

Questions to Ask Yourself When Considering a Kintype

Right off the bat: I will never deny anyone's internal experiences. At the same time, I do believe that, when it comes to something as integral as identity, it's important to be able to think critically, seriously question all options, and to make sure one is using the correct labels and terminology for one's experiences. So here's some questions to ask yourself if you are questioning a kintype.

((Note, I am a therian, which influences my perspective and approach))

1. What traits draw me to this creature/being?

What is it about the animal, creature, or entity that attracts your attention? What makes you think this is a kintype? You can even write down a list. If concepts like "free", "powerful", "independent", "fierce" etc. are a central part of your mental concept of the target (especially for therians and animal otherkin) then I seriously recommend reflecting on that and reconsidering. These are often anthropomorphized and metaphorical traits that humans assign to animals, that don't have much to do with the real life ecology or behavior of those creatures.

For example, let's take wolves. "Freedom/Independence" is a meaningless concept from a wolf's perspective. Wolves didn't decide to diverge from dogs from some sort of internal concept of independence. That's an Aesop fable. Likewise, the idea of predators as fierce and bold and aggressive is from the human perspective of losing livestock to them. Real-life wolves are actually *incredibly* anxious and neophobic. Higher-content wolfdogs make terrible guard dogs because they are more likely to shy away from threats.

In other words- are the traits your drawn to metaphorical? Are you relating to the creature as it truly is, or as media portrays it?

2. Am I using multiple sources of information?

Dreams can be very important to many therians and otherkin. But dreams can be heavily influenced by recent events, and thoughts (for example, dreaming of oneself as a specific creature is not that unlikely if you've spent days researching it, watching documentaries, thinking about it, etc.).

The same goes for meditation- it can be very spiritually important to many therians/otherkin, but (especially without proper training and long term practice) can be easily influenced by what the person imagines or wants to see.

I strongly recommend research. I find comparing shifts to available literature or scientific data is the most reliable method. And research can help dispel some of the metaphorical clutter discussed in point 1. But it doesn't always paint a complete picture, and research on some beings is very limited in availability. It's also much more of an option for therians (who can use zoological data) than some otherkin, who can have many different myths of the same creature to compare.

Overall, *any* given source of information has it's flaws, and should not be relied upon on it's own. If you have recurrent dreams and consistent meditations- great. Follow up on that. Look into literature

and (if available) scientific research. **Draw in as much available data as possible. A kintype should be able to stand up to questioning.**

3. Am I experience-taking?

This is a really big one, and something I think might be very very commonly misinterpreted as being a kintype, especially for fictionkin. Experience taking is a stronger, more identity-based form of perspective taking. Definition:

experience-taking—the imaginative process of spontaneously assuming the identity of a character in a narrative and simulating that character’s thoughts, emotions, behaviors, goals, and traits as if they were one’s own

This can result in “changes in self-judgments, attitudes, and behavior that align with the character's”. In the words of another article on the subject, “people are prone to subconsciously adopt their behavior, thoughts, beliefs and internal responses to that of fictional characters as if they were their own”. From the same article:

Researchers said that experience-taking is different from perspective-taking, a process where individuals try to comprehend what another person is experiencing in a particular situation, without losing sight of their own identity.

“Experience-taking is much more immersive – you’ve replaced yourself with the other,” Libby said in a statement.

The process is spontaneous and happens naturally under the right circumstances.

“Experience-taking can be very powerful because people don’t even realize it is happening to them. It is an unconscious process,” Libby said, adding that the phenomenon could have powerful, if not lasting, effects.

In other words, this is an experience that can very much seem like a kintype, especially a fictotype. A person adopts the beliefs and thoughts of a character to a degree where they blur the line of their own identity. This happens spontaneously and without deliberation or conscious thought.

So how to distinguish this from a kintype? Experience-taking still depends on absorbing the perspective in some way- adopting it from a source. And it may not last. A kintype, by common definitions, is more permanent and would be present before the relevant experience. So if you read a new book or movie, and find yourself strongly identifying as a character, species, or being from the narrative- you are probably experience-taking. This is natural, it isn’t a choice or “just having a favorite character”- but it also isn’t the same as being kin. In other words, ask yourself: **Did I (and would I) have these experiences before/without encountering this particular being/creature?**

Sources:

Wolves and Wolfdogs Are Neophobic/Anxious/Timid: (x) (x) (x)

Experience-Taking: (x) (x)