Photo of the Day |



Students try out free Tajin samples at a pop-up on Fairfield Way. Tajin is a popular brand of Mexican seasoning made from a blend of mild chili peppers, dehydrated lime juice and sea salt. PHOTO BY ANDY CHERRY, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

You cannot truly be yourself

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"Just be yourself."

"Just be yourself" and you'll nail the interview, make new friends and impress the girl. "Just be yourself" and everything will fall into place. We often hear this phrase used in conversation. But what does "being yourself" truly mean?

The average person probably wouldn't act the same towards their boss at work and their childhood best friend. Of course, this doesn't mean that a certain version of them is ingenuine or performative. Different environments simply call for different personas. In everyday encounters, many versions of a person exist as they interact with various people in distinct environments throughout the day. All these versions come together to comprise a person's character. As humans, we are naturally complex beings shaped by our experiences, our childhood and our incredibly diverse walks of life. All the characteristics of a person simply cannot be confined to one personality or "self." A "true self" does not exist.

With the phrase "be yourself," people usually imply that you shouldn't pretend to be someone you're not. In other words, being yourself means to be authentic when interacting with others, rather than intentionally presenting yourself differently in hopes of impressing someone or fitting in. But this does leave some questions unanswered. How do you know who "yourself" truly is? Instead of looking at this phrase as a singular personality we should fulfill, we can see "being yourself" as a set of personal values and aspirations we set for ourselves. Perhaps you want to be the person who listens attentively and ensures that the people around you feel comfortable and seen. Through your interactions — whether it be with your classmate or someone you've just met — you can apply those principles and embody the person you want others to perceive you as.

Especially when meeting new people, you may struggle to act like yourself. Thinking back to those first days of college, you might remember superficial conversations or painstakingly redundant "what's your major" introductions. This doesn't mean you lack social skills or have a hard time interacting with new people. Rather, for some, it is simply the environment that brings out a certain side of you. To some people, you are the bubbly, charismatic life of the party who laughs out loud and is unapologetically bold. But to others, you might be the friendly yet reserved peer who doesn't tend to open up very often. Each person in our life brings out a different side to us — sides that all make up who we are as a whole.

This argument also poses the question: Who are you when no one else is around? Is that the person you really are? We don't need to know all the answers to these questions. In fact, it is nearly impossible to separate ourselves from our interactions with our environment. These interactions go in both directions; our environment shapes us, while we in turn shape our environment. We are a mosaic of all the experiences and people who have played a part in our lives in the past. These influences make up who we are. Without them, we wouldn't be complex humans with unique feelings, beliefs and ways of thinking today.

So, instead of seeing our "true self" as a concrete and determinable personality, we should redefine the term. We can view "the self" as a patchwork of all the everchanging versions of ourselves and the versions we strive to become. In a world that is always moving forward, we are constantly changing as we react to new experiences fueled by old ones. Rather than trying to measure who we really are, perhaps the best we can do is just be.



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