

# Understanding Identity, Belief, Values & Belonging

## Teacher Guidance



### Who is this lesson for?

This activity is designed primarily for KS4 and KS5 students and can be used in youth settings. It can also be adapted and used for younger students.

### Objectives

1. Understand the different aspects of identity and how they shape our experiences.
2. Identify how different narratives impact self-perception and belonging.
3. Examine the impact of biases, assumptions, and dominant narratives about identity, faith, and belonging.
4. Recognise diverse experiences and develop strategies to foster inclusivity.

### Outcomes:

- ✓ Deeper understanding of identity and its complexities.
- ✓ Recognize the impact of societal and cultural expectations on self-perception.
- ✓ Critical thinking skills to question dominant narratives and assumptions.
- ✓ Empowered to embrace their authentic selves and support others to do so.

### Lesson Structure

This lesson has been designed to be delivered either as a one-hour session, or as four 15-minute activities (for use in form time, etc.).

Teachers are welcome to make any reasonable changes to the content in order for it to meet their students' needs.

### Creating a Safe Space for Activities

In order to deal with sensitive topics, safe, brave, trusting and respectful environments are key. These need to be developed & practised over time and so it is worth revisiting your group expectations before these workshops. For more guidance on creating a 'Framework for Encounter' visit <https://faithbeliefforum.org/resources/>.

### Possible Next Steps

#### Extension Activities:

There is an extension activity at the end of this lesson plan. This could be used to extend learning for those students that are interested in knowing more.

Further resources, guidance, and lesson plans on developing skills for dialogue; creating safe spaces; and facilitating dialogue on controversial issues can also be found on the Faith & Belief Forum webpage <https://faithbeliefforum.org/resources/>.

| Slide | Timings                          | Content Guidance   |
|-------|----------------------------------|--|
| 1     | Title Slide                      | Understanding Identity, Belief, Values & Belonging   |
| 2     | Contents                         |  |
| 3     | Part 1: Definitions & Psychology |  |
| 4     | 5 minutes                        | <p><b>Present 1<sup>st</sup> slide:</b></p> <p><b>Identity Overview</b><br/>A person's identity is shaped by values, relationships, and experiences, including cultural and social influences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Personal Identity</b> – Self-perception, evolving over time, shaped by interests, choices, upbringing, faith / belief, and inherent traits.</li> <li>• <b>Social Identity</b> – How others see a person, based on factors like race, gender, and socioeconomic status.</li> <li>• <b>Cultural Identity</b> – A sense of belonging through shared language, values, traditions, faith and belief, and heritage.</li> <li>• <b>Other</b> – Includes appearance, health, education, profession, emotions, beliefs and generational influences.</li> </ul>  |
| 5     | 10 minutes                       | <p><b>The different lenses through which we see our identity:</b></p> <p>In this activity we will have a think about some of these different parts of identities that we all have (personal, social, cultural, and other). We will think about how we see and understand ourselves; how we see ourselves through the lens of others (friends and family, people who know us); and the lens of the community and world.</p> <p><b>Lens Activity:</b></p> <p>Imagine that you are looking at yourself through each lens and answer the question thinking about yourself. You will not need to share this with anyone but only write what you feel comfortable.</p> <p><b>'I' Glass - How do you see yourself?</b></p> <p><b>'U' glasses – How might others see you? Why might this be?</b></p> <p><b>'WE' 3-D glasses – How might groups / communities see you? Why might this be?</b></p> |
| 6     |                                  | <p><b>Reflection questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Are there any things that you have written that you do not feel are true to who you really are?</li> <li>· Do you find that you behave differently in different places or with different people? Why might this be / what might you be thinking? <b>How</b> does this feel?</li> <li>· How may your beliefs be changed or impacted by how others see you or how you are seen in the community / wider world?</li> </ul> <p><b>Wrap-up</b></p>   |

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|    |   | Thank you for writing your own story. Now we are going to move on to looking at what happens when other people try and define us...  |
| 7  | Part 2: What happens when others define your Identity? Impact on identity |  |
| 8  | 7 minutes   | <p><b>FAITH, BELIEF, IDENTITY &amp; DISCOURSE - Encounters &amp; Narratives</b></p> <p>We will be watching an extract from a TED Talk by writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche titled 'The Danger of a Single Story' in 2009. Explain that after we have watched the clip students will be asked answer the following questions (give them the option of making notes as they watch the clip which is just over 2 minutes long:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the effect / impact of others making assumption about parts of your story?</li> <li>2. Where might the source of some of the mis-informed discourse or stories come from?</li> </ol> <p><i>START WATCHING AT 2 MINUTES 58 SECONDS</i><br/> <i>STOP WATCHING AT 5 MINUTES 21 SECONDS</i><br/> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9lhs241zeg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9lhs241zeg</a></p> <p>Ask for some key points that people are happy to share as a whole group</p> |
| 9  | 8 minutes   | <p>Spend a few minutes discussing the 'danger of a single story' by focusing in on the following quote also from Adiche's TedTalk and discuss the questions below:</p> <p><i>"The single story creates stereotypes. And the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story."</i></p> <p>Allow students a moment to think about this statement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· What is being said here?</li> <li>· May there be some groups or specific identities that are more impacted by a single story? Who?</li> <li>· What might a solution be to counter the single story?</li> </ul> <p>Ask for student reflections and discuss as a group.</p>   |
| 10 | Part 3: Impact of Context on identity & feelings of belonging             |  |
| 11 | 5 minutes   | <p><b>FAITH, BELIEF, IDENTITY &amp; PLACE-</b></p> <p>Read the following to students and ask them to reflect on the questions below as they listen:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What was the difference in experiences between the two people?</li> <li>2. What was the impact on how they saw themselves and their identities?</li> </ol> <p>-----</p> <p><i>Below is a transcript of a conversation between two people. Both were born into Sikh families, with parents who immigrated from India but they themselves were born in the UK. One grew up in an area where there were a majority of other Sikh families, and the other grew up in an area where there were few other Sikh families.</i></p> <p><b>Question: Who did you spend most of your time with?</b></p>   |

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|    |   | <p><b>Gurj:</b> I spent most of my time with my friends growing up or with family. Like most kids we spent loads of time playing at the park and playing football. All of my friends were either Sikh, or Hindu, and a couple of Muslim kids. At the time, I just thought that was normal, that was how people lived in their 'community' groups where we spoke Punjabi and followed 'Indian' culture at home, all of my friends understood Punjabi, we liked the same bhangra music which originated in north India. I didn't know any different.</p> <p><b>Aman.</b> See my experience was so different. Other than family, or those that we met at the Gurdwara, I was in the minority both in the area that I lived and in school. Not to say that there weren't any other minorities, but we probably were only about 10% of the whole school population at school. I never talked about what I did at home, the Indian food that we ate, or what we did on the weekend like going to pray at the Gurdwara because I thought friends at school would not understand or be interested, but I also didn't want to stand out or be different.</p> <p><b>Question: How did you feel about your own faith?</b></p> <p><b>Gurj.</b> I loved being Sikh. I felt proud of my religion and my Punjabi heritage and saw that both were really important to who I was, that was something that my parents really instilled in me growing up but also through extended family who we met regularly. My friends and I would also see each other at the Gurdwara.</p> <p><b>Aman.</b> I felt confused growing up. I really just wanted to fit in with my friends. I remember feeling that I wanted to reject my religion, I didn't identify with any part of it but I went along with it because I now it meant a lot to my parents. Saying this and thinking about it now really hurts because my Sikh faith is so important to me now, it has become more important to me the older I have got.</p> <p><b>Question: How did you feel when meeting people from different communities or faiths?</b></p> <p><b>Gurj.</b> So as I mentioned, I had some Hindu and Muslim friends and I got to know a little about their religious lives. One thing I did realise as I grew up and went into work was that I did not know much about the white British community. I have to admit that I struggled when I started working outside of the area that I grew up in, I was then in the minority and it took me a little while to feel comfortable, but then everyone was so welcoming that I soon felt comfortable being myself, although I would not talk about my Sikh faith, but that's probably more because it doesn't come up rather than me purposely hiding it or anything.</p> <p><b>Aman.</b> Honestly, growing up I was such a quiet child that I don't know that I felt fully comfortable with anyone. I stuck with my little group of friends, followed along with them and always felt so anxious when meeting anyone new, regardless of who they were. It took me a long time to feel fully comfortable speaking to people, it is probably something that I still can get anxious about.</p> |
| 12 | 10 minutes                                    | <p>Ask students to work in pairs and create a table of differences in experience that each person highlights.</p> <p>Ask for some key points that people are happy to share as a whole group. As examples are shared, unpick what the impact of these experiences seem to be on the individuals, and how the individuals may have felt.</p>  |
| 13 | Part 4: RRP - Resilient & Reflective Practice |  |

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| 14 | 3 minutes  | <p><b>RRP as a Holistic approach:</b><br/> <i>Here we will be practising a 3 part strategy that focuses on bringing your whole self to any situation that may be uncomfortable or challenging, especially one that is central to our identities and beliefs.</i></p> <p><b>Three-part strategy – controversial / challenging – TO - learning / development</b></p> <p><b>Deep Dive Activity</b><br/> Ask for two volunteers to play the part of each character in the script below (pick <b>one</b> scenario for students to act out).</p> <p>Read the following description before asking students to read their parts.</p> <p>Jess is a 16-year-old Christian student, working on a group project in class when their classmate Mia starts a conversation with them...</p> <p><b>Mia: "I don't get how you can still believe in God. Science has basically proven religion is fake."</b></p> <p><b>Jess: "Actually, a lot of scientists have religious beliefs. Faith and science aren't always in conflict—many people see them as working together."</b></p> <p><b>Mia: "I just think religious people ignore facts."</b></p> <p><b>Jess: "Not really. My faith gives me meaning and guidance, but that doesn't mean I reject science. There are different ways to understand the world, and faith is part of mine."</b></p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p>Satti is a 14-year-old Sikh student, sitting in class when a classmate, Tom, notices Satti's kara (a steel bracelet worn as part of Sikh faith) and starts a conversation with them...</p> <p><b>Tom frowns and says: "Why do you have to wear that? It looks weird. Isn't it just a superstitious thing?"</b></p> <p><b>Satti: "Actually, it's not superstition. It's an important part of my faith—it reminds me to always do the right thing and stay connected to my beliefs."</b></p> <p><b>Tom: "But why do you have to wear it all the time? That seems kind of extreme."</b></p> <p><b>Satti: "Just like some people wear a cross or have tattoos with special meanings, this bracelet is a symbol of who I am. It's not about rules—it's about reminding me to be a good person."</b></p> <p><b>Tom: "I didn't know that. I just assumed it was some strict religious rule."</b></p> <p><b>Satti: "Yeah, a lot of people don't know much about Sikhism"</b></p> |
| 15 | 10 minutes | <p>Once you have finished reading the scenario, ask students to spend time in small groups exploring answers to the questions below for a few minutes.</p> <p><b>Questions</b></p> <p><b>HEAD – ATTITUDES &amp; KNOWLEDGE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What assumptions were made? What did it make you think about the people involved in the conversation?</li> <li>● How do stereotypes about religion or faith develop, and what impact do they have?</li> </ul> <p><b>HEART – EMOTIONS &amp; FEELINGS</b></p>  |

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|    |           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you feel in this scenario? Could you relate to the situation?</li> <li>• How do emotions like frustration, curiosity, or discomfort play a role in conversations about identity and faith?</li> </ul> <p><b>BODY – SKILLS &amp; BEHAVIOURS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you respond if you were in a similar situation in real life?</li> <li>• What actions can you take to create a more inclusive and respectful environment for people of all faiths and beliefs?</li> </ul> <p>If there is time, ask for volunteers to share what stood out for them.</p>  |
| 16 | 2 minutes | <p><b>Summary slide:</b></p> <p>This approach helps to navigate personal identity and challenges...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>HEAD – Thinking Critically:</b> Identifies biases, analyses influences, and expands knowledge on diverse perspectives. Increases awareness of power, privilege, and social influences shaping beliefs.</li> <li>• <b>HEART – Understanding Emotions:</b> Recognises emotional reactions, develops empathy making it easier to connect with others and understand different viewpoints, and helps with mindful responses.</li> <li>• <b>BODY – Taking Action:</b> Translates knowledge and emotional awareness into practical skills and behaviours, builds resilience, and encourages active participation.</li> </ul> |
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|         | Extension Activity |  |
| 18 & 19 | 15 minutes         | <p><b>Investigating Intersectionality of Identity</b></p> <p>Reflect individually on two or three of the following areas (pick any two that feel the most significant). Think about how they may impact your own identity. Do the two / three connect in any way with each other to further influence you (e.g. what influences might family have on who you are and what makes you, you? Are you the oldest child in your family? Does this mean that you have more responsibilities? Combining this with 'traditional' gender roles in dominant society, does this change your experience, role and expectations on you, and sense of self?)</p> <p>You will not need to share your reflections.</p> <p><b>Categories to choose from:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Family (Roles, Responsibilities &amp; Relationships)</b><br/>Shapes early values, beliefs, and self-perception; influences confidence, responsibilities, and expectations in life.</li> <li>• <b>Education</b><br/>Develops knowledge, critical thinking, and social skills; impacts self-esteem, career choices, and aspirations.</li> <li>• <b>Aspirations / Hopes for Future</b><br/>Provides motivation and direction; shapes decision-making, resilience, and personal growth. Affects sense of purpose, and self-worth.</li> <li>• <b>Race / Power / Privilege</b><br/>Influences experiences, opportunities, and social interactions; can impact self-identity, self-worth, and perspectives on fairness and equity.</li> </ul> |

- **Culture**  
Defines traditions, customs, and worldviews; affects language, values, and social norms that shape identity.
- **Friends Circle**  
Influences behaviours, interests, and self-esteem; peer acceptance can shape confidence and choices.
- **Religion / Values / Beliefs**  
Provides moral guidance, purpose, and a sense of belonging; influences identity through traditions and ethical principles.
- **History / Heritage**  
Connects identity to ancestry and past experiences; shapes pride, cultural practices, and personal narratives.
- **Gender Roles**  
Impacts societal expectations and personal identity; influences self-expression, and personal freedom.
- **Media Representations**  
Shapes perceptions of beauty, success, and social norms; can affect self-esteem and identity formation.
- **Sexuality**
- **Feelings of 'Belonging'**  
A strong sense of belonging fosters confidence and well-being, while exclusion can impact self-worth and mental health.

**Summary Slide:**

**Importance of Recognising Intersectionality in Identity**

**Intersectionality** acknowledges that a person's identity is shaped by multiple overlapping factors—such as race, religion or belief, gender, class, sexuality, ability, and culture—which interact to influence their experiences, opportunities, and challenges.

- **More Inclusive Understanding** – Sees people as whole individuals.
- **Impacts Lived Experiences** – Identities interact, affecting discrimination and privilege.
- **Recognises Power Imbalances** – Multiple marginalized identities face compounded challenges.
- **Improves Policies & Support** – Leads to fairer, more effective solutions.
- **Fosters Empathy** – Encourages awareness and inclusivity.

Recognizing intersectionality helps create a fairer, more understanding society.

