

Meaning Making^{*}

/mee-ning may-king/ • verb

A human process where one interprets what is happening to create a coherent understanding.

We're in a major meaning making moment.

Real questions about our society are up in the air, and things we used to have social consensus about are now up for debate or (re)debate.



Why are we here again in a big way?

BIG FORCES AT PLAY

- Decaying systems
- Lack of trust
- Fast-moving tech
- Differences of opinions

BIG QUESTIONS BEING ASKED

- Who is an American?
- Is AI good or evil?
- Is higher education worth it or not?
- Is gender biological or a social construct?

This leaves us all feeling...



But it also opens up windows of opportunity.

We outsource meaning making to others

- Content creators
- Thought leaders
- People we see as peers
- Cultural icons

How can we do proactive meaning making?

- Know the belief you need to shift or shape
- Take advantage of the windows that are now open
- Play at the cultural level
- Move out of fatalism and into future-making
- Control the volume. What do you need to turn up/turn down the volume on?

Meaning Making

What is the world-view that you want to cultivate?

**IF WE BELIEVE THAT _____
THEN THIS MAKES SENSE.**

So...

If we believe that the 1% should not hoard nearly 50% of the world's wealth then it makes sense to tax billionaires to fund public goods.

How can you TURN UP the volume to achieve that?

- Define and name the issue (e.g., doom scrolling)
- Leverage metaphors and symbols
- Connect the concept to identities they already hold
- Align the concept with something society is talking about



How can you TURN DOWN the volume?

- Identify a belief and replace it with another
- Disrupt people's thinking by popping collective illusions
- Do meaning making where you have influence