

# Identity Wheel

Sharing Many Parts of Our Selves



## Description

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Participants reflect on and share aspects of their identities.

## Objective

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- Build and strengthen relationships among participants
- Build and strengthen relationships between participants and leaders

## Connecting the Framework

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Learning about another person’s cultural background, heritage, talents, and skills can help people understand one another better, setting them up to build stronger developmental relationships. This activity encourages participants to share experiences relating to their identity and to learn about others’ identities and experiences.


## Planning and Preparation

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 **Participants:** Any

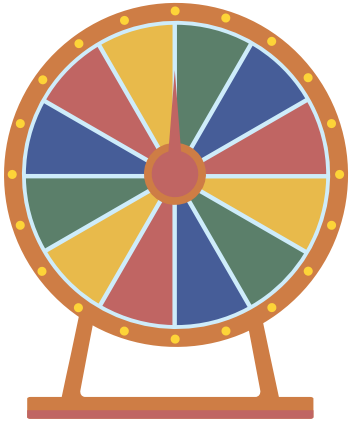
 **Materials:**

- Copies of “Identity Wheel”
- Pen or pencil for each participant

 **Time:** 30 minutes

 **Set up:**

- This activity works best in a space that allows pairs enough space to have conversations without getting distracted by nearby pairs.
- Before starting the activity, the facilitator should fill out their own Identity Wheel and prepare a few examples to share about themselves.



### Facilitator Notes:

- Be prepared to share examples from your identity wheel with the group. This activity can be used with teams of adults as well. Consider using it with your staff team or co-facilitators.
- This activity asks for a high level of vulnerability from participants. Some people may be called to be more vulnerable than others. Think about your group, and depending on how vulnerable they may need to be, you may want to do additional trust-building activities before this activity. As a facilitator, use your role to establish and maintain an atmosphere that supports and encourages vulnerability and respect among participants.
- Be aware that potentially triggering or troubling experiences could come up as participants share their own stories or hear from others. Follow up with participants who share particularly challenging experiences to thank them for sharing and see if there is any support they want or need. Keep an eye on participants' reactions to others' examples, being mindful about how people may be affected by the stories. Be ready to intervene if participants are showing disrespect (which could be intentional or unintentional).

### Facilitator Instructions

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1. Let participants know that this activity will provide an opportunity to get to know each other better, enabling them to build stronger relationships.
2. Assign participants partners. (Consider who might benefit from getting to know each other better in your group.)
3. Have participants introduce themselves to their partner and describe something unique about their name, using these prompts:
  - a. Tell your partner about your name. If you know the meaning, you can share it.
  - b. Do others in your family share your name?
  - c. How were you named? Who named you?
  - d. Were you named after anyone? Who?
  - e. How is your name unique?

Model this yourself, explaining a few facts about your own name. Then, give each participant one minute to share with their partner. Bring the group back together and ask that each person introduce their partner and provide one thing they heard about the other person's name.

4. Before delving into the activity, it is important to set the tone for an engaging interactive experience and healthy discussion. If your group has set group norms, this is a good time to revisit them. If not, here are some suggestions for group norms:
  - Acknowledge the hopes and fears that everyone brings to the table
  - Assume good intentions
  - Participate by actively listening and actively sharing
  - Avoid minimizing or dismissing others' experiences
  - Use a non-judgmental approach
  - Use "I" statements
  - Acceptance – be comfortable with being uncomfortable
  - Have a good time—it is okay to have a good time! Creating a respectful space is about coming together as a community, being mutually supportive, and enjoying each others' qualities.
5. Distribute the "Identity Wheel" handout. Ask participants to write their name in the center circle. They should then fill in each piece of the wheel with a dimension of their identity they consider to be important in defining themselves. Model this practice by filling in and sharing your own answers for a few of the pieces. Let participants know if there is something they are uncomfortable filling out they may leave it blank.
6. After giving participants a few minutes to individually fill out their wheels, ask participants to discuss their wheels with their partner.
7. When participants have discussed their wheels, ask them to talk about the things they are most proud of about their identity.
8. Next, ask participants if they've ever felt pain or embarrassment because of an aspect of their identity. If participants are willing, ask them to share an example or story with their partner. Share an experience of your own with the group aloud to give an example.
9. When partners are done discussing, invite a few participants to share out their examples with the larger group.
10. Circle up to debrief with the reflection questions below.

## Reflect

- How did you feel while doing this activity?
- What are some examples of stories your peers told that really made you think? (Get permission from the person who originally told the story before sharing it with the whole group.)
- How do you think the different aspects of your identity affect how you approach building relationships?
- Did you learn new things about your peers? How did it feel to find out these new things?
- Why is it important to share things about your identity with others? Why is it important to listen to others as they talk about their identity and experiences?

## Identity Wheel Handout

For definitions of each area,  
see key on next page.



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## Identity Wheel Key

### Community

- Where do you live?
- What activities do you participate in?
- What groups do you belong to? What school do you go to?

### Religion/Spirituality

- Do you belong to a faith community?
- What helps you think about big questions in life?
- What holidays or traditions do you observe?

### Family

- Who is in your family? Who lives in your home?
- What family roles are part of your identity that are important to you? (I am a sibling, cousin, etc.)

### Race/Ethnicity

- What race or ethnicity do you identify as? Where are your ancestors from? What cultural traditions do you have in your family?

### Hobbies/Interests

- What do you do for fun? What activities are you involved in? What topics are you interested in?

### Beliefs/Values

- What guides your decisions? What is important to you?

### Gender

- Which, if any, gender do you identify as?

### Other

- What other identities are important parts of you?