



# WHO AM I? – IDENTITY MATRIX

The Identity Matrix is designed to help with self-awareness in regards to how our individual identities change during our lifetime.

For those interested in an explanation of how to fill out the Base and Optional columns, please review the following:

## Base Columns

**Residence** - where we are from and where we live influences identity. Example - I am "from" Northern Virginia, have lived in New York and London, but mostly in North Carolina. Each residence culturally influences my identity.

**Identity %** - society changes our identity. The only racial and ethnic choices when I was young were "White" or "Black" on government forms. In the mid 1980's I was given the choice "Hispanic," which I chose, but I am really 75% Hispanic and 25% Irish. This column is to represent the total percentages, which do not change over time; so 75% of the column would be Hispanic and 25% Irish.

**Family** - we initially identify (traditionally) with our nuclear family, then as an individual, a couple, and a parent should we choose. Today, there are many alternatives that impact our identity and change over time.

**Vocation** - careers, jobs and pursuits affect our identity. Many times, we identify very strongly with these time-consuming activities. As we change and adapt, they do too, affecting our view of ourselves.

**DNA %** - like the "Identity" column, this is a % column. DNA test results add a more precise definition to our heritage. Within Hispanic, my test results reveal 52% Spanish (from both parents) and 8% Basque (Spain/France border). This precision helps clarify the more specific nature of my identity. I also have 2% Central American Indian DNA and another fractured 10-15% that my roots are not just European, but also from Central and South America. This column helps to explore the worldwide reach of the diversity we carry within our DNA identity.

**Interests** - hobbies like photography, sports, quilt-making, traveling, gardening or cooking tell us a lot about our identity. They are based upon our choice and help us relax and express ourselves. Sometimes they are lifelong, but they can also be for short periods.

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**Giving** - while hobbies express our inward focus, giving expresses our outward focus as we give back to or join organizations important to us. This can also change over time as I was once a Boy Scout, then a Boy Scout leader and biking I did for a merit badge made me interested in eBiking and supporting Rails-to-Trails.

**Seeking Validation** - who is important enough to us that we seek their validation? Initially it may be our parents or a sibling; sometimes a close family member. Later, it may be an important companion in our life or a boss at work.

**Marital Status** - this is an important historical societal norm that represents our desire to have a companion. It changes over time and can be a big influence over how we and others see us.

### Optional/personal columns:

**Rent/Own** - renting and owning a car or home involve different levels of responsibility and (potentially) stress. For many, it can also represent an accomplishment aspect to their identity.

**Debt Load** - whether it is college debt, an automobile loan, a business loan or a mortgage, debt can subtly put pressure on our identity.

**Income** - like owning a home, income can represent accomplishment. Higher income potentially opens more opportunities, creating changes in how we see our past, current and future identity.

**Stress** - the level of stress changes over time. The vastly different stresses of college, job, home and interpersonal relationships can challenge or even interrupt life. As a young adult I was super self-confident, but then a medical condition and job loss challenged that identity mid-life for several years. As I overcame those challenges, my identity changed to a more cautious, but still strong confidence.