

Here's LOOKING at YOU

Knowing the true you is key to living a balanced and happy life. Mandy Holloway offers this practical guide to connecting with your inner self.

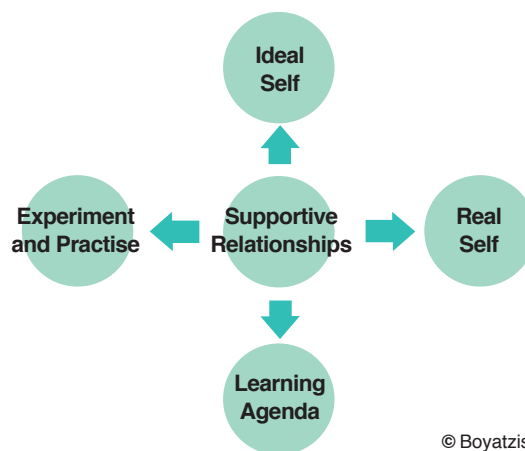


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Energy, passion, courage, authenticity, trust, honesty and freedom – these are not only critical attributes of a leader; they are what you feel and exhibit by being a great leader of your ‘self’. Identifying and becoming your ideal self in every role you play in life is critical for personal happiness. For example, have you always wanted to feel like you were living:

- at peace with yourself;
- in blissful happiness;
- in balance with the tensions surrounding you;
- in a space where you could stay true to you;
- with no regrets for what you have done with your life?

You can achieve all of these by identifying and becoming your ‘ideal self’. This is where you connect with your dreams, hopes and passions. This is not about becoming what you feel you ought to become to satisfy others’ hopes and dreams – your parents, your partner, your boss or your children. By identifying what you want to be known for in every role you play in life you can take the next step and assess where you are now (referred to below as “real self”) so you can determine the gap with absolute clarity. Richard Boyatzis, a professor of organisational behaviour, defines this as your learning agenda and it represents the start of your lifelong journey. Once you have created your learning agenda you experiment and practise until you get closer to ideal self.



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Why find and be your ideal self?

Starting on this journey will have the benefits of greater happiness and a greater sense of who you are, as well as setting you on a lifelong journey of personal discovery. The more you find out, the more you put into practice, and the more you change. The cycle continues as you keep expanding your picture of ideal self.

Just when you think you have nailed your picture of ideal self you will take time to think reflectively after confronting a certain situation only to discover something deeper about yourself and you will take the necessary action to fine-tune your future picture of ideal self. It becomes a lifelong learning loop

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because the more you learn about yourself the more choices are available for action. The more you change real self then the greater the adaptations you make to ideal self.

Taking yourself off autopilot and bringing consciousness to most things you do, say and believe will create questions and choices you have never imagined.

One of my favourite quotes is from the 17th-century French philosopher La Rochefoucauld: “The passions are the only advocates who always persuade. The simplest man with passion will be more persuasive than the most eloquent without”.

This wondrous and lifelong journey allows you to truly discover what you are passionate about and develop the courage to live with this passion.

What's holding you back?

For a large part of our lives we learn to develop routines and habits to protect ourselves, to comply with expectations and to control what happens to us. It's safer to live in this place – known as the ‘problem-reacting stance’. In this, we remove what we don't want and strive to get ‘back to normal’. Fear and avoidance drive the very essence of this life stance because of our overriding desire for safety, security, comfort and approval. These are the key drivers behind many of the destructive habits we hold onto. This kind of life stance keeps us in the safety of what our real self currently is and strives to keep us here within our daily comfort zone. This is particularly so during economic times like we are currently experiencing where the fear of the unknown looms heavily in our minds – and we get locked into negative ‘what if?’ thinking.

If we were to adopt the opposite life stance, which is known as the ‘outcome-creating life stance’, we would focus rather on what we do want; we focus on envisioned results. Energy flows from this kind of creative tension – the gap between current reality and our vision for our future.

So, what holds us back? Fear holds us back! Embrace the fear, step into your courage and dare to imagine what your ideal self can look like.

What does your ideal self look like?

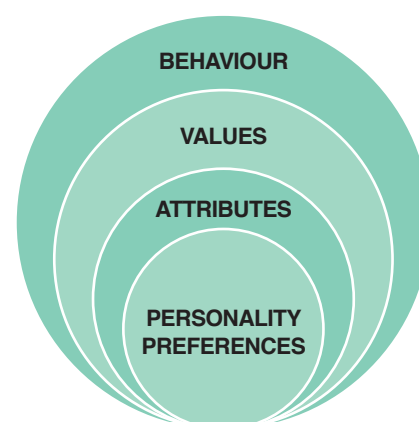
Here is a 10-step approach to deciding what you want your ideal self to look like.

1. Identify all the roles you play in life – family member (sister, mother, wife, auntie), career role, member of sporting team etc.
2. Determine what you would like to be known for in each of these roles.
3. Identify or revisit your values. Feel free to contact me and I will happily email you a values inventory to help you in this critical task.
4. Reflect on how you currently live these values in each of your roles and explore any tension you would like to resolve.
5. Get in touch with your personality preferences – the innate preferences that drive the way you make decisions, how you take information in, how you energise yourself, how you ‘orient’ your life – see ‘A New Understanding’ in the April/May issue of **EMPOWER** on understanding different personality types – so you gain clarity on where you go

quickly and easily to do these things in each of the roles you play.

6. Obtain clarity on the key behaviour choices you make in each of the roles you play – feedback from different people is a great source of input. It was with great delight that I received feedback from my eldest daughter's friends when they said I always appeared happy and asked how I managed this when I was picking them up and driving them places. This feedback certainly affirmed my picture of ideal self as a mum!
7. Stretch your thinking to create a picture of ideal self for each of these roles where you are truly living your values and consistently choosing behaviours that fit with what you want to be known for.
8. Challenge your thinking with the negative feedback you have received in the past and not liked, the negative stereotypes and any other negative thoughts about your roles – and turn these into a positive for your picture of ideal self.
9. Challenge your thinking with aspirations, hopes and dreams you have for yourself but have not dared to imagine making them real!
10. Collate this thinking into something that is meaningful for you.

As we see below, personality preferences are a critical driver for your choice of behaviour, as are your attributes (like patience, curiosity, enthusiasm, passion) and importantly your values show another direct link to the behaviour choices you make. By completing these 10 steps you get insight into the behaviours you want to start adopting so you can get closer to ideal self.



Once you have the outputs from this 10-step approach it is time to engage in a real conversation with a person you trust who is good at listening and asking insightful questions. This kind of conversation (within a supportive relationship as depicted in the ideal self diagram) helps to distil your thinking into a concrete picture of ideal self.

Benjamin Button brings a charming insight to this notion of being ideal self towards the end of the movie *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* when he says, “For what it's worth, it's never too late, or in my case too early, to be whoever you want to be. There's no time limit... Start whenever you want... You can change or stay the same. There are no rules to this thing. We can make the best or the worst of it. I hope you make the best of it. I hope you see things that stop you. I hope you feel things that you never felt before. I hope you meet people with a different point of view. I hope you live a life that you're proud of and if you find that you're not, I hope you have the strength to start all over again.” **em**