NEWS LESSON

Do We Ever Stop Finding Ourselves?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. At what age do you think people know who they are?
2. How have you changed in the last five years?
3. What things make up your identity, such as your job, family, hobbies or beliefs?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**researchers**	☐	A	in a way that is not normal
2	**wellbeing**	☐	B	a reason for doing things that makes life feel important
3	**purpose**	☐	C	how happy and healthy you feel
4	**community**	☐	D	the people who live in the same area as you
5	**average**	☐	E	usual, or in the middle
6	**finding**	☐	F	people whose job is to study something and find new facts
7	**failing**	☐	G	something new that people learn from a study
8	**unusually**	☐	H	not doing well, or not getting what you wanted

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Many people think we work out who we are as teenagers. A long study from Finland suggests that we keep changing for much longer.

1 Many people think that the big question of "Who am I?" belongs to the teenage years. At sixteen, we try out different styles, groups and ideas. Then, the story goes, we grow up, settle down and stay the same for life. But is that really true? A long study from Finland suggests that it is not.

2 Researchers at the University of Jyväskylä used information from an unusually long project. It has followed the same people for more than 50 years. For this study, the team looked at how people described their identity at the ages of 27, 36, 42, 50 and 61. They also measured mental wellbeing at 36, 42, 50 and 61.

3 In this study, identity means your view of who you are and what matters to you in different areas of life. The researchers did not only ask what people believed. They asked how firmly people held their views, and whether those views came from their own thinking or were taken from other people or from society. A well-developed identity has clear views that a person has chosen after exploring.

4 On average, identity became stronger in this way between the ages of 27 and 61. Most of the change happened between 27 and 42. So people did not stop developing at the end of their twenties. In their thirties and early forties, the group was still working out who they were.

5 The researchers also found a link with mental wellbeing. They looked at psychological wellbeing, such as having a sense of purpose, and social wellbeing, such as feeling connected to your community. They also measured life satisfaction, anxiety and depression. People whose identity developed in a more positive way tended to have better psychological and social wellbeing and fewer feelings of anxiety.

6 But a link is not proof that one thing causes the other. The study did not test which comes first. A person with a clear identity may feel better, but feeling better may also help a person build a clear identity. It is a chicken and egg question. The reports we read also do not say how many people took part.

7 Still, the finding is reassuring. If you do not yet know your own mind at thirty or forty, you are not failing. Identity may stay a work in progress for a long time. One study cannot tell you what will happen to you.

Sources: Phys.org, Identity develops well into adulthood and is linked to better mental well-being; University of Jyväskylä, Identity develops well into adulthood and is linked to better mental well-being. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The project has followed the same people for more than 50 years. T F NG
2. Most identity change happened after the age of 50. T F NG
3. People whose identity developed more positively tended to have fewer feelings of anxiety. T F NG
4. The text gives the number of people who took part. T F NG
5. The text says what jobs the oldest people in the study had. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

firmly	ignored	measured	proof	settle	stages	styles

1. After university, many people _____ down in one city and stay there for years.
2. The team _____ how happy people felt at different ages.
3. A link between two things is not _____ that one causes the other.
4. Some people hold their views _____ and never change their minds.
5. Teenagers often try out different _____ , such as clothes and hairstyles.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. Researchers at the University of Jyväskylä _____ information from a long project. (USE)
2. The project _____ the same people for more than 50 years. (FOLLOW)
3. Most of the change _____ between 27 and 42. (HAPPEN)
4. The team _____ at how people described their identity. (LOOK)
5. The study _____ not test which comes first. (DO)

7 Language focus: prepositions

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Some verbs and adjectives always go with one small word. Learn the pair together: worry about, afraid of.

about at for from in of to

1. Many teenagers worry _____ what other people think of them.
2. Feeling connected _____ other people can help your wellbeing.
3. Some people are afraid _____ changing in their thirties.
4. Many people are looking _____ a sense of purpose in their lives.
5. Identity can be a work _____ progress for a long time.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Between which ages did most change happen in the study?
2. Do you think people stop changing when they become adults? Why or why not?
3. Do you know someone who changed a lot in their thirties or forties? What changed?

9 Role-play: a big change at forty

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the worried friend

Your friend wants to leave a safe job and start something new at forty. You're worried about money and risk. Ask at least two questions before you give your opinion.

Student B · the friend with a plan

You want to change your life: a new job, a new city or a new hobby. Explain why it matters to you and how you'll manage the risks. Try to persuade your friend.

Useful phrases

I've been thinking about doing something different.
I'm not sure it's the right time.
What would you do about money?
I know it's a risk, but I'd regret not trying.
You're still working out what you want, aren't you?
Let's agree to try it for six months.

Afterwards, tell the class: did the worried friend change their mind, and what helped?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 F · 2 C · 3 B · 4 D · 5 E · 6 G · 7 H · 8 A

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 T · 4 F · 5 NG

5 Vocabulary

1 settle · 2 measured · 3 proof · 4 firmly · 5 styles

6 Verb forms

1 used · 2 has followed · 3 happened · 4 looked · 5 did

7 Language focus

1 about · 2 to · 3 of · 4 for · 5 in

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