



# THREE STEPS OF MUSIC DISCERNMENT

A GUIDE TO DISCERNING POPULAR SONGS



We want to be healthy individuals who are capable of making our own listening choices but music companies shape us to be passive consumers. Music discernment shows us how to find the songs that help us thrive.



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# STEP ONE: ASK FIVE QUESTIONS

## 1. WHAT IS THE MOOD OF THE SONG?

Music connects with the listener on an emotional level and can change how you feel. In order to know whether a song is helpful or harmful, you need to understand how the song is shaping your mood.

## 2. WHAT PART OF THE SONG STICKS IN YOUR MEMORY?

Experiences in your life can shape which part of a song repeats in your mind even after the song has stopped playing. Knowing how a song impacts your thoughts can tell you whether it is helpful to listen to it again or not.

## 3. WHY DID THE ARTIST WRITE THE SONG?

Artists are motivated to write music for a variety of reasons including money and fame. They may also want to share an idea or experience to encourage others. Exploring what the artist hopes to achieve helps shape your response.

## 4. HOW DO OTHERS EXPERIENCE THE SONG?

Certain songs can divide people based on gender, sexuality, race, class, or religion. People around you may feel silenced or unsafe when they hear the song. Seeing the impact on others is important when discerning music.

## 5. HOW DOES THE SONG MATCH YOUR VALUES?

We all hold certain values. Most songs reflect what is important to the songwriter. Seeing how a song agrees, disagrees, or stays silent about what we find important in life is helpful when choosing a listening response.

# STEP TWO: CHOOSE A RESPONSE

## 1. AVOID THE SONG



Choose to avoid the song by deleting it from playlists, changing the radio station, or hitting skip online. Each song you avoid makes room for you to hear a better song.

## 2. FIND A RELATED SONG



Choose to find a related song if there are aspects of a song that you find untruthful or unhelpful but other parts of the song you really like. There will be other great songs that sound similar.

## 3. CRITIQUE THE SONG



Choose to learn from the ideas and feelings within the song. You may not agree with everything you hear, but you can learn more about yourself and the world by using the song to think and feel deeply.

## 4. CONSUME THE SONG



Choose to listen to the song in the background. Music can help you relax, socialize, study, and even exercise. The song will continue to shape how you think and feel even if you are not actively listening.

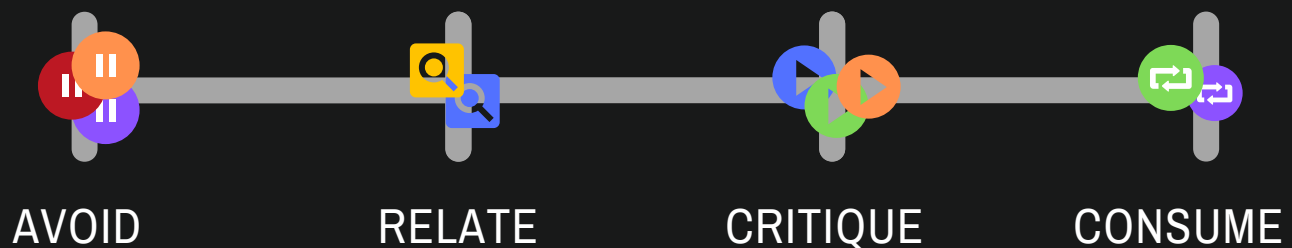
# STEP THREE: EVALUATE

## 1. DID YOU FOLLOW THROUGH WITH YOUR CHOICE?

It is important to check that your behaviour changes after you choose a listening response. It is easy to fall into old habits and continue to let society choose what you listen to even though you said you wanted to respond differently. Look for signs that you are acting out your decision.

## 2. ARE YOUR CHOICES BALANCED?

Map out the last ten songs you discerned to see if you had a variety of responses. If most of your responses are in one category, you have an unhealthy habit and need more practice. A sign of good discernment is the ability to identify specific songs that you are avoiding, relating, critiquing, or consuming.



## 3. ARE YOU CHANGING FOR THE BETTER?

Reflect on whether your response to the song is making it easier or more difficult for you to live out your values. Maybe there is a song you initially decide to consume but you notice that your thoughts shift to jealousy and unhappiness every time you hear it. It's never too late to re-evaluate a song and change your response to it.