

Navigating IDENTITY

With a new environment and greater personal freedom, a lot of college students are given the opportunity to more freely explore and/or express their identity (e.g., cultural, gender, sexuality, religion, etc). This can be very positive as it allows some students to learn more about and better understand themselves. It also allows room for exploration and discovery of new interests and passions. Although this can be a very liberating and exciting experience, it can also come with some challenges



COMMON THEMES

- Feeling unable to express this newfound sense of identity at home or with certain people in your life
- Feeling confused or lost about who you are
- Anxiety about the new directions your life may be headed in
- Questioning pre-existing beliefs or ideas
- Feeling defined by academic markers of success such as GPA or major
- Imposter Syndrome
 - Feeling like a "fraud" or like you don't belong

NAVIGATION TIPS

- ★ **Seeking guidance.** Whether this be from a friend, family member, or professional help, it can be easier to work through identity formation by talking through the several thoughts that may be racing through your mind with someone else. Sometimes saying things out loud can bring about a lot of clarity.
- ★ **Writing things down.** Keeping a journal or diary can not only be a very therapeutic experience but can be a great way of tracking and following personal growth.
- ★ **Culturally/identity-based support groups.** Connecting with other groups that speak to specific aspects of your identity can allow you to learn more about yourself and the culture you come from.
- ★ **Being patient with yourself.** Finding one's self can take an incredibly long time - and it doesn't mean these identities won't change for you later in life. Some people are still struggling to find themselves after college, after marriage and even after starting a family. Learning about oneself is a lifelong process as you can learn something new about yourself every day. It is important to acknowledge this, be patient with yourself and the process.