

Silhouette of a question mark
with words of identity

Who Am I? By Jace Blehar

"Who am I?" is a natural question throughout our lives, but sometimes that question becomes a source of stress and anxiety. Especially as you transition to college, more and more people will expect you to have an answer to this question. As these pressures increase, you may start demanding an answer from yourself as well; after all, why can't you answer a question so many other people can? Even if you have these thoughts, sometimes it's important to remember it's not a question you can answer by thinking or doing something; it's an answer that only comes with time and that amount of time is different for everyone. I understand you've probably heard that before and that it doesn't do much to help with your struggle to find the answer to the question now, but you aren't the only one struggling.

You're Not The Only One

Reilly Hylton, a first-year at Loyola, responded to the question of "who are you?" with an "OH Sh**, who am I? Oh Nooo!" and people from college students to college professors had similar reactions as well. It's not a question you can be guaranteed to find an answer to no matter how old you are or how long you've been in school, and it's not always guaranteed to stay the same either.

How has your
view of who you
are changed
while at Loyola?

"I think I have surprised myself because I can go outside my comfort zone more than I thought I could at Loyola"
Reilly Hylton '25

Reframing

The important part about asking the question "Who am I?" is not to stress over it because you don't have an answer, but to use it to help drive you to search for the answer and find others along the way. By trying to find who we are, we run into things like our interests, passions, hobbies, and other important qualities that make us who we are. Asking "Who am I?" shouldn't be a source of anxiety but instead a way to discover who you are. You can't begin to find new interests, new passions, or just new things about yourself if you never go searching and the question of "Who am I?" is the best way to start that search.

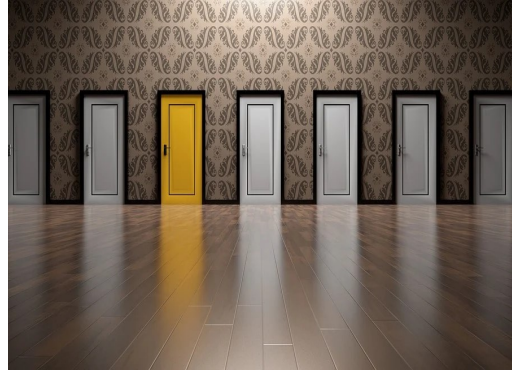


A frame sitting on a desk



The Search

How you go about that search all depends on what you want to look for. This question also helps us find what's important to us and thinking about the different things we want to explore helps answer that question. Loyola has dozens of opportunities for this from service-oriented ones like the [Center of Community Service and Justice](#) to places like the [Career Center](#), to clubs like women in STEM and swimming. Any number of opportunities can be used to define who you are, if anything, and deciding what those are is just another step toward answering the question of "Who am I?" that will help you find out more about yourself. Just trying new things and having new experiences, no matter what they are—academic, social, or otherwise—can help you find who you are.



Multiple doors with one highlighted

Obstacles

Unfortunately, obstacles can arise during this process that can make it an even more daunting process than it already is. Often times people encounter pressure to alter what they think are important parts of themselves or to be something else. For some people this is helpful, such as when people are confronted with ways they've hurt people like friends or family who they care about. When you are transitioning to college, though, some of these pressures to change yourself won't be meant to help you but rather to conform. It's important to recognize that uniqueness in who you are isn't something to be ashamed of, but it can, of course, be difficult to stand by that uniqueness when you're pressured to change it. This is especially true when you don't understand the benefit to holding on to that uniqueness. Everyone has to find their own value in their uniqueness, and there's no cookie cutter answer to resisting pressure from others to change.

You Don't Have To Know Who You Are To Be Who You Are

More than anything, the best thing you can do to find who you are is to let yourself be you. You don't need to have to an answer to "Who am I?" to join the club you have an interest in, you don't need to know who you are to go to a workshop at the Career Center, and you certainly don't need to know who you are to spend time making friends and meeting new people. You can find pieces of who you are through anything, and as long as you're open to that idea, you'll find what you need to know.



Man with his face blurred and replaced by a question mark

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