

her ability to connect with people is her willingness to listen. “Listening fast and caring immediately is a skill unto itself,” Amanda wrote.

Another part of the connection fans feel with Amanda is how much they know about her life. Rather than trying to craft a public persona or image, she essentially lives her life as an open book. She has written openly about incredibly personal events in her life, and she isn’t afraid to be vulnerable. Having that kind of trust in her fans—the trust it takes to be truly honest—begets trust from her fans in return. When she meets fans for the first time after a show, they can legitimately feel like they know her.

“With social media, we’re so concerned with the picture looking palatable and consumable that we forget that being human and showing the flaws and exposing the vulnerability actually create a deeper connection than just looking fantastic,” Amanda said. “Everything in our culture is telling us otherwise. But my experience has shown me that the risk of making yourself vulnerable is almost always worth it.”

Not only does she disclose intimate details of her life to them, she sleeps on their couches, listens to their stories, cries with them. In short, she treats her fans like friends in nearly every possible way, even when they are complete strangers. This mentality—that fans are friends—is completely intertwined with Amanda’s success as an artist. It is also intertwined with her use of Creative Commons licenses. Because that is what you do with your friends—you share.

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After years of investing time and energy into building trust with her fans, she has a strong enough relationship with them to ask for support—through pay-what-you-want donations, Kickstarter, Patreon, or even asking them to lend a hand at a concert. As Amanda explains it, crowdfunding (which is really what all of these different things are) is about asking for support from people who know and trust you.

**IT SOUNDS SO CORNY, BUT MY EXPERIENCE IN FORTY YEARS ON THIS PLANET HAS POINTED ME TO AN OBVIOUS TRUTH—THAT CONNECTION WITH HUMAN BEINGS FEELS SO MUCH BETTER AND MORE FULFILLING THAN APPROACHING ART THROUGH A CAPITALIST LENS. THERE IS NO MORE SATISFYING END GOAL THAN HAVING SOMEONE TELL YOU THAT WHAT YOU DO IS GENUINELY OF VALUE TO THEM.**

People who feel personally invested in your success.

“When you openly, radically trust people, they not only take care of you, they become your allies, your family,” she wrote. There really is a feeling of solidarity within her core fan base. From the beginning, Amanda and her band encouraged people to dress up for their shows. They consciously cultivated a feeling of belonging to their “weird little family.”

This sort of intimacy with fans is not possible or even desirable for every creator. “I don’t take for granted that I happen to be the type of person who loves cavorting with strangers,” Amanda said. “I recognize that it’s not necessarily everyone’s idea of a good time. Everyone does it differently. Replicating what I have done won’t work for others if it isn’t joyful to them. It’s about finding a way to channel energy in a way that is joyful to you.”