

Lesson 110: Discovering the Essence of Your Identity

Discovering the essence of your identity is as much a mystery as is discovering the essence of life; neither of these discoveries is an easy task. Although discovering the essence of your identity may seem like a futile or unnecessary task, the effort to do so is a worthwhile endeavor because if you are not being true to yourself, you might be attracting undesirable experiences into your reality that will allow for many a hard lesson learned. But before you can be true to yourself, you have to know who you really are, not what you or others think or perceive you are. The danger in taking your identity at face value is that there are unknown causes and effects attached to each aspect of your identity – your characteristics and your personality traits. Unfortunately, much of the essence of your identity may be buried under layers of acquired character and personality traits that are not unique to your individual self. These traits are shaped, formed, molded and remolded in response to external and internal influences. Although the essence of life may be a mystery, discovering the essence of your identity does not have to remain a mystery. The process of discovering the essence of your identity is accomplished by peeling back the layers of your character and personality traits. A cognitive effort is necessary to discern which traits are really yours and which traits have been acquired, as well as discerning what traits are useful and what traits are not so useful. Discovering the essence of your identity requires a comprehensive examination of the real or perceived influences that not only shaped and molded your identity; they also distorted your identity, thus making it difficult for you to know the real you, rather than the altered version of you. Discovering the essence of your identity helps to close this gap, it bridges the divide between what is real and what is not real, it separates fact from fiction. The results are that you move closer to knowing a truer version of yourself.

Discovering the essence of your identity begins with the realization that people do in fact take on all sorts of assumed identities as they act and react to external and internal influences. They often define and redefine themselves in accordance with what they believe is true about themselves and their circumstances at any given time, whether positive or negative, desired or undesired, favorable or unfavorable. From as early as childhood and even as an adult certain aspects of their identity are not established on objective facts, but rather they are established on subjective assumptions, concepts and interpretations, among a host of other equally subjective external and internal influences as if these influences were bona-fide truths, although nothing could be further from the truth. Thus, they go about the business of their day-to-day activities, holding fast to these misrepresentations of their identity. In the meantime, like is attracting like in their reality without them ever knowing that this attraction is going on outside of their awareness.

It takes a great deal of cognitive and intellectual knowledge, wisdom and insight to navigate the not so smooth waters of life and to do so somewhat successfully. Some

people can chart direct courses really well. They can navigate the direction of their lives more successfully than others can. Some people never learn how to chart a course; instead, they leave the details of their lives to the whims of perceived chance because they have little or no sense of direction or purpose, among many other seen or unseen contributing factors. But since chance does not exist as a fundamental guiding or governing spiritual principle, they unknowingly subject themselves to the law of cause and effect, attraction and manifestation, among many other universal laws of operation, such as the laws of balance, choices, expectations and action. Unfortunately, the knowledge, wisdom and insight needed to navigate life successfully are strengths acquired over the course of life and even then, for many people it comes in small sporadic packets rather than one burst of awareness or a complete awakening. Thus, personal development is a series of mental and emotional hurdles, more of them are unseen than those that are seen and even the ones seen are often misinterpreted.

Spiritual growth is not much easier. It is difficult to grow spiritually when all the spiritual guiding and governing principles are not known until each of them are known, until they are personally real and fundamentally applied in everyday life. Counting on organized religion often means taking a step back from the dogma in order to part the veil and get back to the essence of what religion is really all about, as opposed to blindly following the herd. Relying on the assuredness of culture is not necessarily a better alternative because it too is only as good as its own self-imposed assumptions, concepts and beliefs, handed down from generation to generation, regardless of the fact that all or parts of them may be outdated and are more disabling than they are enabling. Reliance on traditional education is not much help either. You may learn good social skills and it may prepare you for a future vocation or profession, however, traditional education does not prepare you for life beyond social skills, vocations or professions. While many sources, including yourself can help you identify your character and personality traits, as well as your talents, skills and abilities, the essence of your identity may be hidden beneath layers of external and internal influences, thus knowing the real you is not the same as knowing the perceived you. Knowing your true self and discovering the essence of your identity requires more than a traditional education because there is far more to the story than what traditional education can realistically teach.

Underneath the jumble of family, culture, religious, social and other environmental assumptions, concepts, beliefs, dogmas and doctrines, which you are bombarded with from birth, is the real essence of you, who you really are, who you are intended to be and what you are intended to become. Unfortunately, the pure essence of your identity is clouded over right out of the starting gate. And since you have already lost the essence of yourself, there is less opportunity to experience your true self because all the external programming plays a central role in creating your internal programming, which is almost as debilitating if not more debilitating than the undesirable effects inflicted on you from all the external influences. Thus, the nature of your personal reality is not

really the true nature of your reality because it too has been shaped and molded by the same external influences. In response to all these influences, both external and internal, you may have developed an identity that is not really yours...and you continue to develop and redevelop your identity in keeping with past and present circumstances. Worse yet, is that you are not aware that you are not functioning as your true self. And even worse is that you have been making choices and decisions all along based on an identity that is not entirely yours! Thus, the further you move away from your true self, the more inclined you are to make choices and decisions that are not in your best interest, which is self-evident once you become aware of the distinct difference. This is an awareness that is worth giving some serious consideration too. It can be quite disconcerting to suddenly realize that you are not really this or that identity, such as you have known yourself to be for x amount of time. Nonetheless, discovering or rediscovering your true self will be worth the effort it takes to peel back all the accumulated layers and get to the essence of your identity. This may involve peeling back many layers in order to get as close to a pre-altered state of identity as is possible. This unaffected state of your identity is what might have existed before assuming certain characteristics, before developing certain personality traits, before the awareness of certain talents, skills and abilities and before those that were suppressed and even before the dreams and goals that were suppressed or have been difficult to achieve. Getting back in touch with who you should be and what you would have become without the effects of external influences, such as they were in your reality is not an easy endeavor. Depending on the extent that your identity has been influenced and altered, as some people are far more affected than others are, the pursuit of discovery might extend beyond self-help; it might require professional assistance to help you safely unravel the layers so that you do not risk confusing fact from fiction, causing yourself more harm than good.

This path of self-discovery is the same path that leads to a higher level of personal development and spiritual growth because the more you know about yourself, the more real you become, likewise the more you develop and grow. However, the path of discovery is not without its hurdles, potholes, ditches, twists and turns, ups and downs and sometimes the path even turns back on itself. In other words, the path to self-discovery is not a straight shot. Self-discovery is not an endeavor that is easily accomplished because it takes courage to face things you may not like learning about yourself or others along the way, not to mention it really does take time and concentrated effort. Not many people have that much free time on their hands these days, thus they are reluctant to give serious consideration to who they are and are not, even though they may be acutely aware of a nagging sense of dissatisfaction from within. Since they cannot pinpoint the true source of this dissatisfaction, they do not know what to attribute it to, so they make assumptions that are incorrect and add those assumptions to their existing beliefs. Nevertheless, the effort, albeit is difficult at best, is

truly worth every ounce of the time invested. This is what conscious awareness is all about. It is about becoming aware of who you really are. It is about becoming more aware of your reality and your environment. It is about stripping away the layers of illusion and delusion and getting as close to the pure essence of your identity as you can possibly get, shaking off what is not useful and leaving the rest, the traits that remain in your identity is what you work to develop. Why spin your wheels trying to develop characteristics or personality traits that are not really yours to begin with, but were impressed on you because someone who did not really know any better said you are that way when you really are not. It may have been that you were just reacting to unfavorable conditions or circumstances in your reality, which you still may be reacting too, but are not aware that you are.

Examining the nature of your reality for the sake of discovering the essence of your identity also means realizing that many contributing factors influenced the nature of your personal reality, as well as the essence of your identity, which is why it takes time to peel back all the layers. That is, unless of course you want to avoid discovering what is at the core and just be satisfied with knowing only bits and pieces about yourself and your reality. Unfortunately, that mentality limits your understanding of who and what you really are; it leaves aspects of your identity hidden from sight, which is not what conscious awareness is about. Conscious awareness is about being conscious of everything that pertains to you and about you, not leaving anything out of sight, because whatever is left out of sight will continue to fester, even though it is hidden in the dark region of your subconscious. Your psyche will continue to push up any unresolved past or present mental or emotionally based issues, distortions of your identity and any suppressed aspects of your personality traits, which include suppressed talents, skills and abilities and will do so by sending up all sorts of smoke signals. These archetypal smoke signals will manifest in your wake and sleep state and they will even exhibit themselves in your behaviors, especially the habitual ones. You can run, but you cannot hide. So if you do not identify and resolve these internal issues, they will continue to manifest and influence your reality; they will alter your identity that much more and will do so without you knowing a thing about it. Although you will feel and experience the effects, just as you probably have been all along, you will not know what to attribute them too and will mostly likely attribute them incorrectly, which compounds the problem. In fact, you are more inclined to blame certain behaviors due to perceived characteristics or personality traits on anything other than what it really is because you have not yet identified them and pulled them up by their roots. Getting to the essence of your identity means peeling back enough layers to get to the root and then weed out what does not belong there or is no longer useful so that these things do not continue to distort your identity, doing so also alleviates related adverse experiences in your reality.

The essence of your identity can get lost in the midst of an adversity just as easily as it can get lost from having been adversely affected by external and internal programming.

This undesirable condition is even more threatening when you do not have a grip on your true self. If you did, you would either instinctively know how to manage the adversity or recognize the fact that you are not adequately equipped to manage it and you would seek help, rather than over react or rely on traits that are not helpful. Hanging on to distorted versions of yourself because that is the only identity you know is not just a reactive self-defense mechanism; a survival skill activates when circumstances prohibit you from functioning as your true self, but when carried to an extreme distorts your identity. People tend to create and re-create themselves in an effort to adapt to whatever is going on in their environment, which can be subtle or quite distinct identity arrangements and rearrangements. And while such an accepting method of survival may have its advantages, there are no real advantages in suppressing who you really are, as this distortion of your identity affects what you become throughout the stages of your life.

Before you can discover the essence of your identity, you first have to know what aspects of your identity have not developed or have been suppressed, especially the ones that remain undeveloped or suppressed because of the critiquing influence of others. Few people come to know their true selves; they just go through life suppressing all sorts of things, such as talents, skills and abilities, hopes, desires and dreams, even goals they would have liked to achieve or are still struggling to achieve. Other people go in the direction of living vicariously in the footsteps of someone whom they admire and aspire to be like. However, they won't take the first step, which would move them in the direction of achieving their own level of success for fear of failure, fear of not being good enough, fear of not being smart enough or worthy enough; they lack courage, confidence and tenacity...and on and on the list goes. It all comes down to how well they really know themselves because their success lies in the essence of their own identity. Confidence and courage come from knowing who you are. Thus, it is much easier to believe in yourself when you have a true sense of knowing who you really are.

It is difficult to know the essence of your identity when so much of your has been covered over like a perpetual snowstorm that just keeps dumping more and more snow on the ground, never revealing the actual ground beneath the accumulated snow. There is a ground beneath your altered identity and it is worth your while to begin exploring it, if you have not already begun to do so. If you want to experience the expansion of your conscious awareness, it starts by separating fact from fiction and illusion from delusion. It is about making the effort to reveal what is true and what is fabricated as the result of having been influenced by and accepting subjective assumptions, concepts, beliefs and even expectations as immutable truths. It is about identifying what traits exist in your identity because conditions or circumstances put those altered traits there. It is about exploring family, culture, religious, social and other environmental influences from which you acquired character and personality traits, whether they were passed onto you or where expected of you. There comes a time in your life when you have to stop taking

everything at face value and start questioning how well any influences, external or internal are really serving you. And even though they may appear to be serving you well, they might not be if they were established on disabling beliefs or distorted perceptions. Thus, the only real way to identify the essence of your identity is to start peeling back the layers, unless of course, you are satisfied with who you are today and who you expect to be in the future. If everything that makes up the whole of your identity is working well for you, then you should leave well enough alone. Do not open Pandora's Box because you might not like the contents that spills out, your world may turn upside down and inside out. So why mess with something that does not appear to be broken?

The answer is that you should not mess with anything in your reality that is not broken. However, you might want to be very sure that it really is as you say it is, believe it is or perceive it is, as appearances can be quite deceiving. If you are denying a condition or circumstance in your life as being something other than what it really is, ultimately, it is your loss; you will suffer the inevitable consequences, as you may already be doing. People shy away from exposing their true identity. They will take the path of least resistance. They will deny that a condition or circumstance in their life is not what is really is and continue to suffer the effects, including concealing their identity. Others take to blaming someone or something else, whatever it is on the surface that appears to be the culprit, rather than take a deeper look below the surface where a displaced or distorted identity can be found. An exploration into the core of oneself is just too scary for most people, yet it is so worth the effort. The price of personal freedom is, after all, priceless!

Peeling back the layers of your identity to expose any distortions, whether they are acquired characteristics or personality traits is worthwhile because the actual cause of an identity distortion is not about what is or is not your fault. It may be the residual or a carryover from a traumatic or an unpleasant childhood experience that you have lost sight of, which over time falls by the wayside, except that what is intentionally or unintentionally kept out of sight is not necessarily kept out of mind, consciously yes, but definitely not unconsciously. Your psyche does not forget such things and remembers all the details concerning an unpleasant event that occurred; regardless of when in the past it occurred. These details are not just registered in your psyche, they are registered in the subconscious region of your mind and they are registered in your brain, as well in as in the cells of your body. If you need scientific evidence, devote some time to researching the latest findings in neuroscience or read *Molecules of Emotion* by Candace B. Pert, Ph.D. and *The Biology of Belief* by Bruce H. Lipton, Ph. D. There you will learn that your body is a storage tank, it is an internal hard drive that stores the details of your life events and can bring them to the surface on demand and do so in vivid detail. However, these events are not always recalled in detail, but are recalled as a close approximation of the event, but sometimes they arise as a distorted version of an event. Nonetheless, do not be fooled into thinking that your internal hard drives are

malfunctioning just because the details from a past event are not recalled exactly as it occurred. The malfunction occurs in the shaded areas of your emotions, perceptions and beliefs. The way you remember and recall an event is linked to your emotional experience with it, which you associate in accordance with your beliefs and perceptions as being pleasant or unpleasant, good or bad, desirable or undesirable. These mental and emotional associations trigger your recollection of the event and account for how you describe the details of the event. Siblings who grow up in the same home, with the same parents will each describe a very different experience based on how they mentally and emotionally related to the same or different conditions or circumstances, even those that were desirable and favorable, including how they each related to the same parent or parents. This is a common occurrence among siblings. It is the same way with the weather. While a rainy day may be an irritant to one person, it may be a blessing to another. It is all about perceptions - what you see *is* what you see until you choose to see it from another perspective. Changing how or why you view any experience not only broadens your perspective, it changes how you feel about the experience, which actually changes the energy of the experience itself. This is how inner healing works, whether through psychotherapy, self-help, meditation, mindfulness or in any combination. It is about seeing things in your reality for what they really are, not how they are perceived or were expected of you. When you change your mind, you change your experience, which in turn changes an aspect of your reality...all of which has an impact on your identity.

As you get more in touch with the true nature of yourself, as the “self” that exists underneath all the programming, all the influences, the mental rubble and the emotional debris, you find character and personality traits attributed to circumstances or conditions that no longer exist in your reality. However, you continue to carry these nebulous traits with you, even bring them into your relationships, as if they were a piece of luggage chained to your ankle. It is a liberating experience when you can identify these unnecessary traits and then shake them off. It frees you up to make choices you did not know you could make...and it does not stop there. Liberation brings with it a host of other desirable changes because seldom does one event exist in your reality that is separate or independent from other events. Therefore, when you identify the root of one event, you are likely to identify the root of every other event. As you continue to peel back the layers, you are likely to discover characteristics or personality traits that are not the real you. These traits were imparted to you by way of others who influenced you or they were acquired from adapting to certain conditions in your environment. Perhaps certain behaviors or achievements were expected of you that were unrealistic or appeared to be unrealistic at the time, either way your identity was affected. Some traits were overdeveloped, some less developed and others fell by the wayside.

Not all personality traits are fixed, not all of them are immutable genetic impressions that are indelibly marked on your psyche. With awareness and effort, they can be changed, altered or eliminated. You are not stuck with characteristics or personality

traits that are not the least bit becoming or those that are not serving you very well. You have only to explore the basis of them, determine where they came from and why and then choose what to do about your discovery. There is very little you cannot change about yourself if you choose to make such changes. Although making internal changes is easier said than done, as adapting to the environment and its constant flow of change requires adopting certain identities to survive the changes, lest you get eaten up alive in the jungle called life, you can find a truer version of your identity. This altruistic version of your identity may be a far better fit than the one you've been clinging to all along; the identity you've been calling your own, which is not really your own, but is either a façade or a distorted version of your identity. These false identities will remain attached to you as if you have been branded with an identity that is not yours, but was given to you by someone on the outside, including but not limited to your own parents, siblings or other family members, a teacher or even a co-worker, unless you identify them and shake them off. They will also remain with you if you choose to continue to perceive yourself in a derogatory or boastful way.

Sometimes, an unexpected event in your life can actually bring about an identity transformation. People who have these experiences typically undergo a significant spiritual transformation too. To the extent that they are consciously and spiritually awakened, they acquire a much deeper sense of themselves. Such mental, emotional and spiritual alchemy does not just transform their identity; the transformation changes their perspectives, as well as their priorities, they come to truly know themselves. Thus, becoming more and more aware of your identity and getting as close as you can realistically get to the real you is an alchemical transformation worthy of your time and effort. Though the transformation may not be sudden, it is no less a slow and steady transformation that still desired results. The Law of Process is a principle that operates fundamentally on a step- by- step basis. Peeling back the layers one step at a time will probably take a lot of time, but doing so brings to the surface anything that is attached to an acquired trait, as well as the causes and effects associated with those aspects of your identity that are not yours and even the ones that are yours.

While the fundamental application of the Law of Process is the key to discovering the essence of your identity, it is the same key that liberates you from carrying around all that excess mental and emotional baggage, the one that has been chained to your ankle. However, there is a catch. As things about your identity begin to surface, the beliefs you attach to these things determines whether you will be able to shake free of them or not. Thus, it is important to examine the contents of your beliefs, as holding to acquired traits that are not useful because of a disabling belief is self-defeating. Your own mental or emotional reactions can skew or distort an event, even a perceived event, so the more open you are to exploring a different perspective or interpretation, one that is more factual than it is fiction, the more you will gain from the experience. Likewise, the less open you are, the less you will gain. The choice is always yours. Denial favors your

incorrect assumptions, concepts, precepts, perceptions or interpretations of reality; it is an obstacle, which serves no good purpose.

Needless to say, self-discovery can be a complicated process depending on the extent of your experiences and how factual your memory of those experience are, which of course, is attached to your feelings, beliefs, perceptions, perspectives and expectations. The more accuracy, the more you will get out of your time of discovery. And even when you are certain you have peeled back all the layers, more will be revealed later down the road because there is only so much you can know even in successive steps. But with each step comes greater clarity and insight as you discover the essence of your identity. It is a steady progression of reaching new heights, learning new things about your identity, shaking off the old and embracing the new.

In closing, we have provided you with information that may or may not be familiar. What is important is that you take this information and use it as a guide, use it as a place to start discovering the essence of your identity, as there is nothing more gratifying in life than knowing your true self. Many of the characteristics and personality traits you develop throughout your life have their roots in your early environment, which as you have seen shaped and molded your identity. This truly is an exploration worthy of its effort, because doing so will in time get you closer to discovering the essence of your identity and move you in the direction of discovering the real you. The more you get to know yourself, the stronger your character is developed and the greater is your spiritual growth, which of course, equates to acquiring mental equilibrium and emotional stability, so necessary to achieving success in any aspect of your life.

Thank you for taking the time to read this lesson. Should you have any questions, please feel free to ask and as always, we encourage you to feel free to share your thoughts, comments or personal experiences.

Many Blessings,

Linda, Z and the Collective We

linda@dragonofdrama.com