

GETTING STARTED

1. What Happened to Your Sense of Self?

DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF YOURSELF

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3. Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation
4. Personality
5. Strengths
6. Ethnicity/Nationality/Culture
7. Values
8. Beliefs
9. Occupation
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AS A RESULT OF SENSE OF SELF

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1. What Happened to My Sense of Self?

Regarding losing your sense of self, have you ever found yourself asking, “What the hell happened to me?”

Can you relate to any of the following common reasons people find themselves in need of strengthening their sense of self?

- Family of origin did not allow you to be yourself (e.g. narcissistic, controlling, insecure, or otherwise self-absorbed or absent parent)
- Your own self or actions (e.g. drugs/alcohol/other compulsive behaviors; severe mental health issues)
- Other controlling individuals (usually an intimate partner, but could be a friend)
- High-influence groups (like intense church experiences; cults)
- Society (especially for marginalized and oppressed groups--racial or cultural minorities, LGBTQ, etc.)

How can you honor the experience you had of losing your sense of self, e.g. poetry, art, a story, sharing with others? Is there any grief regarding that loss that you still need to experience and/or express? How might honoring that very difficult experience help bring some closure so you can move forward in strengthening your sense of self?

2. Race

If you are white, you may not consider race as an important part of your identity because, basically, your race is the norm. If, however, you are a racial minority, your race may be a very important part of your identity.

With which race do you identify?

On a scale of 0 to 10 how important is your racial identity to you?

Do you often associate with other people of the same race? Do you wish you could be more connected with a community of people of the same race?

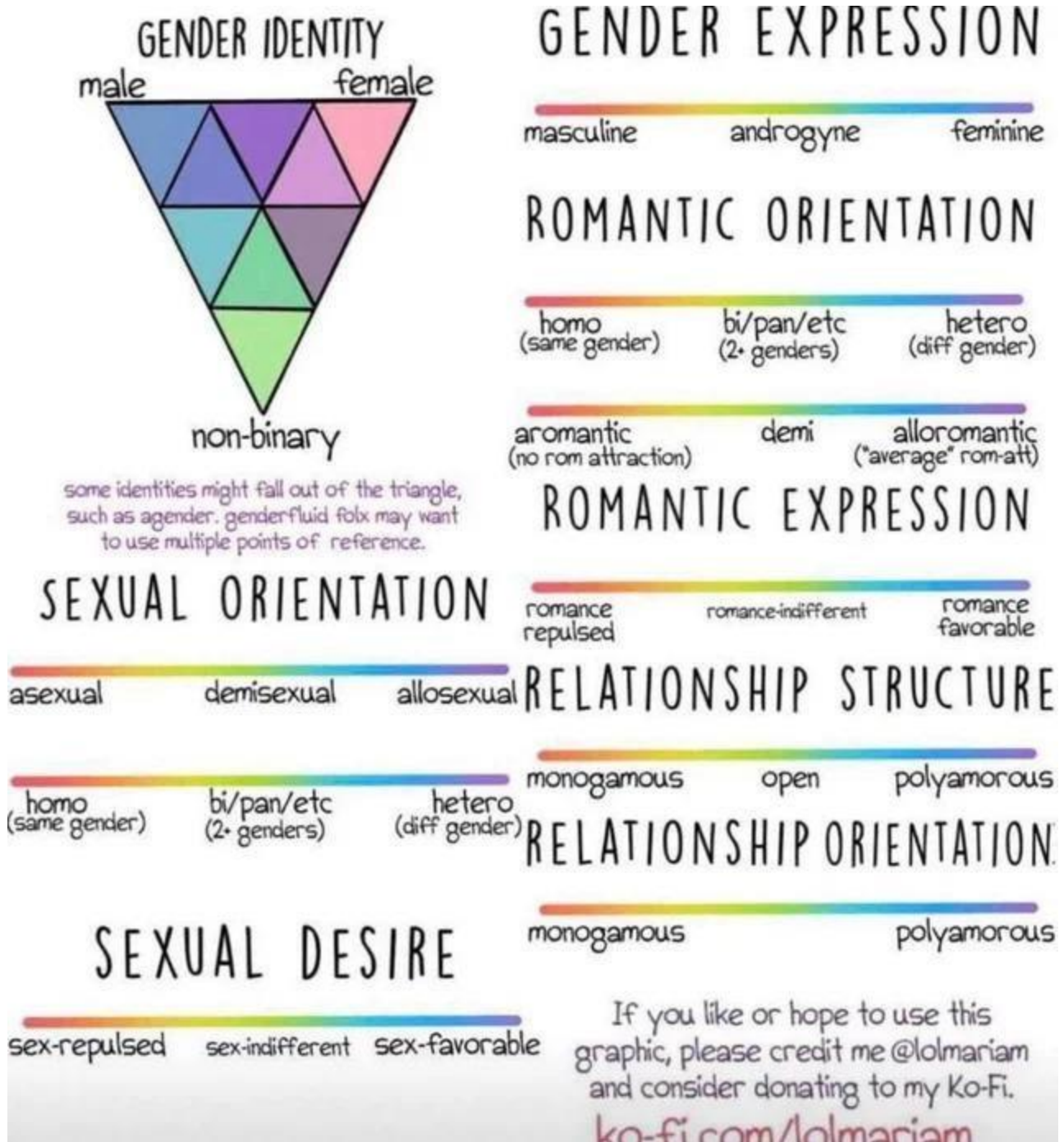
What do you value about your racial heritage? What about it makes you feel proud?

Is there anything about your racial heritage that is embarrassing or uncomfortable for you?

Is there anything about your racial heritage that makes you sad.

3. Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

There is a lot of variety in experience of and expression of gender identity, romantic attraction and sexual orientation. If you're not used to all the potential variety, the following scales may be a little overwhelming. Inasmuch as you want to, plot where you are at on the different scales below.



(Credit: <https://ko-fi.com/lolmariam>)

4. Personality

Do you have a favorite personality inventory (e.g. Enneagram, DISC)
? If so, what's your personality type(s)?

If you don't know your personality type or have a favorite personality test, how would you describe your personality?

What do you like about your personality?

Is there anything you wish you could change about your personality?

5. Strengths

Everyone naturally has a variety of strengths. Using those strengths helps people feel happier and experience more success. The CliftonStrengths assessment identifies your top five strengths and describes how those strengths work together. (See Appendix A for the Gallup website if you're interested in taking the inventory.)

For now, here are some common strengths. Do you see any of them for yourself?

Wisdom	Self-Control
Artistic Ability	Patience
Curiosity	Gratitude
Leadership	Love of Learning
Empathy	Humor
Honesty	Spirituality
Open-Mindedness	Ambition
Persistence	Creativity
Enthusiasm	Confidence
Kindness	Intelligence
Love	Athleticism
Social Awareness	Discipline
Fairness	Assertiveness
Bravery	Logic
Cooperation	Optimism
Forgiveness	Independence
Modesty	Flexibility
Common Sense	Adventurousness

What other things about you do you consider to be strengths?

6. Ethnicity/Nationality/Culture

While you were born into a certain culture, nationality and ethnicity, you may be able to choose to move to a place that is a better fit for what you want in your life. How important is the nation you were born in for your self identity?

Do you like the culture you live in? Does it match your values or do you find yourself disagreeing with the way your culture operates?

Do you have any cultural traditions that are really important to you, like foods or holidays?

Do you have any criticisms about the country you live in?

Do you identify yourself as part of a specific ethnicity? Is that important to you? Why or why not?

7. Values

Only you can determine what's important to you. Assign a number to each of the following values.

1 = Very important

2 = A little important

3 = Not important

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Acceptance | <input type="checkbox"/> Equality | <input type="checkbox"/> Intimacy | <input type="checkbox"/> Safety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adventure | <input type="checkbox"/> Excitement | <input type="checkbox"/> Justice | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-awareness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assertiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Fairness | <input type="checkbox"/> Kindness | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Authenticity | <input type="checkbox"/> Fitness | <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge- | <input type="checkbox"/> Self- |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beauty | <input type="checkbox"/> Flexibility | seeking | development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caring | <input type="checkbox"/> Freedom | <input type="checkbox"/> Love | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-control |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge | <input type="checkbox"/> Friendliness | <input type="checkbox"/> Mindfulness | <input type="checkbox"/> Sensuality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compassion | <input type="checkbox"/> Forgiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Order | <input type="checkbox"/> Sexuality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Connection | <input type="checkbox"/> Fun | <input type="checkbox"/> Open- | <input type="checkbox"/> Spirituality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conformity | <input type="checkbox"/> Generosity | mindedness | <input type="checkbox"/> Skillfulness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperation | <input type="checkbox"/> Gratitude | <input type="checkbox"/> Patience | <input type="checkbox"/> Supportiveness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Courage | <input type="checkbox"/> Honesty | <input type="checkbox"/> Persistence | <input type="checkbox"/> Trust |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creativity | <input type="checkbox"/> Humor | <input type="checkbox"/> Pleasure | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Curiosity | <input type="checkbox"/> Humility | <input type="checkbox"/> Respect | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage- | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Responsibility | |
| ment | <input type="checkbox"/> Independence | <input type="checkbox"/> Romance | |

Can you narrow the list down to your Top 5 Values?

8. Beliefs

Your beliefs are your own. You may have been brought up with certain beliefs and, at some point, you get to choose what you want to believe for yourself.

How would you describe your spiritual beliefs? Do you identify with a specific religion or denomination? If so, which of your beliefs line up with that religion and do you have any beliefs that differ from the religion's usual teachings?

How would you describe your political beliefs and views on different political issues?

Are you currently in the process of questioning or re-evaluating any of your beliefs? If so, what's that like for you?

Do you like to associate with people who believe as you or do you value hearing about different points of view?

Did you find that you accepted beliefs in the past without really assessing how you felt about them?

9. Occupation

Do you heavily identify with your profession or occupation? Do you describe your work as something you do, e.g. "I work in customer service" or as who you are, e.g. "I'm a social worker"?

How did you get into your current occupation? Was it a deliberate choice, something you decided in advance and chose to pursue? Or is it an opportunity that opened itself up to you and you decided to go with it?

Is your occupation a good fit for you—your strengths, values, skills, beliefs, etc.? Do you believe it's important or realistic to have an occupation that's a good fit? Do you think that a good fit is a luxury because financial pressures are pressing?

What are your goals for your career or occupation? Do you have a plan or do you want to create a plan for your occupation/career?

.10. Body

How does your body feel to you physically?

How would you describe your relationship with your body?

- As one
- Best buddies
- On good terms
- Strained relationship
- High-conflict
- Enemies
- Neutral—it's just a vehicle getting you through life

What emotional response do you experience when you think about your body?

What do you really like about your body?

Do you have a disability or significant medical condition? If so, do you consider it as part of your identity? Why or why not?

Is there anything you wish you could change about your body?

- Can change easily (e.g. hair color or style, tattoo, pedicure/manicure, waxing)
- Can change with more concerted effort on your part or perhaps with support (e.g. reduce weight , build muscle)
- Can change with medical intervention (e.g. cosmetic surgery, medical procedure to fix a chronic problem)

Do you consciously utilize your body to connect:

- With yourself (e.g. through mindfully attending to your senses and/or breathing)
- With other people (eye contact, touch)
- The planet (e.g. through grounding)
- The spiritual realm (e.g. belief that the body is a temple for God's spirit)

11. Name

The names you were assigned at birth—how were they determined—cultural norms, family traditions, parents' preferences, etc.?

How much do you feel like your name represents you?

If you've changed your name before, are you currently satisfied with that change?

Do you think about changing your name? Why or why not?

If you are considering a name change, how would your new name better represent who you are?

Do you have a nickname? Do you like it? Do you not like it? Why or why not?

12. Preferences/Likes/Dislikes

There are so many things to like, dislike or have preferences about. Here is a sample list to get you thinking. What are your preferences, likes and dislikes?

- Food
- Cooking
- Physical activity
- Your home environment
- Relationships (family, friends, coworkers, neighbors, community members, etc.)
- Social activities and events
- Physical touch
- Sex
- Time
- Privacy
- Recognition
- Clothing
- Jewelry/accessories
- Vehicles
- Community
- Gift-giving
- Holidays
- Writing
- Social media
- Art
- TV/movies
- Communication (in person, talking on the phone, texting, other IM, email)
- Directness in communication
- Emotional expression
- Seasons
- Vacation/travel
- Music
- Sleeping
- Animals
- Reading
- Education
- Alcohol/drugs
- Personal space
- Personal time
- Community
- Quality time with people
- Service
- Contribution/making a difference
- Lighting
- Noise
- Weather/temperature
- Entertainment/leisure
- Collaboration
- Organization and cleanliness
- Home/community location (urban, suburban, rural)
- Transportation
- Shopping
- Possessions
- Finances
- Political conversation (agreement/disagreement)
- Independence/interdependence

How much do the people in your life honor or respect your preferences/likes/dislikes?

13. Activities/Hobbies/Interests/Fan-dom

How do you like to spend your time? What do you like to do that makes you happy or brings you joy?

Do you have any activities, hobbies, interests that you used to do that you'd like to get back into again?

If you've given up an activity, etc. that you really enjoyed, and you didn't want to give it up (e.g. couldn't afford it anymore, the opportunity is no longer available, or you became physically unable to do it), have you given yourself time and space to grieve that loss?

Do you have any activities, etc. you'd like to try to see if you like them?

Do you like to create things, if so, what do you like to create?

Do you consider yourself a "fan" of a sports team, musical band or other performer/entertainer? Why is that important to you?

How heavily do you identify with your activity, hobby, interest, or team/entertainer? (E.g. "I'm a die-hard Giants fan" or "I'm that crazy cat lady.")

14. Bonus (more stuff)

This workbook is a work-in-progress. Following are some other aspects of self you may want to consider. They just haven't been fleshed out with questions for reflection yet.

Organizations

Money (social class, wealth, money management)

Spirituality

Sexuality (other than sexual orientation)

Astrological sign

Alcohol/drugs—how they've affected who you are, your self-concept, your sense of self)

Love Languages

15. Self Care

Self care is a great way to reinforce your own value to yourself. Basically, it says, "I'm worth taking care of."

In order to commit to a practice of self care, you may need to prioritize yourself over other people in your life. Are you good with that or does it make you uncomfortable to have to say "no" to someone else so you can say "yes" to yourself?

What are you currently doing to take care of yourself in these different areas? What might you like to add to have more balance in your self care?

- Physical
- Mental
- Emotional
- Social
- Spiritual
- Financial
- Contribution

Cool ideas for self care:

take a bath – read a book – go for a walk – join a support group – batch cook for healthy meals throughout the week – get a cup of coffee with a friend – watch the sunset – do an art project – declutter your personal space – do mindfulness meditations daily – get a manicure or pedicure – journal to process your feelings – call an old friend – go on a road trip – have lunch in the park – pet your dog or cat – take a class – practice yoga – listen to birds singing – watch your favorite TV show – take a nap – start a new exercise routine – create some short-term and some long-term goals for yourself – ask for help – say "no" if you don't want to do something

What are some of your favorite forms of self care?

16. Listening to/Trusting Yourself

Trusting yourself is very valuable because you have a wealth of inner wisdom nobody else has and, frankly, you're the best expert on you.

Do you struggle with hearing yourself, a.k.a. your intuition, your inner knowing, your "gut"?

Do you distinguish between your own inner knowing and God (the Universe, Higher Power, etc.) speaking to you?

Do you hear yourself (e.g. "I shouldn't do _____") but then doubt yourself and/or have a hard time following your own wisdom?

How do you know what to do in any given situation?

Do you take regular time to be quiet and listen to yourself (e.g. meditation, journaling, walking). Would you benefit from setting aside some regular, deliberate time to check in with yourself? If so, what are some ideas for doing that?

Are there specific situations where you tend to doubt yourself more? Any situations where you tend to be able to hear yourself and trust yourself more?

REALITY TESTING WITH TRUSTED PEOPLE

Having adequate people in your life for reality-testing can be very valuable, especially while you're getting to know yourself, reconnecting with yourself and learning to trust your own judgment. *In fact, if you have been in a controlling relationship, having trusted people to bounce your perceptions off of can help you see reality more clearly again, especially if the other person twisted reality. This practice of bending reality is called "gaslighting" and can severely cause people to doubt their ability to trust their own perceptions, abilities, and, well, just about everything about themselves.* Do you have at least two or three people you trust, where you can be really honest and you trust they will be really honest with you, too?

If you suspect you're in a controlling relationship and are experiencing gaslighting, your friends might not really understand. So if you don't get the support you want and need from them, you might want to seek out professional support from a psychotherapist or a domestic violence resource center (gaslighting is a form of emotional abuse).

17. The Journey

Time is an essential component in your journey. In general, here's the flow of learning and growth:

1. Thoroughly know yourself
2. Deepen your connection with yourself
3. Trust yourself
4. Express yourself
5. Understand yourself in relation to other people
6. Navigate relationships with a solid sense of self and adaptive boundaries

Like many things in life, the journey is often not neat and orderly. Sometimes, for example, we'll be in a relationship and find we need to reconnect with ourselves. Or we notice we're not able to express ourselves like we'd like, so we need to go back and do some more foundational work.

Where do you see yourself on this journey now? What are some steps you'd like to take to continue this work on yourself?

18. Self-expression

How do you express yourself:

Verbally?

- Do you have favorite phrases?
- Do you cuss?
- Are you a talker or a listener?
- With whom do you like to talk? What do you like about it?
- Are there people you'd rather not talk with? If so, why not?

In writing?

- Do you like to write in a journal, electronically or on paper?
- What do you like to write about?
- What do you find helpful about that writing?
- Have you ever considered writing a book? If you were to write a book, what would you want to write about?

Through clothing?

- What style of clothing is a good match for who you are?
- What are your preferences—formal/informal, comfortable, stylish, flattering, functional.

Politically or in any social movements?

- Do you express yourself at the ballot box, communicate with your legislators and political leaders?
- If you were to get involved in a political or social movement, what would you want to do or help change?

Art?

- Do you use art as a form of self-expression? What are your favorite art projects and why did you like them?

Other means of self-expression?

- How else do you like to express yourself in the world?

19. Roles, Relationships and Boundaries

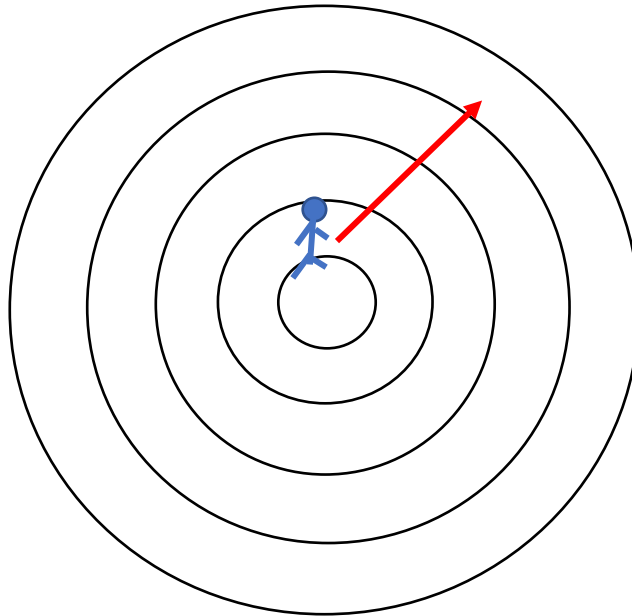
Having a stronger sense of self makes it easier to have and maintain healthy boundaries with other people. At the same time, being in relationship with other people allows us to know ourselves better.

Roles

What roles are really important to you, e.g. family roles (father, mother, parent, son, daughter, child, brother, sister, sibling, uncle, aunt; nephew, niece, cousin, grandparent, grandchild), friend, confidant, caregiver, helper, neighbor, employer, boss, employee, retiree, citizen, or something else? Would losing the person or people associated with your role severely affect your identity?

Closeness

Are there people in your life you want to move out further away from you? Others you want to move in closer to you? Are there still other people not in your life yet that you'd like to add? You can use concentric circles representing how close people are to you as a map and draw a line indicating where you'd like to move them in relation to you.



Boundaries

Check out the "Sample List of Basic Rights" at the end of this workbook. Do you have any relationships where you're not asserting your rights as much as you'd like or where your rights are not being honored as much as you'd like?

Make 3 lists, especially about things you are dissatisfied with:

1. What you have control over in your life
2. What you have some influence over in your life
3. What you do not have control over in your life

20. Self-determination and Life Choices

Have there been times in your life where you surrendered your right to make decisions for yourself? Have you been letting someone else make life choices for you? Why did you relinquish that control?

Are there any areas in your life now where you feel powerless to create what you want in your life? Who can you talk to for support to regain your power for self-determination?

More subtly, do you find yourself putting your desires, goals and dreams on the back burner so you can help someone else achieve what they want in life? What would it look like to have more balance between what you want and what other people want from you?

21. Life Story

We often tell stories about our life experiences. Sometimes we share those stories with other people. Sometimes, we tell ourselves the same stories over and over internally with words, images or both. Stories are a way of processing different experiences.

How much do you dwell on the negative things that have happened in your life? How does that negative focus effect your emotions, mood and outlook?

Try balancing a truthful description of what happened with positive elements that came from the experience:

- What you learned
- How you grew
- What you gained

Can you incorporate a positive expectation of good things with your story?

Similarly, are you aware of engaging in negative self-talk in general? What are some areas where you would like to make your self-talk more positive? You can write out statements as you currently say them and a more positive version, e.g. "My mom didn't love me" -> "While my mom couldn't give me all the love I needed, now I love myself and I choose to have people in my life who value me."

Appendix A: Resources

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(831) 515-8422 – counselingwithrena@gmail.com – www.counselingwithrena.com

CliftonStrengths Assessment (formerly Clifton StrengthsFinder)

www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths

Riso-Hudson Enneagram Type Indicator (RHETI)

<https://www.enneagraminstitute.com/rheti>

Appendix B: Sample List of Basic Rights

1. The right to have and express your own feelings and opinions
2. The right to be treated with respect and dignity
3. The right to be listened to and taken seriously
4. The right to refuse requests without having to feel guilty or selfish
5. The right to consider your own needs
6. The right to set your own priorities and make decisions for your own life
7. The right to change
8. The right to decide what to do with your own property, body and time
9. The right to make mistakes and be responsible for them
10. The right to ask for what you want, realizing that the other person has the right to say "no"
11. The right to ask for information, including from professionals
12. The right to choose not to assert yourself
13. The right to say, "I don't know right now. Give me time."
14. The right to maintain your dignity by being properly assertive, even if the other person feels hurt, as long as you do not violate the other person's basic rights
15. The right to be independent
16. The right to be successful
17. The right to have rights and stand up for them
18. The right to be left alone
19. The right to get what you pay for
20. In borderline personal cases where the rights involved are not clear, you have the right to initiate a discussion of the problem with the person involved and so clarify it

(Author unknown)