



# SEEKING TO UNDERSTAND: IDENTITY POKER

*Identify what makes you, you*



## OBJECTIVES

- Students will examine personal identity
- Students will compare personal values to others

## MATERIALS

- Notecards (5 Per Student)

## TIME

- 30 min
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## LESSON INTRO

To communicate effectively, we must begin by understanding where our listeners or audience is coming from: physically, emotionally, spiritually, and so on. If we are able to listen, understand, and value who people are as individuals and members of our community, we can become more effective and more empathetic listeners, and thus communicators. This activity helps students begin that journey of listening and seeking to understand self and others.

This can be a powerful activity, but to harness its power the right tone and setting are important. Set up your group for success by introducing the activity with some degree of seriousness and intention.

For maximum effect, the facilitator should add in an element of drama (the good kind) to the process of discarding their “identity cards”. Pausing, pacing, and tone can create an atmosphere of intrigue that will lead to a more engaging environment.

## LESSON STEP BY STEP

1. Post or read the following quotes:
  - “Seek first to understand, then to be understood.” S. Covey
  - “Earn the right to be heard by listening to others.” J. Maxwell
  - “Most of the successful people I know do more listening than talking.” B. Baruch
2. SAY: This activity may not seem like it applies to communication at all! As we go through the activity, consider the quotes we just read and what perspective on communication you can draw from this exercise.
3. Provide each student with five notecards.



4. Instruct students to keep these private during the activity. Like a poker hand, cards shouldn't be revealed until the end.
5. On single notecards, allow students time to write their personal answers to the following categories:
  - Name
  - Gender
  - Race/Ethnicity
  - Religion, Spiritual Identity, or Personal Mantra
  - Unique Strength or Characteristic
6. Keep the categories general and open to the interpretation of the student. For example, if students are asking if you want them to write their full name, simply share that they should write the name that they most identify with.
7. Next, have students look at their array of cards.
8. SAY: In a small way, these cards show your identity. Not all of it of course, we are complex people and have so much more than just these five markers of self. But these are some important ones!
9. Begin by asking students to discard the one card that they feel is least important to them or their identity. This should be done silently. Place the discarded card face down.
10. Pause. Have students discard another card. This should be the least important to them of the remaining four.
11. Keep going. Ask students to narrow down their cards to two. Students should keep their two most important cards in their hand.
12. Then, the final step, have students choose one of their remaining cards as their most important.

## VARIATIONS

1. Feel free to switch out any of the categories with another one that best fits your student groups' identity such as: a community you belong to, a hobby or activity, a family tradition, etc...

## FACILITATOR TIPS AND NOTES

Because this is a very personal activity, it can be powerful. Be sure to create and foster an inclusive environment so that students feel free to share and listen to others. It is best not to force sharing during this exercise. One way to offer a sense of safety is to allow students to respond by either sharing their unique answer or the *category* of the chosen card.



## REFLECTION & WRAP UP

1. SAY: You are holding the card that you feel says the most about who you are.
    - Ask if anyone wants to share their last card, and why they chose to keep that one.
  2. Ask (many of) the following (all if time allows!):
    - What was this experience like for you?
    - What was the first card that you got rid of? Why?
    - Which two cards did you have at the end? How did you decide on that one to keep?
    - Were you surprised that you ended up with the card you choose to hang onto as your final card? Why/why not?
    - What do you notice about the differences or similarities among our cards as a group?
    - Why do you think we did this activity to highlight communication?
    - How might you react to someone who makes fun of, or slights, your religion versus if they slighted your gender?
      - Do you think this would be the same for everybody?
      - What can this teach us about how we approach communicating with other people?
    - How might you consider communicating differently with someone who has chosen their name as an important marker of identity versus someone who has chosen race?
  3. SAY: “The more we understand each other (and ourselves) the better we can communicate in a way that is compassionate; the more we show that we understand someone, the better they will listen! The more people listen, the more useful the communication. The chain reaction begins with listening to and understanding the other person.”
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## NOTES

- **Educational Standards:** CASEL: Self Awareness, CASEL: Social Awareness, P21: Social and Cross-Cultural Skills, P21: Communication and Collaboration, CCRS:SL1 Have Diverse Conversations