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Identity Crisis – Fola Daniel Adelesi

Identity crisis in my own words is simply a conflicting perception of your true personality that makes you think less of yourself and often seek approval from other people.

A lot of people do not have it easy relating with other people in their places of work or as students in their schools and sometimes they think the other people are the problem. Often times when we think someone else is the problem, we are the one who need to change. Stephen Covey would say, “the way you see the problem is the problem.”

More than half the people who walk the face of the earth do not truly know who they are because they are looking at someone else and they pattern their entire lives after that person. This is what necessitates the clarification between imitation and emulation. When you are emulating someone it simply means the person has some good attitudes that you can take after. It simply means that the person has set a positive standard and has become a success in the positive light so if you also want to succeed you can take some clues from that person. Nevertheless, you still have it in mind that there are certain things you cannot do exactly the way that person has done it because you may not be in exactly the same situation. Emulation is usually with a purpose and with the consciousness of your personality not being eroded despite the fact that you want someone else to be your role model.

When you begin to imitate people you often do not know why they do what they do but you always do it because they are doing it and before you know it your confidence would depend on what is approved by the society. With this, your personality would be eroded since you are trying to live like another person instead of being yourself and still learning somethings from other people.

The simple clear message that runs through this issue is that identity crisis makes you live a fake life and when you understand what it is to have identity crisis you can walk boldly out of it and live a meaningful life. Stop living other people's life because you have your own life to live if only you discover yourself and work at being yourself rather than trying to be like other people.

Causes of identity crisis

Identity crisis as a problem is a process that everyone who is experiencing it must have gone through or is still going through. I call it a process because most of the words associated with identity crisis reveal that they are not things that can come on you just in one night. They are things that happen gradually. You can't wake one morning and start feeling intimidated by the people around you if nothing had been absent in you to allow for that intimidation. You don't just see people and envy them right away. Envy is a feeling and a form of emotion that develops usually as a result of another process seen in other people. It is very obvious that most of the people experiencing identity crisis have something missing in them and some of those missing things are:

- 1.) Improper upbringing.
- 2.) Lack of affirmation.
- 3.) Demoralizing experiences.
- 4.) Wrong exposure.
- 5.) Cross-cultural exposition

1.) Improper Upbringing

The way a child is brought up will determine, to a great extent, the way that child will live his adulthood. Many adults today cannot express love to their children because nobody expressed love to them while growing up. The funny thing is that many people don't even know what it is to be truly loved so it is not a usual for such people to express love to other people.

When children are not brought up in love filled atmosphere they will always have a yearning for that love and the truth is that they will always look for it anywhere they can get it. One of the primary responsibilities of parents in the present day society is to make sure that their children experience love. So many people want to act love by giving to their children and just making sure they get good education. That is a very good thing but young people grow faster with the seeds of the right words sown into their lives.

In any gathering of children or other young people you will always be able to tell the difference in the homes they all are coming from and it begins with how they relate with one another. One child or youth feels so confident and relates easily with other people and the other one feels so timid and does not want to relate with other people even when this child does not have any physical disability that may bring shame. In some homes there is no freedom because the parents do not want the children to get into trouble but unfortunately they get into worse trouble by not having freedom because they lose personal identity. As much as you do not want your young ones to get into physical trouble in the community, I absolutely think it is more important not to let them get into the psychological trouble of losing their personal identity because that has a long term effect which may come to bear on their success in life.

One of the ways you can help your young ones to grow better is to make sure you and your spouse have a cordial relationship. If for any reason you need to argue it is important to avoid doing it in the presence of your children because there are things that will remain with them from the sight of dad and mum exchanging bitter words or hurling insults at each other. When you also have a peaceful relationship they will always look forward to living a meaning life and respecting other people.

It is as a result of violence against women that some women think their main role in the home is just to keep the kitchen busy and keep the dinning table filled so that the man of the house can be filled. For this reason some women have been relegated in their minds to the position of slaves in their homes. They feel the work of the woman is to stay awake to satisfy the woman. These are all perception creating scenerios and we need to deliberately concentrate on the things we do because the young ones are watching.

2.) Lack of affirmation

There are words that you must say to your children or young ones around you and when they do not hear such words they gradually begin to withdraw into their shells and ultimately into identity crisis.

Never assume a child or any other person knows that he or she is loved. You need to affirm the love. You and I know that your spouse knows he or she is loved but still wants to hear it regularly and when it does not come it looks as if there is a problem somewhere. People get into identity crisis when they do not hear words confirming the fact that they are loved. They do not want to think for the person who is supposed to express love and they do not want to assume they are loved.

One of the things that I have noticed is that many parents find it easy to scold young people or their children than to encourage them. Over and over again I have been in a situation where I get scolded for doing some seemingly insignificant things but when I do things that make me deserve a pat on my back nobody gives the pat. Everybody stands at a distance and watch until that moment of glory gradually folds away. When a child does not receive encouragement for doing something well, it is most likely that child will not want to continue. When a child gets scolded every time for doing something wrong the

child begins to focus on the next chance of making a mistake rather than the next opportunity to do something great and be a better person.

Affirm your love to people around you to help some of them get out of identity crisis. Say what you mean and mean what you say. I have not said that people should not be scolded but it should be done wisely. It should not be done in such a way that the people now totally lose confidence in themselves and always look for whom to imitate since nobody believes in them. Too many people hear more abusive words than encouraging words. That is why they have lost confidence in what they thought was their strength. If people can begin to hear more encouraging words than abusive words there will be a big difference in their lives over a period of time.

3.) Demoralizing experiences

When people start out on something new they often start out with a dose of seemingly inexhaustible energy but when things start turning in a direction opposite where they thing it should be headed, they get discouraged. This simply means that futile attempts at what one is doing can be demoralizing enough to push people off the right track. There are people started out on the right track but opted out when things where not working and they were beginning to get into trouble by trying to do what others are doing well instead of focusing on what they can do well.

For some others the demoralizing experience can be a public disgrace at one time or the other. Take for instance someone who is born with the natural ability to speak. If while starting a career as a public speaker he fails to carry the audience along and the audience begins to clap not as a sign of honour for what was said but as a way to say, “stop wasting our time and get out,” that kind of man may not think twice about public speaking again. He may now prefer to stay in the audience and listen instead of going to speak for fear of being disgraced a second time.

The same can happen to a singer who gets to the middle of a song on stage and mistakenly goes flat! Even if that person knows music is thee only way out for him or her, the experience for some people will be too grave to let them go back to the stage for any performance. Now it is glaring that the discovery of a man’s talents or gifting can lead to another trouble depending on who is in charge.

Don’t let your past failures frustrate you away from what you are doing if you know that is the right thing to do. Keep doing what you are good at, focus on it and take your eyes away from the previous setbacks you have had. Make victory your focus and get up each time you fall. There will be demoralizing circumstances but don’t ever stay demoralized.

4.) Wrong Exposure.

One of the battles that the society has to fight thoroughly in this present day is the content of the media ranging from print to the electronic and recently, internet. Every morning you wake to see the unexpected in the media and at a point the unexpected became the

usual in the media. As far as the print is concerned too many people are consistently exposed to pornographic materials and we now have what I call media prostitution. You can flip through the pages of some magazines and you find people who display their contacts to offer sex to other people.

Nearly everyone who says he has a musical video today does not produce a video without showing a naked girl dancing like a mad devil advertising insanity. Unfortunately there are so many people who buy into this insanity. Audio materials in this present day are no longer what they used to be so you often wonder what happened to the purpose of music. Most times when you want to listen to music you would have a feeling that the song is supposed to be inspirational and it can even help you to get out of a moody situation. In some cases the songs are so strong that you can always remember the lyrics without paying special attention to learn it and these are the things that pop up on your minds in discouraging times. If the song is the right type of song it will give you some energy to keep going but if it is not then you have another issue to deal with. We have more demoralizing music in this present day than edifying music and the truth is that it has so much to do with the identity crisis that a lot of people are experiencing.

Music is powerful and it can get into the innermost part of your soul. That is why you do not struggle to learn music yet you can sing so many songs that you listened to on the airwaves. More than eighty percent of the people who know one song or the other simply started singing the song by listening the first and second time and singing along the third time. When you begin to sing a song consciously or otherwise you will begin to confess the values of that song into your life and if the values of the song are negative it means you are confessing the negative thing into your life.

You need to pay special attention to the things you are listening to if you really want to get out of identity crisis or if you do not want to get into it. You need to be very careful about the things you watch if you don't want to get into trouble. Your memory has a way of storing the things that you see and replaying these things for you in some critical moments of your life. When you need a scene to replay in a discouraging time, it is what you have stored in that will be produced. You and I already know that when you don't feed on balanced diet you will be malnourished. You may eat so much but you may not be eating the right thing so it will not matter how much you are eating at any time. Once you are not eating the right thing you will still not grow properly. That is exactly what it is with musical contents and the content of the videos that we view on daily basis.

The old ancient Hebrew book says you should guard your heart with all diligence. Not just anything is qualified to go in there because what goes in there is what the heart will reproduce for you. It is so easy for the wrong things to go into the hearts without you struggling to put them in there but you always have to make deliberate efforts to put the good things in there.

When the wrong things go into our hearts we begin to think in the wrong direction. We would be thinking in the wrong direction because the seeds of the wrong input will germinate wrong thoughts. When wrong thoughts germinate then we will live our lives

wrongly because as a man thinketh in his heart so is he. Personal and our very intrinsic values are transferred to us through the things that we watch and listen to. While these external values are being transferred to us, our inner values are suppressed for a while. When our inner values are suppressed we begin to live a fake life. The idea of a fake life is to live contrary to your deep inner values. The only way to begin to live like the real person that we are to start viewing the materials that will help refine and unveil the deep inner values that we carry all around without paying attention to them.

Now that you know you are exposed to identity crisis as a result of wrong exposure, wouldn't you choose carefully what to view and what to listen to especially when this can affect your success in life?

5.) Cross-Cultural Exposition

The challenge of cross cultural exposition as it relates to identity crisis is not unconnected to the misconception of the original intention for cross cultural exposition. The reason for intermingling with people in other continents or people from other countries is not primarily to imitate their culture. Variety is the spice of life and we should not always forget that we have a colourful life, to a great extent, if we all do things differently.

Some of the problems we have encountered as a result of cross cultural exposition include the madness in fashion today. What is acceptable in one area as a result of the climatic conditions has been taken hook, line and sinker in another area even when the climatic condition does not call for that kind of apparel. Consequently you find people trying very hard to fit into the personality they have tried hard to portray.

As much as I do not want to hammer the culture of other people I need to say that we are supposed to look at people from other areas and appreciate their culture without losing our own cultural values. Some of the people we are even imitating are people who already have a problem with their culture. You will hear people in that community complaining about decadence, violence, youth restiveness, child delinquencies and people from some other parts of the world think that what they are seeing are the ideals of that society so they begin to blindly imitate.

What I have just talked about in the above paragraph is what I call cultural transfer of challenges. This simply means there are some problems that were not in some societies before but people in that society went to another society and returned to their society with the problems in the society they were coming from. One of the reasons some countries are becoming detestable for parents in other countries is based on the fact that they have seen young people get into those nations and often come back not with the good ideals of that society but with all the negativities that the nation has to parade.

Unfortunately, there are so many communities and nations today that do not have their standards defined so they always let other communities perceived to be the famous and

great communities to define the standard for them. Automatically the only thing you expect when one nation defines the standard for another is that the other nation looking up to have its standard defined imitates both good and bad.

Words that are associated with identity crisis and proofs of thinking less of yourself.

There are a few words that can help us explain identity crisis and those words in their different interpretations show us how identity crisis manifest in the lives of individuals. Many of us have a way of denying things even when they are in us but it takes a lot of guts, sincerity and simplicity to first of all understand the words, see the actions that explain the words and then admit that the problems are in us. Nearly everyone who is living has a challenge in one area of his or her identity. The real problem is that some people are living other people's lives and they do not know they are living other people's lives. Others know as soon as they are about to step into other people's bounds and caution themselves by reminding themselves of who they are.

It takes a great strength to know who you are not and to stick by who you are because the real challenge of identity crisis is that a lot of people do not know who they are and they end up sticking to who other people are. Let's look at these words for more clarification of the issue.

- 1.) Intimidation
- 2.) Insecurity
- 3.) Inferiority
- 4.) Low self esteem
- 5.) Arrogance
- 6.) Materialism
- 7.) Denial
- 8.) Deceit
- 9.) Hatred
- 10.) Envy
- 11.) Depression.

Signs of identity crisis

- 1.) You appreciate everything about others but nothing about yourself.

- 2.) You envy or hate others for being more successful or for having gone ahead of you.

- 3.) You find it difficult to relate with people who seem to be more successful or people who seem to have nearly all that you desire.
- 4.) You always want to make people focus on what you have, your little achievements, what you wear and not who you are.
- 5.) You never want to admit that the other person is better than you in one area so that you can focus on another kind of strength within you.
- 6.) Abnormal sexual behaviour.

Signs of seeking approval

- 1.) You do what others are doing and not what you want to do.
- 2.) Other people's goals and standards often become your goals and standards.
- 3.) You always succumb to peer pressure.
- 4.) You are inwardly dissatisfied but you want to please others.
- 5.) You are not comfortable when people don't compliment you.
- 6.) You don't know when to be at the fore front and when not to be at the fore front.

7.) Your purpose of speaking is to get approval and not to inform or educate.

Consequences of identity crisis

- 1.) Victims are often headed in the wrong direction.
- 2.) Some victims tend to celebrate others and always want to be someone else.
- 3.) Victims do things to feel accepted in places where they find themselves.
- 4.) Victims of identity crisis are always looking for external things to substitute for the missing inner value.
- 5.) It is hard for some victims to accept who they are and when it is hard to accept who you are then you will never be anybody in life.
- 6.) Identity crisis makes you focus on your weaknesses rather than strength.
- 7.) Identity crisis makes people go into pity party.
- 8.) Identity crisis can keep people in poverty.
- 9.) Identity crisis can get rich people into trouble or run them bankrupt.

- 10.) Identity crisis breaks marriages and other kinds of relationships.
- 11.) Churches are breaking or are in serious trouble because of pastors who have identity crisis.
- 12.) Identity crisis inhibits the display of true leadership in any organization because the focus will shift to personalities rather than goals.
- 13.) Imitation is what you do rather than emulation.

The way out of identity crisis

- 1.) You need a lot of guts not to always have your standards defined by others.
- 2.) Don't always go by what is popular.
- 3.) Do what you know is right regardless of what others think.
- 4.) Keep discovering yourself to know why you are different from others and why you should live differently.
- 5.) Keep listening to audios and watch videos that keep you positively motivated to boost your self-esteem.