



**“How do I deal with  
being labeled?”**

# You are not your labels.

I understand the feelings you wrote down are real. And they hurt, don't they? You might even feel like you can't talk to anyone about these feelings because you're embarrassed or ashamed. That's **OK**, trust me, I've been there! People used to call me a rebel, a jerk, a loud-mouth, a lost cause, etc.

But watch this: you are **NOT** who others say you are. You are not your past or some other circumstance in your life.

Just because you did something or were something or were around something doesn't mean you **ARE** that something. You are bigger and better than your labels. But that means you have to get rid of them.

Leave them behind and get ready to move forward. It's time to deal with them once and for all...

I've been called...

and this makes me feel...

# You are different.

Congratulations!

You've just taken a small step towards defining who you are.

And check this out: Your identity is different from everyone else's. You are **DIFFERENT** from your siblings, your best friends, your parents, and that guy over there on your left. (See him? See what I mean?)

## My favorite...

color:	board game:
smell:	video game:
ice cream flavor:	sport to watch/play:
pizza toppings:	candy:
actor/actress:	outfit:
movie:	adhesive:
band/artist:	random word:
song:	city:
book:	place to be:
website:	thing to do:
comedian:	thing I own:

But let's face it: these are just small things – simple preferences and little quirks. Some of these things will change with time and that's **OK!**

Other parts of your identity – some of the stuff that gets down near the core of who you are – may stay with you your entire life. These are the things we need to really focus on.

## ***“But Josh, I don't want to be different.”***

Now, “different” isn't always good, right? No one wants to be an oddball. But sometimes we feel the need to “FIT IN” by imitating or impersonating other people.

Like this: You think so-and-so's cool and they think you're cool if you act like them so you do act like them and feel a sense of belonging and identity...but get this – that's not your real identity. That's like turning into a robot that says the right things and does the right things just so you can be accepted. **LAME!**

There's nothing wrong with having role models. But just because your friends like a certain band, or clothing brand, or movie doesn't mean you have to! If you have to be like your friends just to be accepted by them, they're probably not as cool as you think they are.

# You are what you love.

Now, we're getting somewhere! You're starting to recognize the specific things that define your identity.

Knowing what you love – the things that really make you happy – is absolutely key to forming a positive sense of who you are.

Knowing your dislikes and what makes you unhappy is important, too. And, sometimes, to know what you **DO** like, you have to define what you **DON'T** like.

Once you figure it out, though, try to put it in positive terms so you don't become someone who's always blabbing on about what you don't like. Be known for what you **DO** like!

Trust me, you don't want to be known for all the stuff you hate. That's annoying!

I love...

It makes me happy when...

I get excited about...

I want to jump up and down and clap my hands when...

I dislike...

It annoys me when...

I get disappointed when...

I want to pull my hair out and scream when...