



*Celebrating the Outstanding Work of our Students*

**“Family Values”**  
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Values are the rules that we set for ourselves, the goals that we personally feel are important. Values come from major influences in your life (family, friends, culture, religion, where you live, etc.) but also from your personal opinions and your sense of self. Values impact the way you do things and who you are.

I have four groups of values that I’m going to talk about. The first group consists of hard work and high standards (Avodah Kashey). The second group of values is compassion and respect for animals (Rachameem). My next value is family (Meeshpahcha). Finally, in the last group of values is self motivation, self awareness, and pride in accomplishments (Mashleema Atazma). These values make up who I am and how I act in the world.

Hard work and high standards are two of my values. I work hard because it is satisfying to do my best and see how good it is. I work hard because of myself. It is important to me that things come out the way I envision them. I set high standards and get upset when it doesn’t work up to the level I planned.

My value of hard work comes to me through both sides of my family. One of my great grandfathers on my Jewish side was an optometrist in Harlem. He owned his own business and worked from early each morning until late each night. On the Chinese side, my grandmother also had her own business in high-end knitwear and ran her own retail store. Another example of hard work comes from a time when my mother was young, growing up in Hong Kong. There was not enough water because of a drought. It was so bad that they only had running water for four hours every four days. They had to get great big barrels to collect enough water to last and during those four hours it was chaos. There was only one bathroom for a family of ten people. And everyone had to take a bath, and clean the tub for the next person. The last person to take a bath had to clean the tub and refill it to the rim to save the water. Laundry had to be done, the floors had to be cleaned, dinner had to be cooked and eaten, and the dishes washed. Then numerous barrels of all sizes were filled with water to last the next four days. Each barrel had its own purpose, like one for cooking, one for cleaning, one for bathing, and one for flushing toilets. Hard work is definitely a family value.

My next value is compassion and respect for animals. I come from a family of four generations of pet owners on my Jewish side. Back before the Internet, it was difficult to get accurate information about a pet’s needs. Now I feel that it is our responsibility to understand what a pet needs before getting one. Since the information is available, we should make use of it. My grandmother had pet rats, so did my mother, and so did my brother and now so do I.

Although the necessary information is at our fingertips, some pet owners still do not bother to do the research. One time I was at a pet store to get crickets for my pet frog. I happened upon some college students who were under the impression that two guinea pigs could live in a ten-gallon aquarium tank. Not only were the college students wrong, but the pet store staff were encouraging their purchase. Luckily for the guinea pigs I quickly came to the rescue. I kindly told the students that a mouse would fit in the tank but that a guinea pig would have barely enough room to walk around. Their excuse was that they were only allowed to have a pet in the dorm if it lived in a ten gallon tank or smaller. It made me realize that some people just want pets for their own convenience or pleasure but do not really understand the animal's best interests, health, and wellbeing. This makes me angry. I wish more people would do research before they think of getting a pet. They consider the animal as an object, not a living, feeling part of nature.

The next value I want to mention is family. I have a Jewish foot and a Chinese foot and they both support me. I care where I come from and value it. I like that I can see the differences and the similarities of these two cultures that make up me. Family history and roots are important to me.

Lots of holidays have to do with family so celebrating the holidays is a way to act on my values. On both sides of the family we have holidays to get together with the people we know and love. I really like the holidays where we get to come together and hear the new gossip and know what is going on with each other's lives. Each year we attend a Chanukah party to do just that with an extended family group on my Jewish side (The House of Greenwald). The H of G has been meeting regularly for 75 years. Yes we do have the invention of the telephone, but getting together makes things special.

It is very important to my Mama to make all the traditional foods for the Chinese holidays. At Chinese New Year we have a big banquet with relatives and I always like that. It is also important to her to go to the cemetery twice a year to burn paper money for her mother who died before I knew her.

Family traditions and holidays are important to me even when I don't remember them all. One time I didn't know that it was the dragon boat festival, but my Mom remembered and went out of her way to get the special dumplings wrapped in bamboo leaves.

Another of my values is that I am self-motivated and I have pride in my accomplishments. I don't need to be pushed to get inspired and when I am done I am proud of my work. I am also self-referencing. If someone is upset I put myself in that person's shoes and then treat them how I would like to be treated. I started this paper by looking inward at myself, my life, and my family, instead of looking at a list of values. I looked at times in my life when I felt strongly. Being an individual is one of my family's values and creativity is a part of this. My brother started his own business making devil sticks, my mom is a self-employed artist, and 2 of my great grandfathers had their own businesses. When I grow up I am going to have a petting zoo.

My values show who I am and where I came from. Hard work, compassion, family, and self-awareness are some of my values. They explain how I act and make up who I am. If you didn't already, now you know me. Bringing all of my values together, my likes, my goals, it all seems to come down to one important value of bettering the world (Tee-koon O-lahm). The whole world is at stake and I feel that it is my responsibility to save as much of it as I can. If everyone does that, it can be done.

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