

The Book of Me

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Introduction

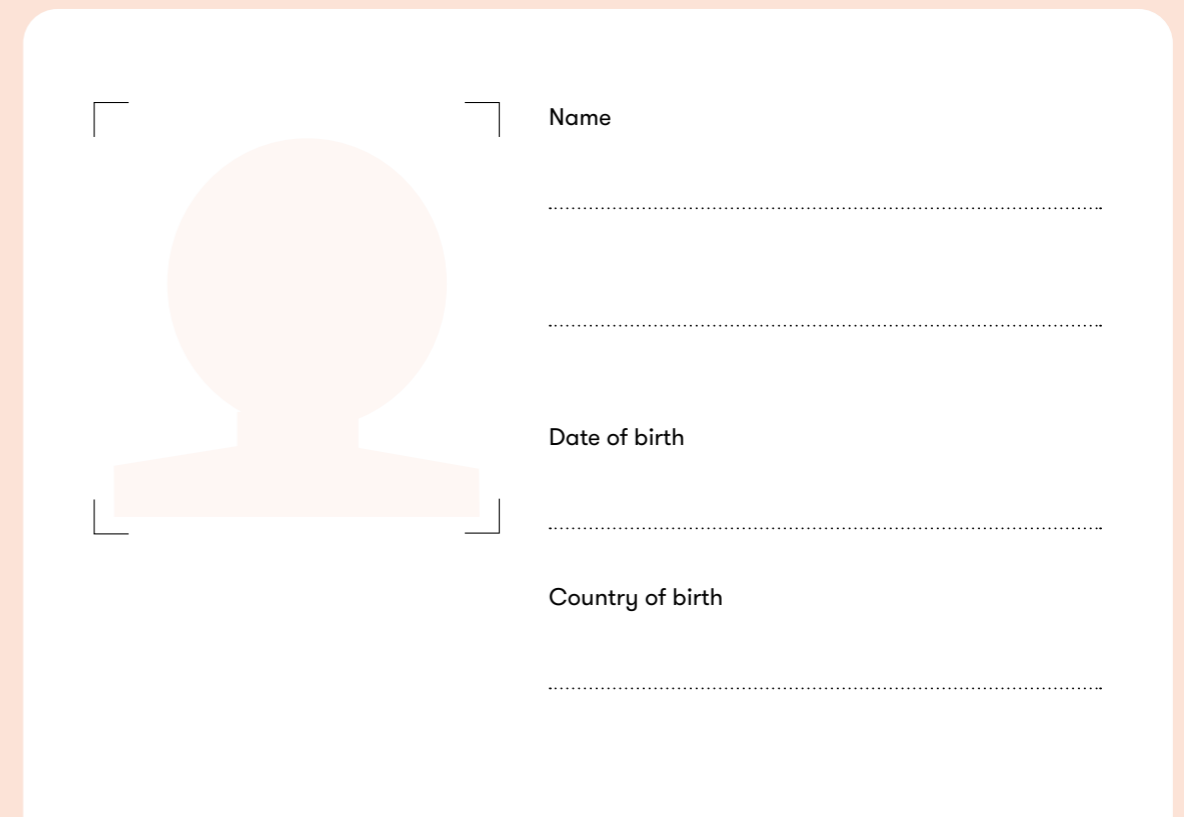


What is a Self-Explorer?

An explorer is someone who takes a journey into the unknown. They travel to places where no one has been before – islands, jungles, caves or deserts – in order to learn more about them.

This book is going to help you become an explorer. You'll be going on a journey into uncharted territory, somewhere no one else has ever explored.

→ Before you set off, you'll need to fill out your passport...



The form is a white rounded rectangle with a light orange border. On the left side, there is a large, light orange circular placeholder for a photo, with a small L-shaped corner bracket at the top-left and another at the bottom-right. To the right of the photo placeholder, the word "Name" is printed in a simple black font. Below "Name" are two horizontal dotted lines for writing. Further down, the words "Date of birth" are printed. Below "Date of birth" is another horizontal dotted line. At the bottom, the words "Country of birth" are printed. Below "Country of birth" is a final horizontal dotted line.

→ Next, you'll need to pack your suitcase. Draw three of your favourite things in your suitcase to take with you on your journey (we've already packed all the boring things like your clothes and your toothbrush for you).



→ Finally, you'll need to find somewhere comfortable to sit. Here are some suggestions:

You won't be travelling there by boat or plane – indeed, you won't even need to get up from where you're sitting. You'll be going on a **psychological*** journey – which means travelling inside your mind. And you won't be exploring an island, or a jungle. Instead, you'll be exploring your **self**.



On a chair by a window



Under a tree



Curled up on the sofa



Tucked up in bed

[*The word *psychological* is a useful one that we got from the ancient Greeks. *Psyche* means mind and *logos* means study – that is, something related to the study of the mind.]

What is the Self?

Your self is a part of your **mind**. It's not the part that controls digestion, or tells your feet where to go. It's the part that **thinks** and **feels**, that **experiences** the world around you. It's the part that makes you *you*.

It's made up of all sorts of things.

- * Your **thoughts**
- * Your **emotions**
- * Your **beliefs**
- * Your **memories**
- * Your **conscience** (your sense of right and wrong)
- * Your **imagination**
- * Your **talents**
- * Your **weaknesses**
- * Your **hopes and dreams**
- * Your **fears and worries**
- * Your **memories**

In some religions and cultures, the self is called the **soul**. Some people believe it lives on after death, or that it is reincarnated in a different body.

Why We Need Explorers

Before there were explorers, nobody knew what much of the world looked like. Until we were able to travel vast distances on ships or by plane, people only knew about the places they happened to live in. As a result, maps often used to look like this:



Cartographers (the people who make maps) had to guess what other places looked like. Countries were drawn with the wrong shape and geography – or simply weren't drawn at all. If no one they knew had ever been there, they labelled them *terra incognita* ('unknown places'). Instead of roads, towns or rivers, they drew fantastical creatures, who they imagined must live there – like magicians, or monsters.



→ Can you name the different types of fantastical creatures?

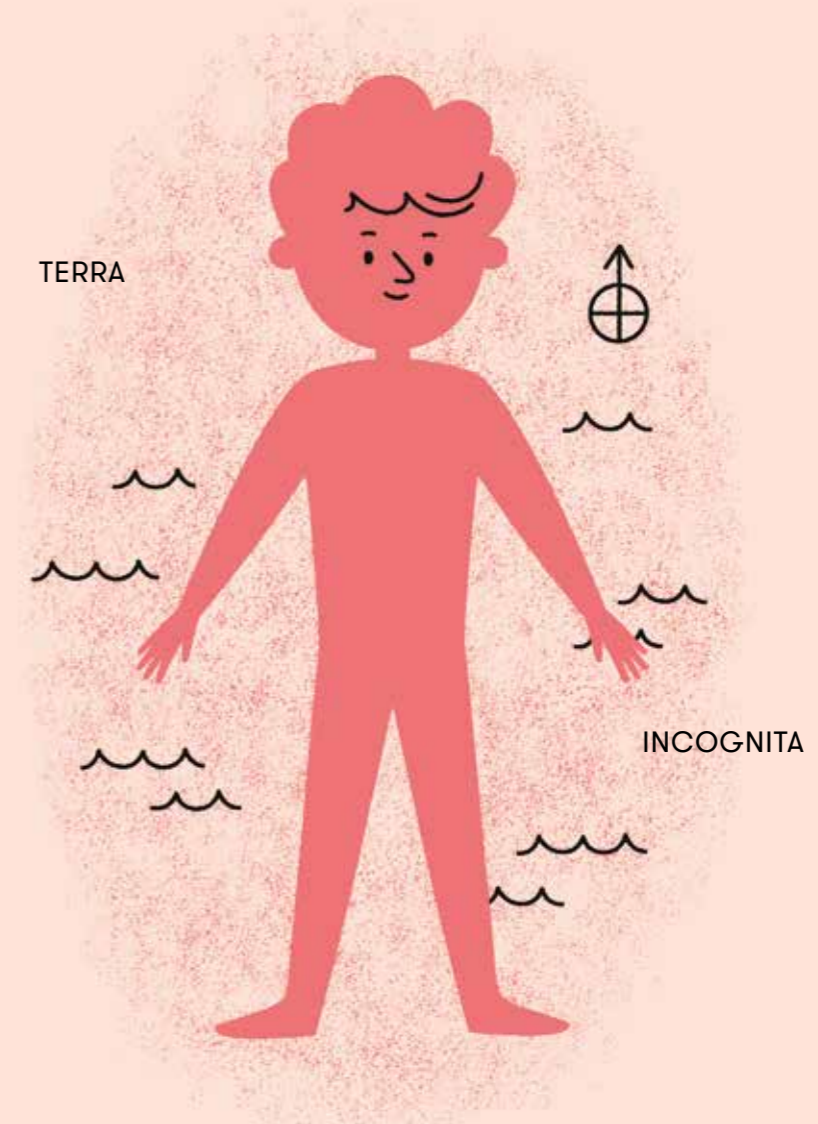
It took explorers to help us understand what the world really looked like. Explorers like Ferdinand Magellan, James Cook, Isabella Bird and Gertrude Bell set off on long voyages across the sea to discover new countries and continents.

Sometimes, they found things they weren't expecting. The Italian explorer Christopher Columbus sailed west from Spain hoping to find a new sea passage to India... but ended up discovering America instead.

Thanks to explorers, our maps now look like this:



Your self is a lot like an undiscovered country. You might think you know 'you' quite well. But the vast majority of who you are has yet to be discovered. If your self was a map, it would look like this:



The journey to discover your self will be long. It won't always be easy. There is enough inside you that it could take a whole lifetime to fully explore.

Only You Can Know Yourself

Think about someone you live with (it might be someone in your family, like a parent or grandparent). You probably know quite a lot about them. You might know the colour of their eyes, what they like to have for breakfast, or how hairy their ankles are.

→ Write down five things you know about this person.

1

2

3

4

5

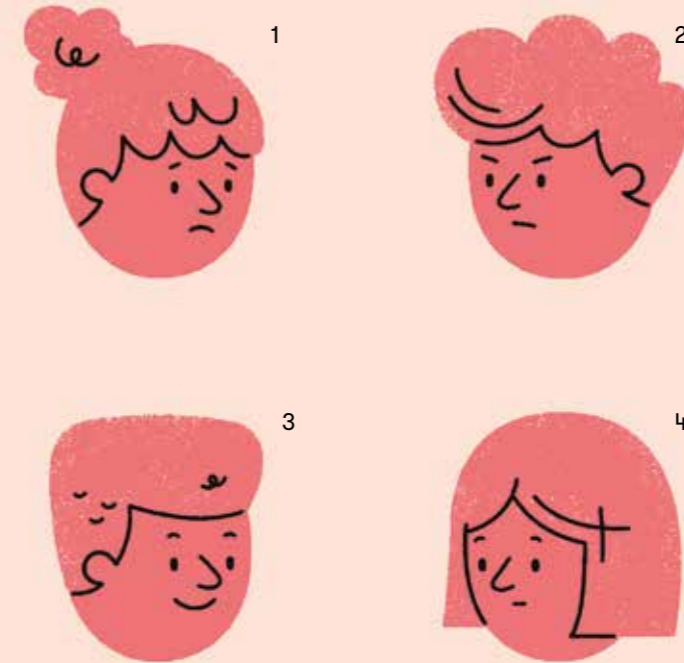
But there's a lot you probably don't know. Most importantly, you don't know exactly what's going on inside their heads – what they are really thinking, or feeling.

Possible mysteries about...

1. What do they dream about?
2. What are they most scared of?
3. What do they think of their childhood?
4. What do they feel sad about at night?
5. What do they regret?

Much of the time, we have to guess what people are thinking using clues drawn from their facial expressions, or the ways they behave.

→ Try this now. Guess what each of these people is thinking and feeling.



1

2

3

4

People might tell you some of the things they think and feel (by saying things like “I’m in a good mood”, “I’m quite cross with you today” or “Not now, I’m very tired”) but they won’t tell you everything. They might be embarrassed by what they’re feeling – or confused about the cause.

The only person you can truly know on the inside is yourself. Only you know what you are really thinking and feeling – which means that only you have the ability to discover who you really are. Knowing ourselves is really hard, but it’s a properly exciting task.

Everyone needs to go on journeys of self-exploration, but because they are hard, many of us never get around to it. Sometimes people tell you they are ‘too busy’ to be self-explorers, but that’s likely to be an excuse. They’re not too busy; they’re too lazy!

Why We Need Self-Knowledge

By exploring the contents of our minds, we can learn things about ourselves we wouldn't otherwise have understood. This is called gaining **self-knowledge**.

Without self-knowledge, we are like cartographers drawing a map of an unknown country:

We won't know what parts of ourselves are really like – such as what our beliefs are, or what we might be worried about.

*

We'll make mistakes – like making friends we don't actually care for, or choosing a job that doesn't suit us.

*

We'll think parts of ourselves are strange or dangerous, even though they are actually normal.

*

We'll tell lies about ourselves to others, because we can't be honest about who we are.

Self-knowledge is useful in all sorts of ways – some of which we'll explore in this book. The more self-knowledge you gain, the better off you'll be.

Gaining self-knowledge isn't easy – in fact, it's one of the most difficult things a person can do. Like explorers, we'll need to be brave and work hard. And we'll need to keep a record of our discoveries by writing things down (or by drawing, or colouring, or sticking things in).

Socrates, a philosopher who lived a long time ago in Greece, said the purpose of life was to:



You might not want to spend ALL your life exploring yourself – but it's probably the most interesting bit of travel you'll ever go on.