

I recognized myself...

I looked in the mirror, and the person who I felt like I was (in my head)... matched my reflection. I just stopped in my tracks and stared for a few moments.

There I was... that girl I'd lost...that girl with determination...with focus...with excitement about the future. I was standing there. I didn't know I had lost her...until I saw her again. She was heading out the door prepared for freezing temperatures, wearing 2 jackets, 2 pairs of fitness pants, a hat, gloves, and carrying a backpack full of books.

A couple little things happened, that led up to that moment in the mirror, a couple weeks ago.

First, (after giving up alcohol to focus and study for my upcoming exams), I stepped on the scale and it was under 150 lbs. The last time I was under 150 lbs (from "healthy" practices) was my senior year of college. Any other time since, had been from a lack of eating properly, do to stressful events in my life. I tried on the pair of jeans I had been saving for the last 8 years...and they fit. This time they fit because I am healthy, both mentally and physically.

Secondly, I reached out to another trainer, who had offered to have me join him to study for an exam we are both taking. I tend to keep to myself, and I'm always a little fearful of comparing notes with other "experts" in the field. But, it felt great to be able to share ideas, and be back in that place of learning for myself. For the last decade, I had been in the classroom as a teacher of physical education and personal training, but I had not stepped back into being a student myself, until the last few weeks. It feels great to be back in that position... watching/listening to a lectures, taking practice exams, and comparing notes.

While taking a short study break, I went for some coffee and came back. A staff member came up to us and politely broke our conversation.

"Excuse me... we were making a little wager, and I came over to find out who was right." She said.

"Ok." We said.

"What was the last competitive sport you played?" She asked, while looking at me.

"Me?" I asked...a bit surprised.

"Yes." She replied.

"Well... its been 10 years, but track and cross country...I'm a trainer now though."

My study partner was genuinely amused by the whole thing, and I was a little embarrassed. I told him I wasn't used to strangers talking to me about my physical appearance.

After the embarrassment came a feeling of validation. My hard work and focus was being noticed by others. I remembered that this is the last layer of James Clear's "Layers of Behavior Change". He is a personal trainer and blogger, that I have begun following over the last few months.

Since January of 2013, I have been working on creating a new identity for myself. My second marriage had ended, and I was left stripped (again) of my identity as "wife". There were quickly a host of "identities" thrown my way, which included "single mother", "victim", "failure", "damaged", and "comes with baggage".

I quickly rejected all of those, and proudly took up the title of "workaholic". I was determined to overcome the failure in my personal life, by building my professional life. By October of 2013, I was quickly running out of the fuel that pain had provided. I was left tired, scrambling, and unable to hide the scattered pieces of myself to my friends. I decided to take back my life, which I wrote about in <http://www.maitrainer.com/training-tips/simplify-your-life-part-1-of-3>

I was left to consider *who it was* I wanted to be, and *what it was* that type of person would do each day. I wrote down the different identities and roles that were important to me. I wrote down the people who were most important to me. I wrote down the habits that would be most important in developing this type of person... and then I started practicing them. *Little by little, I have mastered the little habits that make up who I am right now. My identity has started to come into full display in my appearance. As in James Clear's image above, "the way the world perceives [me]."*

If exercise and a healthy lifestyle is one of your goals, it has to become part of who you are. Trying to add it on to a packed schedule, or telling yourself you have to go to the gym because you are "fat", will likely not work. But it may work to damage your self-esteem and add to feelings of failure.

I am inviting you to make healthy living and exercise part of who you are as a person. You don't exercise because you are "fat". You exercise because you are a "fit" person. You don't put down unhealthy foods because you are trying to "lose weight". You pick up healthy foods because that is what a "healthy person" does. You don't label yourself as "fat" and send yourself to the gym for punishment. You speak yourself into the future you want. You label yourself "healthy and fit" and go do things "healthy and fit" people do.

Over the next couple weeks, I will be sharing with you some of the techniques I have learned to develop my new identity. I will be giving credit to the different authors, speakers, and trainers that I have been learning from over the last few years.

I invite you to answer the same questions that I answered for myself, back in 2013.

Who is it that you want to be?

What would this type of person do everyday?

What different identities or roles are important to you?

Who are the most important people to you?

What are the habits that would be most important in developing the type of person you want to be?

Is there anything (or anyone) you need to let go of, in order to become this new person?

That girl I found last week... I still see her. I've been saying "hello" to her and "welcome back" to her each day, since I discovered her 2 weeks ago. Part of me is afraid I'll lose her again.

Yesterday, I stood in front of the mirror and I didn't see her... I just stood there and waited. I could see stress in my face, and I could feel tension in my chest. I identified some negative self-talk I'd been walking around with, and then I did a chest stretch I've been using to break physical manifestations of stress. I looked again, and she was there. I smiled at her... said "hello" and "welcome back."

Ask yourself those questions, and see what you find out about who you want to be. I'll see you next week with some ideas on where to go from here.