UNIT 1: GETTING TO KNOW YOU
WHO ARE YOU?
What is Identity?

**Identity** refers to our sense of who we are as individuals and as members of social groups. Our identities are not simply our own creation: identities grow in response to both internal and external factors. To some extent, each of us chooses an identity, but identities are also formed by environmental forces out of our control.

Identity is dynamic and complex, and changes over time.
SELF-IDENTITY: collection of beliefs about oneself which uniquely distinguishes them from others
Self-identity refers to how we define ourselves. Self-identity forms the basis of our self-esteem. In adolescence, the way we see ourselves changes in response to peers, family, and school, among other social environments. Our self-identities shape our perceptions of belonging.
63% of teens say they "know who they are" while 37% do not fully know their identity yet.

84% of students say their identities are shaped more by "Nurture" instead of "Nature".

63% of teenagers say that their appearance is an important factor in their identity.

66% of teenagers say that they feel most people do not see them for who they really are.
IDENTITY: KALEIDOSCOPE

To my peers, I am a soft-spoken, smart girl who always hands in her homework on time. When given a greeting in the halls, I give them a timid and sometimes uncertain smile in return. My eyes dart around anxiously and my feet drum a quick staccato as I walk briskly across the tiled floor, fearful of being late for my next class.

To my friends, I am a listener. I am not the life of the party, nor am I the one who can make everyone burst into waves of laughter from just one joke or facial expression. Instead, I’m their confidant -- the person they come to for comfort. I meet their tears with sympathetic eyes and gentle hand gestures, followed up by the best advice I can offer them. Sometimes, when I’ve had too much sugar and too little sleep, my friends see a more extroverted side of me. My quiet giggle crescendos into a hiccuping laugh, and I tend to dance, instead of walk, out of excitement and giddiness.

To my family, I function as both the lazy teenager and the sarcastic sister. Despite being an early bird on the weekdays, I tend to be the last one awake on weekend mornings. Every day I’m different. Sometimes, I’m the bossy sibling who tends to get stressed when no one will listen or comply to my wishes. Other times, I am the mischievous prankster who can’t seem to barricade the witty comments and teasing gestures that surface throughout the day. I am the hugger of the family, often ambushing anyone and everyone with my unavoidable, tight squeezes.

Identity is often associated with how people see us. Every person sees me differently, depending on the people I’m with and the environment I’m in. The side of me they see, however, is just one of many. When someone sees only one of these sides, they are only seeing a faint silhouette of who I really am. In order to see my true identity, they must take a step back and view all of these sides together. My identity is a mixture -- a kaleidoscope -- of all of these single identities.

To me, I am all of these things. Despite all of these traits and attributes being so different, somehow they manage to blend together and create something fascinating and unique, just like the different components of a kaleidoscope shift into a abstract, colorful array. My identity may seem to shift and change, but each change is just a new way of showing a small piece of who I really am.

- student identity essay contest runner-up
Self awareness is the first step in creating what you want and mastering your life. Where you focus your attention, your emotions, reactions, personality and behavior determine where you go in life. Having self awareness allows you to see where your thoughts and emotions are taking you. It also allows you to take control of your emotions, behavior, and personality so you can make changes you want. Until you are aware in the moment of your thoughts, emotions, words, and behavior, you will have difficulty making changes in the direction of your life.

SELF AWARENESS: knowledge of one’s character, feelings, motives and desires
WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS?
Social identity is constructed by others, and may differ from self-identity. Typically, people categorize individuals according to broad, socially-defined labels. For example, if you have dark skin, you may be labelled "black" by others even though you may not have adopted that identity for yourself.
In the 1960s, psychologist Erik Erikson argued that adolescents face a major identity crisis which he considered one of the stages of psycho-social development. Successful resolution leads to a secure identity; failure leads to role confusion and a weak sense of self. The key to resolving this crisis lies within the adolescent's interaction with others. The stages of identity development are as follows:

- **Identity Diffusion** is the status of adolescents who have not made a commitment to a particular identity. A youth who has not yet considered college or job prospects, for example, could be said to be in the "identity diffusion" status with respect to his professional identity (although in other dimensions his self-identity may be strong). This status may not be resolved unless some experience forces a crisis.

- **Identity Foreclosure** involves committing to an identity prematurely without exploration or choice. This might occur, for example, when traditions are compulsory or parents are insistent on a particular identity, "foreclosing" conscious choice by the adolescent.

- **Identity Moratorium** is a stage of active exploration coupled with low commitment to a particular identity. This is an interesting, exciting, and potentially dangerous time for an adolescent that often leads to conflict with parents or other authority figures. Adolescents need to be free to explore their identities, but also need guidance and support to proceed safely through this status.

- **Identity Achievement** is said to occur when the adolescent, having had the opportunity to closely explore an identity, chooses that identity with a high degree of commitment.
BUILD YOUR IDENTITY

- Explore your interests and curiosities
- Be self-aware of your opinions and emotions
- Accept and understand the consequences of your choices
- Don’t look too far ahead toward your future
- Be open to identity evolution as you grow and change