

Global Jewish  
Peoplehood  
Learning Series

What Does  
Identity Mean  
To You?

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## What does identity mean to you?

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Welcome to our session! Today, we're going to spend some time thinking about what it means to be... us. What is identity, and what does it mean for us? We're going to start with a couple of reflective questions in pairs.

Find a chevruta (study partner), and discuss the following questions.

- What factors shape our identity?
- How does one's culture affect one's identity?
- How does identity shape views and behaviors?

### **Activity 1, SHARE:**

#### Identity Chart

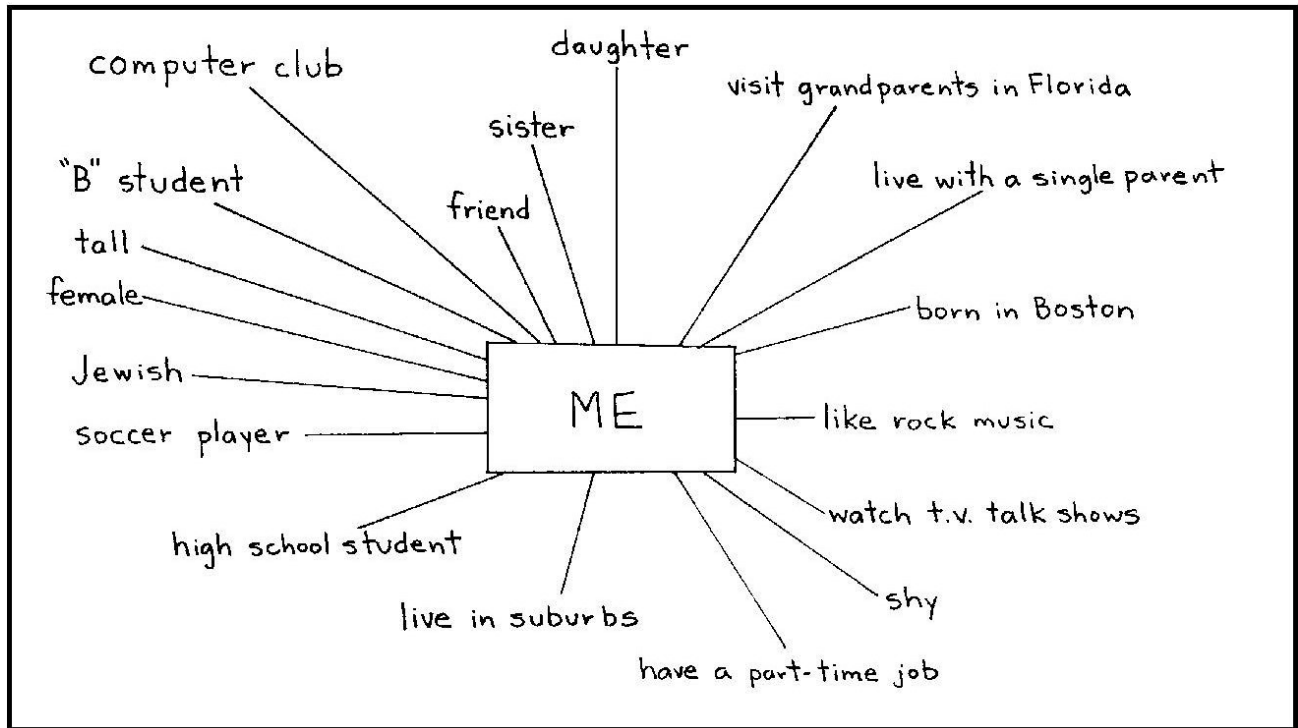
##### Rationale:

Identity charts are a graphic tool that helps students consider the many factors that shape who we are as individuals and as communities. They can be used to deepen students' understanding of themselves, groups, nations and historical and literary figures. Sharing their own Identity charts with peers can help students build relationships and breakdown stereotypes. In this way, identity charts can be utilized as an effective community-building tool.

##### Procedure:

Before creating identity charts, have the group brainstorm categories we consider when thinking about the question, "Who am I?" such as our role in a family (e.g., daughter, sister, mother, etc), our hobbies and interests (e.g., guitar player, football fan, etc), our background (e.g., religion, race, nationality, hometown, or place of birth), and our physical characteristics. It is often helpful to show students a completed identity chart (attached) before they create one of their own. Then have the students fill out their own identity charts.

Students will then introduce themselves or a partner to the group.



## Activity 2, LEARN:

Show clip from YouTube titled: Eboo Patel, Interfaith Youth Core: The power of failure to motivate (3 minute clip)

Introduction to Eboo Patel, recently visited Queens University:

Eboo's core belief is that religion is a bridge of cooperation rather than a barrier of division. He's inspired to build this bridge by his faith as a Muslim, his Indian heritage, and his American citizenship. He has spoken about this vision at places like the TED conference, the Clinton Global Initiative, and the Nobel Peace Prize Forum, as well as college and university campuses across the country. He has written two books about interfaith cooperation, *Acts of Faith* and *Sacred Ground*. Some people ask if Eboo ever stops talking about interfaith. If it's any indication, his five-year-old son can define interfaith cooperation.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m6RIZZBcpbg>

Reactions to the movie, discussion (15 minutes)

Activities after movie:

- Reactions to movie
- Create Eboo Patel's identity chart
- What is the implied value that his father refers to when he says "You have failed as a Muslim."
- Do any other religions share this value?



### Activity 3: DO

Distribute copies of the following poem

Where I'm From, by George Ella Lyon

I am from clothespins,  
from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride.  
I am from the dirt under the back porch.  
(Black, glistening,  
it tasted like beets.)  
I am from the forsythia bush  
the Dutch elm  
whose long-gone limbs I remember  
as if they were my own.

I'm from fudge and eyeglasses,  
from Imogene and Alafair.  
I'm from the know-it-alls  
and the pass-it-ons,  
from Perk up! and Pipe down!  
I'm from He restoreth my soul  
with a cottonball lamb  
and ten verses I can say myself.

I'm from Artemus and Billie's Branch,  
fried corn and strong coffee.  
From the finger my grandfather lost  
to the auger,  
the eye my father shut to keep his sight.

Under my bed was a dress box  
spilling old pictures,  
a sift of lost faces  
to drift beneath my dreams.  
I am from those moments--  
snapped before I budded --  
leaf-fall from the family tree.



### **30 minute activity**

- a. Read aloud
- b. Note repetition of “I am from”
- c. Notable details; why you like them
- d. Prompts to brainstorm details for you own poem
  - a. The neighborhood, where it’s located
  - b. Details from your childhood bedroom
  - c. Names of relatives who were important to your young life; those that linked you to your family’s past
  - d. Expressions you heard when you were growing up.
  - e. Names of memorable food, dishes served at family gatherings
  - f. An early memory in that home/neighborhood
  - g. How you felt in that home/neighborhood
- e. Select at least six of your best details and link words, phrases, and names together using the “I am from” line to begin your thoughts. Link them in any way that seems to make sense to you.
- f. A few people willing to share?

### **Closing question:**

Thinking about your identity that you have described today. Have any of our discussions added to your understanding of your own values? Are those in line with concepts you know about from Judaism?

### **Next Steps:**

Is anyone in your group interested in researching Interfaith Youth Core and establishing a relationship?