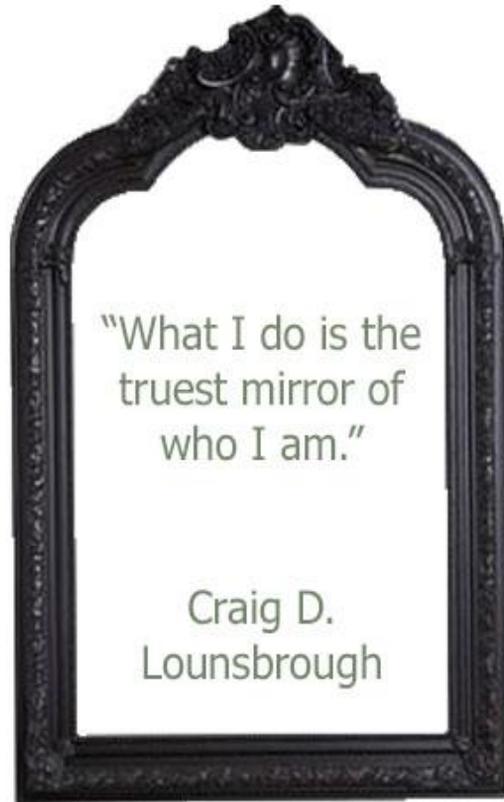


# IDENTITY

September 2021



Skilled Helpers Collaborative

Individual Perspectives  
Collective Meaningful Content

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## Skilled Helpers Collaborative

# Identity

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### The Skilled Helpers Collaborative

The Skilled Helpers Collaborative is an initiative aiming to bring meaningful content to you. Various skilled helpers from different backgrounds sharing their perspectives regarding a specific topic. They don't get to read each other's contribution before publication and thus don't influence each other to make sure, you as a reader can enjoy a variety of insights.

Grateful for their willingness to participate in this collaborative project, this month's contributors are:

Mathias Sager – Psychologist

Sujit Gogoi- Career Clarity Coach

Rika Cossey - Transformational Coach

Kally Tay – Freelance Expert

They say we come into this world innocent, unbiased. Little human beings with unique personalities. The environment in which we are born, caregivers, teachers, family, friends, neighbours and the experiences throughout life help form our identity.

Feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or depressed due to all the confusing content we hear, read or watch can happen to all of us. Questions as 'Who am I?' or "What is right for me?" could arise, as also the feeling of disconnection to life, others or even yourself.

The labels we as human beings create(d) to identify objects are also used to identify a person's uniqueness. While this provides clarity and a certain degree of safety, there is also a danger in identifying others or ourselves to such labels. We become our job-title, economical state (poor, rich) the colour of our skin, gender, state of our health, etc.

In addition, when an object is broken we (try to) fix it and nowadays, we seem to think we humans can be broken too. Even worse, we think we need to be fixed when a problem occurs.

Human beings are complex creatures and so much more than the labels we choose or often identify ourselves to. Solving a physical or mental issue is totally different to fixing an object. It involves being aware of beliefs, values, emotional or physical pains and the labels someone identifies him/herself too.

It also requires empathy, kindness and compassion without placing a label on to each other.

These skills we all possess the moment we come into this world. All we have to do is to remember our human identity. Regardless the labels we identify ourselves to; we will always be human beings first.

Enjoy the perspectives from the Skilled Helpers and we all hope you like this month's collaborative article.

Warm regards,

**Patty Wolters**

Skilled Helper

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## Identity: Who are you?

by Mathias Sager

*What a significant purpose of life! Life isn't about learning to fit in somewhere. It is about creating somebody new.*

### **Socio-cultural identities**

Of course, you may want to stay social and cooperative with people in your life. However, with time, the nature of these relationships might transform as your awareness regenerates. Separation from yourself and others means, in a psycho-spiritual way, that you let go of your identity, which is based on social conformity and cultural beliefs that would be misbeliefs in a different culture. You also must let go of attachment to others' judgments, which are opinions only and have little if anything to do with truth. By distancing yourself from the idealized role you have learned to assume during all the years of education, socialization, and enculturation, you begin to see who you really are.

Don't waste your thoughts on interpreting equipment, façade styles, and fashions. They are not relevant to our true selves, and they go as fast as they came. We are not our social personalities. Clinging to our social identity and old ways of thinking about ourselves makes us, in any case, matter less than we deserve. Artificial rules that protect selfish interests are not natural laws of life. So don't take them so seriously!

Children are dependent on the care received from their parents and other adults in the culture they are born into. For them, inter-psychological learning, the influence of other people is unavoidable. Their survival depends on following their caregivers. Such dependencies should not exist anymore later in life, though. An adult person can re-build their own identity intra-psychologically. There is a possibility, even a necessity to recognize your socio-cultural independence. It is a trap to let others' opinions and beliefs define one. Therefore, such an awareness allows you to free yourself from backward-related definitions of your person by others.

### **Losing one's identity**

When I moved abroad and ended up being on myself in a completely different culture, there was nobody and nothing anymore that would have supported and validated my identity at that time. For my new environment far away from my former social networks, jobs, and possessions that had defined me to a significant extent for a long time, too, I then was left to be just an unknown foreigner. Therefore, I could not and did not have to live up to any story anymore. What an opportunity. I've realized how foolish it had been to build one's personality too much on the unstable ground of externals.

Meanwhile, having left most of the external things and values behind, there has remained one true identity-giving source: The inner self that connects all of us on a deeper human level. I've found this true self when mentalizing back to before I had grown into an adult body, before I was associated with a particular social status and related privileges, and before I started to hold on to a variety of achievements and acquisitions. Then, literally as an alien in a foreign country, I became aware of what was left, what will always be left, and I mentally returned to the core of whom I am: The consciousness that is all and my origin of life. For all my life, I was looking for happiness. Then I found meaning. And when I accepted meaning, happiness became meaningless. That's when I started to really enjoy life again; joy through the effort to create awareness-intelligently an identity instead of blindly assuming one that's tried to be assigned to me. That's also when I better understood what it means to be an artist.

When you experience meaninglessness, low motivation, and urges to give up, it is helpful to check the extra-future element and probe its awaring, for example, as follows. Ask yourself: Am I creating in line with life, the life that continues in all human evolution beyond my family, my party, my nation, my race, etc., or do I identify with such social constructs on which can't be hold on to in the perishable physical world? If it is the latter, feelings of meaninglessness could stem from such a misidentification. One might feel that clearly when losing somebody close when having lost a job, or being rejected from a social group. We must die to our ego during a lifetime voluntarily. As we shift from socio-cultural group identity to a universally valid life membership, we will have found our purpose in life as well. The ego cannot be overcome by disabling the mind (as sometimes advertised in meditation classes). Selflessness is achieved by thinking awareness-intelligently about the egoless self, through non-transactionality in meeting others and focusing on a mutually beneficial future in all humanity's interest.

### **Achieving a symmetrical, congruent (awareness-intelligent) identity**

We can clearly feel that we separate mental awareness from bodily sensations and instead picture the wholeness and infinity of life. We can change our way of thinking. The most profound, impactful, and sustainable way to change is to change the layer from where thought arises: awareness. The human condition is no longer dependent on social identity alone. It learns to integrate the three modes of the intra-past, the inter-present, and the extra-future into increased and undivided awareness (for the

detailed explanation, see <https://mathias-sager.com/tag/awareness-intelligence/>). As our thoughts and actions become more symmetrical (and our business and private cards more congruent), life will never feel like a lie again.

Becoming a genuine leader is founded on mastering self-leadership and being at peace with oneself and the world. To serve as a role model, one must be ready to give up their title and position. Too dissonant can a professional identity become with the aware self. How could one ever enjoy people who admire rather their title-based authority and social status rather than knowing about their creativity, vulnerability, and loving character in the first place?

**Connect with Mathias Sager**, psychologist @ [www.mathias-sager.com](http://www.mathias-sager.com)

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## Identity

by Sujit Gogoi

If someone asks you, "Who are you?", how will you respond? Will you start with your Job positions, your skills, your highest qualifications, your Achievements, or your role in society? Well, it depends on the situation and what you tend to achieve, doesn't it? But what if someone asks you to define yourself, without mentioning any of those? Will it make you think for sometime? To be honest, it was not easy for me. I always thought that what I do, and what I achieve in life is what defines me. But how far is it true? Let's discuss.

### How is our identity created?

The creation of our identity mostly begins in an unconscious manner during our teenage years. We adopt beliefs, values, and aspirations from our social circle which works as a basis of formation for who we are. We also start to define ourselves based on how others treat us or respond to us, and our own judgement of ourselves in comparison to others.

Moreover, Self-Identity is deeply ingrained in our mind that sometimes we misunderstood it as the only truth. It is also subliminal in the sense that we are unaware that our behaviours more often than not are influenced by our identity. For instance, If you define yourself as a smart and charismatic person, then whenever you are in your social environment, you will have less fear when meeting new people and can easily connect with others. Whereas, if you define yourself as failure or weak, then you will often depict a sign of pessimism or worthlessness. This usually happens when we are excessively identified with our past experiences.

### Identity a hindrance to self growth?

As our identity gets built mostly from the interaction with our outside environment, it might not be consistent with who we really are at the core. And if our Self-Identity becomes inconsistent with who we are at the core or who we want to become - ideal self, then it becomes a limitation. For eg., you had a difficult time in your school days, and the teachers once told you that you are dull and unintelligent. And you think of it as true and moving forward, you haven't tried anything new which could prove it otherwise. So dull and unintelligent became your identity. This is just one example, but most of us have so many beliefs about ourselves and the world that makes our identity so constricted.

Now the problem here is not with having a bad experience or relationships in the past but being strongly identified with the beliefs which are mostly untrue and meaning that we have given to the situation without questioning it. Ofcourse, if your identity is helping you to grow and be fulfilled, then go ahead but if there is something that's stopping you from being happy at present, growing or excelling in life, then it's time to check in with your self identity before doing anything on the outside. You might try to change things on the outside - changing jobs or partners, building muscles in the gym, doing face surgery, buying luxury cars and so on. But if you don't dive in to know your core-identity - which is constant, expansive and limitless, then achieving all these will entrap you more than to liberate you.

### How do one know that they have constricted Self-Identity?

- 1) Being too hard working on themselves. They are not happy and satisfied with what they have and they are always looking forward to the next big goals to accomplish thinking that accomplishing those goals will help them to feel more valued and respectable among the so-called social groups.
- 2) Fail to have healthy boundaries. They say YES even if they want to say NO. They think that their opinions and preferences don't matter and they don't feel like sharing that to others.
- 3) Personalisation. They personalize things even if there is nothing about them. They often think that if a situation doesn't turn out the way it should, then they are the only one who is responsible.

4) Defining oneself based on their thoughts, actions and behaviours. They often define themselves by how they feel, what they do and how they do it. For example, if they overthink, then they consider themselves to be an overthinker. But they forget to realise that overthinking is something that they do and they can change if they want it.

5) Comparison. They often compare themselves with others in terms of career, achievements, fame, money and feels inferior or less satisfied while doing it.

6) Values and principles are out of alignment. They are not aware of their own values, what they want and why they want it. Their actions often fail to be in alignment with their values, motives and visions in life.

### **So what's the way out of constricted Self-Identity?**

The only way I know which can help us to come out of constricted self identity is through self-discovery. Knowing who we are at the core, who we aspire to be, what we value, our strengths and weaknesses and our purpose in life can help us in constructing a healthy self identity for ourselves. One common misconception we most of us have is that who we are is defined by what we do and how we do things. No, it's not. In reality, who we think we are and how we do things will determine what we do in life. So, Questioning our current belief system can be a great start for this process. One thing that helped me in my own self-discovery process is to have an open mind and realise that whatever limiting beliefs we hold might not be based on truth and can be changed if we want. Last but not the least, Self-discovery is a journey and we don't need to rush through the process since knowing and understanding ourselves can take upto a lifetime. However, the self discovery journey can be more exciting if we keep on learning new things about ourselves by exploring and questioning and not making any assumptions of ourselves.

"Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom." ~ Aristotle

**Connect with Sujit Gogoi**, Career Clarity Coach @ The Impactverse Coaching

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## **Whenever You Are Stuck**

by Rika Cossey

“What I do” and “who I am” are not the same

One of the most dreaded questions for me when meeting new people has always been: "What do you do?" I don't like answering it because my answer is never a simple answer. I have never had a simple job title or another short answer to how I spend my days. So, answering the question usually leads to more questions and I often feel I need to justify myself.

Only in recent years have I begun to realise that not only is the need to justify myself just something I feel but that I have also begun to sync my identity with the way I spend my days. I am proud of what I do and I know why I do what I do.

### **Job titles**

I grew up assuming that identity comes with adulthood and with what a person does for a living. My parents have both been in the same profession since their early twenties. Their job title is part of their identity and I took that for granted. In fact, for most of my childhood, a part of my identity got wrapped up in my parent's job title - I was the daughter of the local pastor. It seemed to define who I was until I left the town I grew up in.

With the idea of "job title = identity", I entered university, started my first job and started a family of my own. "I am how I earn my living". "I am what I do". It seemed logical to me ... until I was asked to leave the last role that defined me. Suddenly, I found myself without a job title (let alone without a job) and I had to fill the blank.

I have tried many different things to figure out how to define myself. Who was I without an external entity giving me a title? Who was I at my core, at the centre of my being? Which identity is the one I can feel proud of and not burdened by?

### **Incomes and identities**

The truth is that there is a fine line between who I believe myself to be and how I spend my days.

On the one hand, there are situations where an income rules over the need to live up to your ideal identity. Whenever you find yourself in financial difficulties or want to afford something you really want, your life's purpose gets parked outside the front door. It's not what you had dreamed of doing but it will do for right now "to pay the bills". It is in these moments when it can seem that your daily work begins to define your identity - but only if you let it.

On the other hand, however, there are situations where you dedicate time and energy to something that doesn't support your life through an income. The desire to fulfil your dream becomes so much bigger than the way you live. In fact, the need to fulfil your purpose becomes all-consuming and you can begin to lose sight of yourself in the process. That is when your ideal identity overrides your well-being.

### Finding middle ground

It is easy and logical to equate a job title with an identity because, in most cases, it is where we spend most of our time. But, the truth is, we each hold more than just one identity: I know that I have a job title (coach/producer/writer), a social title (dog owner), an economic title (trustee), a political title (activist), a cultural title (creator), and many more. In any given situation, I choose who I am because I am all those titles at the same time. However, it might seem confusing because it gives the person I'm talking with a different insight into who I seem to be.

It's essential to remember that I am all those identities and all those different roles all of the time. It just depends on the situation I am in and who I'm talking to. And it depends on how I relate to each identity at any given moment.

Finding an identity is not something that happens when you sign a job contract or you agree to spend your days in a particular way. It is a choice you make every day and at every moment. And it changes. If your job is something to create an income to support the person you want to be, then it's a means to an end. If you do what you love then your job title is who you are in those hours of the day. Ultimately it comes down to: "Who are you while doing what you do?" Or, to put it differently, "How do you see yourself right now?"

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## Why we identify ourselves by our jobs

By Kally Tay

Every person is different and can be defined differently based on one's characteristics, image and behaviour. However, there are times when their career or profession represents one.

When one identifies themselves with their career, it shows that they are focused on their career. They are determined to improve themselves and pursue their goals no matter what challenges come before them.

But, it is not recommended to define oneself with their career because it reshapes your overall perception of yourself.

Do you want to change your attitude about identifying yourself through your work? Here are some tips to help you get started:

### 1. You Won't Work In The Same Job Forever

As we become older, we tend to find characteristics and activities that stick with us for a long time. For example, if you studied art for college, you may find it hard to do something else that isn't related to art unless you are open to doing other things.

The same idea goes with how you identify with work. If you want to shift your attitude in determining yourself with your work, you must remember that you won't be working in the same career or job for a long time. There will be a period where you will need to shift careers because you may not be happy with your current career, or you need better job security. You will also come to a point you will need to decide whether it is time to resign or retire. For some, their current jobs may not be a perfect fit for them because it's what was available when they were applying for a job and had no other options to practise what they studied in school for.

Whichever situation you find yourselves in, you must understand that your job won't be there forever, and you will need to shift when the situation calls for it. If you fail to do so, how will you define yourself if you don't have a job anymore or change careers? It would help if you were open to other opportunities to prevent an identity crisis from hitting you and affecting how you define yourself.

### 2. Always Look Into Your Relationship And Its Connections To Your Identity

Are you in a relationship? On good terms with your family and friends? These relationships can help you define yourself as much as how your work defines you.

Your work is only a tiny part of you, and other factors define who you are as a person. With your relationships, other people can influence how you act and think for yourself and help you see what kind of person you are from their perspective. If their response to your questions is negative and you aren't giving your all to these

relationships, you will need to shift your attitude to improve it and reach out to others.

Defining yourself outside your career also enables you to build stronger relationships and new ones, especially with those who do not know your profession very well. In turn, you will be able to see other perspectives you may not have considered to help you grow as a person.

### **3. Find Your Focus**

Work and relationships are critical parts of your life that can define who you are. However, they will constantly change, which is why you can't use them to limit who you are entirely as a person. A part of you goes over your career and relationship, and that is your centre.

Your centre is the part of your identity where you can always fall back when something goes wrong with your career and relationships. It doesn't go away as well despite everything that may happen to you. When something wrong occurs, you can fall back to your centre, reassess your situation and change your options for something better.

Finding your centre can also help you prevent burnout, especially if you focus on only one thing. While it is ok to be fully committed to one's work, there is a danger that you may end up ignoring your other interests and prevent yourself from achieving a work-life balance. When this happens, you will find yourself burnt out and unable to separate yourself from your work.

It may also affect your self-worth because your successes and mistakes in work will affect your self-worth ultimately. Recuperating from it can be difficult, and you might end up facing an identity crisis if your career falls apart.

### **4. Find Your Calling**

Aside from finding your focus or centre and reevaluating your career and relationships, it would be best to take the time to explore the world and use it to disassociate yourself with what you are doing with who you are as a person.

It is an excellent opportunity to reassess ourselves and evaluate what makes us happy with events like the pandemic and other natural disasters. While it is ok to pursue your work and give your all to it, it is essential that you still have different goals to focus on: how to live your life and be happy. By changing your mindset from defining yourself through your work and working towards a calling you want to pursue, you may achieve the satisfaction you may be unable to reach if all you think about is your career.

Using our work to define ourselves is a quick way to introduce ourselves to people we meet to have a slight idea about ourselves. However, it is essential to remember that our work is just a part of who we are and shouldn't be the only way you think about yourself as a person. As you make connections, get to know others and explore more about yourself, you will be able to define yourself differently and blossom further as a person. Take one small step at a time, and don't be afraid because you can restart until you find your identity.

**Connect with Kally Tay**, Freelance Expert @ [www.middleme.net](http://www.middleme.net)

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