

On Identity: You Belong Here

Description



Photo: Denis Boulze / 2020

Do you ever think about how no one chose to be here? No one submitted an application to exist. Our existence was chosen for us. Therefore, no one has more or less right to be here than you. You have a right to take up space. You are enough, the very essence of who you are is more than enough.

I understand this principle now. But I havenâ??t always. Hereâ??s one story about misunderstanding my identity.

This year every family with school-aged children was forced to dip their toes into the realm of home education. I had the joy of growing up homeschooled, but when I was young, it was largely looked down upon. It had only been legalized in Iowa shortly before my parents started. A few years before that, some parents were actually being arrested for attempting it. It was a tense time for young parents (and their children) interested in alternatives to the public education system.

My siblings and I were homeschooled all the way through high school. It was a wonderful experience. Iâ??m so thankful my parents were willing and able to give us a unique learning experience.

But it left scars in some ways. I didnâ??t feel fully accepted in society, didnâ??t feel welcome to engage with the community because of the way people treated us. When I got to college, I wanted to get good grades to prove my academic ability, and perhaps, earn a feeling like I was equal and belonged in this world. The, further along, I got in school, the more I became obsessed with it. In my last few semesters, while studying for finals, I would have self-destructive thoughts. The possibility of not doing well on the final and not getting the highest grade was so painful that it was appealing to think of not existing at all.



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I was placing a completely unhealthy level of identity on my grades. And, by the way, if you are struggling with something similar to this right now, I encourage you to talk to someone you trust about it. I was too embarrassed to admit these things while they were happening, but it would have been helpful to let someone else share the burden and speak some truth into my fears.

I ended up being successful at my mission to be a good student. I won some awards and graduated among the top students of my class. But my understanding of identity has shifted since then. Itâ??s taken a long time and itâ??s been a gradual shift, but through subsequent failures, Iâ??ve come to understand that you have value and worth that is beyond all measure of anything you do or donâ??t do. Whether you succeed or fail, whether you are educated in traditional or non-traditional ways, you have worth. Whether you seriously mess up or feel so confused that you canâ??t figure out the next step, you have worth.

The next time you are tempted to feel like everyone else has more right to exist than you, think of life like driving a car. What I love about driving is that all the cars are equal on the road. No matter what birth order you are, no matter your level of confidence, no matter how self-disciplined you are, no matter what kind of car you drive, no matter the mistakes youâ??ve made, when you pull up to a four-way stop, you get to go when itâ??s your turn to go.

My prayer for you is that when youâ??re feeling down, you will come to the deep understanding that you have the right to take up space and to take your turn in life, just like at a four-way stop in your car.

CATEGORY

1. COMMUNITY
2. WELLNESS

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