

7 Steps

to Create the Freedom to
Be Who You WANT to Be

(A GUIDE)

About

THIS WORKBOOK

According to Psychology Today, “Identity encompasses the memories, experiences, relationships, and values that create one’s sense of self. This amalgamation creates a steady sense of who one is over time, even as new facets are developed and incorporated into one’s identity.”

To put this another way, we have a tendency to base our sense of *who we are* on the relationships and experiences that we’ve had. Which is wild, considering we don’t get to choose many of our early relationships or experiences.

It’s also risky, because we can become trapped by our identities. We make choices based on the ways we identify, whether we’re aware of them or not. For instance, if someone identifies as a “hard worker” (which may just be a side effect of the family they were raised in), they may over-prioritize their work ethic. Maybe even to the point that they harm their health or relationship with their family. Or if someone identifies as a “technical person” they may overlook their creativity and turn down great opportunities because they think they’re not creative enough.

This can be an extra big deal when our circumstances change. If someone identifies strongly with their work, they may go through a crisis when they get laid off. There could be an amazing opportunity waiting for them, but if they are defining themselves by their old career they might miss out on it. Or if a mother defines herself as a stay-at-home mom, she may face an internal crisis when their kid goes off to college. *If that’s where you’re at right now, my workbook on transitions may be a better place to start.*

Our identities tend to form in the background, so most of us don’t realize everything that encompasses them. This is dangerous. If we are going to be making choices based on our identities, we should at least be aware of what they are.

This guide will assist you in becoming consciously aware of how you identify. It will then support you in evaluating your identity and choosing if you want it to stay that way. Chances are that you will want to release portions of it, and it will guide you through how to do so.

This work may bring up a lot of emotions, because you’re considering letting parts of your identity go. If at any point they get overwhelming, put the exercise on hold. You can come back to it another day, or revisit it with support. If you would like Bara’s support with this work you may contact Bara at bara@baraco.org.

1. Brainstorm: How do you identify?

Write down every word and phrase you can use to describe who you are. If you're not proud that you think of some of the words that come up it's ok, still write them down. You will have the opportunity to release them at the end of this exercise.

Your list may include some "obvious" stuff, like 'white' or 'educated', and some more abstract stuff, like 'hard worker'. Make sure to consider each of these categories that matter to you, but don't limit yourself to them:

- *Race/ethnicity/background*
- *Career*
- *Family*
- *Relationships*
- *Gender*
- *Personality*
- *Religion*
- *Sexuality*
- *Ethics*
- *Lifestyle*
- *Physicality*

Take some time with your list! I recommend leaving it out on your table or open on your computer for a week or so. Add to it every time a new identity comes up!

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2. Once you've completed the list, re-evaluate your identity

Review each item you've written down and ask yourself: *"is this part of who I am, or does it just describe me?"*

If you're not sure, put one hand on your belly or heart (whichever you identify more). Bring your attention to that area and ask yourself again.

This isn't a mental or logical exercise so don't try to reason with it. Something that's an identity characteristic for one person might not be for another. For example, for some people, being a *"hard worker"* or *"funny"* might be an integral part of who they are, where for others it's just a character trait.

If it describes you but doesn't define you, remove it from your list.

3. Spend some time with each of the items that remain

Ask yourself about each one: *"Who would I be without this? Do I still want to identify as this, or would I be better off letting this part of my identity go?"*

If you don't want it anymore, cross it out with a thin line (so you can still read it).

Spend some time with this exercise. Ideally you will work through it with a partner or in your journal.

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4. Take out a loose piece of paper and create a new list of the things you no longer want to identify with

You get to put whatever you want to on this list. Even if it's something that's always going to be true for you, it does not have to define you.

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5. Release the words on your new list with a ritual that resonates with you

Speak these (or similar) words aloud *"thank you for all you have done for me, but I no longer need your support. I release you now,"* and then physically release the words. You want to make this ritual your own—something that feels good to you.

Here are some suggestions:

- Paint your list in watercolor, and dissolve the paper in a bowl of water.
- Burn your list (somewhere safe).
- Write the words in the sand at low tide, and allow the ocean to wash them away.
- Write them on compostable paper and bury them, returning them to the earth.

6. You've created a lot of space in your life!

Reflect on if there are any new identities you want to take on. If so, add them to your original list as if you already embody them.

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7. Read back through the words that remain on your list

You may want to write on the top of it: "*I identify as:*". Better yet, create a whole new list that no longer contains the things you crossed off. Put it somewhere you can come back to when you want to do this ritual again.

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Hi! I'm Bara.

I'm a transformational life coach and speaker. I help people overcome the patterns and beliefs keeping them stuck. Are you ready to take your life or career to the next level? Book a free discovery call on baraco.org and let's find out if I'm the right person to support you!



LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH

BARA@BARACO.ORG
INSTAGRAM.COM/BARACOBARA