

# Our Identity:

## What Is It And How Do We Understand It?

Do you ever struggle to answer the question “who are you?” when meeting someone new? With so much room for comparison around us every day, it can be hard to really know ourselves.

### What Is Our Identity?

Our identity is the combination of characteristics that define who we are as a person, some may be visible to others (e.g. height, hair colour, age), whilst others may be hidden (e.g. hobbies, religion, education). Our identity is determined by the things that are important to us; our relationships, our gender, our sexuality, our careers, what we like to do with our free time and our motivations in life are just a few examples.

For many, some aspects of identity may not be a choice but instead predetermined by one's upbringing. However, we each hold different combinations of characteristics that shape who we are as a person and make us unique. We may even hold multiple identities, such as being a friend, a husband and an artist, each with its own associated characteristics.

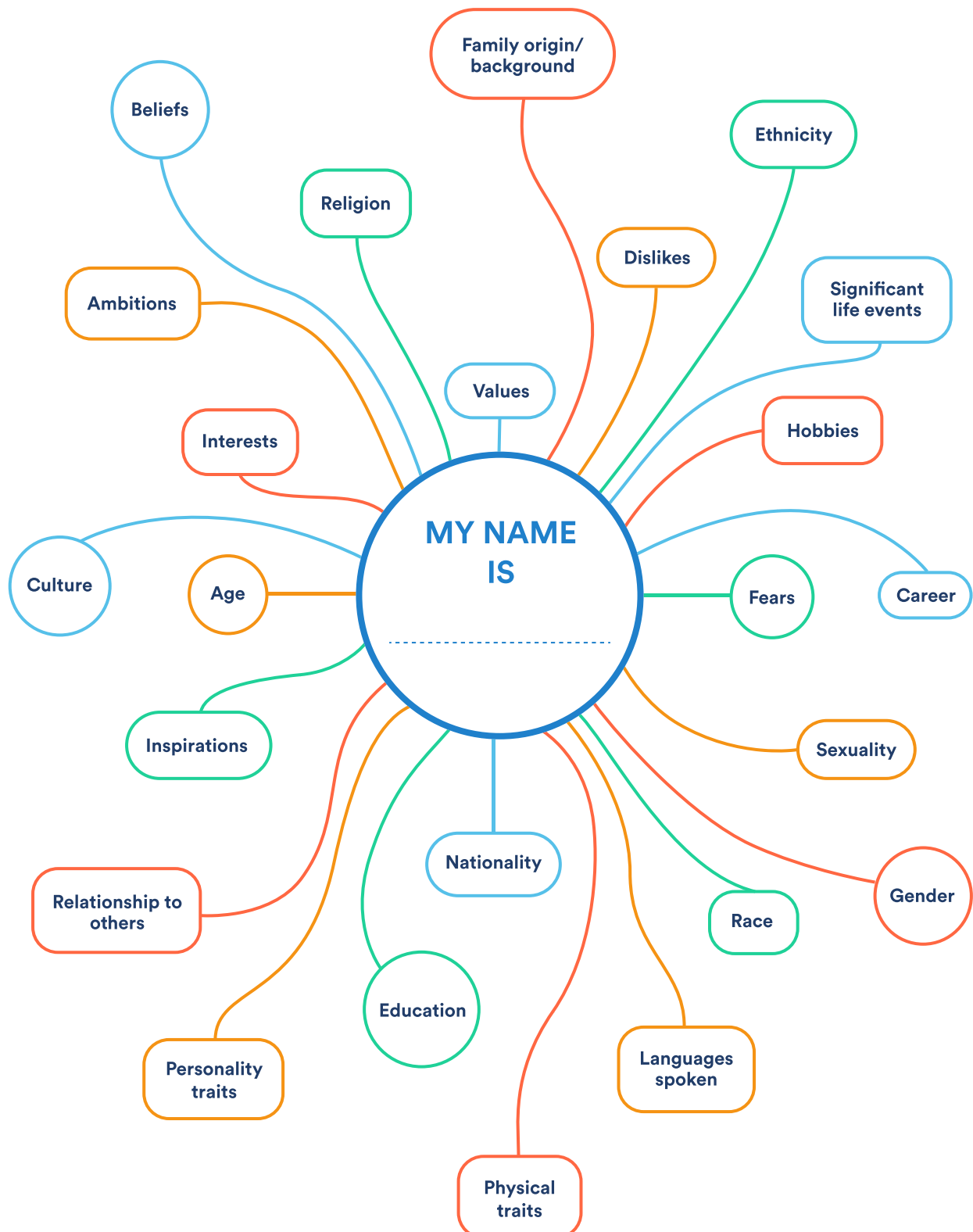
### Why Is It Important?

Understanding and acknowledging who we are as individuals can help us to:

- Have stronger relationships with ourselves
- Enhance the way we live, learn, relate, and value
- Make decisions more effectively
- Realise that what we think we know about others may be assumptions or parts of them that only scratch the surface
- Build strong relationships in our communities
- Deepen our perception of the world around us and why others may identify the way they do
- Understand what we want from life
- Avoid making choices led by others which can lead to unhappiness and unfulfillment

# Mapping Your Identity

Use the template below to create a self-identity map that is unique to you. Feel free to add any other elements that contribute to defining who you are.



# Understanding Yourself

Now that you have mapped out some of the key elements that form your identity, it is time to deepen your understanding further.

## Step 1: Build on your identity map

- For each of the items on your map, mark which ones are given, chosen or a core part of your identity. For example, “given” would be your nationality, “chosen” could be your career and “core” would be your characteristics.
- Now look at your map and ask yourself how each aspect of your identity makes you feel. Consider adding these feelings to your map in a different colour.

## Step 2: Consider the following questions

- What parts of your identity are visible to others and which are hidden?
- What part of your identity are you most proud of?
- What parts of your identity are you most afraid to share?
- What are your strengths?
- What makes you happy?
- Do you live your life according to your values?
- Do your choices reflect your interests or someone else's?
- What characteristics do you value most in yourself?
- What elements of your identity might change over time and which are fixed?
- Think about your friends, family, and colleagues - would they know all of this information about you? Would you know what their identity map would look like?

Now that you've answered these questions for yourself, we encourage you to start a conversation with a colleague and share your answers with each other. Not only does this deepen your relationships with one another, but it can help improve communication and understanding.