



7. IDENTITY

Identity is a tough one because most of our lives we are someone else. When women marry, they lose their maiden name, their status they've known and owned for maybe a quarter of a century, and they take on a new one, although many use a double-barrelled name that eases the loss. There are many identities from social, religious and nationality, and when challenged, we often feel threatened. Many a war has started based on a country's not wanting to lose its identity.

Having a sense of identity

Is essential to us human beings; we thrive on knowing who we are because it allows us to stand out as individuals; it creates a sense of wellbeing and purpose. Identity enables us to fit in with certain cultures, groups and clubs. We display a sense of identity through verbal and nonverbal means, through language, social status, clothing, what we drive, and where we live. Living in a specific area will also give you status and identity.

Symbols and Icons

Many countries, cultures and societies place great importance and significance on certain things, which hold symbolic meaning that gains respect from people and other countries. National flags, have distinct colours and patterns, symbolising past achievements and are intimately familiar to the citizens of the country. Icons tell us which religion a church may be. On a practical note, someone who drives a particular car is often considered to have reached the top of his profession.

Identity is a learned behaviour, we learn from our environment, the situations we are placed in, the attitude and the actions of others around us.



TRIBAL BY NATURE

We are tribal by nature and knowing who we are is vital to that sense of belonging, where we stand in society plays a role in our beliefs, values and how we think and feel and why people often prefer to live in communities. Some of us are born to lead others to prefer to be lead, not in a passive way, but in a genuinely caring way. Our personality dictates the pressure one wants to live under.

But knowing who we are?

Makes us feel safe; our identity is essential to how we live day-to-day. Without a sense of the self and often without that sense of identity, we can often feel like we're drifting aimlessly, that we have no purpose in life and nothing destroys the heart and soul's energy that a lack of ambition. As much as we decry labels, we are happy to be called Mr or Mrs, Miss or Mz, Lord or Lady, Doctor or Sir. Labels or titles give us a sense of confidence, but also tell others who we are.

The age of knowing

If we knew who we were, instead of people or society classifying us, then we would be happier and more content, however, all through our life, we move through various identities. The Jesuit priests say, 'give me the child until he is seven and I will give you the man,' indicates at the age of seven we start to form an identity, and it's true.

Until then we were children, we were starting on that adventure, under the umbrella of our parents, but at seven we are becoming miniature adults. We begin to view the world in a different light because up to this age, our parents told us who you were.



RITUALS FORM OUR IDENTITY

At seven, we are starting to look around and evaluate others. Even know where we want to be and for some even what we want to do. I knew at seven years old when I made that second ritual, the first my baptism my second my first Holy Communion that I tried to emulate Joan of Arc and why I picked her name for my Confirmation a year later, for she stood for fairness and justice. I'd noticed from five years old that some people were unfair to others.

Knowing who we are.

Gives us personal strengths to change the status quo, we feel confident in making waves, taking risks, increasing our curiosity and standing our ground. When we don't know who we are, then we are subject to other opinions. One nun said I was bold. I liked that level of identity because inside of me, I felt courageous, so equated that as a compliment. But of course, it wasn't she was teaching me a lesson in humility, or as another nun said, she said for my own good, as pride was a sin.

But because I was confident,

Even at that age, when I found out she was insulting me, I wasn't bothered. I knew I was an okay person, even at that age, and that was all down to two things. My father said, 'a cat can look at a king,' and while I had no idea he was instilling a sense of authentic pride and teaching me about uniqueness, it clearly worked. But I was and still believe, we come gift wrapped with certain personality traits and a sense of identity already. We are old souls coming back to complete our journey. My grandmother said, 'if you don't know who you are, how can you like or even love yourself?' And that's true.



LOSS OF IDENTITY

Liking yourself is as important as love, because we can love someone, but may not like them. And while I talk about loving oneself unconditionally. We also have to like who we are, we need to improve any flaws in our personality, so our identity is pleasing to other people and us. Not feeling part of the whole and knowing who we are then we're going to feel out on a limb, feel at odds with the world, not part of the whole and that sense of wholeness is vital to our beliefs, values, our well being and purpose.

Losing our identity is often hard for many women.

I wasn't bothered that I changed my name via marriage because it was a new journey and one I was looking forward to. However, I fully understand women holding onto their birth name because our identity gives us a sense of rightness and for many people inner peace and a sense of belonging. Our identity holds all our talents, skills, and abilities.

The Family Identity

If life is consistent with who we are and how we view the world, then we are bound to feel more content, have the energy to seek what we need to live our life to the full. For many of us, a family is enough for others, not. I know people who've bought titles so they can be called a Lord or Lady, Duke or Duchess because they find they get better tables at restaurants, better hotel rooms, quicker answers to letters of complaints. A title evokes an identity that seems trustworthy.

I know of others who have done the same because life was a struggle, and they wanted to change the dynamics of their name and life. Many people do this, and it works.



TAPPING INTO OUR NEW IDENTITY

Numerology speaks of this ability to change the dynamics from poverty to riches, from the unknown to the famous. However, those who bought a new title, changed their names, their life changed for the better. They felt they were more respected. And to strangers, they were, to the family they weren't. Their new title Lord or Lady ruffled family feathers. For this new identity to work, one would have to leave the old one behind, and that would entail living someplace no one knows you and starting again. That would be okay if you were an insular person, but for many buying and creating a new identity would be a lonely life.

Clearing on a grand scale.

The identity we know exists but have no idea where to find it because we've lived with so many that we've become lost in the pea soup. First, you have to stop, step back and reflect, then you have to clear on a grand scale. I'm not talking about a house clearance, but an identity clearance, because one day, (may have happened now) you are no longer, a wife, but a widow, another title added to the long line.

The dynamics are changing.

You may no longer be a woman because you changed sex, and so you need to form another new identity. You're no longer a girl, but a woman and this requires a new coping strategy. You're no longer a CEO, but retired, and may feel you've lost someone vital to wellbeing. No longer a therapist, but a volunteer, no longer a carer, because your partner has died or your children have left home. We then have to dig deep to find the authentic identity, the one we were born to have. And the only way is to clear the ones' we've collected throughout our lifetime and delete those that are no longer useful or holding us back.



WHO AM I?

At a workshop in 2000, someone asked me who I was; usually one would say, a this or that, but I said, 'I am me.' And I said this because, although I was a wife and homemaker because I loved the role, plus I'd committed myself to do this the day I married, and I'm hot on commitment. We would need to find the identity we were destined to have, to be happy and successful in doing what feels right; we have to know who we are. And be proud of this.

But I was also a mother who had adult children, a daughter who could be better, a friend that often neglected her friends, a neighbour that could be more proactive and a successful therapist, at that moment in time I was ME, nothing else but the authentic me. I learned that alignment to yourself is critical and that knowing who you are is essential for self-worth.

Being authentic with ourselves

We have to know enough about ourselves to be authentic; we have to embrace our talents, to be recognised as a person that is successful in their own right. Years ago I was admiring the flowers a cleaner had put in the toilets in a local shopping arcade. At that moment in time, this woman was a cleaner, although I like to call them domestic fairies because without them we all suffer and anyway I'd also been a cleaner when young women to make ends meet.

I value all working practices.

But we are conditioned to think of a name that fits the bill automatically. A while, later I saw her face in the local newspaper, she'd completed a degree, what in I never noticed; however, something changed in me.



INSPIRED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

My view on this woman status automatically changed. That doesn't make me ignorant, but what it shows is that a change of circumstances holding a title, call them what you may alter the status quo. However, she inspired me to do the same. I was proud of her determination. I was inspired by confidence, against all the odds, she did what she wanted to do. As I read the article, I felt part of a vibrant sisterhood. And that alone is an identity' I was pleased for her.

I never saw her cleaning the toilets again.

Where had she gone? I have no idea, but I do hope she never devalued her work as a domestic fairy of lavatories because she made a necessary environment look and smell wonderful. She created a situation that had people stopping and admiring the flowers, and chatting; she had people changing their behaviour. Before paper towels were discarded on the floor, taps left on; water splashed everywhere.

But I noticed people never did that anymore.

I even watched one young woman no more than sixteen wiping down the sink and surrounds. This dedicated cleaner of life, (because that's what she had created by example of a wholesome environment), she had indirectly and directly set a precedent where people's actions changed for the better. Her beliefs and values about her work shone through; it was a sad day when she left because she showed those who entered her domain, how to behave and think authentically.

If we want success, we first must know who we are and what we want. Identification goes a long way to happiness, wellbeing and inner peace.



SUMMARY

But to regain our identity, we must first know how our beliefs have shaped us. Be proud of who we are. But to regain our identity, we must first know how our beliefs have shaped us. Be proud of who we are. When you know who you are, a transformation takes place within you, and a new awareness is born for others to witness and emulate. The quickest way to find yourself is to stop trying to be someone else and stop trying to be superwoman; she doesn't exist.

MAKE YOUR IDENTITY A STRENGTH

We're the master of our health and wellbeing,
The architect of our future,
And we're the creator of our wealth.
But all our lives,
We allow others to dictate who we are.
Intelligent or ignorant, generous or selfish, wise or stupid,
masters or scapegoats, moral or immoral.
We allow our past to decide our present and our present
to determine our future.
Well, I believe it's our duty and personal responsibility
To invent something better for us.
We're not that original; anyway,
Because of our history and genetics dictates.
But what we can be is authentic.
Clothes and cars, houses and money, qualifications and titles
may disguise incompetence,
But the voice and the eyes will always tell the truth.
We must never forget what we are, for those around us will not.
Make your identity a strength, never a flaw.
And life will only get better.

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