

Anthony Miller

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What's in a Name?

It is said that you should never let anything but your own actions and personalities define who you are. But there is one thing that defines all of us. A name. A name is the basic unit used to define a person, but it is so much more than that. A name determines how people perceive you. It changes the attitude people have towards you and what they may expect from you. But most importantly, a name can affect self-image. That is why I had a bit of an identity crisis during my childhood.

My mother, because of her deep love for our Italian heritage, named me Anthony. As a child I never really liked my name, it was too formal. When I thought of someone with the name Anthony, I thought of a business man. I went by Tony. Tony fit me much better. I was outgoing and energetic. My grandma scolded me for being hyper every day. I was very loud and was worried more about having fun than much of anything else. I felt like Tony fit the care free personality I had much more than Anthony would.

As I grew and matured, I became a much calmer, organized person. Not to say that I didn't still have fun, but I knew when I needed to be serious and get things done. I got a job. I started going by Anthony. It made me feel like an adult. I thought it would make people take me more seriously. I ran for, and won, the position of Student Body President at my school. I needed

to be organized and formal. For meetings with the principal, Anthony made me seem more credible than Tony.

It is true that a name can affect how people view you, but that can be overcome. That is just a minor part of how people view you. Your clothes, the way you act, the way you present yourself. These are all much more important than the name your parents gave you. The greatest function of my name to those around me is just a way to refer to me. When people say Anthony, or Tony, they are either talking about me, or trying to get my attention.

To me however, my name is much more important. Though other people don't always define me by my name, I do. What I call myself is very important to me. Tony acts much differently than Anthony. Looking back, I don't really like the way Tony acted sometimes. I'm much happier with the new, more mature Anthony. Though other people wouldn't distinguish the difference, I feel different as Anthony than I did as Tony.

I feel empowered. In my mind, Anthony is more respected by others. Anthony is prepared for anything, organized, and confident, but still knows how to have fun. Anthony is clever and witty; he has a great sense of humor. He has gotten good at balancing his time and is never afraid to take on responsibilities.

Depending on how you look at it, a name can mean nothing but a word that people call you, or as much as a strong indicator of who you are. Though those around you will never really know how your name defines you, it may change the way you look at yourself.