

Who am I? I don't even know. I learn more about myself each and every day. It has only been in the last couple of years that I have begun trying to get to know myself better. I started looking at the people around me and paying attention to how I was like or unlike them. So to tell you who I am, let me tell you about three people who are closest to me: my father, my mother, and my husband.

I'll start with my father because I feel that I am most like him. Besides, I'm "Daddy's little girl." My father was born and raised on a farm in Sturgis, KY as #13 of 16 children. Being a farm boy, my father grew up to be a practical, hard-working, and soft-spoken man.

He and I are both very practical people, especially when it comes to buying things for ourselves. I find it very hard to justify spending money on myself, but I can buy things for others. I love giving gifts!

My father and I are both hard workers. Growing up on a farm you had to be! Dad came to Fenton, Missouri to work for Chrysler while he was still a young man. He retired a year ago in March at the young age of 52. He always pushed me to succeed and be the best at what I do. I made him proud when I graduated as Salutatorian of my high school class and completed my bachelor's degree in Chemistry in only 3 ½ years from William Jewell College in Liberty, MO. After being a chemist for 4 years, I became interested in a career in computer programming while creating a web page for my former employer. I signed up for night classes at a technical learning center and soon landed my job here at Maritz as a web programmer.

Being behind-the-scenes people like we are, it's not surprising that my father and I are soft-spoken individuals. We are not loud by any means! We can talk to just about anyone; however, you would rarely see either one of us enjoying being in the spotlight. I'm here in Toastmasters to feel more comfortable in a leading role in an attempt to break this mold.

My father and mother have been married for 30 years. Mom came from a very different family. She was born here in Fenton, MO as the youngest of 4 children and the only girl. She felt like an only child since her brothers were 7-18 years older than she. Mom always took care of everyone else above herself and took pleasure in the simple things. I take after her in both of these ways.

We are both worrywarts who seem to thrive on stress. Neither one of us can fall asleep quickly at night. We have trouble slowing down our minds, much less shutting them down for the night! We're too busy thinking about everything we didn't get done or what still needs to be done. We are organizers with our "To Do" lists.

To relax, we still work. But this work is in the flower garden – a job that is never done! We may not have any more space, but every year we come home with more bulbs, plants, and shrubs. We call each other every time a new bloom appears in the Spring or another store is having a plant sale.

Plants aren't our only downfall. We also love animals. While I was growing up, I remember having goldfish, parakeets, a hamster, a cat, and a dog. The cat and dog were from people giving them away in front of Wal-Mart where mom worked. She could hardly resist not bringing home one of those adorable puppies and kittens.

Only a year after I was married, my husband and I adopted our own cat and dog. David and I met our freshman year in high school in algebra class. We became immediate competitors and friends. We became even better friends when I started dating his best friend, Joe. But that's another story! Dave and I started dating in our junior year and were together for 4 ½ years before getting married on June 1, 1996.

We are so much alike, yet so different at the same time. We love the great outdoors and animals, meaning we take our dog on numerous hiking trips. We both love a challenge, which includes several home remodeling projects that are still in the works.

It is our differences, however, that make it all worthwhile. David is so self-confident. He is a great source of strength and support for me. He has helped me to overcome my all too-practical self, like my father, and to subdue my worrying nature, like my mother. David has taught me to dream, to relax, and to enjoy life more. He plans vacations that are more like retreats. He knows when I'm at my breaking point and helps me to slow down. He has helped me in my quest to find myself. Sometimes, I think he knows me better than I know myself. Most of the time I'm right.

So if I had to answer the question "Who am I?", I'd have to say that I don't know yet. For now all I do know is that I'm a combination of some great people, and I'm still evolving.