



Intro to Maturity

Resource

Maturity definition: Reaching my God given potential in every age and stage of life

What it's not....

- Reflection of your Leadership role
- Your life stage
- Your spiritual gifting

Maturity has 5 stages

- Infant, Child, Adult, Parent, Elder
 - These stages are the same across world culture, throughout history and scripture, are proven in brain science.

Principles of Maturity

- A person's age or stage does not determine his or her maturity
 - Can skip stages, can't be a parent at 10, but you can be an infant at 65
- Maturity does not give us more value
- Maturity is valuable
 - Maturity increases the success and satisfaction of marriages, parenting, leadership, etc.
- People naturally desire to mature, but few know how to attain it or teach it to others
- Maturity is not automatic
- Unresolved A&B Trauma can block the process of maturity
 - A - Absence of what we needed
 - B - Bad things that we should not have experienced
- Maturity never ends
 - People need ongoing family and community relationships to stay unstuck in maturity
 - People need to know who they are, and they need to be frequently reminded of who they are by those who love them.

Signs of Blocked Maturity

- Inability to regulate emotions
- Inconsistent behavior (not the same person over time)
 - Don't know who's going to show up each day, ruled by emotions
- Motivated and led by fear
 - Stay in unhealthy relationships because of fear of being alone, fear of conflict
- Low satisfaction
 - High achiever, but never really satisfied with anyone or anything
- Poor sense of identity
 - Don't have a solid knowing of who you are, or belief system to guide you



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Reality is most of us have major gaps in our maturity and we are functioning in roles that we just do not have the fully developed maturity for. Ouch!

Every stage has work to do - things that I have to do to grow in maturity

And every stage has needs - things that your community need to do for you to help you grow in maturity

The 5 Stages of Maturity

Infant (0-3)

The primary function of an infant is to receive

- Don't know what they need, or how to ask for it. The community must guess.
- An infant's primary job in the beginning is to receive unconditional love, without having to give anything in return. We will never be able to effectively give until we have received. (Receiving always precedes giving.)
- Learns the value of just being me without having to earn anything
- Identity is built around joy or fear

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.
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The one thing Infant maturity leaders are really good at is expressing how upset they are.

"My job is to let you know I'm upset. Your job is to figure out why and fix it." *

Primary Task to be completed:

Learning to receive

Primary Resulting Problem (as adult, if not completed):

Weak or stormy relationships

When the infant learns to tell you what is wrong, and what they need, that marks the transition to the next stage of learning how to take care of themselves.



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Child (4-12)

Childhood is a time of expanding their skill sets and exploring the world around them. In this way they learn their place in the world (their identity), who their people are (belonging and identity), and how to act like themselves in a way that gets their needs met.

A child is expected to be able to take care of one person - themselves. What they lack, is the ability to take care of you and themselves at the same time.

Learning to care for oneself requires the mastering of several personal tasks.

- A child must learn to say what he thinks and feels and appropriately ask for what is needed.
- Discernment - learning what satisfies (brings them joy) - distinguishing what is good for them from what is bad for them.
- Discipline - learning how to do hard things - not just doing anything you feel like doing, but doing what is good for you. *
- learning how to wait for and work for what is good - learning to say no to what is bad for them.
- Self care requires knowing yourself and making yourself understandable to others.

“Child adults” who have adult bodies but are emotionally at the child's level of maturity, will always appear egocentric. Because the whole role of a child is to be self centered - which can be maddening in parenting a child, but very damaging when the same behavior is still in an adult.

The child-level leader is good at taking care of themselves and making sure they get what they want, but not so good at creating an environment where everyone's needs are getting met.

For other child-level leaders, with pseudo maturity, the roles are reversed. While there is still only one person being cared for, it is the other person, and self care drops off the radar. In other words, whoever has the need gets the care at the expense of self, family, and everyone else involved. *

Primary Task to be completed:

Taking care of self

Primary Resulting Problem (as adult, if not completed):

Not taking responsibility for self

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).



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Adult (*13-birth of first child*)

Adults know how to

- Keep relationships bigger than problems
- Act like themselves in a group
- Take care of the needs of two people at the same time.

Mature adults are looking for fully satisfying relationships for themselves and others. Not only am I well cared for (because I can take care of myself), but so are the people around me.

If you try to move here too soon, there is a pattern of “I can take care of me OR you, but if I take care of you, I neglect myself.” - that’s a martyr, and a sign of a lack of maturity.

Your brain makes a significant change at 13

- The survival of your group becomes more important to your brain than your own survival
- You are now a part of a people group/identity
- You live to be a part of something bigger than yourself
- Your brain also loses the ability to quiet, regulate and fully control your impulses - you need the help of your community to know what you should do.

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. You will rarely, if ever, see a mature adult turn to addictive behavior to cope with their stress.*

Primary Task to be completed:

Taking care of two people simultaneously

Primary Resulting Problem (as adult, if not completed):

Lack the capacity to be in a mutually satisfying relationship



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Parent (*first birth until youngest child becomes an adult/13*)

- You are no longer looking to take care of yourself and others equally, like an adult would
- Parents are looking to give something away that can't be given back.
- Parents are so full of the life skills and maturity that they have learned, up to this point, that they joyfully desire to offer it to the next generation. Even if it costs them the ability to take care of themselves well.
- Parents are more than eager for the next generation to go on beyond them.

* Biologically being a parent does not automatically put you at the parent stage of maturity. Singles can be parents too.

You know you are a parent when you can sacrificially care for 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.

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.

Primary Task to be completed:

Sacrificially taking care of children

Primary Resulting Problem (as adult, if not completed):

Distant/conflicted family relationships



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Elder (*beginning when youngest child becomes an adult 13*)

To qualify as an elder, one needs to have raised children to maturity and completed all the prior maturity tasks. 13! Because your 13 yo “should” be able to take care of themselves while taking care of others.

Elders

- Parents at large to their community and its identity
 - This is who we are
 - This is how we live
 - This is what’s important to us
 - This is the kind of infant, child, adult and parent we are.
- Parents to those who lack parental resources as individuals.

It’s all about Joy

- Elders are free agents of joy
- Free to enjoy everyone in the community
- Free to tell anyone how beautiful, smart, wonderful they are. Even if you’ve never met them.
- Joy wild card
 - This makes a joyful community.

If you are looking at just getting working done for your community, elders are of no use because they are too old and slow, but if you are looking to build a community of joy, we need to select and recognize elders and let them bring joy to your community because they have the time. Who we are and what we do is important, but if we don’t enjoy each other along the way, it’s not worth it.

Elders need recognition from their community

- They need to be selected and recognized as elders by the community.

There are a ton of people in this stage of life that are just waiting to be recognized so they can step into their role and bring joy to their community.

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.



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True Elders

- 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 value all community members and see them as God sees them - looking past their flaws and facades to see the persons they have been designed to be.
- True elders can act like themselves in the midst of difficulty.
- True elders are willing and able to parent and mature the community.
- 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.
- True elders realize that those without sufficient biological families need real, live, loving spiritual families to heal, to grow and to thrive - and are willing to give spiritual children the same unselfish care that they gave their own biological children.
- True elders are not necessarily leading the community but they are in the background shouldering the weight of the community.

Primary Task to be completed:

Sacrificially taking care of the community

Primary Resulting Problem (as adult, if not complete):

The overall maturity of the community declines

How to Grow in Maturity

- Identify holes in your maturity
 - i.e., the Needs and Tasks that were missed at each stage
- (Continually) Get God's perspective on life, ourselves, and others
 - Need to be tender toward weakness, in ourselves and others
- Multi-generational Community
 - Models maturity tasks for us
 - Teaches us who we are (group identity)
 - Helps us connect with Jesus for healing

Life in community is best when people have life-giving relationships with those in all the other stages of life.

¹

¹ Jim Wilder