



### ***The Identity Code:***

#### **The 8 Essential Questions for Finding Your Purpose and Place in the World**

**Notes by Frumi Rachel Barr, MBA, PhD.**

**Author:** Larry Ackerman

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**Author's Bio:** Larry Ackerman is a leading authority on organizational and personal identity. Ackerman is widely regarded as the pioneer in the field of identity-based management. His many and diverse clients include Alcoa, Maytag, Fidelity Investments, the Dow Chemical Company, Ernst & Young, Norsk Hydro, Interbrew, and Boise Cascade. His first book, *Identity Is Destiny*, set forth a revolutionary view of the nature of identity and its fundamental impact on organizational and leadership development.

#### **Author's big thought:**

Despite what you may have been told when you were a child, you cannot be whatever you want to be in life—you're already what you were meant to be. The secret to uncovering your purpose, is built into you in the form of a code—the identity code. Much like your genetic code, your identity code provides a complete map of how you were designed to live, when you are living in accordance with who you truly are.

Answer the questions that frame your identity code, and the contours of your life will shift. You will not only emerge stronger, you will emerge larger: larger in heart, larger in influence, larger in your capacity to love and be loved. You will understand the *why* of your life. In this life-transforming book, Larry Ackerman shows you how to crack your identity code.

#### **Chapter Notes**

##### **YOUR IDENTITY JOURNEY**

- This book is designed to guide you on your identity journey: first inside yourself, and then outside, into the world It large. You will find your identity, explore it, and then apply it to how you live.
- The first part of this book will help you understand what identity is all about and the magnificent force it is in how it shapes human life.
- Each of the next eight parts presents you with a question. As you answer these questions, your identity will gradually become clear. It will become the foundation upon which to make truly meaningful decisions about what work is right for you, how to build

and maintain relationships that matter, and even what interests and hobbies make sense for you.

- Each question begins with a brief story about someone whose life has been deeply affected by his or her identity. Take from these stories insights and lessons that make sense to you.
- Every story is followed by a discussion about the particular promise contained in answering the question at hand and the challenges we all face in “getting to” that promise. Use this discussion as a way to understand yourself better and accept yourself more fully.
- The next section will help you understand what you must do to realize the promise each answer holds. Use this section as a way to ready yourself for change.
- Each of the eight questions concludes with a series of personal identity exercises, which will help you decipher your identity Code. Use the Identity Mapping® process as a starting point from which to move forward on your own.

## **THE MYTH OF PERSONAL FREEDOM AND THE MEANING OF IDENTITY**

- The idea that you can be whatever you want to be in life is a myth that tortures people needlessly.
- From the time we are born, we are told by loving parents, devoted teachers, well-meaning friends, and larger-than-life public figures and celebrities that we can be anything we want to be. We come to believe we are free to make choices about our lives that are wide open, unrestricted by anything.
- The myth of personal freedom—the idea that you are at liberty to pick whatever path in life you want—is the unspoken agony of the modern person. It ignores the fact that life has order, and that that order bears heavily upon your choices—on what makes sense to do with the time you have. The good news is that although you can’t be anything you want to be, you have more potential than you know.
- The order is contained in a code, the identity code, which is born into each of us, providing a complete map of how we, as human beings, are designed to function—of how we are supposed to live—when we are living according to who we are.
- By “identity” Ackerman means the unique characteristics that, in combination with one another, define your potential for creating value in this world; that is, for making a contribution that springs naturally from the core of your being and touches the lives of others in positive ways.
- It is up to each of us to learn who we are, and then to act upon this knowledge in ways that enable us to realize our potential. We are responsible for what happens to us in life. We are responsible for making identity our framework for living.
- Crack your identity code and the contours of your life will shift. You will not only come out stronger, you will come out larger. Larger in heart, larger in influence, larger in your capacity to love and be loved. You will understand the why of your own life.

- The identity code is found in the answers to eight questions. They come from a single source: a series of eight natural laws—the Laws of Identity— which are part of the very constitution of nature and govern our lives like clockwork.
- The closer you are to living according to your identity, the closer you are to being in sync with these natural laws.
- The sequence of these questions builds in a way that tells a story about how life develops when it is lived through the lens of identity.
- When your identity becomes clear, taking on form and meaning, you will arrive at a place where you are filled with passion, conviction, and serenity—a place you will recognize, finally, as home.
- Identity is the most perfectly integrated expression of a human being there is. Our identity presents nothing less than the “whole” picture of who we are capable of becoming as individuals.
- These are the Laws of Identity:
  1. *The Law of Being* ; An individual’s ability to live depends first upon defining one’s self as separate from all others.
  2. *The Law of Individuality*: A person’s natural capacities invariably fuse into a discernible identity that makes that person unique.
  3. *The Law of Constancy*: Identity is fixed, transcending time and place, while its manifestations are constantly changing.
  4. *The Law of Will*: Every individual is compelled to create value in accordance with his or her identity.
  5. *The Law of Possibility*: Identity foreshadows potential.
  6. *The Law of Relationship*: Individuals are inherently relational and relationships are only as strong as the natural alignment between the identities of the participants.
  7. *The Law of Comprehension*: An individual’s various capacities are only as valuable as the perceived value of the whole of that individual.
  8. *The Law of the Cycle*: Identity governs value, which produces wealth, which fuels identity.
- These laws are the same for everyone. They shape our lives and fortunes even when we aren’t conscious of their presence. They are the foundation of the eight questions, the answers to which reveal your identity code.
- Living by your identity code holds out the promise of a life steeped in authenticity.
- Living through your identity opens up possibilities you might never otherwise have seen. For all of these possibilities are anchored by the unique characteristics that make you who you are. The very first step is to recognize that your identity is an inherently positive force.
- For as long as human beings have existed, our sense of identity has played a central role in how we live, in the decisions we make, and in the outcomes those decisions

have on the fates of individuals, including ourselves, on families, on organizations, even on nations.

- You are stronger than you feel, wiser than you think, more powerful than you may care to admit, more courageous than you believe. Do not shrink from the opportunity to discover who you are. Honor yourself. Make the journey.

### **THE FIRST QUESTION: Who Am I?**

*The Law of Being* ; An individual's ability to live depends first upon defining one's self as separate from all others.

- Who am I? is a question that has been asked in various ways by everyone from great philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle to decidedly not-so-famous people:
- Asking the question Who am I? makes kin of us all.
- At times, you may pose the question in calm, contemplative moments, at other times, you might ask the question amid the fires of growing despair.
- You are not your labels. You simply *are*. Locating this sense of self is like being born anew.
- The answer to the question Who am I? brings with it the promise of affirmation—nothing less than the awakening of your spirit.
- Experiencing this confirmation of life is a prelude to everything else you will learn and do in relation to your identity. Once you have found this feeling of life, you will be ready to discover your uniqueness as an individual and the potential it implies for how you ultimately engage the world.
- Within each of us lies the innate, if unconscious, knowledge that if we know who we are, we will know why we are here.
- The way to know who you are is by first defining yourself as separate from all others. Separation is about putting some healthy distance between yourself and other people so you can step back and see, really see, yourself within the context of your relationships. The aim is to see people—yourself included—through fresh eyes.
- What you seek in separation is independence—the ability to think and act on your own and in your own best interests, despite what others may expect of you. Defining yourself as separate from others is about finding your own integrity as an individual.
- Before you can know who you are, you need to know who you are not.
- If you are like most people, the idea of separation will spark fear. Facing up to the initial discomfort that aloneness may bring is a sure sign of progress. Taking this time isn't self-indulgent; it is self-affirming.
- The prospect of stripping yourself, even for a moment, of the various labels you have come to take for granted in your life, of exposing yourself to questions rather than answers, is, at the very least, anxiety-producing.
- For better or worse, our families color our sense of who we are, from the moment we are born. They wrap us in their successes, triumphs, victories, and blessings, as well as in their failures, struggles, and seeming curses. For all the love and warmth our families

may provide, we have an obligation to put some distance between ourselves and them, if only for a little while.

- To get to know yourself as a separate person, you must attain a certain detachment from the people to whom you are closest. Our roots keep us tethered firmly, and sometimes blindly, to family, blocking our ability to see ourselves clearly.
- Find a place within yourself to be alone in the pursuit of separation, everyone needs a refuge. What we often fail to see is that we have a world within us that at least as large, rich, and mysterious as the one outside.
- What makes these places unique, compared to your external destinations, is that you are there by yourself; you are alone. What happens there is entirely up to you. Let your imagination lead.
- Imagine a location— where you are at its center, surrounded by people you know well. You can see them, but they can't see you. Bring them into this place of comfort. Now imagine these people gradually leaving this place, one at a time, acknowledging one another, but not you. Until finally you stand alone. It may seem crazy at first, but allowing them to leave you alone is the challenge at hand.
- They are the ones you need to have the courage to separate from in order to find your own space.
- Finding a place within yourself to be alone will bring you peace. Spend time in this refuge. It will help you develop your powers of separation. It will help you build a stronger foundation from which to forge ahead.
- Practicing separation daily makes the process easier. It becomes a healthy habit. With the comfort this routine brings, you may even seek out opportunities to separate, simply as a way to test how adept you have become at managing the process. Life offers many opportunities to practice the art of separation.
- You may not know yet who you are in the purest sense of your identity—the special capacities that, when combined, shape your ability to contribute to this world. But know this: you are unique within your clan, complete within yourself. Know that the answer to the question Who am I? is there to be found. This knowledge is the reward of separation. And it is in having had the strength to follow this course that you will realize: *I am alive!*

## **THE SECOND QUESTION: What Makes Me Special?**

*The Law of Individuality:* A person's natural capacities invariably fuse into a discernible identity that makes that person unique.

- It is one thing to know you are alive; it is something else entirely to live according to who you are. Crossing this divide means coming to terms with the need to fit in. Fitting in is something most people seek to do.
- Your need to fit in contains an amusing paradox: *being like everyone else makes me special*. For some people, fitting in is all that matters, even if it means denying who you really are.

- What makes me special? It is a question that takes up residence inside us at an early age, from the time we start forming relationships that draw us away from ourselves and toward the cliques, clubs, companies, and other communities that demand allegiance if we are to be accepted.
- The answer to the question What makes me special? brings with it the promise of clarity and conviction—clarity that you really do have instinctive capacities and what they are, and, in turn, the conviction that there really is a special place for you in the world.
- Realizing the promise of clarity and conviction calls for you to unearth what you love.
- Most people think they know themselves pretty well. When we're asked to describe ourselves to others, we immediately gravitate to those traits that are most obvious to us. Below the surface of your daily life, however, the aspects of yourself—capacities—you may not be aware of at all. Yet unearthing what you love calls for you to suspend disbelief. Accept that you will not know the answers at first.
- Realize that there are layers of meaning to the events and activities of your life that have been hidden from view for a long time. Give yourself permission to explore, no strings attached.
- As much as we are used to remembering the external events and experiences that make our lives meaningful, it is equally important— maybe more important—that we identify the internal experiences that give life meaning. Identifying soul-stirring moments is a way to give our lives inner structure.
- No one knows more about you than you do. Therefore, the responsibility for your future can only be yours. Yet gathering other people's views about you—their perceptions »f your talents, skills, and aptitudes—makes perfect sense in your efforts to guide yourself forward. What you are seeking are clues, vital clues about who you are, and who you are not.
- With the best of intentions, other people form their own views about what you are really good at and, as a result, what you should and shouldn't be doing with your life. Your parents contribute to your identity by combining the seeds of innumerable generations into the formation of a unique being—you. Beyond that, their job is to get to know, and nurture, the individual you are. You will know what makes you special when you recognize in yourself strengths and passions that are deeply comforting and yet seem fresh and new. They are the foundation f your identity. Building this foundation is the reward for unearthing what you love. It is yours alone to stand on, a place to realize and then assert: *I am unique*.

### **THE THIRD QUESTION: Is There a Pattern to My Life?**

*The Law of Constancy:* Identity is fixed, transcending time and place, while its its manifestations are constantly changing

- Most people don't see the pattern hidden in the many experiences of their lives. Many people believe that there is no pattern at all, that their lives are composed simply of random events. For them, choice and free will rule.

- Finding the pattern your life contains is neither positive nor negative. It simply is. What you learn about yourself from your mistakes as well as your triumphs is what counts, not the experiences themselves.
- To find the pattern your life contains is to find the path that has been right for you all along. In this process, it is comforting to know that change doesn't necessarily mean leaving important parts of yourself behind. And sometimes what you may see as change isn't really change at all; it simply another way of expressing who you already are.
- Embracing your identity allows you to live comfortably at the intersection where change and constancy inevitably meet.
- In finding your pattern, you are seeking not only to discover but to create the story of your life in a way that will help ensure a "happy ending."
- Answering the question is there a pattern to my life? Carries with it the exhilarating promise that your life has order and meaning. Put plainly, that you haven't wasted your time, that your efforts—your successes as well as your failures—add up to something essential and telling about who you are. Without order, it is impossible to find meaning in life.
- Like order, meaning is inherent in everyone's life. Meaning refers to your intrinsic worth as a human being—the fact that you have value in this world simply as a result of being here.
- The way to find the pattern in your life is by making the connections that explain past events and foreshadow your future.
- What you are looking for: the theme that is a part of your identity story, which will help you put your life into perspective as you look back and as you look forward.
- In finding the pattern to your life, let your achievements light the way. They are vital indicators of how you can make a difference in the world. Consider achievements from different ages, so that you paint a comprehensive picture of your life. Your failures as well often hold precious clues to the pattern you seek.
- Our value as people can be measured only by the totality of our lives. Forcing yourself to connect the dots your life contains is a way to honor the wholeness of your being.
- Together, your achievements, both great and small, coupled with the liberating insights your failures yield hold the key to finding the pattern of your life.
- Only after you have drawn those insights will you be in a position to consider what they may mean in terms of your career path, or vocation. Having uncovered the pattern your life contains, you will realize his simple truth: *I am immutable, even as I grow and evolve.*

#### **THE FOURTH QUESTION: Where Am I Going?**

*The Law of Will:* Every individual is compelled to create value in accordance with his or her identity.

- We are all tempted at times to do it: to walk away from a challenge when the task seems too great, the pressure is too much, or the odds of succeeding seem to be

stacked against us. People who choose to give up simply ignore the burnings inside that have surfaced without warning.

- Others are fortunate to have the courage to live with the uncertainty that personal transformation inevitably brings.
- The Law of Will takes each of us to the edge of an untenable place in our lives. Having discovered what makes you special, you awaken to the idea that your future is in some way knowable. You have discovered the pattern of your life. Instinctively, you are compelled to bring these powerful traits to bear, whatever it takes.
- Consider this experience the half-birth of your identity: you have gained enough knowledge about yourself to be encouraged, but not enough to know for certain where this knowledge may lead you. This may create a sense of paralysis but it is in the midst of this self-imposed paralysis that you are tested. Addressing the question *Where am I going?* Also brings with it the promise of faith and fortitude. It is in the crucible in which this faith is forged that you will find the strength you need.
- Commit yourself to the path revealed in what you have learned so far - Commitment requires bravery. Commitment thrives on uncertainty. Uncertainty teases out of us a sense of resolve we didn't even know we had. It brings us face-to-face with risk and the edgy discomfort that risk brings.
- But commitment is what the Law of Will demands of us. Attempting to figure out exactly where you are going in life brings with it equal amounts of wonder and aggravation.
- All we can really do—is to figure out how to use today the special strengths that begin to reveal what our value-creating potential is. We have control over what we do now and how we do it. Taken one at a time, each of our days becomes our future. That is how the future is formed.
- The answer to the question *Where am I going?* Is *I don't know, but that is alright.*
- Whatever the might be, your special capacities deserve recognition. These strengths represent new information. They need to take root in your life.
- Acknowledge that your life will change. The Law of Will asserts that at the core of our beings, we all want to create something of value that flows naturally from who we are. The desire to create is part of what makes us human.
- Knowing what that creation is, whether it is large or small, will in time reveal the answer to the question *Where am I going?*
- Acknowledging the prospect that you will live differently tomorrow will open you up to new possibilities. It will free you from the pressure you feel to have the answers now.
- In surviving the trials of uncertainty, you will find the faith and fortitude you need to travel on. You will affirm one thing above all: *to live, I must express myself fully.*

## **THE FIFTH QUESTION: What Is My Gift?**

*The Law of Possibility:* Identity foreshadows potential.

- The idea that each of us is born with a particular gift that informs what we might do with our lives scares people. The notion of a “gift,” or “purpose,” is a lofty one. As a result of our fears and expectations, we shy away from entertaining the idea that we may actually have one: a particular, innate, overarching drive that cries out to be developed and exercised. Call it a gift, a purpose, or a passion.
- Knowing one’s identity causes an unexpected thing to happen to us. We want to give; indeed, suddenly, we must. Because we now have something of consequence to offer. The desire to give - to create something of value for people—is innate. Giving is our natural state and, once located, it will not be denied.
- While you might have several impressive talents, you have only one gift of the type referred to. Your gift is the practical expression of your identity. Put in other terms, your identity is your gift to the world.
- Knowing your gift, and finding ways to give it, brings a palpable sense of peace. Authenticity, and the strength it produces, is yours: nothing about you is made up.
- Answering the question What is my gift? holds out the promise of achieving both power and grace. Born of your identity, power is power for the good. Knowing your gift gives you the power to make a difference. It also bestows upon you the grace with which to make it.
- Born of identity, grace is the state of being fully and effortlessly engaged in the world.
- Follow the signs of joy. Most people intent on finding their gift look for clues in their work, past and present, their family backgrounds, their hobbies and interests. None gets to the heart of your remarkable capacity to create value. The way to find your gift is by following the signs of joy—those aspects of life to which you are instinctively drawn and that stir our soul.
- Joy comes before happiness, meaning that you are at peace with yourself, among others in the world. To arrive at this place, you need to make joy your guide.
- Whatever it may be, what brings you joy carries you naturally to state where you are one with yourself—you are genuinely happy. The only thing that matters, then, is to find that “something.”
- Put your identity puzzle together. Once completed, it illuminates the value-creating potential your gift suggests. The main pieces of your identity puzzle include three sets of themes: the themes that define what you love, the theme that captures the pattern of your life, and those themes that define the basic nature of the experiences you identified at the outset, which led you to unearth what you love. By basic nature, the author is referring to the innate meaning of each of these experiences to you. Combine these themes and you will have the main ingredients you need to complete your puzzle and understand your gift.
- The picture you are looking for in completing your identity puzzle comes in the form of a succinct, deceptively simple statement that clarifies your gift and the value it implies. E.g. “I am Larry Ackerman and I am driven by the need to help people to see”.

- In no instance does this statement—your personal identity statement—define exactly what you should do with your life. How you apply your gift is up to you. Rather, your personal identity statement reveals your potential for creating value in this world.
- Use your personal identity statement as a lens for evaluation. Consider the possibilities your identity holds. The implications are limited only by your imagination. You owe it to yourself, to bring your identity statement to life. That is how you will find integrity.
- The payoff in coming to terms with your gift is knowing your purpose. The sense of purpose we achieve when we know our gift fuels and enriches all of our relationships. In terms of finding peace within ourselves, knowing our gift makes us happy.
- Having reached this vital point in your identity journey, you will affirm, in no uncertain terms: *I have much to give.*

### **THE SIXTH QUESTION: Who Can I Trust?**

*The Law of Relationship:* Individuals are inherently relational and relationships are only as strong as the natural alignment between the identities of the participants.

- Most people seek stability in their relationships with others.
- The relationships we form—the big ones and the small ones—frame our lives in ways that give them the structure we need to find our way in this world. Our relationships give our lives meaning, for it is only through them that we are able to express who we are.
- When viewed through the lens of your identity, figuring out who you can truly count on gets more complicated.
- The question of trust permeates our lives, touching everything from the mundane to the serious, from simple matters to matters of life and death.
- To trust someone, you need first to rely upon your instincts about the other person's intentions. Let your guard down and take the risk of exposing your doubts and imperfections. If not all at once, then a little at a time. You need to make what amounts to the first move: inviting someone into your world without knowing in advance whether he or she will accept or reject your invitation. Finally, if a meaningful two way dialogue does ensue, you must accept the real possibility that what you think, feel, and do may actually change as a result of the trust you've place in this person.
- Finding people you can trust is both easier and harder once you have a clear sense of your identity—once you know your gift. It is easier in that your identity automatically acts as a filter, enabling you to weed out people whom you may like, and even admire, but who you know aren't really in tune with who you are.
- It is also harder to find people to trust once you understand who you are. Knowing your identity makes you infinitely more discriminating about what matters to you in life. The stakes are higher. Your integrity hangs in the balance of nearly every decision you make. You simply know better what contributes to your happiness and what is merely expedient. Second, the field of candidates narrows dramatically.

- Answering the question *Who can I trust?* brings with it the promise of sanctuary—special relationships that become places of refuge, that protect and nurture the most sacred and beautiful aspect of your being. Within these sanctuaries, you can recharge your engine with people who know what matters to you and who want what you have to give.
- Sanctuaries are safe havens where you can share fears about your own limitations, as well as dreams about how life might be were you to overcome them.
- Amid all the relationships you have today and will form tomorrow, only a few will qualify in terms of providing you the sanctuary identity-based trust brings. The way you will know if they do is by taking stock of who matters and why.
- To know who you can trust, begin by defining the universe of relationships that frames your life.
- The more varied your relationships universe, the richer the results will be as you begin to take stock of who matters and why. You will then be in the best position possible to identify which stars are likely to shine the brightest and which, in time, may gradually fade.
- You also need a small group of relationships—one carved out of your relationships universe—that becomes your “inner identity circle.” The people who come to occupy this circle are those who genuinely want the fruits of your gift and who are willing to give to you in return.
- Your inner identity circle will become a true source of energy. What is important is that everyone within it honors your identity as well as their own. The bond your identity creates with others defies time and transcends place.
- Identity-based trust grows out of a shared view about what is fundamentally right and true. It springs from passions and priorities both of you hold dear.
- Building relationships with individuals whose identities align with yours makes caring for all people easier. When you know who you are, you become more accepting of others. You no longer gauge your own worth by how others perceive you, or how you perceive them. You have found sanctuary in your relationship with yourself. As a result, you can be compassionate, even loving, toward people without necessarily bringing them into your identity circle.
- The simple expression “Trust your gut” is filled with wisdom, especially when it comes to matters of identity.
- Trusting yourself is loving yourself- It is the necessary first step in earning to love, and be loved, by others.
- There is no middle ground when it comes to trusting or believing in yourself. Either you do or you don't. In truth, however, you have no choice but to do so. That is what the Law of Relationship demands.
- If your inner identity circle is to have the power to be self-sustaining, you need to be its first member.

- Give-and-take creates a sense of flow between two people. It is a simple philosophy that applies to building trust.
- Trust creates an *us* that requires both people to open up simultaneously. To know who you can trust, ask yourself whether each of the people who compose your relationships universe cares about the things you love. Do they respect what is most important to you? Can you speak freely with them about who you are? Listen to your answers honestly.
- As important as it is to give, it is equally important to take, since it is a two-way street.
- It is important for you to keep your eyes open for opportunities to meet new people whose passions align with yours.
- Being open to opportunities to expand your horizons will keep you alert and in close touch with yourself. Sizing people up through the lens of your identity will help you learn who you can trust, instinctively. It will also help you cultivate your identity, causing it to take root, ever more deeply, into your being.
- Living by the Law of Relationship holds out the prospect of sculpting a life that testifies to the power you hold—when your relationships are fueled by this power, you are fully engaged in life. You are operating under “full sail.” This is the reward of taking stock of who matters and why. And it is in having reached this place that you will avow: *I need others and am most productive with those who need me in return.*

### **THE SEVENTH QUESTION: What Is My Message?**

*The Law of Comprehension:* An individual’s various capacities are only as valuable as the perceived value of the whole of that individual.

- People try to discern what you stand for. They want to know what cause, purpose, or passion fuels the choices you make in life. What people ultimately want to know is whether they can relate to you, and, if so, how. They are looking for a frame of reference they can count on.
- Telling people what you stand for explains and exposes you in your entirety. This takes courage. Telling your story can be a risky proposition.
- What you gain in telling your story, however, is worth the risk. For every relationship that may end, a new, more genuine one is likely to begin. Having endured the discomfort that change invariably brings, you gain self-esteem. You gain confidence.
- *What is my message?* Is a question that has an outsized impact on our lives, even when we aren’t aware of it. It comes up in the essays we write as part of our college applications, as we search for jobs after graduation— and when we are faced with the not-so-simple task of expressing who we are on one or two pieces of paper called a resume.
- The question slips into our lives at large social gatherings and when you are introduced to people for the first time. Or at intimate dinner parties. In all of these situations, you

have choices to make. You can make a point of finding ways to tell people something about who you are at your core, and risk making yourself vulnerable, if only for the moment.

- People are searching for signs that give them reason to believe you are someone they should take a chance on, and possibly trust. People who want to know you better need you to let them in. Hiding what you stand for erodes your sense of self-worth.
- Nothing makes you more complete than your identity. Your message is found in the wholeness of your being, not in your parts. It is a message the world needs to hear.
- Answering the question What is my message? holds out the promise of liberation from the fear of being who you are and doing what you know you must. Often in the course of our lives we arrive at a point where we run out of excuses: why not to do something, why not to follow a certain path, why not to take a particular risk.
- In the course of our lives, we turn ourselves over, time and again, to people and organizations in order to be accepted, paid, loved, nurtured, or recognized. It is what we do to get along. Sometimes we are conscious of the choices we make. At other times we make these choices unwittingly.
- As your identity blossoms, it can no longer be contained.. When you reach this point on your identity journey, emancipation is all that matters. How, then, do you realize the promise of liberation? By declaring yourself on the strength of your gift.
- Declarations are simply a commitment to follow one path and walk away from others. What makes declarations so powerful is their intent: *to remove doubt about what matters to you.*
- Knowing your gift is the key to declaring what your “major” should be in life. It is the living, practical expression of your identity. It is the content of your message.
- Working to decipher your identity code puts you on a path that leads, inevitably, to a moment of declaration. In that moment, the outcome in terms of what other people may think of you doesn’t matter at all.
- Before sending your message, rehearse the experience in your mind as well as in reality. Whether you know them intimately or have only recently met them, practice telling people about yourself. Learn to tie your gift to the topic at hand.
- As you rehearse your message in your mind, you are likely to find yourself returning to one particular “place” over and over. Your task is to seek out, or create, real-life settings where you will have an opportunity to talk about needs and opportunities that call upon you to let people know what you stand for. In time, you will be able to deliver your message almost anywhere.
- It is accepted wisdom that actions speak louder than words. It is our nature to look for concrete evidence that someone means what they say. Your message isn’t a message until you send it. It can be sent verbally, in the form of a speech to a crowd, or through a simple conversation with a few people. You can deliver your message in how you spend

your time and the priorities you live by. A message is all about action. The act of declaring yourself brings with it the obligation to live your words.

- When you finally tell the world what you stand for, you will declare what you've known all along: *to establish meaningful relationships, I must first be recognized for who I am.*

### **THE EIGHTH QUESTION: Will My Life Be Rich?**

*The Law of the Cycle:* Identity governs value, which produces wealth, which fuels identity.

- Asking ourselves whether our lives will be rich is one of those questions that make us sweat.
- What is worth sweating about is whether, from this day forward, you do right by yourself and by others. This sequence—first you, and then other people—is deliberate. It is only when you build relationships that reflect who you are at your core that you can “do right” by other people.
- Your identity is the living lens through which you can safely engage the world, make informed decisions. And thereby fashion a life that you, and others, can trust.
- As much as wealth may be about money, however, it is equally about those things that, like a magnet, draw people back to you over and over again.
- The idea of attaining a “rich life” is an invitation for you to decide what truly matters. What are the things that, when combined, will add up to a life you will be proud to call your own?
- It is worth sweating what your legacy will be. Will the commitments you make and the actions you take today leave people better off because you were here?
- The question Will my life be rich? isn't just about today; it is equally about tomorrow. It is about how you will be remembered and what you will be remembered for.
- The answer to the question Will my life be rich? brings with it the promise of endurance. What it takes to endure as a human being in the face of rejection.
- The kind of endurance the author is talking about allows you to endure in the face of time and even in death. The Law of the Cycle is the story of infinity. What you leave as your legacy will produce value long after you are gone if you give your gift, no matter what it is, no matter how large or small it may be.
- Endurance comes from having a sense of wholeness about yourself and from being in sound shape emotionally. From simply being honest about who you are, and who you are not. It comes from being deeply comfortable in our own skin. In short, endurance comes from having integrity.
- The way to realize the promise of endurance is by surrendering to the pull of identity. This is like handing over the reins of your life to the part of you you can count on the most to make wise decisions, to build meaningful relationships, to guide you through pain, to steer you to a place in this world you can call your own.
- Many of your responsibilities are opportunities to let your identity find expression. When you let your identity filter into your daily routine, you give it voice, and you will start to

relax. Mundane tasks that weighed you down yesterday are imbued with new meaning today. When you transform daily acts into acts of identity, the seemingly unbridgeable divide between who you are and what you do will begin to close. You will have found the pathway for bringing the best of who you are to unsuspecting souls who will benefit from your outstretched hand.

- Creating a rich life for yourself is a matter of discipline. Avoiding seductions is part of the process. Do not let yourself be seduced by career opportunities that are simply glamorous, or higher paying, but demand that you leave your identity at home.
- Follow your instincts. Avoid what is expedient, or merely socially correct. Be honest with yourself at all times. As you go forward, begin to make choices that call upon you to live your gift. Choices about your career or vocation, about assignments to volunteer for in your present job, and about which ones to avoid. About the kind of people who you sense will make good friends—those you feel you can trust—versus those who will never become more than passing acquaintances.
- Your gift isn't tied to a particular line of work. It is ageless. Your value in this world doesn't end if you decide to retire. Make living your identity your career and "retirement" will become irrelevant.
- Use your identity as a lens through which to engage the world. Honor what you have worked so hard to find.
- Identity-based living isn't an act of altruism, where you give with no expectations of getting something back. The identity-based life demands wealth in return for value. Identity-based living demands mutual respect. The identity code is a code of honor.
- An identity-based life needs to be fed. Being rewarded for giving our gift is the sustenance you will need in order to endure. That sustenance can take many forms that go beyond money. These include love, admiration, thanks, reputation, or even simply a heightened sense of self-esteem that allows you to sleep better at night. No matter what you seek as your reward, make sure you are paid.
- As you gradually surrender to the pull of identity, you will see how life is ordered by the intimate relationship the Law of the Cycle reveals: that identity (the confluence of your unique characteristics) governs value (the particular contribution you are capable of making in this world), which, in turn, produces wealth (the harvest you will reap as a result of what you give). Embrace this reality and your life will be richer.
- Embrace the fact that identity organizes life. The continuous cycle, from identity to value to wealth and back identity, gives new meaning to the term life cycle. Endurance, in its many forms, is the reward that comes from surrendering to the pull of identity. It is in having the courage to follow this path that you will realize and assert: *I will receive in accordance with what I give.*

## **A FRAMEWORK FOR LIVING**

- Order helps us navigate uncertainty, deal with surprise, and explain why various events happened, or why they didn't.
- Identity-based living has a rhythm all its own. It comes from within. The rhythm of identity flows from the uniqueness and potential that defines every human being. It comes from you.
- The Arc of Identity has five distinct stages, which illustrate how an identity-centered life unfolds. These stages are Preparation, Discovery, Trial, Transformation, and Integration.
  - *Stage 1, Preparation*, comes from having defined yourself as separate from all others. You've allowed yourself to find your "separate space" within the many relationships that frame your life. You have geared yourself to see with greater clarity than ever before. You have prepared yourself to begin your identity journey. You are ready.
  - *Stage 2, Discovery*, stems from having unearthed what you love and finding the pattern of your life. You have done the spadework necessary to find capacities and passions, which, most likely, were invisible to you at first. You have learned that your life isn't simply a series of random experiences. Rather, it tells a story that explains past events and foreshadows your future. You are learning.
  - *Stage 3, Trial*, comes from having encountered—and survived—the inevitable frustration and doubt you experience once you've gained insights into your unique strengths, but before you know exactly how to apply them. Despite all you have learned about yourself so far, you aren't yet sure where you are going. You are tested.
  - *In stage 4, Transformation*, you enter your most profound period of development. You have followed the signs of joy and discovered your gift. You have taken stock of who matters and why, and come to know who you can trust most deeply. You have declared yourself on the strength of your gift and made your message clear. In this stage, you will have taken many vital steps to align how you live with the purpose your identity reveals. You are growing.
  - *Stage 5, Integration*, flows from having surrendered to the pull of your identity. Yielding to its power, you are forging a life rich in the things that matter most to you. You have come to terms with who you are and have experienced the unmistakable sense of completeness that establishes your integrity. You are at peace with yourself and alive with purpose. You are whole.
- The Arc of Identity suggests that your journey will occur in discreet stages, one after another. But the journey isn't a linear path. You will revisit different stages at different times, circling back to one or more of these stages as you learn more about yourself. As you do, you will move ahead with greater conviction than ever before, on the strength of what you've learned. The process is fluid. It will respond to your touch.

- Each of the insights the Laws of Identity reveals has a value all its own. Each takes you a step further along your identity journey, helping you find ever greater comfort and meaning in who you are.
- Beyond the Arc of Identity, there is yet another way in which the Laws of Identity bring order to your world. Taken together, the eight insights form a credo. This is The Identity Credo and it illuminates how your life will unfold when you live according to it.

*I am alive, I am unique, and I am immutable,  
even as I grow and evolve.  
To truly live, however, I must express myself fully,  
and in this regard, have much to give.  
But to do so, I need others, and am most productive with  
those who need me in return.  
To establish these relationships, I must first  
be recognized for who I am,  
and it follows, then, that I will receive in accordance with what I give.*

- If people lived by the Identity Credo, relationships would change in dramatic ways.
- There is no person walking this planet who doesn't have the capacity to live through his or her identity. If we were to make identity the foundation of our lives, it would be a better, more productive world.

**Recommendation:** I thought my purpose, my "why" was clear when I started this book and was amazed at the next layer I discovered in articulating my purpose. I love that this book offers an opportunity to be in integrity with myself and it will do the same for you.

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Contact Frumi at 949-729-1577  
[ceoconfidante@frumi.com](mailto:ceoconfidante@frumi.com)  
[www.frumi.com](http://www.frumi.com)  
[www.100mustreads.com](http://www.100mustreads.com)

**About the reviewer: Frumi Rachel Barr, MBA, PhD**

Many CEO's find themselves asking "What now?" to sensitive situations that only an experienced former CEO can understand. Frumi is brought in to solve problems and often remains to work with you, as your confidante and secret weapon. She has an uncanny knack of getting to the heart of your corporate climate and maximizing your team's performance, profitability and sustainability.

To schedule a free ***Break From the Pack to Success*** consultation email [ceoconfidante@frumi.com](mailto:ceoconfidante@frumi.com) or call 949-729-1577