



Infant Maturity

Resource

Age: 0-3 years old

Primary Goals

- Learning to Receive, Live in Joy and Peace

Infant Stage Needs

- Don't know what they need, or how to ask for it. The community must work to figure it out.
 - Important needs are met without asking (physical, emotional, mental)
 - Need others synchronize (attune) with him/her first
- An infant's fundamental need is to receive unconditional love and care, without having to give anything in return.
 - Learn the value of just being me without having to earn anything
 - We will never be able to effectively give until we have received.
 - Be seen through the "eyes of heaven"
- Need people to be happy to be with them and help them return to joy from all sorts of overwhelming emotions (emotional recovery).
 - Help regulating distress and emotions
 - Joy bonds with both parents that are strong, loving, caring, secure
 - Identity is built around joy or fear (directly affects ability to attach and feel accepted)
- Learn how to rest and quiet with others

Infant Stage Tasks

- Learns how to receive
- Learn to synchronize (attune) with others
- Organize self into a person through imitation
- Learn to regulate emotions (calm self)
- Learn to return to joy from every emotion
- Learn to be the same person over time
- Learn self-care skills
- Learn to rest

An Adult with holes in their maturity at the Infant stage...

- Will not ask for what they need because they believe if others really cared for them, they would figure out what they needed and meet it.
- Will not be able to take care of themselves (or others) emotionally.
- Will not be able to appropriately receive important things from others.
- Cannot handle criticism even if it is valid and constructive, because they see any negative feedback as a personal attack.
- Will often be possessive of relationships, power, and possessions ("Mine!")
- May be high-functioning in many areas of life, but due to emotional immaturity will find it difficult to have successful and enduring relationships.



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The Life Model: Infant Maturity Indicators¹

Personal Tasks	Community & Family Tasks	When the Tasks Fail
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.
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.
Learns how to receive.	Gives care that matches the infant's needs without the infant asking.	Is withdrawn, disengaged, self-stimulating, and unresponsive.
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.
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.

¹ Chart adapted from Shepherd's House, Inc. © 2000



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Infant Maturity Stage Assessment²

No	At Times	Usually	Always	
				I can identify my needs.
				I can ask for what I need.
				I can emotionally take care of myself.
				I am not possessive of relationships, power, or possessions.
				I can receive valid constructive criticism; and not take it as a personal attack.
				I trust others in close relationships.
				I know how to quiet myself and rest.
				I can receive from others without guilt or shame.
				I can return to joy from the "Big 6 emotions" and not get stuck there.
				Anger
				Fear
				Sadness
				Disgust
				Shame
				Hopeless/Despair
				I am able to restore connection in my relationship after an upsetting event.

² Modified from <https://lifemodelworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/Maturity-Skills-Assesment.pdf>. This can also be found in *RARE Leadership*, by Marcus Warner & Jim Wilder and *The Complete Guide to Living with Men*, by E. James Wilder