

Your magazine for self-discovery, creativity, and the art of living!

A woman with short, wavy, reddish-brown hair is wearing large black headphones. She has several tattoos on her hands and forearms, including hearts and symbols. She is resting her chin on her hands, which are holding a blue marker. She is looking upwards and to the right with a thoughtful expression. In front of her on a dark wooden table is an open notebook and a bright red apple. The background is a warm, textured wall with a pattern of small, glowing lights.

# StoryLane

## Magazine

# #5

Never Ending -  
The Art of Not Putting Yourself in a Box

# Never Ending - The Art of Not Putting Yourself in a Box

When I was 8 years old, I really wanted to learn how to play the accordion. When I was 10, I joined the chess club, and a year later, I joined the club for kegelbilliards. I wish this were a joke, but kegelbilliards is a real thing, and it seemed incredibly appealing to me at the time.

At the age of 12, I started practicing the guitar, and in the same year, I wrote my first horror story. This was shortly after I joined the swimming club. My list of leisure activities between the ages of 10 and 17 also included, at times, handball, kickboxing, and athletics. For me, there were only two rules:

- 1.If something interests me, I must try it.
- 2.If it doesn't suit me, I move on!

Under no circumstances would I allow myself to be put in a box. I didn't have to be "the athlete," "the writer," or "the kickboxer." I just wanted to be and flow through life like water. But then adulthood crept in, bringing with it responsibility and a bunch of uncertainties. Thankfully, I added social media to the mix just in time. It would have been too nice to hear the doubts of the entire society on top of my own. But what can you do? I wouldn't allow myself to be boxed in. I was sure of that.

The Danger of Making Spirituality Your Identity When I started my studies, I picked acrylic painting as a hobby and began journaling regularly. That's how I stumbled into what I'll call my spiritual journey. Yes, I know: the boundaries between a crazy hobby and personal growth are thin. My personal growth and my understanding of spirituality unfolded as randomly as my choice of leisure activities. In the past ten years, I've written in my journal (I still do), been in various therapy settings, tried hypnosis, meditation, forest walks, sugar detox, digital detox, and juice cleanses. Anything that heals is fair game. Things got out of hand quickly, and soon I felt like I needed a detox from the detox.

You know, we humans aren't always logical. I'd almost bet and say that you, too, regularly appear as a contradiction on two legs. I feel you. We are an irritated and equally irritating species that doesn't feel comfortable with the simplicity life can offer. We don't accept simple explanations any more than we accept the fact that life, whether we like it or not, comes with challenges and a lot of responsibility. When we ask people how they found spirituality, we get as many answers as the people we've asked. But why is that?

The search for the meaning of life is natural, just like the question of who we are. Because, let's admit it, the person we are alone in our four walls often differs from the version we present to other people. Maybe that's also why we often feel uncomfortable when someone tries to put us in a box. Statements like "Oh, you're such a typical Aquarius, so rebellious" or "When I saw you, I immediately knew you were a vegan" are irritating not only because they contain unnecessary judgments but also because they are delivered with a self-assuredness that suggests we must be nothing else but what we are perceived to be.

Now, we could say, "It's not that bad." It doesn't happen that often." However, given how many opinions we are exposed to every day and how often we unconsciously compare ourselves, it becomes a bizarre dynamic. A dynamic in which we strive for individualism and want to avoid labels, and in the process, we choose every little nuance of ourselves as identity markers.

After realizing that life is not just a series of hobbies but requires self-exploration, I stumbled into "my healing phase." What did I need healing from? Life and my carelessness. And before I could start feeling better, despite all the rebellion I wanted to live with, I jumped from one box to another. I had an astrology phase, a breath work phase, a tantric phase, an ecstatic dance phase, a silent retreat phase, and I walked the Camino de Santiago twice. And in each phase, I thought, "Now I've got it." "I've cracked the code."

Life is more than a series of phases. Looking back today, I have to admit that each “phase” was nothing more than a box that shielded me just as much as all the other labels I had for myself: vegan, hippie, music lover, writer, liberal, and so on.

No matter what feelings you may have about these terms, I have to say they mainly limited me. Because what kind of vegan am I if a piece of cheese makes me crave it (even if I don't eat it), and what kind of writer am I if I can't put a word on paper for six weeks straight? Would I think this way if I weren't constantly bombarded with advice from every corner of the internet on how to be the right way? I get it. We want to understand the world. Spirituality is a great way to engage with ourselves, the world, and the things we can't see. But when it becomes the center of our identity, it carries the same danger as all other labels, especially when different labels are crumpled together into stereotypes.

There seem to be no non-vegan hippies with a penchant for political debates because the word “hippie” seems to be reserved only for peace and love. Spirituality, openness, and curiosity get lost on the internet. A place where opinions and moods are turned into facts just as often as there are people, every day.

We often forget that healing is a journey of self-discovery and personal growth, and in the process, we accidentally put ourselves into another supposedly identity-defining box. We humans are not just one aspect of our personality, but a complex web of facets. When we focus exclusively on our healing side and make it the sole foundation of our identity, we risk cutting off other important, beautiful, and healing parts of ourselves.

And especially in today's digital world, on platforms like Instagram, the glorification of self-healing becomes more prevalent. But behind the filters and carefully curated images lies the complexity of real life, with all its beautiful and painful experiences.

The reality is that we are more than our wounds. Labels are too small to preserve the richness of life within them. Each of us carries our own scars and stories, but these do not necessarily define our entire existence. We are more complex and richer in experiences and facets than any single label could ever capture. Our identity should not be based solely on healing but on the abundance of our being.

Life is a journey that doesn't need labels. Admittedly, it's often said that we can be anything. But when we try to do exactly that, it's always wrong, according to ever-changing standards. In other words, if we attach our identity to these labels, we must accept that they change every day. Because today's words are not the same as tomorrow's. What was good and right yesterday can be wrong tomorrow. The criteria for this remain a well-guarded secret.

The good news is that we don't need the internet to explore life. Today, we can decide to simply be as we are and as we want to be, and in doing so, we can draw from a variety of adjectives. We can be beautiful, brave, quiet, or loud. We can be tolerant, critical, or neither of both. But you know what the best part is?

Most of the time, we can be many things at once. If there's one thing I've learned on my journey so far, it's this: Two truths can coexist side by side without canceling each other out.

I am introverted and extroverted. Bored and excited. Focused and fidgety. But what I'm not is trapped in a cage I've drawn around myself.

And you?