

*Who am I ?
How our answers change across our lives.*

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Who am I? What is my purpose? What is my passion? Am I fulfilling my dream? These are important questions to ask ourselves. At times they are difficult questions to answer. Over our lifetimes we think of ourselves and others differently. Life events happen that trigger us into reflecting on who we were and are now. While not everyone will fit perfectly into the following categories, they can at least be a guide to start us thinking and relating to who we are and where we are going in life.

Developmentally, as human beings we have many transitions during our lifetime. At those points we have to remake our self-concept (who I am). In the late teenage years to 20s there is the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Relevant questions in this phase are: Who am I independent of my parents/caregivers? How do I be in an adult relationship with my parents/caregivers? Who do I want to be? What is my place in the world? What type of career do I want? Who am I in the context of an adult romantic relationship? How do I see myself as a professional rather than a student?

In our 30s and 40s, we are often facing questions of being single versus in a relationship, being divorced, being remarried. Other relevant questions surface: Who am I as a new parent? How do I juggle family and career to successfully be in both roles? When am I the expert at my place of business? Am I on the right path? Do I go back to the student role for graduate training? Who am I now that I'm not 20 and my body isn't 20?

In our 50s and beyond, there are even more life events that can happen to shake our self-image. Children are getting older, perhaps leaving home or the last one has just left. Questions in this stage include: Who am I now that my children are

adults? Who am I and who is this person to whom I'm married? Where do I put my focus now? The area of career again raises questions: When do I want to retire? Can I retire? Am I satisfied in my work? Do I change careers and remake myself professionally? Am I doing what I always dreamed? Changes in the health of ourselves and our spouses can lead to questions such as: Who am I if I can't do this or that? Who am I taking care of a disabled spouse? How much longer will we have and what do we want to do with that time? Is this relationship still satisfying? Who am I as a widow(er)? Who am I as my parents pass and I'm an orphan? Our children are having children: Who am I as a grandparent?

So, our self-concept changes many times over our lives influenced by what is important to us as well as the various life events and stressors that are happening. Our self-concept is formed from the many facets that are our lives. Facets include our social identity (who we are with our friends, with what causes we identify, how we are connected to society), our family identity (who we are as a son/daughter, lover/spouse, parent, grandparent, aunt/uncle, cousin), our career identity (who I am as a worker, contributor to society, supervisor, entrepreneur), our spiritual identity (who I am in the context of the Divine or the universe, as a spiritual being, fulfilling my purpose), and our self-identity (what kind of person I am, what I value, what traits I have, how valuable I am).

If you find yourself in a period of seeking who you are, congratulations! You have made it to another phase of life! While at times it can seem confusing and lonely, it is also an opportunity for tremendous growth and fulfillment. Take the time to focus inward and reconnect with who you were, who you are, and who you are becoming.

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