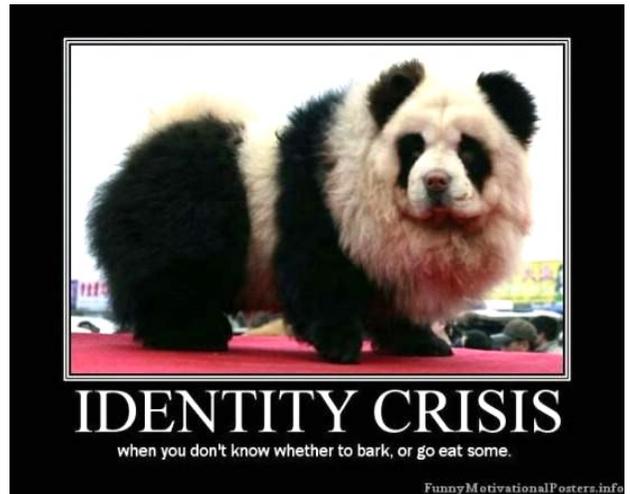


WHO ARE YOU?

When you meet someone for the first time, they will likely ask what you “do” for a living. We ask this question because it is a relatively harmless identity probe, and we then use their answer as a mental shortcut to inform us about what kind of person they are. Consider the stereotypes you hold for different occupations: a “business person,” a “doctor,” a “firefighter,” a “plumber,” a “police officer,” a “waiter/waitress.” Not only do we make unspoken assumptions about others’ personality from their occupation, but we also use this information to assume their social status, financial standing, stage in life, and even sometimes their political/religious affiliations.

Similarly, how you choose to answer “who am I?” reveals a large amount of information about your values, your beliefs, and even life priorities. Do you define yourself by your job (e.g. military, ISR, GEOINT), position (e.g. technical expert, supervisor, NCO, commander, civilian, contractor), family roles (e.g. father, mother, husband, wife, brother, sister), what you like to do in your free time, or past achievements (veteran, Amn of the Year, college graduate Scout)? Where you’re from (i.e. American, Texan, Croatian, Martian)? What you believe in (i.e. Christian, Jewish, Muslim, LDS, Atheist, Scientologist, Wiccan)? Life stage (i.e. Baby Boomer, Gen X, Millennial)? By your personal challenges (i.e. ADHD, insomniac, OCD, wounded warrior, PTSD, alcoholic, perfectionist, grouch, loner)? We are all a complex combination of roles and identities adding to our uniqueness, and informing how we think about ourselves and others.



Some of these descriptors aid people in understanding us; others help us understand ourselves. However, not all identity claims are positive; in fact, many can be downright damaging. Think about how you define *yourself* and the implications of those chosen identity monikers.

- **Describe yourself.** If you could only pick three words to answer, “Who are you?” What would they be? This is your primary identity, and the one that should ideally motivate actions. Next, think about whether your daily behavior aligns with your chosen descriptors; is there dissonance or congruence? If there is a mismatch between how you describe yourself and focused areas of effort, consider aligning priorities to match your primary identity.
- **Ask how other people see you.** Would your friends, family, and coworkers describe you the same way you see yourself? Might they perceive your priorities differently than you do? Solicit feedback about your reputation, and strive to show people the “real you.” How do you *want* to be viewed?
- **Consider how your identity has changed (and will change).** You are not the same person you were 10, 15, and 20 years ago...and for good reason! Expect change to be a life-long constant, and your current identity to shift in response to life changes—and what/how you want that to be.

This reminder was provided by members of the Airman Resilience Team at the 363 ISRW