



# Identity Boot Camp

*A toolkit for Discovering You*

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The **Identity Boot Camp** is a toolkit with themes, exercises, and prompts, to enable you to work through a process or jump around and pick the sections that resonate.

Exploring identity offers **valuable insight** into who we are, what we need, and how we move through the world. It helps clarify our values, strengths, and patterns, allowing us to make choices that feel aligned and authentic rather than reactive or inherited.

A common tension in identity development exists between the pull toward **autonomy** and the fear of **self-alienation**, contrasted with the desire for **connection** and the risk of **self-abandonment**.

When we lean too far into independence without emotional grounding, we can become self-alienated cut off from our needs, feelings, and relationships in an effort to protect our autonomy. On the other side, when the need for closeness outweighs our sense of self, connection can slip into fusion, where we over-accommodate, silence our needs, or shape ourselves around others, leading to self-abandonment.

Healthy identity lives in the middle space: the ability to stay connected without losing oneself, and to stand in autonomy without disconnecting from others. This balance allows for both authenticity and belonging.

By understanding the many layers of identity our beliefs, emotions, experiences, and internal parts we build greater self-awareness, resilience, and emotional regulation. This exploration also deepens compassion for ourselves and others, strengthens relationships, and empowers us to create a life that reflects our true sense of self.

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## Basic Aspirations

Most people share a few universal aspirations that shape how they understand themselves and their place in the world.

Being **seen** affirms that our presence matters; being **heard** validates that our thoughts and feelings have meaning. Having a sense of **purpose** provides direction and helps us feel that our lives contribute to something larger than ourselves. Feeling **connected** offers belonging, safety, and emotional grounding.

Together, these fundamental needs influence how we see ourselves, how we relate to others, and how we navigate challenges—forming a foundation for healthy identity development and overall well-being.



Be SEEN



Be HEARD



Have PURPOSE



Be CONNECTED

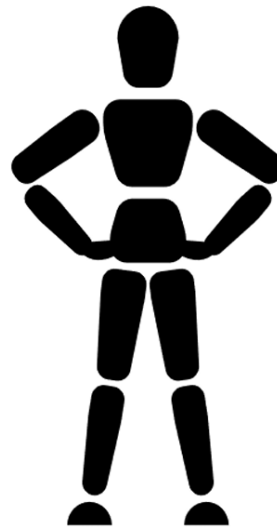
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## Influences:

Identity is shaped by a blend of **internal and external influences** that interact throughout our lives. Internally, our personality traits, emotions, values, and lived experiences form the core of how we see ourselves.

Externally, family, peers, communities, and life circumstances shape expectations and reinforce certain roles. Acceptance-based factors such as the desire to belong or be valued can influence how we present ourselves or adapt to others. Cultural, gender, and religious experiences contribute powerful frameworks that guide beliefs, behaviors, and meaning making.

Together, these factors shape a dynamic, evolving sense of identity that reflects both who we are within and how we navigate the world around us.



### Internal

- *Organic, Self Determined...*

### External

- *Determined by Others...*

### Acceptance

- *Based on Others Approval...*

### Cultural

- *Based on Cultural Norms...*

### Faith or Religious

- *Based on 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Norms...*

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## Explore:

Identity can expand when we stay **open to new experiences**, reflect on our beliefs, explore different roles, and remain curious about who we are becoming. This openness allows flexibility, growth, and the integration of new insights that deepen our sense of self.

Identity development involves a dynamic interplay between exploration and commitment, reflected in four key states.

- **Foreclosure** occurs when someone commits to roles or beliefs without exploring alternatives, often adopting others' expectations.
- **Diffusion** describes a lack of both exploration and commitment, leading to uncertainty or drift in one's sense of self.
- **Moratorium** represents active exploration without firm commitment, a stage of questioning and experimentation.
- **Achievement** arises when exploration leads to informed, personal commitment, creating a coherent and authentic sense of identity.



Foreclosure limits growth and can create a rigid sense of identity that feels more inherited than chosen, preventing people from fully discovering or evolving their authentic selves.

**Important:** These states are not fixed; individuals may move between them over time as they learn, adapt, and integrate new experiences into their identity.

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## Role:

Identity formation can be understood through the interplay of three roles: **actor, agent, and author**, each contributing to how we develop a coherent sense of self.

- The **actor** represents the present self, expressing behaviors, emotions, and skills in daily life—essentially “performing” **who we are in the moment**.
- The **agent** reflects our capacity to make choices, set goals, and take responsibility for shaping our future, giving direction and **intentionality to our actions**.
- The **author** integrates past experiences, present behaviors, and future goals into a coherent narrative, crafting meaning and a sense of **continuity in our identity**.

Together, these roles allow identity to grow dynamically: we act in the world, make purposeful choices, and construct a personal story that unifies our experiences into a meaningful self.

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## Learning:

The learning process shapes identity by gradually expanding our awareness, skills, and sense of self, a process well-illustrated by the conscious competence model.

In the **unconscious incompetence** stage, we are unaware of what we don’t know, limiting insight into ourselves and our abilities.

As we move to **conscious incompetence**, awareness of gaps emerges, prompting reflection, humility, and motivation to grow.

In **conscious competence**, deliberate effort allows us to practice new skills or behaviors, reinforcing confidence and shaping aspects of our identity.

Finally, **unconscious competence** integrates these abilities naturally, so they become part of who we are without deliberate effort, solidifying our sense of self as capable, competent, and adaptive.



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## Process:

**Identify the Purpose:** Set your intentions for this activity and prepare yourself for self-discovery.

- **Develop your Mission Statement:**
  - **Establish the “why” or “what” you are doing.**
    - It can be for this specific activity - "I'm on a journey to meet me."
    - It can be about what you want out of the exercise - "I will discover my blind spots."
    - It can be about you - "I am a curious person who seeks to understand."

**Ground Rule:** This activity is NOT about being self-critical, beating yourself up, and filling up a trunk of regrets, “would have’s”, or “should have’s”, etc. This activity is about being curious, practicing compassion with self, and being open to discovering themes about you across your age and stage of life.

Start with the **PDF – “Understand the SELFs”** to build an understanding around the different terms often used. Then, consider exploring the **PDF - " Cultivate Curiosity & Understanding"** as an adjunct to this Identity Bootcamp.

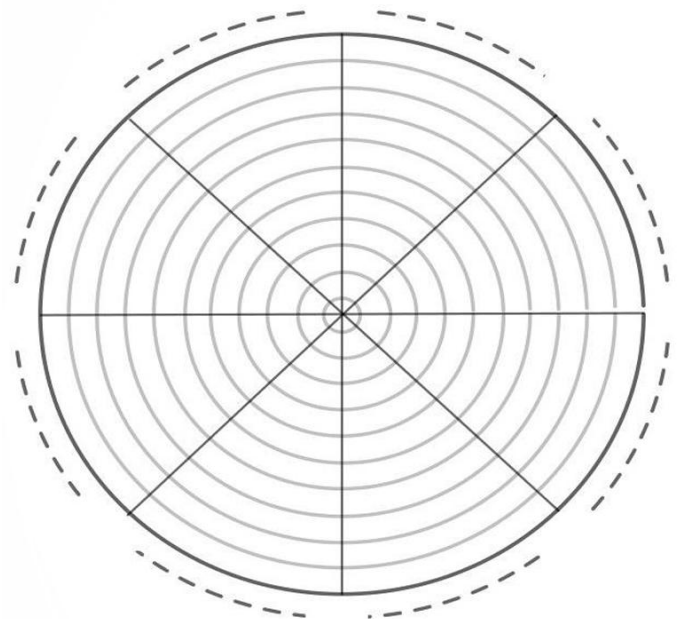
Review both documents. You don't need to complete them to move forward. Be curious. Notice topics that you are aware of about yourself. Notice topics that you are unfamiliar with about yourself - or you've just never heard of. Be curious.

Use the topics that you are unfamiliar with as the starting points and then work with the suggested exercises and drills below as a means to fill in the blanks and get to know you better!

**Suggestion:** Draw a large circle and divide it into slices, like a pie chart, then write in what you’ve discovered about you similar to the slices in a pie.

In addition, as you explore further and discover more about "Who I Am" and your "Parts" fill in, add, or replace the slices with the responses you've discovered.

Please note that an example has been provided at the end of this document.



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## Self-Awareness Drills

**Objective:** Explore you. Review the **PDF – “How I Show Up.”**

### 1. Who Am I? Drill

- Write 20 answers to “Who am I?”
  - Example: *“I am a curious person”; “I am a competitor”, I am moody.”, etc..*
- Circle the: *roles, attributes & qualities* that jump out to you.

### 2. I Am... Exercise

- Write 10 “I am...” statements that feel authentic today.
  - Example: *“I am funny”, I am smart”, I am stubborn”, etc..*
- Circle 3-5 that resonates with you the most.

### 3. What For...Exercise

- Set a timer for 5 minutes. (You will do this twice for a total of 10 minutes)
- Reflect on the regular activities that you do.
  - There are no limits to what comes to mind.
  - Try not to think too much - write what comes to mind.
- In the first 5 minutes, write down what you do.
  - Example: *“I brush my teeth...”, “I go to work...”, “I watch TV...”, “I drink...”, etc.*
- Then, once the 5 minutes is up. Set the timer a second time for another 5 minutes.
  - Return to the list you created and complete the sentence you started with "what for." Example: *“I brush my teeth for good mouth hygiene.”, “I have to work for money. “I watch TV for boredom. “I drink for quieting my mind.” etc.*
- After you have completed the two steps. Review your responses and look for themes that may occur.

### 4. What’s Your Metaphor

- Choose a number of metaphors.
  - Example: *“I am like a tree,” “I am a river,” “I am a traveler”*
- Write a series of short descriptions detailing how the metaphor captures you, does it reflect your struggles, or how does it highlight your strengths.
- Reflection: What does this metaphor reveal about you and your identity?

### 5. Explore your Parts...

- Review the following video. Link: [Susans](#)
- Work through the **PDF – “Exploring our Parts.”**
  - Reflect on the different "characters" or "parts" in you that exist.
- Write down all the parts of you that exist both currently and, in the past, the good, bad, and the ones you are indifferent or not proud about.
- From the list circle the "characters" or "parts" you are most proud of.

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## Values & Capabilities Targeting

**Objective:** Identify what matters and what you are capable of..

### 1. Values

- Work through the **PDF – “Values.”**

### 2. What Pisses Me Off List

- Set a 5-minute timer.
- Then, without hesitation, write down what irritates you, frustrates you, or simply pisses you off that you see occur or that others do personally, professionally, etc.
- Finally, review the list and look for the underlying value(s) in your responses.
  - Example: *“It pisses me off when people don’t hold the door for others.”*
  - Underlying value = Being altruistic

### 3. Line in the Sand Drill

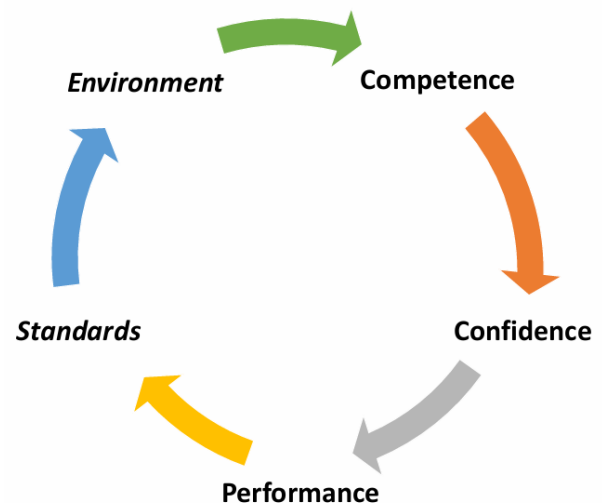
- Write down values or principles you will not compromise.
  - Example - --This is me...."
  - Example - --This is NOT me..."
- From the list - circle or identify the core 3-5 that you refuse to compromise.

### 4. Strengths Inventory

- Explore the Character Strengths Survey: Link - [VIA Character Strengths](#)
- Highlight the strengths that stand out the most to you.

### 5. Superpowers Collage

- Use images, colors, and words from magazines or online to create a visual Superpower map.



### 6. Character Development

- Set a 15-minute timer.
- Write and develop a character that embodies who you aspire to be.
- Provide details of what they look like, what capabilities they have, how they show up in the world, what their challenges, obstacles, and enemies may be.
- After 15 minutes has expired. Pause, read/review what you documented and then highlight the capabilities, strengths, and challenges for the character.

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## Social Recon

**Objective:** Understand your social ecosystem.

### 1. Social Map

- Place yourself in the center of a circle.
- Then begin drawing connections to people/groups/communities you interact with.
- Reflection: Discover how many or how few connections you have? Are they more professional than personal? Are you affiliated with many groups or only a few? Do you have quantity of connections or quality of connections?

### 2. Models Timeline

- Use a sheet of paper and draw a line across the middle.
- List the people who have been models and influenced your identity over the course of your age/stage of life by year or general age/stage of life.
- Don't limit yourself to only positive influences. Make space for the models that may have left a negative imprint on you.
- Review the timeline and reflect on which models you want to rent, lease, or own?

### 3. Reality Check

- Ask 3-5 trusted people for whom you feel will provide you with an authentic response:
  - Ask them to share – *"How do you see me?"*
- Their response can be brief, long, or somewhere in-between.
- Reflect on how "they" see "you." How does it compare/contrast to how you see you?

### 4. 3 Words Drill

- Ask 5-10 people, personal or professional, for quick feedback.
  - Don't let them think too much. Just respond...
- Ask them: *"What three words best describe me.."*
- Gather the words, create a word cloud or list.
- Reflect: Which words feel most aligned? Which feels unexpected or not me?

### 5. Blind Spot Discovery

- Ask 3-5 friends, colleagues, or family members:
  - *"What's one thing I might not see about myself that others notice?"*
- Gather the responses and be curious rather than defensive to discover what others see about you that you may overlook?



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## Narrative Ops

**Objective:** Discover your story.

### 1. Replay the "game tape"

- Reflect on your age/stage of life by building a timeline Identifying life events that stand out and have been influential.
- Reflection: Note what each life event has taught you about who you are. How you responded. How you avoided. Etc.



**Tell the Story**  
*(Review the Game Tape)*



**Edit the Story**  
*(Facts from Fiction)*



**Author the Story**  
*(Ownership)*

### 2. Chapters of life Exercise

- Reflect upon your age/stage of life and organize into "chapters"
  - Example: Childhood, Adolescence, College, Marriage, First Job, Adulthood, etc.
  - For each chapter, write:
    1. Title of the chapter
    2. Key themes (e.g., growth, struggle, resilience)
    3. Main characters (family, friends, mentors, etc.)
    4. Turning points or defining events
- Reflection: How do these chapters shape and influence how you show up currently? Would you edit a chapter? Remove a chapter?

### 3. Music or Movie Playlist:

- Build a playlist of songs or movies that capture key moments across your age/stage of life.
- Reflection: How do the themes from those songs or movies. I.e., comedies, romantic, inspiring, etc. say about you during those age/stages of life. Be curious how the themes may match the age/stage of life.

### 4. Discover the Labels

- Set a 5-minute timer.
- Write down the labels you often hear from your own self-talk.
  - Example: "quiet," "caretaker"
- Set a 5-minute timer a second time.
- Write down the labels you often hear from others. I.e., family, friends, colleagues.
  - Example: "stubborn", ""joker", ""jerk", ""kind", ""etc.
- Reflection: Do you agree with these? How do they serve you? Identify the labels that fit for you?

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## Future Trip

**Objective:** Who you want to be.

### 1. Future Fantasy

- Set a 15-minute timer.
- Imagine ahead - Don't limit yourself - write, narrate, or sketch out what you see.

### 2. Vision Quest

- Leverage your creative talent by putting together a poster board or a wall of images, words, or symbols representing you in the future.
- Based on what you have created – consider revising or create a new "mission statement" that reflects "how" you are going to actualize your vision.

### 3. Future-Self Letter

- Write a letter from your future self to current self- offering advice and encouragement about what's ahead.

### 4. What If "Lives"

- Imagine 3 different lives that may have focused on different jobs/careers, places or people, experiences, lifestyle, etc.
- Use the three prompts below to write a brief response to yourself.
  - I could have...
  - I should have...
  - I didn't...
- Reflection: Notice patterns and recurring values.

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## Final Obstacle

**Objective:** Write your **Identity Statement**

- Develop 2–4 sentences that capture who you are now that you've spent time discovering you.
- Reflection: Take a moment or two to identify
  - *"What's different now compared to when I began this bootcamp?"*
  - *"What have I discovered about me that I didn't know before?"*
- Plan: Identify your **implementation intention**. *(Example provided on following page)*
  - What are the daily practices that will help you live, and act aligned with this identity.
  - Who can you involve as part of your team to support you?

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## Implementation Intention:

Step 1: Define the **outcome or goal**.

- What do you want to achieve?
  - Example: *"I want to show up ontime for the family dinner."*

Step 2: Identify the cue or trigger. **(the "If")**

- When or where it will most likely to come up? It may also be a who may trigger the "if"
  - Example: *"If my boss ask me to stay later..."*

Step 3: Create a specific response or behavior. **(the "Then")**

- What helpful language or action(s) will you take in that moment?
  - Example: *"I will pause, take an extended exhale, and take a moment to respond."*

Step 4: Anticipate the obstacles. **(Internal and External)**

- What might get in the way, and what's the back-up plan?
  - Example: *"If my boss is standing near me, I'll excuse myself to use the restroom."*

Step 5: Rehearse the plans. **(Practice)**

- Visualize yourself in the "If" situation, connect how you anticipate feeling "in" the moment with what you need to mentally walk through doing the "Then."

Step 6: Review and reflect. **(Reinforce – "I can..)**

- After following through on the plan: Pause and review - Did it help?
- Evaluate if you should adjust the "If-Then" to be more realistic or effective?
- **Lastly, "If" it worked – "Then" celebrate your effort!**

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## Sample(s)

- ***If** I start ruminating before bed, **then** I will write down in my gratitude journal for 5 minutes.*
- ***If** I feel anxious before a meeting, **then** I will visualize a previous meeting that I successfully participated in.*
- ***If** I feel the urge to procrastinate, **then** I will set a 10-minute timer and begin with the easiest task.*

**Example:** Fill in the slices with what you've discovered about you. Add additional lines as needed.

