

# Who Are You? Pondering Your Personal Identity

In the last couple of lessons, you started to expand your knowledge of yourself. Who you are—your identity—is a powerful force in your life and speaks volumes to others who meet you. Your personal identity contains more than just your thoughts and feelings. Now, we look at some other things that help make up your personal identity.

***Your identity plays an important role in your decisions and relationships.***

Thinking about who you are will strengthen the connections between your mind, body, and behaviors. Also, you can get a better handle of where you are in life as well as where you're headed.

**Although there are plenty of theories out there about identity, including its formation and how you maintain it, think about these basic elements of your identity:**

- 1. Your personal family history.** *Where you were raised, who you grew up with, and the experiences you had as you grew from an infant all the way through your early adult years are powerful factors affecting the development of your personal identity.*
  - Consider sayings like, “You can take the girl out of the city, but you can’t take the city out of the girl” and their implications. Where you’ve come from plays a major role in who you are.
  - Your history does not have to be the end of the story when it comes to your present identity. An encouraging thing about life is that you can take steps to be the person you want to be at any time.
- 2. The “group” of people you hang out with.** Much of who you are today can be credited to the people you most closely affiliate with. Your friends probably share interests in the same kinds of things you do.
  - Think about it—maybe several of your friends play golf and so do you. You’re into fitness and a health nut as are a few of your friends. Even though you may associate the idea of “cliques” with

your high school years, it's still true that we lean towards people who share similarities to ourselves.

- You can be choosy about the people you pick to hang out with. If you want to be successful, choose to hang out with people you see as good at their work and successful in life.
3. **Your physical appearance.** The clothes you wear, the way you style your hair, and how you carry yourself make up an important part of your personal identity. Your appearance isn't the only thing that's relevant about who you are, the fact is that your physical state provides people with a picture of who you are.
  4. **Your feelings, thoughts, and beliefs about you.** Your self-image is made up of how you feel about yourself. Also, what you believe to be true about yourself is a powerful force in determining your personal identity.
    - Example, if you believe you're an overweight, unattractive person, then you might unconsciously portray those characteristics toward others. But if you see yourself as someone who's working hard to excel in her career and willing to give something to get something, you present a more positive identity to others.
    - What you feel, think, and believe about yourself are major aspects of your overall identity.

Make it a point to think about who you are as an individual on this earth. Notice that your personal identity is a complex mix of your history, your connections, and your thoughts and beliefs about yourself. How you appear to others shows your identity.

Realize that you have significant power to influence the type of identity you possess and show to others. As you develop your authenticity, stay true to who you really are. But, you can still learn to let go of the negative influences of the past that inhibit you today.

The next lesson talks about your past and how writing down past events of your life can help you in your quest to get to know yourself.

**Here's what you need to do today:**

List 3 best friends that you hang out with the most. How do these friends affect your identity?



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