

The Life Model: MATURITY INDICATORS

THE INFANT STAGE: BIRTH THROUGH AGE 3

Newborns and toddlers are included here, up to the age where they can effectively say what their needs are.

PRIMARY TASK to be completed during this stage: **Learning to receive.**

PRIMARY RESULTING PROBLEM in adult life when this task is not completed: **Weak or stormy relationships.**

If our primary dependency needs are not met, we will spend the rest of our lives trying to get others to take care of us.

PERSONAL TASKS	COMMUNITY AND FAMILY TASKS	WHEN THE TASKS FAIL
1. Lives in joy: Expands capacity for joy, learns that joy is one's normal state, and builds joy strength.	Parents delight in the infant's wonderful and unique existence.	Weak identity; fear and coldness dominate bonds with others.
2. Develops trust.	Parents build strong, loving bonds with the infant — bonds of unconditional love.	Has difficulty bonding, which often leads to manipulative, self-centered, isolated, or discontented personality.
3. Learns how to receive.	Gives care that matches the infants needs without the infant asking.	Is withdrawn, disengaged, self-stimulating, and unresponsive.
4. Begins to organize self into a person through relationships.	Discovers true characteristics of the infant's unique identity through attention to the child's behavior and character.	Has an inability to regulate emotions.
5. Learns how to return to joy from every unpleasant emotion.	Provides enough safety and companionship during difficulties, so the infant can return to joy from any other emotion.	Has uncontrollable emotional outbursts, excessive worry and depression. Avoids or gets stuck in certain emotions.

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Characteristics of “Adult infants”

Adult infants who have not received in these important areas as babies, will always be needy as adults.

- They will not be able to take care of themselves emotionally nor will they be able to appropriately receive important things from others.
- Adult infants will not ask for what they need because they believe if others really cared for them, they would figure out what they needed.
- Adult infants cannot handle criticism even if it is valid and constructive, because they see any negative feedback as a personal attack
- Adult infants are often possessive of relationships, territory, power and possessions.
- Adult infants use fear bonding to ensure others will stay bonded to them.
- Although “high functioning” adult infants can appear responsible in many areas, like handling personal finances and being punctual and reliable, emotionally they are severely crippled making it difficult for them to have successful and enduring relationships.

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THE CHILD STAGE: AGE 4 THROUGH 12

Transition from infant stage to child stage is marked by the child being able to say what is needed. Age 12 is the earliest age this stage can be completed.

PRIMARY TASK to be completed during this stage: **Taking care of self.**

PRIMARY RESULTING PROBLEM in an adult life when this task is not completed: **Not taking responsibility for self.**

“Child adults” can take care of themselves but they can only take care of themselves often at the expense of others.

PERSONAL TASKS	COMMUNITY AND FAMILY TASKS	WHEN THE TASKS FAIL
1. Asks for what is needed; can say what one thinks and feels	Teaches and allows child to appropriately articulate needs.	Experiences continual frustration/disappointment because needs are not met. Often passive aggressive.
2. Learns what brings personal satisfaction.	Helps child to evaluate consequences of own behaviors and to identify what satisfies self.	Is obsessed with or addicted to food, drugs, sex, money, and power in a desperate chase to find satisfaction.
3. Develops enough persistence to do hard things.	Challenges and encourages child to do difficult tasks child does not feel like doing.	Experiences failure, remains stuck and undependable, is consumed with comfort and fantasy life.
4. Develops personal resources and talents.	Provides opportunities to develop child's unique talents and interests.	Fills life with unproductive activities despite God given abilities.
5. Knows self and takes responsibility to make self understandable to others.	Guides in discovering the unique characteristics of the child's heart.	Fails to develop true identity; conforms to outside influences that misshape identity.
6. Understands how he or she fits into history as well as the “big picture” of what life is about.	Educates the child about the family history as well as the history of the family of God.	Feels disconnected from history and is unable to protect self from family lies or dysfunctions that are handed down.

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- “Child adults” who have adult bodies but are emotionally at the child level of maturity, will always appear ego-centric.
- Taking care of self includes the ability to push through on difficult tasks. This requires developing patience and persistence and takes some guidance. Unfortunately for all, there is a current “entitlement” trend in America. It erroneously suggests that if you are worthwhile, you will not have to do hard things. *This misconception goes against all conventional wisdom and severely limits the development of maturity.*

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THE ADULT STAGE: AGE 13 TO BIRTH OF 1ST CHILD - Age 13 is about the earliest age at which adult-level tasks may be accomplished

PRIMARY TASK to be completed during this stage: **Taking care of two people simultaneously.**

PRIMARY RESULTING PROBLEM when this task is not completed: **Lacks the capacity to be in mutually satisfying relationships.**

You will know when a person has graduated from the child level of maturity to the adult level because he will shift from being a self-centered child to a both-centered adult. While a child needs to learn me-centered fairness (how do I make it fair for me), an adult learns we-centered fairness (how do I make it fair for us). Mutuality is the trademark of an adult because he can take care of two people at the same time.

PERSONAL TASKS	COMMUNITY AND FAMILY TASKS	WHEN THE TASKS FAIL
1. Cares for self and others simultaneously in mutually satisfying relationships.	Provides the chance to participate in group life.	Is self-centered, leaves others dissatisfied and frustrated.
2. Remains stable in difficult situations and knows how to return self and others to joy.	Affirms that the young adult will make it through difficult times.	Conforms to peer pressure and participates in negative and destructive group activities.
3. Bonds with peers; develops group identity.	Provides positive environment/activities where peers can bond	A loner with tendencies to isolate; excessive self importance.
4. Takes responsibility for how personal actions affect others including protecting others from self.	Teaches young adults that their behaviors impact others and impact history.	Is controlling, harmful, blaming, and unprotective to others.
5. Contributes to the community; articulates “who we are” as part of belonging to the community.	Provides opportunities to be involved in important community tasks.	Does not become a life-giving contributor to the community; is self-absorbed and uses others — drains society.
6. Expresses the characteristics of his or her heart in a deepening personal style.	Holds the person accountable while still accepting and affirming the aspects of his or her true self.	Is driven to ‘play roles”, prove self to the world, get results, and seek approval.

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- When people with adult bodies are functioning below the adult level of maturity, you will know because in the end your interactions with them will never feel mutual. You will go away feeling like in order to maintain a relationship with them you will always need to give more, listen more or tolerate more than they would ever be willing to do for you.
- Adults know how to remain stable in difficult situations and can return self and others to joy. People who cannot do this will either avoid, escape or get stuck in certain emotions, crippling many of their endeavors and relationships. EX. If I avoid all anger, it eventually explodes into rage. If I get stuck in shame and failure, I may become depressed or even suicidal. And if I escape pain and rejection by doing drugs or having a sordid affair, I've only increased my misery and suffering.

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THE PARENT STAGE: BIRTH OF 1ST CHILD UNTIL YOUNGEST CHILD HAS BECOME AN ADULT

PRIMARY TASK to be completed during this stage: **Sacrificially taking care of children.**

PRIMARY RESULTING PROBLEM when this task is not completed: **Distant or conflicted family relationships.**

You know you are at the parent stage when you can sacrificially care for your children without resenting the sacrifice or expecting to receive anything for your efforts. You may feel exhausted or overwhelmed at times, but you still will be able to appreciate, not begrudge, your sacrifice.

PERSONAL TASKS	COMMUNITY AND FAMILY TASKS	WHEN THE TASKS FAIL
1. Protects, serves, and enjoys one's family.	The community gives the opportunity for both parents to sacrificially contribute to their family.	Family members are (1) at risk, (2) deprived, and (3) feel worthless or unimportant.
2. Is devoted to taking care of children without expecting to be taken care of by the children in return.	The community promotes devoted parenting.	Children have to care for parents which is impossible and leads to child abuse/neglect and/or "parentified" children which blocks instead of facilitating their maturity.
3. Allows and provides spiritual parents and siblings for their children.	The community encourages relationships between children and extended spiritual family members.	Children are vulnerable to peer pressure, to cults, to any misfortune, and are less likely to succeed in life's goals. Parents get overwhelmed without extended family support.
4. Learns how to bring children through difficult times and return to joy from other emotions.	The community supports parents by giving them encouragement, guidance, breaks, and opportunities to recharge.	Hopeless, depressed, disintegrating family units develop.

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- \sum ÷ Entitlement philosophy pervades modern parenting. "I'm entitled to do all the things I was doing as an adult, and I should not have to make any sacrifices of time, money or social activities." Do not misunderstand. Parenting does involve sacrifice, but it is not about giving up who you are, but about becoming who you are!
- It is vitally important for parents to learn how to **protect, serve** and **enjoy** their families for all members to be fulfilled. Balancing all three requires community support and elder guidance.
 - Mature parents are aware that they cannot provide everything their children will need and allow opportunities for others to come alongside the child.
 - In the end, mature parenting is about representing God to one's family. When you accomplish that, you are ready to graduate to the final level of maturity.

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THE ELDER STAGE: BEGINNING WHEN YOUNGEST CHILD HAS BECOME AN ADULT.

PRIMARY TASK to be completed during this stage: **Sacrificially taking care of the community.**

PRIMARY RESULTING PROBLEM when this task is not completed: **The overall maturity of the community declines.**

Most in our culture never make it to this level of maturity. This is unfortunate because the success of any country, community, school or church body will have a direct correlation to the presence of true elders who are guiding and advising.

PERSONAL TASKS	COMMUNITY AND FAMILY TASKS	WHEN THE TASKS FAIL
1. Establishes an accurate community identity and acts like self in the midst of difficulty.	The community recognizes elders in the community.	There is meaninglessness, disorder, loss of direction, and disintegration of all social structures from government to family.
2. Prizes each community member and enjoys the true self in each individual looking past their flaws and facades to see the persons they have been designed to be.	The community provides opportunities for elders to be involved with those in all of the other maturity stages.	Life-giving interactions diminish along with life giving interdependence stunting the community's growth. Fragile, at-risk people fail to heal or survive.
3. Parents and matures the community.	The community creates a structure to help the elders do their job which allows people at every stage of maturity to interact properly with those in other stages and to listen to the wisdom of maturity.	When elders do not lead, unqualified people do, resulting in immature interactions at every level of the community.
4. Gives life to those without a family through spiritual adoption.	Places a high value on being a spiritual family to those with no family.	When the "familyless" are not individually taken care of, poverty, violence, crisis, crime, and mental disorders increase.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • True elders establish an accurate community identity by finding out what their community has been designed by God to be, rather than imposing what they would like it to be. • True elders can act like themselves in the midst of difficulty. • True elders can handle criticism and rejection, speak the truth in love even when it is not easy or popular, serve without being appreciated, encourage needed growth and change, delight in younger people's skill and power, and place what is best for the community over personal fairness or preference 		

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