Emotional Maturity

Purpose

Understand the:

- Signs of emotional maturity
- Stages of ego development and their associated needs
- Process of maturation
- Emotional spiral of deterioration
- Steps to create, develop and preserve willingness

EMOTIONAL MATURITY

Everything we do, responsibly or irresponsibly, does have impact. Maturity is the degree we responsibly contribute to our environment. As we expand our awareness of what needs to be done and do it to the best of our abilities and resources (response – ability), we empower ourselves to provide a sense of security and happiness. When we and the society of which we are a part are not responsible we create or contribute to insecurity and unhappiness.

The environment and situation we find ourselves in is a reflection of our level of responsibility and maturity. The current economic crisis is a message and a metaphor screaming that we have not acted responsibly. We need to grow up; be more responsible. We need to mature.

Emotional Maturity is having a healthy ego identity (sense of autonomy) balanced by also experiencing ourselves as:

- Part of the greater whole
- Integrating independence and interdependence
- Affecting *and* being affected by everyone and everything
- Both enough *and* continuously developing

The Greater Our Emotional Maturity the more we

- Exhibit ownership and choice in our lives
- Relate to others in an authentic and meaningful way
- Realize we are part of any problem and its solution; and every opportunity and its optimization
- Engage without blame, shame or guilt
- Increase our ability to:
    - Meet and deal with discomfort, fear and the unknown
    - Learn and be compassionate
    - Develop our inherent talents and experience joy

Competition among individuals with a mature adult ego

- Stimulates creativity
- Produces a challenging learning environment
- Tends to manifest as an innovative, dynamic expansion of possibilities

The following sections of this chapter explore the stages of developing emotional maturity, motivational factors on the job, and the spiral of deterioration when we engage from fear versus presence. It is followed by how to create, develop and preserve willingness.

The chapter concludes with a self-assessment form to help you determine your current level of willingness to be emotionally mature. Reflection questions are included if you wish to expand your willingness, for it is our willingness to help ourselves and others that sets the boundaries of our reality.

STAGES OF EGO DEVELOPMENT

Healthy ego development involves sequentially learning and integrating the lessons of each stage of development. Erik Erikson (1902 – 1994), a developmental psychologist known for his theory on social development of human beings and for the phrase *identity crisis*, outlined eight stages of development from infancy to late adulthood. For simplicity, we have combined Erikson's eight stages into four stages, adding stages 0 (Fear of non-existence) and 5 (Infinite Potential) to include the experience of Essence as a natural and essential part of human development.

Erikson's stages1 through 4 as noted in the following chart, outline the development of maturity as moving from being totally dependent (Stage 1) to the gradual breaking of that dependency (Stage 2) to an autonomous independence (Stage 3) to inclusive inter-dependence (Stage 4). Stages 1 through 4 support the growth of our ability to live from an inclusive interdependent experience of Infinite Potential (Stage 5) which exists in dynamic balance with the existential fear of non-existence (Stage 0).

As Erikson taught, only when we understand and accept both extremes of a life stage as essential and useful can the wisdom within that stage emerge and support our further development. For example, understanding and accepting the tension of extremes of the Mature Adult, 'I am enough *and* I am not enough,' furthers our willingness and ability to learn, while also opening us to further experiencing our Potential, which requires that we embrace the extremes of 'I am *and* I am not' for actionable wisdom to emerge.

Stage	Life Frame	Mature Experience	Stages of Dependency/Autonomy
5	Infinite Potential	I am	
4	Mature Adult (middle/late adult)	I am enough	Inclusive interdependence
3	Adolescent/Young Adult	I am not being, doing, having, learning, growing enough	Autonomous interdependence
2	Child/Young Adolescent	I am not good enough	Gradual breaking of dependence
1	Infant/Young Child	I am not getting enough	Total dependence
0	Existential fear of non-existence	I am not	

As we continue to grow and have new experiences we recycle through the stages of development. As we mature, i.e., increase our willingness and ability to be present and confront and deal with what needs resolution, we cycle through these stages quicker and quicker, and with less upset in our learning / growth / change process. In fact, the resiliency and speed of recovery from upset / difficulty directly correlates with the person's level of emotional maturity (acute and possibly chronic.) Understanding these cycles make is easier to take ever more conscious, positive actions to support and in turn increase our development.

Presence, Emotional Maturity and Ego Development are Mature Experiences.
They are inclusively interdependent.

With presence, we increase emotional maturity, strengthening our ability to learn the lessons of each stage of development. As we develop and integrate the lessons of each stage, our emotional maturity grows, increasing our ability to stay present. This rhythm of presence, emotional maturity, and development through sequential ego stages continually repeats itself like a woven spiral of development.

The more consistently we stay present and learn, the stronger our spiral of development,
the greater our emotional maturity, and vice versa.

Undeveloped Ego Stages

When the lessons of any stage are ignored and thus not developed and integrated we become emotionally stuck in that stage. Then when a situation arises requiring the emotional skills of that stage, rather than responding with mature behavior, we react with dysfunctional, self-serving behavior that reflects the developmental issues of that stage.

Example

Imagine parents (reflecting their own immature ego needs) push their child to act like an adult before the child is ready. Their child, who is now an adult both doesn't know how to play and doesn't feel like an adult. He may handle that discomfort by either pretending to be 'mature' or by continually acting out in childish behaviors. His presenting ego issues may be related to 'Am I getting enough? and/or 'Am I good enough?'

Or consider how closely we relate success with competitive achievement and material possessions. Look at the heavy emphasis we culturally place on accumulation of wealth, and how collaboration, a hallmark of the mature ego, is more often given lip service than a true place at the table. These behaviors suggest we are culturally 'stuck' in the Adolescent stages.

HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

Abraham Maslow (1908-1970), considered the father of humanistic psychology, describes our Hierarchy of Needs in both growing up and life in general. These needs (survival, security, belonging, esteem, and self-actualization) recycle throughout life.

Our perception and emphasis on our needs changes with maturity and context. The more mature we are, the more easily and elegantly we handle our needs in the variety of life's give-and-take situations. An overemphasis to the exclusion or minimization of any of our other needs creates an imbalance resulting in lost integrity. For example, if we are so focused on self-actualization that we disregard the need for food and shelter for ourselves and family, a loss of integrity occurs.

Erikson's Stages of Ego Development	Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
Infinite Potential *I am.* **Mature Adult** *I am enough.* **Young Adult/Adolescent** *Am I learning, doing, growing, being enough?* **Young Adolescent/Child** *Am I good enough?* **Young Child/ Infant** *Am I getting enough?* **Fear of Non-existence** *I am not /I don't exist*	**Self Actualization** **Esteem** **Belonging** **Security** **Survival**

Needs Satisfaction

Our perception of needs is primarily based on the messages of our emotions. Part of our learning process is to gain experience in what does and doesn't work in getting our needs satisfied.

In the Infant to Young Adult stages, needs met externally increases the likelihood of internal needs satisfaction. Conversely, in the Mature Adult stages, needs satisfaction/self assurance is increasingly initiated internally, reinforcing the likelihood that our external needs will be satisfied.

This spiral of internal and external needs satisfaction repeats itself in life. As Mature Adults in a new situation we typically experience needs satisfaction relatively quickly, needing to satisfy only the 'part' of us that feels 'young' or new in that particular job or situation, while the greater whole of us is also confident that we are 'enough'.

In the following example, notice how the organization provides the initial external satisfaction of survival and security needs. Then, with maturity and growing confidence, more of the new executive's needs satisfaction is initiated from his own internal source, which is then met by positive external results.

Connection – That's Where It Starts

In his book, *Facets of Unity,* A. H. Almaas, a contemporary spiritual teacher who integrates ancient wisdom traditions with modern [depth psychology](#), says that we must have a 'basic trust' in Life in order to fully explore and develop our capacities. As a child, the primary connection that establishes 'basic trust' is most often with a parent. Our 'basic trust' then evolves to a deeper personal experience of our Essence as we mature.

The stronger our connection with who we are, our Essence, the greater our ability to stay present when new situations most intensely challenge our external security. Our basic trust of self and the world around us provides the foundation for learning and achievement. Individuals and organizations with a strong basic trust in themselves contribute to each other's ongoing experience of connection which in turn supports their mutual growth.

In the following story, *Security and I Have a Dream,* notice how James' *external* performance and *internal* sense of security support the organization in making challenging new choices that ultimately produced outstanding business results.

Story: Security and I Have a Dream

James, a seasoned retail executive, has decided to get a graduate degree in psychology at age 40. It satisfies a lifelong dream, and will increase his natural ability to assist high functioning executives in developing the full breadth of their skills. It requires him to have two weeks additional vacation for each of two years, and he will be gone for three weeks at a time once in each of the next two years.

James request challenges every retail norm. Though he has a well-established track record of top-level business performance, his Senior VP doesn't support the idea, and the CEO wants to 'think' about it – will let him know on Monday if he can keep his job if he enters this program. James is certain about two things: He's going to get his Masters in this program, and he wants to continue to deliver high quality results in his current job. James makes $200K a year, is a sole provider, has a natural orientation to being challenged by security issues, and he has a dream. James must stay crystal clear about his external goals and intensely present with his internal sense of security. On Monday he might have his dream, along with no job, no income, no collegial support.

The happy ending: James kept his job, earned his Masters magna cum laude, and delivered top performing sales and profits which earned him significant bonuses for exceeding challenging goals. Everybody stayed present; everybody won.

Two Factor Job Model of Motivation

Dr. Frederick Herzberg (1923 – 2000) was a psychologist and business management consultant noted for his work on job enrichment and motivation. His Two Factor Job Model indicates the motivational factors propelling people to accomplishment, and the maintenance factors needed to keep people on the job. He indicates that while the basic survival/security needs of salary, work conditions and job security must be met, personal growth and maximizing one's potential are higher order motivational factors.

In the following model, we have correlated Morler's Six Levels of Emotional Maturity with Erikson's Stages of Ego Development, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and Herzberg's Models of Motivation.

Highly effective leaders operate at the top two emotional levels, Leader and Doer. They are people with a strong sense of self-esteem, engaged in the ongoing process of discovering and actualizing both their own potential and that of their organization. They are motivated by opportunities for growth, responsibility, achievement, recognition and advancement. Their ability to develop healthy relationships and deliver top business results draws to them satisfying options on salary and job security. They actually *attract* their required maintenance factors.

Correlation of the Levels of Emotional Maturity, Stages of Ego Development, Hierarchy of Needs and Two Models of Motivation
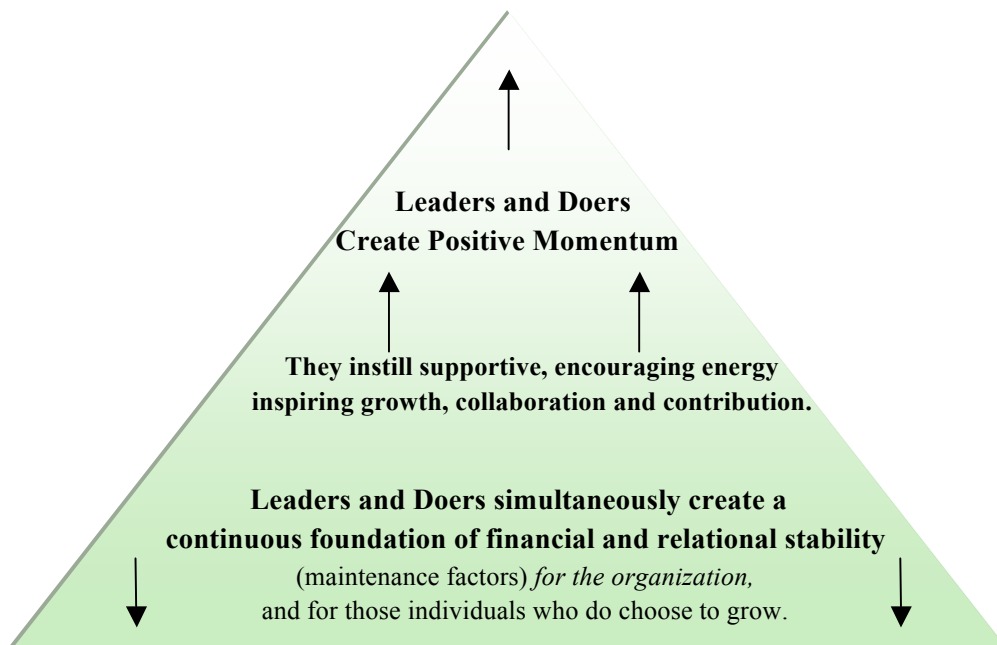
Levels of Emotional Maturity	Stages of Ego Development	Hierarchy of Needs	Herzberg's Two-Factor Job Model
	Infinite Potential *I am*		
Leader	**Mature Adult** *I am enough.*	**Self Actualization**	**Motivational Factors** Growth Potential Responsibility Achievement
Doer	**Young Adult/ Adolescent** *Am I learning, doing, growing, being enough?*	**Esteem**	Recognition Advancement
Coper	**Young Adolescent/ Child** *Am I good enough?*	**Belonging**	**Maintenance Factors** Interpersonal relations, Peers Supervisors Subordinates
Opposer			
Manipulator	**Young Child / Infant** *Am I getting enough?*	**Security**	Company Policy Job Security
Victim		**Survival**	Work Conditions Salary
	Fear of Non-existence *I am not/I don't exist*		

For the developing individual, maintenance factors provide the stability and assurance necessary for growth, yet ultimately that development is a personal choice, inspired by an inward connection with self (self-esteem) and outward inspiration that reconnects the person with their own potential.

When an individual resists growth and clings to maintenance factors, the result is stagnation and eventually deterioration into the lower levels of emotional maturity. It is the person who stays in a job they dislike rather than look for a new one they do like. Or the person who is often grouchy, hostile, manipulative, or passive aggressive; the one who blames, criticizes, or patronizes rather than offering curiosity and creative expertise to produce a more positive outcome. Have an abundance of stagnating individuals in your organization, and your business will deteriorate.

In an emotionally mature organization, Leaders and Doers comprise the largest portion of the work force integrated throughout all levels of responsibility. Their business results and their willingness and ability to inspire and support growth *provide the organization* with the financial and relational stability (maintenance factors) *it* needs in order to offer a steady foundation for people to mature and grow into ever more skilled, productive leaders. See the following diagram.

Emotionally Mature Leaders Create Financial and Relational Stability

(Maintenance Factors) for the Organization

**Leaders and Doers
Create Positive Momentum**

**They instill supportive, encouraging energy
inspiring growth, collaboration and contribution.**

**Leaders and Doers simultaneously create a
continuous foundation of financial and relational stability**
(maintenance factors) *for the organization,*
and for those individuals who do choose to grow.

A Concentric Model of
Stages of Ego Development, Hierarchy of Needs, and Motivational Factors

In the following diagram we have used the same stages of ego development, hierarchy of needs and motivational factors already discussed, simply aligning them concentrically.
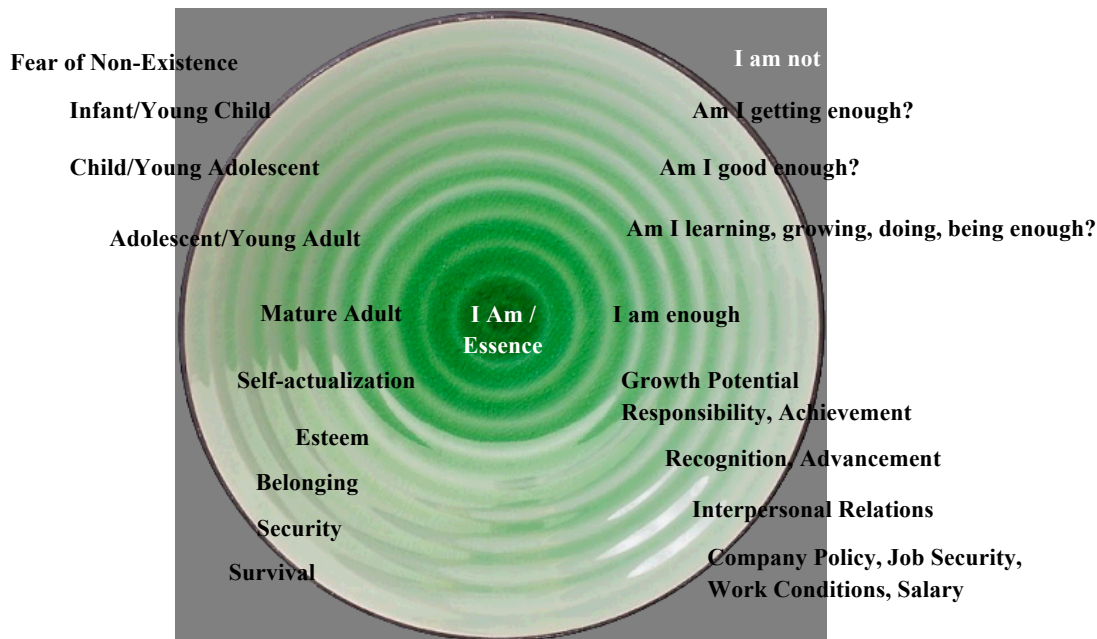
Blending linear and intuitive, we physically build structure and skills 'from the ground up', based on some inner sense or picture of what is possible matched to what is needed. Connection, awareness and confidence develop from the outside in as a child (we believe what we see and experience around us) and from the inside out as an adult (we look within to go beyond our current external experience.)

For example, as a child we focus on the external, the outer circumference of ourselves – existence, survival, getting enough. We are dependent on the world around us for our very survival. As we mature, our experience and assurance from the external world helps us gradually move into the inner circle of 'I Am'. We sense ourselves as 'enough' with continued potential that we allow to ever more often inspire our actions. We hold the tension of extremes of 'I am enough *and* not enough' and 'discovering our potential *and* having financial and relational stability', as we remain present with our potential to optimize what is working and move beyond what is currently known.

Notice that emotional maturity emanates from our center therefore having the greatest capacity to impact the world around us. Acting upon our inherent potential, our sense of "I Am", which includes more than we now know *and* all of the structure, skill and abilities we have developed throughout our lives, fosters stability and security. And the more we act from our potential, the smoother, more quickly energy becomes idea and action which creates structure and employs skill to produce the intended results.

In the mature adult structure emerges from the focused intention to create. It emerges from within, serves its purpose, and then disintegrates as it is internalized, creating ever more complex inner resources to call upon as needed, while making space for new structures to emerge as we evolve.

**The purpose of structure and skill is to support and refine our actions,
and to shape and evolve versus control outcome.**

In every setting, we are a steadying resource for each other in the growing process. To help each other grow and to grow our business, we must 1) be connected with ourselves and one another, and 2) continuously evolve the structure and skills that make it possible to deliver on our potential. When we are secure in our connections, skill, and in ourselves, we have the internal support and resources needed to evolve our relationships, external structures, and actions for sustainable, positive outcome.

In the next section let's look at the spiral of deterioration that occurs when we lose or do not develop a mature connection with our potential, and the skills to act upon it.

GENESIS OF LIMITATION

We already know that reactive defensive behaviors originate from limiting beliefs. The more limiting our beliefs, the less resourced we feel. The universal core delusion that drives our limiting beliefs and behaviors is that we that we are 'not enough', not significant or able to experience and respond to what is occurring in the moment.

When a momentary reactive behavior, meant as a survival action in the moment, becomes the automatic and unconscious reaction to anything occurring that is even remotely similar to the original threat, we have developed a survival strategy that limits us from our fuller potential. We do need to learn what can be detrimental to our mental, emotional and physical well-being and be able to apply it responsively to the uniqueness of the moment rather than reactively. The former is limiting, the latter, expansive.

SPIRAL OF DETERIORATION

Continuing our reactive behavior, our discernment diminishes, increasingly depleting us mentally, physically and emotionally, impairing our ability to communicate authentically and be happy. As stress increases, our compensations become more intense and irrational. We move from being able to see the big picture and experience abundance, ease, elegance, happiness and joy to an ever narrower outlook, spiraling downward through antagonism, anger, blame, hostility and passive-aggressiveness, eventually to despair and apathy.

As we deteriorate, our perspectives become narrower and more fixated. Our sense of being able to cope with life diminishes. We become increasingly self-centered and selfish. We see the world as hostile, to be defended against or avoided. Our desperation intensifies. We wind up feeling out of control and powerless and attempt to compensate by assuming control and power over others. We replace responsibility, honesty, trustworthiness and happiness with their opposites. Our behaviors become more dysfunctional and destructive resulting in the opposite of what we actually need.

On the handout entitled "Hierarchy of Emotions & Willingness Assessment", see the chart on the Natural Hierarchy of Emotions associated with the Six Levels of Emotional Leadership. After viewing the Six Levels of Emotional Maturity and the dynamics of communicating effectively at the various levels, we will discuss how aligning with the flow of emotions can help facilitate others, as well as ourselves, up the hierarchy to more empowered emotionally mature states.