

Personal Essay: Maintaining Identity
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Who are you? How many times have you asked yourself this question in one way or another. Do you define it by your personality? Your job? Your morals or beliefs? Do you list out skills and attributes? Or your preferences? Does it stay the same throughout your life? Or is it something that changes with your circumstances? I used to think identity was something that was eternally the same regardless of what we were going through. Like the nature or nurture aspect- it was based in our nature, and not something we had much control over. I have learned, however, that our identity can be as changing as the seasons. That as we continue to grow and change throughout our life, our identity transforms with us.

Originally, I thought identity was cemented into who I was. Especially before having kids. And needing to hold true to that identity through motherhood. Taking time to re-ground myself into the individual I used to be. There is so much talk about not 'losing' yourself in motherhood, making sure to take time for self-care, and tying your worth to being productive aside from parenting. But I've come to understand that identity is a changing and shifting feature that adapts with our ever-changing circumstances.

Throughout our life we experience more, we learn more, we find answers to questions, and uncover more questions from those. Things we may have been certain about can become debatable. Things that are routine can become novel again. With the shifts in our life our identity molds and forms alongside our emerging conditions. Instead of trying to find roots in maintaining 'who' we were, our self-care should be an adventure of self-discovery. Knowing what we like and want is helpful, but we won't always have the time, ability, or resources to reconnect with what we were used to. It's vital for us to adapt with our environment and essential to remain in a state of learning, even about ourselves.

Along with new developments comes the loss of old desires. It is acceptable, and even important, to allow the grief of the previous chapter. We are comfortable in our usual habits and it is understandable to have difficulty with the changes, especially when we so often do not have control over them. We can accept the new while missing the old, and appreciating what it has done for us. It's necessary to validate the feelings we have over the latest substitutions so that we can most efficiently accept the fresh identity.

I used to think our identities defined us, like that of a steadfast symbol, from birth to death. I now know that our identities are ever evolving and are emblematic of each new chapter in our lives. With each new revision comes an exciting opportunity to meet your new self and discover new possibilities. While enjoying the progress we can blissfully reminisce about our previous lifestyle. Our identity isn't just what we do or who we are, it's the culmination of everything around us and within us, and is continuously constructed throughout our life.