiss Life Podcast* summer giveaway, which is going to be running through September the 23rd. This is my way of saying thank you to all of the amazing podcast listeners who tune in every week and it's a way for me to honor my love language, which is gifts.

I love giving gifts. So if you want to learn how you can be eligible to win, head over to frenchkisslife.com/giveaway and maybe you'll be one of the two lucky winners.

Bonjour and welcome to The French Kiss Life Podcast, where personal development meets style. I'm Tonya Leigh, certified master life coach and the hostess of this party, where we explore how to live artfully and well. Each week, I'll be sharing inspiring stories, practical tips, and timeless wisdom on how to elevate the quality of your everyday and celebrate along the way. Let's dive into today's episode.

Hello there. Why don't we just jump right in, straight to the Community Spotlight; the part of the show where I feature someone in the community who has benefitted from the *French Kiss Lifestyle*.

Now, here's a little bit of back story. I was meeting with my team last week. We had five days together. And on our very last day, my assistant Susan received an email from a lady who has just stumbled upon *French Kiss Life* and she read it out loud to all of us. And we were literally, like, high-fiving each other and Marilyn.

Marilyn sent in this email. She said, "Although I don't have any mentors, or really girlfriends for that matter, it's really hard to make friends when you're not in college and no one at work is around your age and we don't know each other personally. I want to thank you, Tonya, for being a mentor to me of sorts. I struggle with depression and have always had a negative outlook on life. Even now, when I have an amazing apartment, partner, and job that seem too good to be true, I still have self-doubt and anxiety about the future and myself. I just saw one of your blog articles on Pinterest and have been listening to your podcast almost nonstop for the past week.

I found myself strutting down the hall at work, looking in the mirror and thinking, I'm fabulous and sexy and killing it, and getting more into my passions that I've been neglecting, like reading, writing, and practicing French. Thank you so much

5 Questions to Define Your Core Values

for sparking that interest to cultivate some joie de vivre. No amount of therapy has helped me as much as listening to you and knowing others like me have struggled and have not only overcome those struggles, but have also thrived afterwards.”

Marilyn, thank you so much for sending that to me and my team. You and many others like you are the reason why we do what we do and it’s why I love this podcast so much. So hey, listen, if you want to be featured in an upcoming community spotlight, all you need to do is email us, just like Marilyn did to let us know how the podcast has touched your life, or even better, write us a five-star review over on *French Kiss Life* on iTunes.

Alexander Hamilton once said, “If you don’t stand for something, you will fall for anything.” When you claim your personal values, it allows you to fall into what aligns with your deepest truth. Your values tell yourself and the world what you stand for. So in this episode, I want to share with you some questions to help you decide on your own personal core values.

I was inspired to do this episode because I just came off of meeting with my team for five days. We had so much fun. I don’t think there has ever been so much belly laughter at an annual team meeting, but we laughed so hard and we also got a ton accomplished. We have really big plans in place for this year that I’m super, super excited about.

But one of the things that we did is we revisited the company’s core values and really looking at do they represent who we are now. Because the values that we have been implementing were created four years ago, and I’ve grown so much, the team has grown so much, the company has grown so much. So I wanted to revisit them and then to fast forward into the future and really think about the values that will get us there.

So, when I do my own values, I’m always creating aspirational values. I want values that, when I put into place today, they are going to help me grow and they’re going to help me create the life that I want to create, the company that I want to create, and just to help me make sure that my daily decisions are aligning with what I value.

Now, a lot of times, we think that core values are something that companies do. But I think personal values are so important to have in place to really know what

5 Questions to Define Your Core Values

you stand for, what you want your life to look and feel like. And when you know those things, the beauty of it is it helps you make better decisions.

The way I like to think about it, your core values are that constant beacon of light and you want to constantly be heading towards them. So for many years, my top three personal values have been connection, beauty, and inspiration. And I'm starting to revisit them because I know that those things are still really, really important to me. But again, because I've grown and I have big dreams, I'm constantly thinking about what are the personal core values that, if I put into place, will help me get there.

But let's just talk about having beauty, inspiration, and connection as my personal values. If someone comes up to me and they say, you know, "Tonya, I have a huge deal that I want you to be a part of, it's going to pay you a lot of money," I get to ask myself, "Okay, does this align with beauty? Do I feel connected to the idea? Does this idea inspire me? Do I think it will offer me the platform to inspire other people?" And if it doesn't check off all of those boxes, it's not as good deal for me.

And so, when you have these values in place, every decision that you're faced with every single day, again, it will be your guiding light, that beacon, even when the world seems crazy and chaotic, you can always ask, does this decision align with my core values?

So, let's take a look at what the word value means. It is a strongly held belief about what is valuable, important, or acceptable. So get really honest with yourself and ask yourself if you have defined what is valuable and important and acceptable in your world. And if you haven't, that's okay, now is a beautiful opportunity to establish what those values are.

Let me give you another example that just popped into my head as to how I use my core values. So, I'm planning an upcoming trip to New York and my girlfriend sent me some options of where we could stay.

And I was looking at all of the different options and I was running them through the lens of my core values. Number one, is it beautiful? And I think underneath beautiful is luxury. I love luxury. I have no shame about it. It's something that inspires me. I've written about how I found god in Bergdorf Goodmans because I did.

5 Questions to Define Your Core Values

So I love luxury. And to me, I group that up underneath beauty. But I ask myself, okay, is this place beautiful? Does it feel luxurious? Does this place inspire me? When I think of spending a week there, is it going to be aligned with the kinds of feelings and aesthetics that inspire me? And number three, do I feel connected to it?

Now, granted, I'm going to be with friends and my daughter, so I'm going to feel connected to each other, which is the most important connection. And I am also that kind of person who can be happy anywhere. Like, if you put me with the right people, I can be happy in a tent, I can be happy staying in a Motel 6. But it's not what I prefer.

And if I want to live my life true to my values, I need to honor that. So I used my personal values to decide where we're going to stay in New York City. Now, let's imagine that for you, your top value is financial security. And here's the thing, you all, you get to value whatever you want to value. You just have to like your reason for it. And don't get me wrong, I love financial security, but it's not a top value and I have this belief, if I live my life according to my own personal values and I stay aligned with my truth, financial security will take care of itself.

But let's say that financial security is your value, then you would look at those options through very different eyes. You would be looking at the price, right? Nothing wrong with that. I mean, I don't just completely discount the price, but it's not the driving factor for my decisions. So you would make a different decision and you would feel good about it because it's based on your values.

When you live life in alignment with your values, you feel really good about your decisions. It's when you don't know what you value and you're making decisions that aren't in alignment with your truth that you end up doubting your decisions and feeling bad about them.

But when you make deliberate decisions based on your values, you end up feeling really good about your daily choices. So I want to give you five questions to think about in order to create your personal core values. So here's the first question – and this is what we did as a team.

What are the value words that really resonate with you? So what I did, I had a big whiteboard and I just had the whole team list out the words that really resonate with them. So, for example, elegance, abundance, fun, joy, achievement,

5 Questions to Define Your Core Values

generosity, growth, health, happiness, love, passion, service, security, uniqueness, boldness. There's so many value words to choose from.

In fact, I would encourage you just to Google personal value words and you'll have lists and lists of words that you can choose from. Just go through those lists and choose the words that resonate with your soul. They resonate for a reason, so honor that, for whatever reason that you're drawn to them, and write them all down.

The next question to ask yourself is twofold. I want you to ask yourself, what have been the biggest highlights and the biggest lowlights of my life? This is why this one's so important is that during the highlights of your life, you will probably find that you are living according to your values. During the lowlights, you are probably going to discover that your values were being suppressed.

So, for example, one of the highlights for me was that first trip to Paris. And when I think about my core values and what that highlight was showing me, it's that I do love beauty. I do love being in places where I feel inspired. And I love being in places where I feel truly connected to the place and to myself.

Now, when it comes to lowlights, I have many. I'm trying to think of which one to share with you. I also have many highlights as well, but I'll just go with this one because this definitely was me living a life not according to my core values.

And it's when I struggled with my weight – I didn't feel beautiful. I wasn't taking the time to take care of myself or to really enjoy beautiful foods. I was avoiding my life. And because of that, I didn't feel connected to myself. Every time I would overeat, I felt disconnected. And then when you are avoiding your life and using food to numb out, there's no space for inspiration. And so that is one example of me not living in alignment with my values. My soul was trying to tell me, hey, listen, wake up, get back on track.

Another lowlight that really highlighted that I was living out of alignment with my values is when I was going through my divorce. And I talked about this, I think, in episode 134. So if you go to frenchkisslife.com/134 you'll be able to listen to the podcast that I did on the habit of worry.

But it was during that time when I was going through my divorce and I was just paralyzed with worry and fear. And when I think about that in relationship to my

5 Questions to Define Your Core Values

core values that were being suppressed, I was not taking the time to bring beauty into my everyday or to notice that beauty around me.

I wasn't creating that space to be inspired. And on top of that, I retreated from the world because that's what we do sometimes when we're scared and we're worried. The very moments in our lives when we need to reach out and ask for help, probably because of my ego, I just went within and I didn't feel connected to the world around me, which just made it worse.

And so when I started to get back into the game and I went on the worry-free diet and I started to honor my love of beauty, getting up, getting dressed every single morning and I started to get out of the house, meeting up with girlfriends again, and doing things that inspire me, then I was able to get back into alignment. So, think about your own highlights and lowlights and excavate what those moments can teach you in relationship to what you value.

The third question to ask yourself is, who do you admire and what values do they embody? Because usually what we see in others that we admire are things that we secretly want for ourselves. So for me, there's so many people that I admire and I feel so fortunate and blessed to have incredible people in my life.

But I have noticed that the people that I have the biggest crushes on or who when I'm around or I'm reading their books or studying their lives, they all embody my core values. Let's take Diana Vreeland, for example. Talk about a woman that's inspiring and who led such an interesting creative life and someone that I just feel really connected to. She is one of them. Iris Apfel is another example. She's inspiring. She's living life outside of the lines. She is creative. She honors her own beauty. And she seems to be really connected to herself. And in your 90s, I would hope that that's where we finally get to, right?

So, I have noticed a direct correlation with my admiration being aligned with my own core values. So for you, think about who is someone that you admire and what values are they expressing that you want to incorporate into your own life.

Here's another question for you to think about. I want you to think about your big dream. In my Slim, Chic, and Savvy society which is my monthly coaching program for women who've gone through my Slim, Chic, and Savvy program, we called it your big WEG, your wildly elegant goal for the year.

5 Questions to Define Your Core Values

And within that WEG, I was asking them, who do you need to become? And I want to take it one step further. What values do you need to practice every single day to get you there? Because often, in our dream is buried our values. And I am all for aspirational values because if you look around at your life now and what's created your life now and you want to evolve and grow and expand, the chances are you're going to need to grow and expand your values as well.

It's why me and the team, we revisited the values of *French Kiss Life* to ask ourselves, are these values what we still embody. Is it going to get us to where we want to go? So I want you to think about your big dream and what values do you need to incorporate into your daily life to guide your decisions, how you're showing up, to tell the world what you stand for in order to help you create your big dream.

So, here's the final question; what do you want people to be saying about you at your funeral? I know, it's a little bit morbid, but we're all going to die. That's a guarantee, right? So why don't we take control of who we are being and how we're expressing our personal values so that we can change that narrative.

I know, for me, I want people to be saying, like, "She inspired me so much. She showed me what's possible. Every time I was around her, I felt inspired. I felt heard. I felt seen. She was kind. She had so much fun. That woman French kissed life." That's what I want people to be saying about me.

So when I know where I want to end up, I can reverse engineer the whole process and ask myself, what values do I need to embody to help me create that, so when people are standing up at my funeral, they're going to be saying all those things about me? Which, by the way, if you happen to attend, make sure it's a party, number one. I want celebration. And please stand up and say all those things about me.

But you can see how this plays out, right? You go to the end of your life and you imagine the life you've lived and what people say about you and then you reverse engineer it. And living your life based on your core values is how you're going to get there.

So the questions I just posed to you are the exact questions that we were thinking about as a team in order to create our new *French Kiss Life* core values. I asked the team, I said, what words really resonate with you? I wrote them all down.

5 Questions to Define Your Core Values

Then we thought about our mission, our vision, and our goals and what values do we need to embody as a company to get us there.

We thought about businesses that we admire and what values they embody. And because my team, we have so many new team members, they haven't been with me during this journey of growing a company and so I really sat with the highlights and the lowlights of business for me. And it was so obvious, during the highlights, were those times when I was expressing the values of the company. And the lowlights were when those values were being suppressed.

And so I factored those in when we were coming up with the new core values. And then finally, I thought about at the end of the *French Kiss Life* era, which I don't plan for it to end, but I imagined at the end of it, if it were to end, what would I want people to say about *French Kiss Life*? What kind of impact do I want it to have on women's lives, and not just the women that we serve, but my team?

I want *French Kiss Life* to have an impact on my team. I want the families who are a part of the people that are working with me to benefit from the growth that is happening. I want my team to be compensated well and beautifully. And so I was thinking about all of it, how I want our clients and our customers to feel as well as the team and what values do we need to embody to get us there.

So, do you want to hear our *French Kiss Life* core values? I'm going to assume all of you are saying yes. So, here we go. Our first value is we have a get-her-done attitude. This came because my brand and experience curator is amazing. She creates all of our events. She has now been promoted. She's going to be helping build the brand. And we all were just amazed with her.

And we call her get-her-done Gibbons, because Gibbons is her last name. But there's nothing she won't do and she just gets it done. She doesn't sit around talking about it, spending hours thinking about whether she should do it or not. She just gets it done. And we love being around her for that reason and it's something that I want everyone on my team to embody.

I do think there's a time to talk and discuss things, but I also know that we can spend way too much time in thinking and not doing. And I also know, from experience, the more you just get things done, you just show up, you give it your best effort and you're willing to fail and you're willing for it not to be perfect, you

5 Questions to Define Your Core Values

just get the momentum going. And so that is one of our core values; we have a get-her-done attitude.

Our next core value is that we hold high standards for ourselves and each other because, here's the thing, your standards are creating your life. What you expect of yourself is what you create. And so it's so important for me to be surrounded by people who not only have high standards for themselves, but they'll also hold me to high standards because I believe that when you are around people who expect the best from you, that's what you're going to get.

I was even thinking about how this impacts our retreats and our experiences that are live and when I walk into a room and I see a fabulous group of women, I hold such high expectations and standards and I watch them live into it. And so imagine a team where we're all committed to having high standards for ourselves and then for each other and it's done out of love and wanting the best for each other and for the company.

The third one is we're team players. There is no job that we say is not ours. That is like a pet peeve of mine. I am such a team player. I'm like, it's all of our jobs. I will delegate, I will say, you need to own this. But when push comes to shove and I need to get into the arena with you, I will be the first one there. I do not think there is any job above me or below me.

I was talking to my business manager and we're like, we'll clean toilets if we have to. And now, looking back. I can see how that attitude has helped me be successful in life. I mean, I remember working as a nurse and there were some nurses that I worked with and they would say things like, "That's not my job, that's a nursing assistant's job." Like, when it came to my patients, everything was my job. If there was no nursing assistant available, guess who was in there emptying the bedpan. It was me.

I just did what needed to be done to get the job done. And I worked as a team player. If someone was struggling, I was there to help them. If someone needed support, I was there to help them. And that's the kind of team that I want to build, knowing that we all have each other's back, and at the same time, we're holding high standards for each other.

The other one is we listen to our intuitions and we lead with our hearts. I will tell you, in business, when I look back at my lowlights, it's because I did not listen to

5 Questions to Define Your Core Values

my gut. I overrode my own intuition and I started leading with my head versus my heart.

Now, don't get me wrong, I love to use my mind for me. But I think, at the end of the day, success really comes down to you trusting your intuition and being willing to say no when you know it's a no and saying yes when you know it's a yes, and using your mind to guide you. But at the end of the day, I want to be a leader that leads with my heart.

My other core value is we bring the fun and humor into everything that we do. I am telling y'all, we have never laughed so hard. I was like, "Is this normal to laugh so much at team meetings?" But I am a master of mixing business with pleasure and I think we're here to have fun and enjoy life and to laugh. And so I want to make that part of the company culture, which is why it's a value.

So if you apply to work for *French Kiss Life* and you're just a dud and you never laugh and you don't find the humor in anything, you're probably not a good fit. That's why it's so important for us to have those core values because we know who's a good fit and who's not.

I mean, if you're expecting for us to sit around a boardroom and fill out spreadsheets for five days, *French Kiss Life* is not a good fit for you because what we do is we have agendas, we show up, we produce, we get things done, and then we have a lot of time for play. In fact, on Friday we just played because I think it's so important for us to bond and get together and just laugh and not always be making plans. And so we went out on a boat and we surfed and we listened to music and we had lunch and we danced and we lay in the sun and it was just so much fun.

And I love having this core value too because even when we are up against challenges and things aren't going the way we had planned, we can somehow find the humor in it. And I do believe, energetically, the more we can lighten up, the more things can flow. So, we bring the fun and the humor into everything that we do.

Our next value is we create possibilities and solutions. We don't indulge in problems and challenges. Instead, I feel like – and I teach this to clients as well – within every problem or challenge, there are solutions and possibilities. So as a team, when you bring me a challenge, you bring me a problem, I am going to

5 Questions to Define Your Core Values

expect that you are also bringing me possibilities within that problem, or you're bringing me solutions.

And I love this because it just makes us all expand. We start to think more creatively. We don't get stuck. We keep the momentum going. So we don't dwell on problems. We focus on the possibilities and the solutions.

Our seventh core value – and you all, there's only one more, so we're almost done. But our seventh one is we embody elegance in our attitude, our conversations, our style, and our actions. And the way I love to think about elegance in this context is there's kindness, there's respect, and there's effectiveness.

I want my team to be the kinds of people that when there is tension or there's an issue, that we can come together and we can express ourselves with so much respect and so much love for each other so that we can serve the higher vision. I want myself and my team to also show up in a certain way. I want them to present themselves to the world in a way that really embodies what *French Kiss Life* stands for.

I mean, if my team is showing up every day in tattered sweats and they haven't showered for a week, that is a problem because that's a core value of the company. The way we address each other, in our actions, I want all of it to embody elegance.

And finally, our final core value is we are courageous creatives. What this means is that all wild ideas are welcome to the table and then we sift through them and then we have the courage to go after them. We're willing to fail over and over again because success is built on a mountain of failures and it's all about experimenting, seeing what works and what doesn't. And that's where the courage comes in. And the creativity is just thinking outside of the box, thinking in wild imaginable ways and seeing what we are capable of.

So, those are the values of *French Kiss Life*. And as you can see, these values will help us guide our daily decisions as a company. They'll help us hire the right people, create the right things, and serve at a much, much higher level. And you get to do the same for your life. You get to impact your life at a much higher level when you live your life based on your deepest core values.

5 Questions to Define Your Core Values

So, please don't skip this step. Your life is way too valuable. You're way too valuable. So take the time to figure out what your personal core values are and then practice embodying them every single day.

Now it is time for a J'adore. This is the part of the show where I get to share something that I love with you. And this week's J'adore was actually inspired by my team meeting. So before my entire team flew in, my business advisor and mentor and my business manager flew in and we were at dinner one night and we were talking about the Amex Platinum Card.

And, you all, I went on this rampage of love for this card and my business manager turned to me and she said, "You have to feature this card on your next J'adore because I've never seen you be so excited about something."

But listen up, you all. If you travel a lot and you have a business, you need this card in your life. And I promise you, you will thank me later for this, my friends. So let me tell you why I love the Amex Platinum Business Card. Let me just tell you about all of the things that you get with this card.

So, first of all, you get five times the membership reward points when you book your flights or your hotels on [amextravel.com](https://www.amextravel.com). Now, your membership points, you can turn around and use to stay in hotels and to pay for your airfare, so that alone is such a huge benefit. But, you all, I'm just getting started.

You also get 35% airline bonuses, which means when you pay with points for your airfare, you're going to get 35% of those points back. They're giving you points back, how crazy is that? The other thing, when I first got my Amex card, they sent me this card called a Priority Pass, which basically allows me to get in almost all of the airport lounges.

Now, because I am status with American, I typically use Admiral's Club, but I have used the Centurion lounge, which is usually really, really nice. So you also get access to their airport lounge collections. And they're in all of the major airports around the world. You also get a \$200 airline fee credit, so when you get your card, you tell them what airline you typically fly with and within a calendar year, they will credit you back for things like checked bags or in-flight refreshments just by using your card.

They also credit you back for your global entry or your TSA pre-check, which I think is probably, both of them, around \$200. There are no foreign transaction

5 Questions to Define Your Core Values

fees, which means when you use this card outside of the country, you're not going to get an extra charge. I don't know about you all, but that really rubs me the wrong way. Like, I'm already using your card, don't charge me extra just because I'm traveling. But with the Amex Platinum Card, there are no foreign transaction fees.

The other thing that I really love about the Amex platinum card is you get access to their fine hotels and resorts. When I travel and I'm staying in a hotel, I always, always book through Amex Travel because I get extra points for doing that, but then there are perks when you have the platinum card. For example, I almost always get upgraded for free.

And then there's also certain properties that will give you a third or a fourth night for free. And then, on top of that, there's usually a unique amenity that is around \$100 that you get; maybe it's food or maybe it's a spa credit, but again, these perks are adding up.

You also get Marriot Bonvoy Gold Elite status and then, here's what I loved, I got upgraded to executive with Emerald. I think I used Emerald and National. Because I have the Amex Platinum Card, I got upgraded to executive, which means when I go to rent my car, I literally walk out to the executive row of cars, I pick the car that I want, and then I get in it and I drive away. I don't have to stand in lines. I don't have to have someone tell me what car I can get. I get to choose my own car.

When that happened the first time, I was like, this has to be the best thing ever. But when you're someone like me and you value luxury and beauty and inspiration and connection, this Amex Platinum Card aligns with my values perfectly. And you also get your own concierge, how great is that?

But you all know what it's like if you travel a lot and you're trying to get reservations at the latest restaurant because your kid wants to go there, or maybe you want to get tickets to Hamilton and you're pressed on time, or maybe you have to make a change in your flight at the last minute. You just pick up the phone and call the concierge and they will handle it all for you.

And, I just found out that they also offer \$200 in Uber credits per year, which means, if you live in a city and you take Uber a lot, Amex will pay you for it. And I will tell you, the coolest thing about Amex is that they're always surprising me as a platinum member. Like, they're always adding in perks.

5 Questions to Define Your Core Values

It was last year that they were doing a \$100 in Saks Fifth Avenue credit. I just found out that you can get one year of complimentary access at WeWork, which is the communal workplaces. I don't have any around here, but I'm thinking, hey wouldn't it be cool, if I'm traveling to a big city and I need to work out of an office one day, I get access just from having this card. For every dollar that you spend with your Amex Platinum, you get one membership point as well. So all of this adds up.

Now, some people are initially turned off by the annual fee. And I will tell you, this card is not for everyone. I think this card is ideal if you are a business owner and you travel a lot. Like, it's a no-brainer to get this card. But the annual fee is, I think, it's up to \$595.

But think about all that you're getting for that. I get so much more than that every single year, so for me, the fee is like crazy. I'm like, that's a no-brainer. So again, if you're someone that has a business and you travel, head over to frenchkisslife.com/amex.

Now, here's the thing; when you sign up, you will be eligible to get 50,000 membership reward points that you can then use to travel, pay for your airfare, stay in a really beautiful place. And I can't remember what the dollar amount is that you have to spend, but if you have a business, you can probably do that with no problem.

But the other thing that I like about the Amex Platinum Card is that you have to pay it off every month, which I like. So I don't have any added interest. Now again, I have to repeat, this card is not for everyone, but if you've listened to this whole spiel and you're thinking, "I need to learn more about this card," head over to frenchkisslife.com/amex.

I am truly passionate about my Amex card. It's made travel so much more fun, so much more elegant and easy. And again, I have to share those things that I love with you because, if it resonates, then maybe you need the Amex Platinum Card too. So again, head over to frenchkisslife.com/amex, and until next time, my friends, go out there and *French Kiss Life*. I'll see you soon. Cheers.

If you enjoyed this episode and you want to dive even deeper into the French Kiss lifestyle, let's start with a makeover; a mindset makeover. You can download

5 Questions to Define Your Core Values

my free training, The 3 Mindset Makeovers Every Woman Needs by visiting FrenchKissLife.com/mindset – because after all, mindset is the new black.