

SPARK 167

(Matrix Code: **SPARK167.00** for StartOver.xyz game.)

DISTINCTION: Your possibility horizon expands when you view yourself in #hashtags rather than in categories.

NOTES: The way you think of yourself sculpts your relationships with others, qualifies your access to potential, and catalyzes what you can be or become in any given situation, or even more interestingly... when there is no situation at all.

You've been taught to encapsulate yourself in definable categories. For example, you might imagine that you fit the categories of man, German, divorced, remarried, college educated, having a career, so many years old, living in Berlin. You might classify yourself as bisexual, female, two abortions, using drugs, barely surviving, being in a Chinese street gang, waiting for your prince to fly in on a dragon and whisk you away. You might categorize yourself as genius Italian Millennial, highly connected to online groups through your smartphone, having a Brazilian girlfriend, being desired by various cool projects, flitting from community to community but harboring your own secret undefined project so as never having to deliver. The point is, whatever the category, you are categorizing yourself.

Experiencing yourself in categories gives you the illusion of knowing who you are. To the Western-trained psyche this is comforting. You wear knowability as a badge so when someone asks what you do, you can satisfy their curiosity while appearing understandable and acceptable. This means they don't have to avoid becoming your friend for fear of being implicated if the Inquisition comes to burn you at the stake.

Categorizing yourself is a fear-based reflex to test if you fit in. You constantly scan: Are they Jewish, Muslim, mindful, Christian? Are they rich, middleclass, poor? Are they black, Chinese, indigenous? Are they pierced, using drugs, gay, drinking partners? If you can't match their categories how could you be safe with them?

Categorizing is so deeply woven into Western identity that you cannot understand someone who does not categorize things the way you do. You walk into the grocery store and find what you want because the store manager categorizes things in a way you can understand, fruit and vegetables here, peanut butter there, breakfast cereals main aisle, toilet paper side aisle. If you can't find what you want or the categories keep changing you shop at another store. You walk through downtown categorizing each shop-window: stationary supplies, drugstore, café, book shop, gas station, another damn shoe shop.

Western science classifies every biological organism according to a cascade of categories: kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus, race, and species. We are tested in school for our abilities to recognize patterns and categorize.

Categorizing gives the world the appearance of being known. There are other options for how to make the world appear, such as the appearance of abundance, the appearance of mutability, the appearance of being richly connected.

This SPARK says that thinking in categories produces very different results than thinking in #hashtags. What is meant by #hashtags?

A #hashtag is a key word, a quality, a theme, a meta-data label. *Meta-data* means data about the data, information about the information. #Hashtags bring what is inside to the outside to make it more findable. #Hashtags feed into the algorithm that search engines use to rapidly scan the entire globe and report back anything related to what you are seeking.

Both categories and #hashtags are subjective, that is, their accuracy can be debated. Each is chosen according to personal taste and perspective. Here is where they differ: Categories help you know. #Hashtags help you create. Once a thing is categorized it can be known. Once a thing is #hashtagged it can be found and put to interesting new uses.

We started categorizing because in the physical world the easiest way to organize things is to put them in piles, boxes or drawers, with like things together. *One thing cannot be in two piles at the same time!* You must decide which pile to put a thing on. Through your decision the thing is categorized and your thinking becomes rigid.

However, *one thing can have a hundred different #hashtags and more than one thing can have the same #hashtag!* Suddenly you find connections between very different categories of things. *This establishes an entirely different world to play in!*

When you start regarding yourself, other people, the world, and what is possible through #hashtags, your previous world is shattered. Your thought categories disassemble into a toybox full of options for mixing and matching.

Since a human being is a multidimensional flux node, human beings are rich in #hashtags. In fact, others can #hashtag you in ways you never imagined by perceiving aspects of you that you never noticed. Were those aspects there the whole time? Or are these qualities invented through the #hashtagging? Does it matter? It is joyful and entertaining to be #hashtagged in new ways.

If the #hashtags work to connect you with new people or new possibilities, your experience expands into finding similarities to create with rather than finding differences to guard against. You suddenly have #hashtags in common with people from opposing categories. This means you fit together with many different people in many different circumstances breaking most of the traditional social rules. What if you have common #hashtags with each and every human being on Earth? Experiencing massive connectedness is tremendously healing. Let it happen to you.

EXPERIMENTS:

Intimately #Hashtagging people you never met before is fantastically stimulating for both parties. Here are a three refreshing experiments to try.

SPARK167.01 YOURSELF Shift away from categorizing yourself with modern-culture pigeon-holes and start regarding yourself as an evolving set of unprioritized #hashtags. To start, make a list at the inside cover of your *Beep! Book* with the

heading, “I can be used for...” or “I am a source of...” or “Here you can find...” and start writing two-or-three word #hashtags that you could wear, for example, #transformationalfunhouse, #wildinitiationideas, #openheartedlistening, #threestepsoutward, #rawactioncourage, #colorfulopportunityweaving, #authenticmalepresence, #anarchiccollaborationcircles, #introspectivecartographics, #angrymanactivist, #healingchaosgenerator, #crucialselfdemands, #impulsetoawaken, #gaianworldtours, #medicinemanteam, #dehypnotizingadventures, #delicatehumancontact, #dangerousquestionasking, #magnificentwishfulfillment, #regenerativeculturevisions, #clearcenterholding, #consciousgremlinfarmer, #dynamichumorsolutions, #teadrinkingphysicist, #birdwatchdancing, #trulyunrulysuggestions, #assumptioninversions, #newshamacentral, #thoughtwarestyling, #nextcultureincubator, #identityshiftcoach, #fourbodytheaterwork, #groupgeniusamplifier, #remindingfactorshop, #doitnow.

SPARK167.02 OTHERS For the next week, each time you meet someone use a different kind of scanning intention. Instead of *categorizing* them into the knowable categories, be wildly creative and sense into their qualities of being, their themes, their vast untapped resources of possibility. Then explain to them their #hashtags just like you were doing for yourself in Experiment 1. Shower #hashtags on them for some minutes without stopping. Write them down on a piece of paper for them as a gift of possibilities. Then ask them to do the same for you. SUGGESTION: Avoid categorizing the #hashtags that people give to you! Instead let them be an endless series of evolving facets to marvel at and make creative use of.

As you shift and start regarding yourself as #hashtagable rather than categorizable the pathways for connecting with other people and other opportunities get free of old barriers. Welcome the expanded space. Each time you come into contact with new or “familiar” people celebrate the #hashtags about them that excite you. Does this mean you need to stay with these people forever in the same category? No. This is a #hashtag connection. You are permanently connected to them through the #hashtags wherever you go, AND you remain free to flux and flow and celebrate wave after wave of connections with others through the infinite variety of #hashtags you have in common.

SPARK167.03 HAVE A #HASHTAG PARTY (25\$ for a 3 hour evening or afternoon experience). Spend the first 15 minutes explaining the difference between categorizing and #hashtagging. Then have people pair up with strangers and give each person 1 minute to introduce themselves with the usual categories, job, family, hometown. Then pass out post-it notes and narrow felt pens to each person. Now give every person 3 minutes to #hashtag the person standing across from them, writing each #hashtag on a post-it, and sticking the post-it to the other person (may need paper clips or safety pins). Then go find a new partner and do it again. Then go find a third new partner and do it again. By now each person should be covered from head to toe with amazing #hashtags. Now shift to a café environment with background music, non-alcoholic beverages and a few snacks where people’s job is to create #hashtag projects together giving the #hashtags room to express themselves in ways that immediately create a bright future for the world.