



The definition of **identity** is who you are, the way you think about yourself, the way you are viewed by the world and the characteristics that define you. An example of **identity** is a person's name. Another example of **identity** is the traditional characteristics of a South African or more specifically a South African aviator.

Many of us, and especially myself, have a lot of our self-worth and therefore our identity linked to the fact that we are aviators – professionals in a very interesting and challenging complex socio-technical industry. Usually, these are the people that make for interesting conversations at any social gathering to the delight of the non-aviators. However, our identity as aviators is being turned upside down as we speak during the present volatile global era.

Being an aviator is a stereotype that most of us don't mind being associated with, although now it seems to be an inhibiting stereotype – amongst ourselves as well as from the perspective of the public. Trying to define a typical aviator is not that easy and even trying to define an aviator can be unrealistic – is a stereotypical aviator male or female, White, Black, Indian or Coloured, large or skinny (depends on when your medical is due, right)?

This pandemic has challenged us to assess who we truly are and the truth is that we are complex, multidimensional beings whose identity cannot be confined to an occupation or title. The bottom line is that we should not allow for our identity as aviators to become an obstacle because we are complex and multi-dimensional human individuals! America Ferrera (2019) said that the world teaches us what success is based on who we see thriving, but that seems like a convenient fabricated untruth because each of us are far more than our successes, being an aviator or being redundant because my employer was resized.

If you feel you have lost your identity because you have received a letter stating you're unemployed or you are waiting for that letter, here are a few thoughts that MAYDAY-SA hopes will encourage you:

- Accept and recognise the loss – what is happening in the industry may be what you are going through but will never be who you are (let your family read this too). It is scary how years of working hard and getting the experience and qualification and self-confidence can diminish so quickly.
- Be cautious – don't become the person that genuinely wants to see change but then also be the person whose actions keep things the way they are. In other words, do not make decisions in the moment filled with anxiety, but also don't delay your decisions or continue on a path of excuses that result in you not making any decisions.
- Change will not come from identifying the good guys and the bad guys/gals. Change will come when we challenge our own fundamental values and beliefs – and our actions lead to our best intentions.
- Write down your strengths – sounds silly but it has been proven to work. Ask friends and family to add what they see as your strengths. That is who you are – guard against becoming unrecognisable to yourself because you are not working at present.
- Quantify your self-worth! Realise the truth that your worth is not dependent on external platforms recognising you or people validating you as an individual. You are good enough because you are good enough, not because someone else says you are good enough. You have not achieved what you have without your internal dedication.
- Learn to bask in space of uncertainty. My inability to articulate who I am does not mean I am not living. Acceptance is an internal process to understand my own raw and unvalidated true success.
- Despite it all – I will be ok! In the words of Jeannie Woller (2016), the beauty of self-acceptance and accepting the reality of one's current circumstances can lead to a terrifyingly endless amount of opportunities.

As MAYDAY-SA we are here for each and every aviator if you need to talk or if you need to reflect on what you are faced with in this uncertain time. Call us.

References:

- How I lost my identity but found my worth | Jeannie Woller | TEDxUSU. Dec 2, 2016
- My identity is a superpower -- not an obstacle | America Ferrera TEDTALK. Jun 21, 2019
- [www.yourdictionary.com](http://www.yourdictionary.com)

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