



Reflect and discuss

The false idea of who you are



In his short lecture, **The false idea of who you are**, British philosopher Alan Watts reminds us all how “fantastically complex” we are, and how amazing it is to belong so fundamentally in the world.

Activity steps

1. Ask participants to consider what it might mean to have a ‘false idea of who you are.’ Discuss for a few minutes.
2. Play **The false idea of who you are**.
3. Give each participant a **The false idea of who you are handout** and walk through the contents.
4. If needed, arrange participants into pairs or small groups for discussion. Then, debrief as a larger group.
5. If needed, assign a due date for submitting writing work.

Reflect and discuss

Watts says identifying only with our “trouble-shooting” conscious mind means living in “perpetual anxiety.”

- Do you agree or disagree? Why?
- What does living in perpetual anxiety look like to you? Give examples.

“You can feel yourself, not as a stranger in this world, not as something here on probation, not as something arrived here by fluke, but you begin to experience your own existence as absolutely fundamental.”

- Watts uses metaphors to describe different ways of feeling disconnected. What are other metaphors or ways to describe that feeling?
- Have you (or someone you know) ever felt like a “stranger in this world”? If so, what did you/they do to remember you/they belong?
- Indigenous teachings emphasize our ultimate belonging to the land. To what degree is Watts suggesting the same idea?
- Describe what went through your mind when Watts said, “You’re all that, only you’re pretending you’re not.”