

# **THE DESIGN OF LIFE**

**HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

**FROM A NATURAL PERSPECTIVE**

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## FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the late 1970's, when I was in my late 20's, I met a remarkable man. John Waskom was an enigmatic sort: tallish, somewhat gruff-looking, black hair with silver streaks, slicked back like a figure from the 1940's. His accent was Louisiana and Deep South. Added all together, he presented a visual and auditory image of a slow, sullen, and simple man. But his manner was careful, as were his words, which were sometimes humorous and almost always penetrating. The school dropout who became a Ph.D. The angry young man who ran from his psychologist father -- and later bested the old man in insight on human behavior, even though his chosen field was geology!

I became John's protégé from a distance, absorbing his ideas and practically memorizing his talks that wove together the math and physics of the cosmos with Why-didn't-I-think-of-that? applications to child-rearing. Even the titles were intriguing: *The Magic of Life*, *The Sex Life of Rocks*. Then I began adding my own insights, and I accompanied him often to give weekend workshops for parents and teachers. But we were only two in a spiritual network, and our paths diverged after a few years. Living in New England in the 1980's, I heard of his untimely death.

He had never gotten around to writing his book, and his family did not seem to be getting around to it either, so in the late 1980's I asked for his tapes and notes, and his widow Sara graciously loaned them to me for several months. I organized the work into charts and theories and self-published a small book, which all of about a dozen people ever read. Later, in the publish-or-perish world of university employment, I had two successes in getting John's ideas into journal publication: *Design and Development of Wholeness: Waskom's Paradigm* (in *The Educational Forum*) and *Moral Development: the Experiential Perspective* (in *Journal of Moral Education*). I got requests for reprints from a few professors in the U.S. and about 20 from Yugoslavia, France, Israel, Cuba, Poland, and elsewhere!

You may ask, "Did John Waskom practice what he preached?" Yes, indeed he did. He and Sara had five children: four boys and the youngest a girl. And I can testify that I have never met young people with more poise, assurance, and humility. They even exhibited a fair amount of grace passing through their terrible teens, thanks to John.

Anyway, after some years of sitting in a closet on sheets of paper and computer disks, here's your book, John. I won't always be specific about which ideas are yours, which ones I had to modify, and which ones are mine. That's not what is important here. But if you're still interested, help me get this distributed to the world you were so determined to help: the world of parents and teachers, the world of today and tomorrow.

I also wish to acknowledge others who contributed to this endeavor: my wife Sierra, who shared her

genius in the parenting process; Martin Exeter, who inspired understanding of human design and purpose; and my parents, who provided me with a firm foundation and (unknowingly) a lifetime supply of questions about humanness.

NR / June 30, 1995 - [mail@whizkidz.org](mailto:mail@whizkidz.org)

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# NATURAL DESIGN

For centuries, many scientists have followed a basic assumption in their search for truth: that every set of complex questions has a simple, unifying answer. This has inspired scientists to create theories of simplicity and unity, and it has challenged them to seek new simplicities and unities when old theories became bulky and strained.

For a well-known example, let's look at the history of astronomy. Ptolemy proposed that the sun and planets revolved around the earth, and in the next few centuries this was the common belief -- and scientific "fact." However, as observations became more refined, his original diagrams had to be altered to fit the evidence. It took enormous mathematical effort to uphold the theory, because planets often did not behave in ways that made sense in a universe with the earth at its center. Kepler tried a new and simple approach: putting the sun at the center. Sure enough, the calculations worked very easily under this theory. Now it was just a matter of convincing the people -- and the Church!

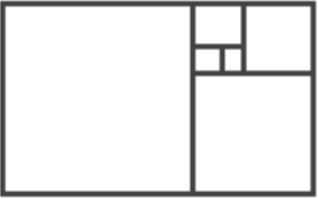
The search for simple, natural design has fueled scientists' curiosity for all of recorded history. As the example above shows, sometimes the "find" is erroneous. But sometimes the pieces really do fit together with precision and elegance. The Greeks came upon a mathematical truth that became the basis of their science, art, architecture, and music, and to this day the truth still holds. That truth is a simple ratio -- 1.618, which they named phi.

Before explaining how phi could be so useful to so many fields, it would be wise to explore this number a bit. First, find the inverse or prime of this number by dividing it into the number one (in other words, work out the decimal for  $1/1.618$ ). Does the answer .618 look familiar? Just in case you don't think this is impressive, try doing this with any other number. You will find that no inverse comes close to looking like its original number. There is definitely something special about phi.

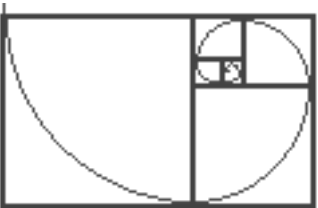
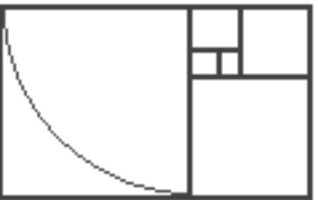
Now, take a standard-size credit card and measure its sides (preferably in metric units). Divide the length by the width and you will meet our friend again. Why? This is because modern graphic artists have learned something from the Greeks: the phi proportion gives the most pleasing visual effects known to man. (And if your credit card is pleasing to the eye, it's just one more incentive to take it out -- and use it!) The Greeks called this proportion the Golden Mean, and they used it in building their temples and other structures.

But why is the Golden Mean so pleasing? Why does it make the Parthenon, the Mona Lisa, and the United Nations building beautiful works of art? The answer lies inside our own bodies. Measure the face of a friend, from the bottom of the chin to the hairline. Measure from the bottom of the chin to the bridge of the nose (the point between the eyes). Divide those numbers. Does the answer look familiar? Now measure from the hairline to the tip of the nose. Divide that number by the whole-face measurement. Again, you should get the Golden Mean. Regardless of the size of the person, the proportion holds true. In fact, our entire bodies are full of the Golden Mean.

Your credit card can also be called a Golden Rectangle. If you construct such a rectangle, then draw another Golden Rectangle inside it, using the width as the length, and kept doing this until it was too small to measure, you get something like this:



If you connect the corners of the rectangles, you get a spiral:



Is this a natural shape? Absolutely! Note pictures of spiral galaxies. Then check the arrangements of pinecones, whelk and nautilus shells, and sunflowers. The Golden Rectangles can also be taken apart to form five-sided stars. (For a graphic demonstration of this and other wonders, watch Disney's "Donald in Mathmagic Land" .) You can find evidence of such natural pentagrams in sand dollars and many flowers.

*[See Links page for more examples and illustrations.]*

It should be apparent by now that there is a natural design at work in the universe. Randomness is just an illusion when the design reveals itself. And just in case there is any question about how far the design goes, consider this: the phi proportion has even been found in the double-helix "ladder" arrangement of the DNA molecule, a structure that encodes hereditary traits through its chemistry and geometric design. So from the macro to the micro, the design is in place, and we humans are gloriously caught in the middle of it.

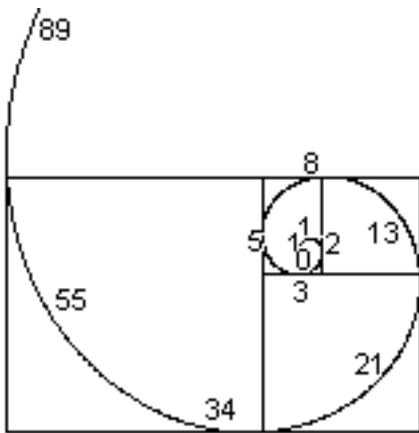
But how does all this relate to human function and human development? To start answering that question, let's turn again to the science of mathematics.

## Natural Progression

A Renaissance mathematician named Fibonacci discovered a unique sequence of numbers. He started with 0 and 1 (a natural starting point) and added them to get the next number. Now he had 0, 1, 1. Then he began to add the last two numbers of the sequence to produce the next. This is what appeared:

0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, 144, ...

It turns out that these numbers appear in natural design, such as in the number of concentric spirals in a pinecone or sunflower, and the number of seeds in each spiral. And if this were not enough evidence that they relate to the Golden Mean, consider this: as you move up the sequence, the relationship of any two consecutive numbers gets closer to phi. For instance, divide 34 by 21; then try 55 by 34; then 89 by 55. You will get closer and closer approximations of 1.618. So with the Fibonacci sequence, we can describe the Golden Mean not only as a natural proportion, but also as a natural progression. In fact, as you look at how the numbers quickly get larger, you can almost imagine them taking on a spiral shape of their own:



(As a convenience, the Fibonacci numbers will be presented as linear and equidistant for the remainder of this book. However, do not forget how the numbers actually depict natural design in progression.)

Now bear with this a bit more, and you'll see how this all relates to human development. When viewing the Fibonacci sequence, imagine that each number represents the beginning of a new cycle or set. This would mean that each previous number represents the end or completion of a cycle or set:



End of old cycle						4	7	12	20	33	54	88
Start of new cycle	0	1	1	2	3	5	8	13	21	34	55	89

Music provides some good examples of this idea. An octave, by its very name, is made of eight notes. However, the first and last notes are really the same, only in different registers. In fact, the sequence we call an octave is complete with seven notes; the eighth note is actually the beginning of a new octave or cycle. (See how that compares with the illustration above.) A chromatic octave, using the white and black keys on a piano, is considered to have 13 notes. However, the first and last are the same, so here the cycle is complete with 12 and restarts with 13. Again, this matches the illustration. Finally, count the number of keys on a piano. Whether conscious of it or not, piano builders traditionally complete the cycle just where natural design and progression would predict.

Using the Fibonacci sequence, a natural progression of human development begins to reveal itself. Look again at the number lines above. Imagine these numbers as ages in a person's life. Notice the numbers on the bottom row that represent beginnings of cycles and ages. Then notice the numbers on the top that represent ending or completions. Do you see some familiar patterns? The ages that have traditionally marked early childhood, adolescence, and adulthood seem to jump out at you, don't they? The numbers that mark the milestones of human life are the same numbers that express the perfect proportion found in all nature.

So how might this natural sequence or rhythm define natural development at the various stages of human existence? That is, how can the Golden Mean and phi and Fibonacci numbers help parents, educators, counselors, and caretakers discover and foster what is natural and healthy at each stage of life? The rest of this book will be devoted to addressing these questions. And to start the journey, we'll look at a couple of major themes in the human drama: The Purpose of Life and The Way Things Work.

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## PURPOSE: THE ULTIMATE QUESTION

*[sensory refinement and metaphorical transformation as purpose. Then use modified Creative Process as milieu in which metaphorical senses operate -- i.e using meta-senses to harmonize with The Way Things Work and thus commit right action appropriate to stage of sensory development.]*

Doesn't it seem reasonable that theories and texts on human development would discuss the meaning or purpose of life? After all, why lay out psychological constructs about human existence and not even hint at *why* humans should bother going through all the motions? Not that writers on development should presume to provide answers to this most debatable subject. But they should address meaning and purpose so the reader can get a sense of the perspective of the writer and the "direction" his/her theory would lead. (Perhaps every book on the topic should have a Surgeon General's warning label, such as "This book contains secular humanism; ingesting this theory could cause existential leanings." Or perhaps a coded rating system: "This theory has been rated CF [Christian fundamentalist]; reader discretion is advised.")

So what perspective does this book take on What's-It-All-About? Since the theory contained here is committed to all that is inherent and natural, the answer is simple:

*The purpose of life is to fulfill its natural design and progression.*

Fine, but what does that mean? It means that each form of life, at each stage of its development, is urged to perfect its equipment, according to its design. Crystals (minerals are alive, aren't they?) are bound to the expression of a simple geometric design and progression. Plants must fulfill their geometry, too, plus a life cycle: growth, reproduction, and demise. Animals must fulfill their geometry and their life cycle, plus instinctive and learned behavior patterns. In all these cases, there is an imperative. Failure to do these things will jeopardize the individual and the species. Design and progression must be fulfilled.

For humans, fulfillment of design and progression likewise includes geometry, life cycle, and behavior patterns, plus an imperative toward mental, emotional, and spiritual development. All together, this imperative could be described as movement toward ever-increasing levels of self-awareness and self-efficacy; in short, it is the development of character.

How does this human fulfillment occur? Through senses. As a human develops keener and keener senses, the mental, emotional, and spiritual faculties increase and thus the human character is individuated and perfected.

What senses? There are all kinds, but they can be placed into two basic categories: gross and subtle:

- gross = five senses, plus hunger, thirst, sexual appetite
- subtle = discriminatory senses, i.e. making distinctions, sensing mood internally/externally

(This topic will be discussed in more detail in a later discussion.)

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We have seen that randomness is only an illusion once design is known. In much the same way, chance is found to be an illusion when purpose is known. Of course, purpose could not reveal itself in an instant. It needs a set of skills to be able to articulate. This is the importance of child-rearing and education: to give each individual the emotional and intellectual tools to reveal personal purpose and discover how it fits in the social whole.

If this is true personally, it could well be true collectively. Putting design and purpose together, it would seem that there is a very intelligent order to things, and human beings ought to be in position to participate with a

bit of that intelligence. One way to look at this is to borrow from Lovelock's Gaia Hypothesis.

Imagine the millions of cells comprising your body -- cells of the liver, the brain, the skin, etc. Each cell has a life purpose: to create energy, to maintain homeostasis (a balanced environment), and to replicate. Each organ in turn has a purpose, and it takes all of its cells working in harmony to fulfill that purpose. Then there is your entire body and personality. There is purpose there, which requires harmony among all the organs and their cells.

Now it seems that the planet earth has been maintaining a stable environment for life for many centuries -- homeostasis. This would indicate that the planet had the fine sensing mechanisms of a living being and that it was expressing purpose in maintaining and replicating life. Interestingly, scientists are finding that planet earth uses its life forms to fulfill this purpose. Termites, sea coral, green plants, as well as other living things rise and fall in population to balance the gases and climates around the globe. It is as if life forms were the cells and whole species were the organs of the planet. Everything -- and everyone -- has a role to play. Those of us creatures with the gift of intellect have a critical role.

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Seeing the enormity and complexity of life and its purposes, we may sense the importance of harmonizing with the natural life cycle, from conception to birth through maturity. But what would a truly natural progression of human life be? This is tantamount to asking, "What should human beings be thinking, feeling, and doing on this planet? What are they designed to do?" That may seem like more of a philosophical question than a developmental one, but using natural design, natural progression, and our own sense of unfolding purpose, we are very well equipped to answer. In fact, we may be the best equipped to answer.

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## THE CREATIVE PROCESS

[This section needs some re-work: explain Creative Process as Way Things Work, and draw in senses & metasenses as tools for discerning right thought and action to harmonize/utilize Way Things Work ==> sensing inner & out happenings (to best of one's current stage/ability), then acting appropriately]

How do design and purpose reveal themselves in action? They do so through process. And when that process works clearly, without interference, it creates natural and pleasing forms. So we can call this action or rhythm of design and purpose the Creative Process.

The entire life cycle is a creative process, as is any stage within it. The circuit of the earth around the sun, and the subsequent seasons we experience, is a creative process. A single day is a creative process, as is a week or a lunar month. These are relatively natural cycles, each with design and purpose. The question is, how creatively do we handle these cycles? The answer lies in our ability to sense the rhythms of these cycles and act in harmony with them.

Here are sets of words that have been used to outline the rhythms of the Creative Process, matched with familiar cyclical occurrences:

<b>Stillness (Awaiting)</b>	<b>Connection (Synthesis)</b>	<b>Action (Unfolding)</b>	<b>Creation (Fulfillment)</b>
water	air	earth	fire
winter	spring	summer	autumn
dormancy	germination	growth	harvest
conception	birth	growth	maturity

(Please bear in mind that creative processes do not jump from segment to segment. However, making these divisions helps us get a sense of the different rhythms that occur as they move along.)

The first two segments, Stillness and Connection, are invisible, being feminine and subconscious in essence (what the Chinese call Yin). They make up the portion of the process that is grounded in Being. You can think of this as a quiet and reflective time, just as winter and early spring harbor life in preparation for later growth. This is precisely the part of the process that Western man (and often woman, too) has trouble with, for there is a tendency to jump into things and start doing with great passion. But this is not yet the time for that. The earth knows that; so does all of nature. And if people are going to be wise and sensitive, they too must learn to hold back their action and be still, listening and waiting for the right moment to act.

The latter portion of the process (Action and Creation) is the active stage, essentially masculine and conscious, or what the Chinese call Yang. There is Achieving, and later there are results and fulfillment. Many individuals have trouble here, too. Some want to jump to the fulfillment as quickly as possible; some want to avoid the fulfillment; and some want to fiddle with the results until there is no recognizable fulfillment. As in the first portion of the process, timing is everything.

The invisible and visible (yin and yang) combine in creative action. As each element of the process completes itself, the creation begins to appear. The result is always in accordance with how favorably each element was allowed to work. For example, if in the gestation of a fetus the mother's nutrition or disposition was less than ideal during the first trimester, the resulting infant can only be as healthy as can be expected under those conditions.

The word "want" is key to understanding what goes wrong in creative processes (or why it goes from creative

to destructive). Because of emotional ties, we may often want the process to go in a certain direction or at a certain pace. This is especially true at moments of intensity. Whether in relationships, business, or art, this is disastrous, for we are contending with natural design, and the results are ultimately unfulfilling.

To illustrate the need to understand cycles, rhythms, and intensities, let us use childbirth as an analogy. During labor, the mother experiences what is called transition. This is the period when her contractions reach maximum intensity; thus, it is the period of maximum discomfort. If she is not aware of this, she may begin to panic, imagining that the intensity she feels will continue to increase and become overwhelming. However, if she is aware that she has entered the period of transition, she knows that the intensity has reached its peak, that she will not have to endure anything greater, and that she will soon see her child delivered.

The difference between the mother who understands transition and the one who doesn't is profound. Knowing the rhythms of the cycle, the informed mother can stay focused and as relaxed as possible. She keeps participating in the Creative Process mentally, emotionally, and physically. This helps the delivery go smoothly and relatively quickly. This ease will transfer to the child in two ways. First, the blood transfer (the last before birth) will contain no toxins of upset feelings. Second, as the natural pulsations of her birth canal push against the soft, flexible bones of the child's skull, a proper "wave action" of spinal fluid is established in the child. This is a critical rhythm the child needs for early neural development.

The uninformed mother tends to abandon the process, giving way to panic, anger, and helplessness. Toxins enter her blood stream which get transferred to the child, and her emotional and mental tension tightens her muscles, which can slow the delivery and make it more uncomfortable. Then she might call for anesthetics, which can have an adverse effect on the child. Spinal fluid rhythms cannot get properly established, and other patterns of mother-child interaction tend to get disoriented.

The mother who feels panic and hopelessness would no doubt stop the whole process of childbirth if she could. The intensity would be so great, with no sign of relief in sight, that she would want to walk away from this seemingly endless build-up. How often do we have the tendency to walk away from the emotional intensity of our situations, especially when they are unclear or in transition? "Walking away" from emotional intensity can take many forms: blaming others for the discomfort, becoming depressed or self-critical, numbing ourselves through drugs or apathy, or even leaving the situation for others to clean up. Through such patterns of reaction, many creative cycles in our lives get impaired or aborted. And just like the uninformed mother above, it is all the more tragic because it tends to happen just before the "birth" of something new and purposeful.

Knowing in advance about patterns of rising and falling intensity can be reassuring. Of course, this is not always possible. In any event, the only real insurance anyone ever has for being prepared to meet intensity is to have plenty of positive experience handling all the little creative processes of daily living. Even the most detailed advance notice of what to expect in a situation cannot take the place of simply being a substantial person who has a sense of welcome, assurance, and willingness to see the cycle all the way through. This requires a basic trust in life's Creative Process, which after all is running the entire cosmos!

It could be said that stewarding the Creative Process is simply dealing with what is obvious. There is purpose waiting to be fulfilled, and that can only be discovered by working with natural rhythms rather than forcing things to happen "my way or else." Sensitivity to where one is in the sequence (and keeping check on how one feels about it) is the key to success. This applies to parenting and education, as well as professional endeavors and personal growth. Everything from marriage to capital expenditures has its right time and place and rhythm. Managing oneself, rather than trying to mold the process, gets the job done effectively and creatively for all concerned.

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# NATURAL CYCLES OF MATURATION

What follows is a chart that depicts a natural progression of human life through stages of development. These stages are based on the Fibonacci sequence, although they conform in many ways to popular divisions outlined in human development textbooks. The chart is not meant to be a finished product. It has undergone refinement for a number of years, first by the late Dr. John Waskom, then by the author.

The educational aspects of the chart may be somewhat culture-bound, but the idea of a balanced curriculum is universal. Similarly, any culture-related items in the areas of character development or community involvement can easily be retranslated as needed. Indeed, this outline of human development is meant to be more than cross-cultural; it is intended to transcend culture.

[\*CLICK HERE FOR DEVELOPMENTAL CHART<\*](#)  
[\*\(BEST TO OPEN IN NEW WINDOW\)\*](#)

The following chapters will fill out the meaning of the chart. First, there will be a consideration of basic life themes and an explanation of terms used. Then there will be consideration of life stages, following the chart down its columns.

Bear in mind that this chart is not just a group of ideas compiled by artful theorists. It is based on years of observation and interaction with individuals of all ages, especially ones who have begun to reveal the clarity and health of natural, undistorted progression. Because there has been some sensitive, intelligent parenting and teaching harmonized with the Creative Process, there are living examples who demonstrate natural wisdom and vitality. Without such parents, teachers, and their products, this discussion would be only pleasant theory. Because of them, what follows is a description of what has been demonstrated as possible.

## MAJOR DEVELOPMENTAL THEMES

### FIBONACCI NUMBERS AND HUMAN AGE

<Above the lifeline on the chart, there are two rows of numbers. The upper one shows the Fibonacci progression, and the bottom one shows corresponding human ages. Obviously there are going to be individual variations, depending on physical, neurological, and character factors.

A question often comes up when the Fibonacci progression is matched with human age: "How do you account for having two number ones? Humans only have a first birthday once in their lives." The answer to that is simple, if you realize that 1) the Fibonacci numbers are whole integers and only approximate the Golden Mean and 2) the life of an individual begins in the womb, not at birth. Using this information, we can see that if the number 0 represents conception, then the first 1 represents the point of birth, while the second 1 represents the first birthday. Of course, gestation is not a full year, so that first 1 is just the closest whole integer to what it really means. It is interesting to note that according to traditional Chinese reckoning, a child is considered a year old at birth.

The numbers 1, 1, 2, 3, and 5 are included in Early Childhood. This corresponds to ages birth to eight. Then begins Middle Childhood, which ends at puberty (Fibonacci 13). Adult hood has no obvious physical demarcation, and we traditionally use the Fibonacci 21 as its starting point. Middle Adulthood seems to begin in the early thirties, corresponding to Fibonacci 34. And the beginning of the Elder stage (Fibonacci 55) matches well with our traditional ideas of retirement, Medicare, Social Security, etc.

### NAMES OF STAGES

<Across the top row of the chart are names of the life stages. These follow popular names, with two exceptions. Only these will be addressed here.

**FOUNDATION:** The first stage occurs before the birth of the child. How long before birth? That depends on many factors, but mostly on the sense of readiness of the would-be parents. Foundation begins when a couple reaches a point of willingness to become parents and to prepare properly for the event. It ends at the moment of conception. Although sensitive couples may know that moment, others may not realize it is time for the next stage until pregnancy is verified. Obviously, the sooner conception is recognized, the sooner the couple can "switch gears" and move to their next stage.

**ELDER YEARS:** This is not a shortening of the word elderly, which simply means one who is old. An elder is a revered person, one who has a distinct place in the social order. That place is not attained by age alone, but by the demonstration of character and a history of substantial contribution. In a natural progression, all older humans would be called elders, for their lives would have been rich and full of service, and their older years would be marked by wisdom and peace of mind.

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## **FUNDAMENTAL THEMES**

<These are the large "issues" that pervade the development cycle, often spanning two or more stages of growth.

**CONTROL -- DESIGN:** The initial stages of human development are rightly concerned with the establishment of a pattern of control. The best way to think of this is to see control as a matrix or foundation, like a skeleton. Design is the flesh which can overlay the foundation. By having a solid foundation of control, the design can accurately reflect the purpose that is intended, just as the muscles and flesh give final definition to the structure of the bones.

Much of the control for human function is built-in, especially at the physical level. But careful external control is needed to guide the way for the natural design to take form. This is the role of parents and educators: to maintain a control that respects and complements the natural controls and processes of young people, so that development is as ideal as possible.

**OPEN HEART -- OPEN MIND:** In the early stages of life (and parenting), a sense of trust and relaxation, rather than direct instruction, brings out the best in behavior and attitude. Openness of heart at an early age seems to make it easy for an open mind to develop later on. Our culture is learning this the hard way, as we pinpoint the personality traits of cancer and heart disease victims. Such persons tend to harbor rigid structures of thinking, which can often be traced back to attitudes developed in youth. In



fact, medical science is fast discovering that poor coping with stress in heart and mind is the real killer, and diseases are just the labels for how the stress finally broke down body function. Perhaps we could spare future generations much misery by letting open-heartedness take precedence during formative years -- not "hurrying" our children mentally and emotionally, as David Elkind has stated.

**SUBCONSCIOUS -- CONSCIOUS -- METACONSCIOUS:** Life begins with little conscious awareness of self. This is perfect, for it creates an open, innocent space for social and behavioral learning to take place with ease. This time can be full of heart: first invisibly before birth, then visibly in simple feelings of joy and love and wonder during the early years. By adolescence, this gives way to self-consciousness, the beginning of conscious function. Although painful at first, this is a natural progression, for it allows for a burst of mental or intellectual growth and the initial sensings of unique purpose. This develops through early adulthood, becoming more and more facile. When middle adulthood arrives, the progression leads naturally to a new state: metaconsciousness, or "conscious of being conscious." This is the full flowering of self-awareness, for it involves the recognition of purpose, how one's life fits into a larger pattern, and how one can best activate purpose within the social whole.

## **DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES**

<These are the topics which will be discussed under each stage of development. They are grouped in three major headings: 1) Physical Development, 2) Psycho-Social & Character Development, and 3) Socialization and Guidance Processes. Within each heading are subheadings which further describe development at that stage. Following are the headings and subheadings that will be used.

### **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Growth Patterns:** Some stages are marked by obvious physical changes, such as adolescence. The others have unique physical traits, but they may not be so obvious or immediate. This book will not deal heavily on this topic, except as it relates to natural design and health.

**Nutrition:** On the chart, there is an important message concerning proper nutrition. This is an area often neglected in the study of development, except as it concerns pathological disruptions. Here it will be treated somewhat differently, since the disruptions most often created by nutritional practices are quite subtle and often pass for normal.

### **PSYCHO-SOCIAL & CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT**

**Developmental Urges & Tasks:** Within each stage of development, there is an underlying urge, task, or essence. It is an impulse that guides both physiological processes as well as attitudes and behaviors. How

often have we heard that it is important not to break the spirit of the child? Although we would tend to agree with that, do we know what that spirit is? Let us think of the urge or task of each stage as the spirit that the child is compelled to express. Then we can begin to see patterns of behavior as accurate or inaccurate reflections of natural compulsions.

Sense Development: How many senses are humans capable of developing and using? Although there is common talk of "the five senses," we know there are more -- both basic ones, such as the sense of balance, and more subtle ones, such as the sense of appropriateness, or "common sense." As you will see as the life stages are discussed, the basic senses are not just valuable tools; they are preparatory for the development of the subtle ones. This is critical, for although well-trained eyes and such are useful, there may be nothing more valuable than the ability to "read" situations and people and to sense the right action to take. This is sensing at its finest.

Well-developed senses can allow the urges and tasks of each life stage to be fulfilled. They act as "feedback" mechanisms for the developing person, reporting on the quality of his or her interaction with the world. Development of the senses is not an academic task, nor is it always teachable in the normal sense. However, it can be encouraged through proper guidance, once the "trainer" understands the urges and tasks of the age being worked with.

Character Development: This is a theme that gets little more than lip service in present educational practice, perhaps because it is difficult to measure, not readily marketable, or too closely tied to morals and religion. However, in a natural progression of human development, character is the cornerstone. The development of character is not philosophically nor religiously based, but grounded in the notion that purpose is trying to fulfill itself and can only do so through a character that is strong, sensitive, and clear.

Primary to the development of character is the ability to be still and let the Creative Process be initiated. "Stillness is the cornerstone of character," states a native American watchword. As this theme is developed through the life stages, it is important to keep in mind that character is shown by the ability to work with the natural rhythms of the Creative Process, and that begins with stillness.

Educational Approach: The development of character and the sensing mechanisms must happen in context. This necessitates some consideration of curriculum, although much of the actual learning occurs in the quality of interaction between adults and young people.

The educational approach that would encourage natural maturing may be somewhat different from the standard academic curriculum, which concentrates so heavily on intellectual growth. Remember, the intent here is to bring human beings to a sense of personal purpose, self-knowledge, and social integration, not just to develop the ability to survive economically and professionally.

## SOCIALIZATION & GUIDANCE PROCESSES

Parenting Patterns: Just as the child is guided by inner impulse or urge, so parents have subtle mechanisms that compel them to take on specific roles at the various stages. The wisdom of parenting can be discovered along the way as adults ask themselves, "What would be the appropriate attitude here? How would that translate into action that will guide the child into a greater sense of maturity?" This kind of questioning may sound simplistic, but it is highly effective when done with sensitivity and emotional stability, especially when feelings and circumstances are intense. The answers that come from such questioning will be discussed for each life stage.

Responsibility: Who is responsible for stewarding the process of maturation, for helping to bring out true character? Each stage has its requirements, and different people can play critical roles at different times. Since the goal is self-responsibility leading to a sense of responsibility for the whole earth, it would be ideal for adults to be sensitive to how and when they should play their part in young people's development.

Society & Community Involvement: Various members of the larger community can play significant roles in the life of a growing person. These people may not be responsible for the actual character development of the individual, but they have an influence in matters of health, well-being, and self-esteem. They are the supporting cast in this drama, and their roles can be crucial at times.

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**NATURAL CYCLES OF MATURATION**

	<b>Founda-tion</b>	<b>Gesta-tion</b>	<b>Early Child</b>	<b>Mid-Child</b>	<b>Adoles-cent</b>	<b>Young Adult</b>	<b>Mid-Adult</b>	<b>Elder</b>
<b>Fibonacci</b>	0	1	1 2 3 5	8	13	21	34	55
<b>Human Age</b>	0	0	Birth	8	12-14	21	32-35?	55-60?
<b>Physical attri-butes</b>	Pre-parent health in body, mind, relation	Concep-tion; life; awareness	Walk, talk, think  (rudimen-tal)	Eyes/teeth formed, thymus atrophies	Puberty, sex drive, muscle development	Full grown, peak of strength & power burst	Stamina, changes in metabol-ism	Decreased tone;  De-emphasis on physical
<b>Meta-sense urges &amp; develop-ment</b>	<u>Choice</u>  Sense of fitness, timing; patience	<u>Imprint</u>  Sound, light, emotions; "matrix of the possible"	<u>Will</u>  Gross sense control: sight, move-ment & aliveness leading to autonomy	<u>Feeling</u>  Refine to metaphor-ic trans-formation of char-acter, as courage, compassion, etc.	<u>Thinking</u>  Make sense of world thru meta-cognition; "feeling" flow of thought, leading to discern-ment	<u>Action</u>  Sharpen, use per-ception to learn intimacy & right relation with work & adult world	<u>Refining</u>  Facility with adult world & creative processes; sense of service & finesse	<u>Fulfill-ment</u>  Lessening concern for worldly activity; sensing essences, rhythms of life; integra-tion
<b>Charac-ter develop-ment &amp; educa-tion</b>	Pre-parents' character & home climate: stability, patience, assurance, calm (major components of "matrix of the possible")		Imitation of parents in speech & attitudes	Observation & memory used to develop decision-making & sense of honor & authority	Thinking & process-ing skills; (can use with own stress of emotion); shift focus to peers & mentors	Learn to initiate & follow creative process; evaluate own values & behaviors	Poise in worldly affairs; sense fitness & act with integrity; settle/fill past voids	Integrate previous develop-ment as path to wisdom, humor, accept-ance
<b>Curricular themes to encourage meta-senses</b>	Learn about stages, responsi-bilities, nutrition, atmos-phere	Learn about birthing, infant care, child development	Imitation & repetitive activities, leading to healthy habits;  Use of rhythm, move-ment, music, touch	Nature, math, science: patterns of design & relations;  Speaking, drama, then read & write	Academic plus arts, vocational& life skills;  Following an interest to expertise	Personal & social skills for use in work & relations	Learn to administer & nurture in family, profession, society	Learn for enjoy-ment & perspec-tive  Releasing attach-ments  Sensing own fulfillment

**APPROPRIATE RITUAL/CEREMONY AT EACH TRANSITION, INCORPORATING CHALLENGE, SYMBOLISM, AND REPRESENTATION OF FAMILY, COMMUNITY, SPIRIT**

# FOUNDATION STAGE

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

### Growth Patterns

In Foundation, pre-parents can influence their future child's health through the quality of their own health. A woman who is physically and nutritionally fit will tend to have a relatively easy pregnancy and birth. She will most likely have less discomfort, more energy, and more emotional stability during this time, and she will pass on greater health and disease immunity to her child. A man who is nutritionally and physically healthy will have a higher quality and quantity of sperm (which leads to better "selection"). He will also be more apt to hold up to the rigors of the gestation and birth, both physically and emotionally.

Physical health is not the only factor for pre-parents to consider during Foundation. What is the "health" of their relationship? This is absolutely crucial to the matrix upon which the child will emerge. A strong and resilient partnership is essential, and until this is established, pregnancy might well be avoided, for this and their physical health will set the tone for the pregnancy.

### Nutrition

Some nutritionists will tell you that the most important years in a child's nutrition are the two before birth! Both pre-parents have a profound influence on their child by the way they eat. It affects their mood and the subsequent atmosphere between them. It affects the health of both sperm and uterus. It affects their ability to hold up to the rigors of gestation and infancy. So although no rules will be set forth here, it suffices that pre-parents need to consider this area before conception and all through gestation.

One very important point needs to be made. Biochemists are very concerned about the depletion of the earth's topsoil, particularly in heavy farming regions like North America. The depletion in quantity and quality of this precious resource has great bearing on the nutrition of all age groups. Pre-parents may need to consider how they and their future child will receive vital nutrients, particularly trace minerals that are fast disappearing from our soil. Coupled with the possibility of contamination from insecticides, radiation, and chemical preservatives, sweeteners, etc., this concern has vast ramifications, and it may necessitate re-evaluating the family lifestyle. Perhaps fast foods and "junk" foods are the first to be curtailed or eliminated. Perhaps there needs to be a monitoring of the sources where foods are being purchased. Perhaps nutritional supplementation needs to be considered. The choices made at this point may well influence development for years to come.

## PSYCHO-SOCIAL & CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

### Developmental Urges & Tasks

When does the child's individuality begin to manifest? At birth? At conception? Before that? Without going off into realms of speculation, there are some logical considerations that can be made in the light of natural progression. During Foundation, pre-parents are making choices that will determine what kind of behavioral patterns they will have to handle. In a sense, they are determining the quality of love their child will be able to receive and give, just by their choices in diet, attitude, atmosphere, etc. Perhaps choices are being made at other levels as well, but the conscious decisions made by pre-parents at this time are sufficient to allow a natural, healthy pattern at the outset.

### Sense Development

As couples prepare for parenting, they can address some issues which will have a tremendous bearing on the atmosphere in which the child will develop the various senses. Besides monitoring their physical condition and lifestyle, pre-parents can take time to check the state of their own consciousness in regard to these items:

- a) Does each really want a child consciously? Subconsciously? Is there any harboring of imposition, obligation, or guilt associated with the idea of parenting at this time? Is there adequate communication about these feelings?
- b) How does the man feel about the woman? Is he willing and able to encompass her physically and emotionally during the rigorous time ahead? Is he secretly dependent on her, which might make him resentful when she must soon rely so much on him?
- c) Has each one begun to integrate the male and female aspects of personality? Is each one getting comfortable with the entire spectrum of feelings that are possible? Are they getting comfortable with each other expressing a full range, even when it does not fit the stereotypes or expectations men and women may have for each other? Are they becoming comfortable with their own and their partner's sexuality?

These are critical issues, for they set the tone and quality of the home setting. If these issues are met and resolved before conception, the couple is free to focus their energies on the Creative Process ahead, rather than on their own psychological needs.

### Character Development

If the child is going to develop a character that is grounded in assurance and an understanding of the

Creative Process, it begins with pre-parents who possess the same qualities. Stillness is the key, and this is only possible when the couple has proved trustworthiness and stability to each other. Then hearts are relaxed and the Creative Process can be a living reality in the home -- and in that atmosphere character can develop solidly.

## Educational Approach

Couples who are considering a family would benefit from specific preparation. Among the topics they might consider are: the stages of development, the creation of a proper home atmosphere, how the Creative Process applies to conception and gestation (physically and emotionally), parental responsibilities, support systems, etc. As with training in the Creative Process, it is not easy to find such instruction at this stage. Rather than a class setting, it may be found in the presence of a wise and experienced person who would offer guidance, attunement, and overall support -- someone who nurtures self-knowledge, not dependence on theories or books.

## SOCIALIZATION & GUIDANCE PROCESSES

### Parenting Patterns

During Foundation, the first step or task of parenting can be described as setting a "New Earth." During this period, couples merge life perspectives and purpose in a new relationship. This is could be called coming into a true state of marriage, and it takes place for quite some time after the official wedding ceremony. (One authority has stated that it takes about five years for a marriage to truly consummate.) As partners learn to share life and accommodate each other's unique personalities, they must be patient and not assume readiness for parenthood just because finances or some other minor factors are in order. Patience is required to sense what areas still need addressing in preparation for parenthood. Patience is required to sense when conception is proper. Lack of patience at this point could lead to bringing a child into a home that is not fully ready to receive it, thus setting off a series of missteps.

### Responsibility

No matter who may be advising or guiding the couple at this stage, it is they themselves who are responsible for what has been put in motion toward having a child. It is important that the pre-parents learn to "tune in" to themselves and each other, so they can begin to sense the depth and duration of the responsibility they are taking on. This is especially so with the couple's first child. Such tuning in may lead to some sobering moments, and that could be perfect for a couple who thought that "making a baby"

would simply be a nice idea!

## Society and Community Involvement

When a couple decides to become parents, family and friends can play the vital role of giving acceptance and support. This can take many appropriate forms, but inordinate advice is not one of them. The couple is supposedly basing their decision on a firm foundation of love (not just for each other, but for a larger purpose), and they have made the decision in view of all the factors they can see: finances, home atmosphere, professional support, etc. So the main thing they need from family and friends is a welcoming for their decision and the offer of whatever support is considered mutually acceptable.

Although formal education is likely over for the couple, there is a great need for counseling and guidance during this period. This may be best kept outside the family so that there can be someone on hand with an objective view. Few people can fill this role presently, and couples often do not realize they are missing a vital element in the process when they do without this person. Clergy, birthing centers, and psychological counselors are often asked to take on this role, which may be fine. Whoever fills this role must be equipped with more than pamphlets and techniques and advice; this person must be adept at letting the Creative Process work through all the confusions, doubts, and fears that can arise. This person would represent a safe place where all the factors can come to rest, so that the couple can gain perspective and discover their own answers. This person, who in some cultures might be a grandparent or village elder, is taking on the task of offering attunement to the couple, and this will become more essential as the process unfolds through the next stage.

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# GESTATION STAGE

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

### Growth Patterns

The physical traits of the child during Gestation are well documented in words and photographs. However, a few additional but vital points need to be addressed here. First, consider the period when the child moves from the embryo to the fetus stage. This is marked by obvious physical changes, true, but that may be an indication of something else happening "behind" the physical form. Consider this: if there is purpose as well as design working out in one's lifetime, when does that purpose begin? Perhaps this is just the moment -- the point when the physical form is "human" enough to be imbued with purpose. Let us call this, then, the time of incarnation. This is not to be confused with the idea of reincarnation, which involves a certain amount of belief. Rather, the time of incarnation would be the point at which a rather mechanical uterine process becomes the container for the spirit of a human being to begin a natural process of unfolding purpose.

Another point in the Gestation period to note is that sensory awareness begins about midway between the beginning of the fetal stage and birth. Up to this point, all "messages" received by the child have been through the mother's placenta (blood supply and exchange) or through more subtle communication devices. Now there is sensitivity to sound, light, motion, etc., outside the womb, the importance of which will be discussed below.

### Nutrition

Expectant mothers often say, "Now I'm eating for two!" In many ways this is true. She must provide nutrients for both herself and her child. Body-building at this stage is the same as when the child is out of the womb: there is a need for high-quality protein and an ample supply of vitamins and minerals (especially calcium and iron). Supplementation is often recommended by physicians, knowing that the mother's body demands high nutrition that would normally require enormous amounts of food to supply. Natural (rather than synthetic) food supplements can help the mother prepare her body for the long-term strain of pregnancy and later lactation while helping the child get critical nutrients. In this way she can get a dietary boost without having to consume more calories than necessary.

## PSYCHO-SOCIAL & CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

## Developmental Urges & Tasks

While in utero, the child experiences the wisdom of the Womb. In deep, automatic, subconscious processes, the mandates of life are being carried out. As gestation unfolds, two processes are at work: accommodation and assimilation. At first, these are largely physical, as the child accommodates its environment and assimilates nourishment. Later, these processes expand. The child actually begins to sense and learn from the environment outside the womb, both directly through budding sense organs and indirectly through internal messages in the mother. (Piaget used these two terms to describe early childhood processes. He was right, but he had no idea the child had been doing them before birth as well.)

## Sense Development

As was mentioned above, sensory awareness begins about midway through the fetal period. With the sudden increase of stimulation from outside the womb, the child is more vulnerable and in need of a new kind of protection. But the child is also more "teachable" as well. This is the time when parents would do well to speak in tones they want their baby to recognize and introduce music and other sounds that they want as part of the child's sensory "vocabulary."

At the invisible or subconscious level, the pre-parents can influence the child's sense development through a relaxed control of the external womb -- their home atmosphere. The work of Thomas Verney ("The Secret Life of the Unborn Child") sheds some light on this. He reports that while the fetus is quite receptive to stimuli through placental interchange and the primitive sense organs, there is also evidence that the child reacts to more subtle stimuli, such as mood changes in the mother and the environment. So there is a delicate sensing going on, and a repertoire of sense possibilities is being learned. Pre-parents who are aware of this are careful to let their own senses filter the emotional stimuli in the environment.

## Character Development

Pre-parents would continue to maintain a relaxed and orderly atmosphere that will help the infant experience trust and security. This will be the first step in the development of strong character. The focus now is on the mother-to-be. The depth of her trust and relaxation in her husband and in the Creative Process will have a profound effect on the atmosphere of home.

## Educational Approach

Couples anticipating a child would benefit from formal training in birthing procedure and atmosphere, proper care for mother and infant during and following gestation, childhood behavior patterns and proper

parental response, etc. This kind of training is attainable in many locations (although subtle themes may not get addressed).

## SOCIALIZATION & GUIDANCE PROCESSES

### Parenting Patterns

During Gestation, pre-parents find themselves needing to exhibit single-mindedness (the Single Eye experience). There are so many distractions that appear during pregnancy that it is easy to forget the primary task: to prepare the way for a special being to come into the world in the most easy and welcoming atmosphere possible. This certainly does not mean that expectant parents should be fearful and shut out the world, for the fear itself would destroy the atmosphere. However, it does mean that a focus must be maintained through mental and emotional stability.

### Responsibility

The pre-parents continue to have primary responsibility. Whoever might be offering guidance or attunement shares in this to a degree, helping the couple stay "on track" with their priorities of physical and emotional preparation.

### Society and Community Involvement

During this period, family and friends best give the majority of their support from a distance. Unless called upon, they may inadvertently interfere with delicate cycles going on in the home. The pre-parents are concerned with atmosphere and with keeping a stability present in their lives. This is proper, and they should not have to deal with more stimuli than necessary. At this time, the assistance of midwives and/or physicians can be invaluable, as long as they respect the atmosphere of attunement that is being nurtured. One way to think about this is to consider that the womb is not just in the mother; it actually surrounds the entire situation. No one would intentionally disrupt the processes going on in the mother's womb, nor would anyone disrupt the larger womb if they recognized it was there. The couple knows it is there, and they can make it more obvious to all as they intensify their own sense of attunement with it.

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# EARLY CHILDHOOD

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

### Growth Patterns

Notable physical traits of this stage include the "seeds" of tooth development at around one year and the beginning of a fascinating and recurring "walk-talk-think" cycle. This cycle, in rudimentary form, completes itself during Early Childhood: the child learns to physically walk during the first 2 1/2 years, then talk in sentences from age 2 1/2 to 4, then think with some precision from about age 4.

On a larger scale, this "walk-talk-think" cycle can be seen moving across the entire life span. Early childhood is a "walk" stage, with each subsequent stage representing the next in the sequence: middle childhood is a "talk" stage, and adolescence is a "think" stage. Then the cycle repeats at a higher or more metaphoric level on the life spiral: young adulthood is like learning to "walk," middle adulthood is becoming fluent at "talk," and the elder years are a time to "think." This may become more apparent in further discussions.

### Nutrition

Young children are often thought of as "picky" eaters. There may be good reason for this. Perhaps they have a built-in sensitivity that monitors what their bodies can and cannot tolerate. However, sometimes the finicky-ness of young children is just part of a power struggle with parents who have been duped into over-indulgence. Giving a child choices (especially about food) from too early an age can set up a recurring scenario in which the adults end up catering to the whims of one who is too young to know what is really fitting. Give a three-year old unlimited choice for breakfast and you may hear anything from "popcorn" to "chocolate cookies." Then when you try to back up and limit the choice, you have a tantrum on your hands. Why? Because you just gave the child power and then tried to take it away. Better that the wise parent give limited or no choice until there is sufficient understanding of what choosing is all about.

Recently there has been growing concern about food sensitivities in children. Research shows that not all children are equipped to digest all foods. As an example, lacto-sensitivity (observed as an allergy to milk) is much more wide-spread than earlier imagined. This condition is related to the lack of a certain digestive enzyme in the intestinal tract. Many children (especially of black and Latin origin) lack this enzyme. What does this imply? Possibly, it means that we as a nation are giving many of our children a food substance they cannot process and which causes any number of symptoms, ranging from constant colds to poor digestion to the increase of other food allergies. Behavior can also be affected, which means that learning can be affected, too. Parents would be wise to monitor their child's ability to handle foods for several years. It could save them enormous amounts of time, money, frustration, and

embarrassment by preventing ill health or school-related disorders.

Another area for consideration (and this applies to teenagers as well) is the matter of blood sugar. This process is regulated by carbohydrates -- B vitamins in particular. Enriched white flour does not contain a completely usable B-complex, so most breads and cold breakfast cereals cannot keep the blood sugar stable for long (although it is better than going to school on an empty stomach). When B vitamins are depleted and blood sugar drops, the body goes into a survival mode: it gives the most nutrients to the lower brain, which regulates basic metabolism. Thus the upper brain, used for thinking, learning, and socializing, is relatively starved. This leads to behaviors which are classified as dull and/or anti-social. Parents who are sensitive to this will insure that their child has a breakfast and a lunch that will keep blood sugar stable and brain activity normal all day. This means enforcing a diet rich in whole grains, fresh vegetables and fruits, and a minimum of substances that will deplete the B vitamins (namely, sweetened or refined foods).

## PSYCHO-SOCIAL & CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

### Developmental Urges & Tasks

In the first years of life, the child is compelled to express the spirit of Life with great enthusiasm. Still accommodating and assimilating new information, there are two further behaviors that reflect this urge: absorption and imitation. The child absorbs behaviors (even subtle body language and attitudes) and mimics them as well as possible. Sometimes this leads to "cute" behavior, such as when the child parades around in parents' shoes. Sometimes this leads to behavior that gives parents pride or consternation, depending on how they feel about the reflection being shown. Absorption also relates to attention span, which can be considerable at this time, if the child is allowed to explore objects without distraction or over-guidance.

Erikson divides early childhood into three stages, each with a distinct task, that builds on the previous one. First (Fibonacci 1-3, a "walk" stage) comes the urge or task to develop trust. This is essential for the bonding of the child with the human world, beginning with the parents. Ken Magill, furthering Brazelton's well-known observations, has found evidence that lack of bonding in infancy (due to mothers using inconsistent childcare) is causing a profound increase in psychopathic or antisocial behavior in our society. This is a topic that is so vital, yet often so neglected, because infants require a consistent care provider in order to "absorb" human patterning.

Erikson's next stage (Fibonacci 3-5, a "talk" stage) involves the urge toward autonomy. This is the time of "do it myself." So much has been absorbed and assimilated, and now the child wants to prove a certain measure of independence and ability. The third stage (Fibonacci 5-8, a "think" stage) involves the urge toward initiative. Play is a major way to process new ideas and experiment with them. Thinking is not a heavy mental task at this stage; it is more of a playful, almost dream-like synthesis of ideas, as any

primary teacher will tell you.

## Sense Development

Assuming that trust has been established, young children have the impulse to develop the sense of will, which leads to autonomy and initiative. The senses that enable the will to develop include:

- touch, which relates to touching and being touched, the primary learning modality of this stage;
- movement and motion, which relate to large muscle coordination and the sense of using space;
- balance, relating to physical equilibrium, which later will transfer to a sense of mental/emotional equilibrium; and
- the sense of life, which relates to the recognition of one's own animating force as well as that of other forms -- knowing that one is alive and has feelings, and so do other living things. Children learn to "charge" objects with life (such as dolls), and this further enhances the sense of life, which later can transfer to compassion for others.

Learning in and with the elements of nature allows this entire process to be as effective as possible. In fact, outdoor education is essential at all stages for effective sense development, because in the open air one finds both the comfort of nature as well as the perfect natural challenges.

## Character Development

As stated on the chart, the character of the child is initially grounded in the character of the parents and the atmosphere they create in the home. In practical terms, this means that the parents are able to maintain a sense of stillness and assurance so that the home is imbued with an air of calm and "all-rightness." Thus the child lives with adults whose words, actions, tone of voice, and overall body language convey the message, "All is well." This is the security that many sense is essential to raise a healthy child. When the parents convey this message, they provide assurance to the child that human facilities are adequate to their purposes and that nothing is ultimately overwhelming. Everything can be handled with grace and ease; nothing can shake the firm foundation that is present.

This may seem like a call to laissez-faire parenting, but that is not at all what is required. Guidance of young children is a hands-on affair, needing constant vigilance and attention. However, if children are to grow up vibrantly, without neuroses, parenting must recognize natural rhythms and seek to give them clear translation. This means that manipulation and imposition (bullying or conning the child) have to

give way to loving, sensitive, yet firm attentiveness to what the child's body language is saying and what the child needs.

There is almost universal agreement that character and self-esteem are damaged by criticizing a child. But do we recognize the long-term devastation caused by praise? Parents and teachers who use praise to get a child to behave properly are instilling a sense of dependence on external authority: the child will "perform" correct behavior only with the anticipation of reward or approval. This can lead to any number of character flaws, such as living by concepts and rules ("You should always do it this way.") or manipulateness ("What will I get for doing this?"). Such character flaws undermine genuine expression. Interestingly, the adults who trap a child in a praise mode become trapped themselves, for the child learns how to use situations to get reward or praise for even the simplest acts.

So what builds character in young children? Criticism will not, for it can tear down self-esteem. Praise will not, for it can create permanent addiction to external approval. Fine character tends to be built on meeting simple, straightforward expectations without reward attached. Children who learn the joy of doing what is expected learn to value their own efforts without needing incentive or approval. This requires adults to give children routines as well as new experiences they can complete successfully. Children love a job or a challenge that is within their reach, and a warm acknowledgement of their contribution or effort is sufficient to let them know they did well and they are appreciated. Pride is best when it is self-induced.

This does not mean that adults cannot show interest or enthusiasm to a child, for that is not the same as praise. Think of a child presenting a drawing. An adult who says "This is good" is praising, and the child learns that drawings have value. Now the child may draw to please others or perhaps shy away from drawing for fear of creating a "bad" picture (which many do in later childhood). Either way, the child is no longer expressing genuine feeling in artwork.

An adult who says "What interesting colors!" or "Tell me about this!" is placing no value on the art and is not praising. Such statements place value on the child and on the child's process of creation. In this way the adult is opening a door to interaction, creativity, and pride, all of which are character-building.

## Educational Approach

Questions and Answers: Our present society encourages children to ask questions, to be curious. Yet there are many parents who become suspicious of this in young children. This is no wonder, since often a small child is not really interested in the answers to all those questions. It seems to just be a way to get the parents' attention and control the situation. Actually, by answering children's questions, we may be doing more than just giving them control. We may be taking away control at the same time!

When we feel obligated to answer every question, we give the child a hidden message: "Knowledge and

understanding are outside of yourself. Answers are always external." This can rob the child of a sense of authority and true curiosity, setting up a life-long pattern of being dependent on "experts" and external authority. You can see this in individuals and groups who demand and rely on government or technology to provide answers. This is a far cry from the kind of character revealed by those who know the strength and assurance of their own authority, as exemplified by entrepreneurs and self-starting neighborhood crime-prevention groups -- people who make use of their own resources.

How should questions be handled and when should they be answered? That depends on the nature of the question and circumstance and the age of the child. There can be no formula for this, but the considerations above should give some guidelines. Perhaps before answering a child's questions, it would help for the adult to ask some internal questions: Does the child really need this answer? Is an external answer the best way to handle this? Could the child find out the answer by investigation or observation?

What sensitive parents have discovered is that children who are not provided with answers to many questions come into their adolescence with a sense of authority and inquisitiveness. This is quite different from the typical young person who is often apathetic and argumentative.

**Physical Learning:** Early Childhood is the time for learning to be at a physical level. This is obvious to one who observes young children, yet often it is forgotten at critical times. At this stage, children relate to people and objects with their senses and their large muscle groups. Parents and educators accept this for the most part, until they see a child do something "antisocial," such as pushing another child or not sharing a toy. Often adults make a big fuss over such instances, seeing in them motives that are unacceptable in grown-up society. However, to a young child, this is just part of physical expression. Trying to make children of this age conform to adult protocol is inconsistent logic. Perhaps not sharing is perfectly natural; perhaps an occasional push or shove is natural. Perhaps by letting children work out many of their physical processes without adult interference is natural as well.

Physical learning can enhance character development at this stage through learning and performing repetitive actions. When a child knows the proper procedure for setting a table or cleaning a room, a sense of pride and autonomy is instilled. Repetitive actions just for fun (such as singing) help build memory and logic, but when it also means "helping out" the child gains the added advantage of feeling important within the family. This is not unusual in farm families and pre-industrial societies, where everyone has a job to do in the smooth working of the home.

**Curriculum:** Our society has many day care and preschool facilities. Curriculum varies, as does atmosphere, intent, and instructional practices. In light of the theme of this work, what would a parent look for to complement the sensing and character training begun in the home? First, there would be a recognition of the child's primary learning mode, imitation, and how that requires the adults on staff to exemplify mature behavior. Second, there would be emphasis on physical, active learning, with much time spent on art, music, dance, gymnastics, construction, and repetitive actions. Third, there would be a



respect for the child's intuitive abilities and tendencies (without catering to whims). In this way the natural instincts are encouraged.

The fourth area of the curriculum is vital yet so sensitive that it may have to "stay at home" and be handled only by parents. This is the area of massage. Children not only need to actively touch their world; they need to be touched as well. Just as learning to balance one's body has implications for later learning, so does having one's body massaged relate to later intellectual development. How? Because the body and mind are part of one system, and when the young child's body is massaged, the entire thinking mechanism is massaged through neural stimulation. After all, thinking is not exclusively a brain activity. When properly trained, the whole body participates in thinking; this is a basic principle in "special needs" and "right brain" education. Massage can be a critical aspect of training the body to participate in thinking.

## SOCIALIZATION & GUIDANCE PATTERNS

### Parenting Patterns

In the first years of a child's life, parents very naturally carry the spirit of Blessing. They feel blessed, and they give blessing to the little one in their care. But blessing is more than a pleasant feeling toward another. It includes the realization of the size of their responsibility and the realization that they must begin to instill a sense of self-responsibility in the child. While the child is so young, this takes the form of discipline. This is not to be confused with irrational punishment or a systematic plan of rewards. Discipline, as the root "disciple" infers, has more to do with teaching by example, naturally expecting the child to follow the course set by the parent, both in physical action and in emotional tone -- accounting for the unique personality of the child, but not letting youthful whims and tantrums turn the parents into slaves. Remembering that children at this stage learn by physical contact, parents can firmly yet calmly give them physical messages that bring them "back in line." Without an atmosphere of anger or shame, parents can let young children know who is in charge, and that unconsciously reassures them that the design and control of the family is intact, and that gives them a sense of safety: "Mommy and Daddy have everything under control -- even me. So I know they can take care of me. If they couldn't control me, how could I trust them to be able to take care of me?"

One of the primary ways in which parents offer blessing and discipline is in their role of "guardian angel." The young child has no real understanding of what information is useful and what is potentially destructive or fear-producing. There is an open heart that accepts everything, which in the world of today is rather dangerous. So it is up to parents to filter the experiences of the child, acting as guardian angels for the subconscious. Later, preschool and primary teachers will join in this, always aware that the child needs training to become his or her own guardian angel.

Another way in which parents can offer blessing and training has to do with respecting the child's

intuitive powers. The child will sense something about every person and setting, and that sensing will possibly have a more lasting impact than the events that take place. Parents can be sensitive to this, using their own sense of empathy to "tune in" to the quality of experience going on in the child, then offering protection or explanation as needed.

This can be critical when you consider how often adults put on a "front" in public. A child might sense that what someone says is not really how they feel, and this can be confusing. For instance, parents may tell the child that Uncle Fritz is special, deserving trust and love, but the child senses something about Uncle Fritz that is not wholesome or safe. If parents do not acknowledge this themselves, or insist that the child disregard such feelings, the child is being asked to ignore intuition. Enough of these kinds of episodes might cause the child to "turn off" the intuitive powers and become bland and unimaginative, or to withdraw and become skeptical, fearful, or guilt-ridden.

The best prevention for this is for parents to have clarity of self and in their relationship. When there are no "hidden agendas" or mixed messages in the home environment, the child is free to use and develop intuitive powers. This can lead to psychological strength and assurance of character.

## Responsibility

From Foundation through Early Childhood, the parents are the primary care givers. Even when they send their child to day care or preschool, they are actually responsible. Why? Because they are responsible for the choice of care outside the home, but more importantly they are responsible for giving the child a firm base of attitude and disposition. Remember, the child is basically mimicking parental response to the world. So even in away-from-home settings, the child has no real tools for perceiving and acting except for what parents have instilled. No teacher, doctor, friend, or family member can be relied upon for supplying authority at these stages. Only parents know whether their atmosphere and behavior are equipping the child for the world "out there."

## Society and Community Involvement

At this time, family and friends can come closer; again, not for advice and counsel, but for support and friendship. Besides being sources of assistance, these individuals will give the child initial glimpses of the range of adult expression. This makes their role crucial, for they provide a safety net for the parents and the child.

At some point day care or preschool may be considered. Sensitive parents will seek out the finest adults and settings possible for this. Again, atmosphere is vital, and it needs to be considered before any other aspect of the facility. It is wise to think of these as support mechanisms for parents, rather than

educational settings for raising the child or providing character training. Even the finest preschool can only foster what parents have established already, since the child is still mainly a reflection of that.

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# MIDDLE CHILDHOOD

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

### Growth Patterns

This stage is marked by some rather startling and noticeable changes. The adult teeth are making an appearance, which alters the facial features. The thymus, an endocrine gland that provided natural immunity before the lymph system had built up antibodies, begins to atrophy. The child's body is now "on its own" to remain pure. This correlates with the diminishing of the "angelic" appearance of the younger years. Also, the eyes finish developing, and eyesight is now as good as a normal adult. (This is a point to note: in today's world, we have children learn to read from two to five years before their eyesight is developed to full capacity. This could well be a vital factor in reading difficulties and in the large number of children needing corrective lenses.) This is definitely a "talk" stage, as noted earlier. Speech expands rapidly, and the ability to express complex ideas grows immensely.

### Nutrition

The nutritional principles discussed in the section on early childhood still apply. Now, however, there are added factors for parents and educators to note. With the child out of the house and direct parental supervision more and more, some formal nutrition education needs to be given. School lunches, after-school snacks, and other eating activities need guidance and forethought. With pressure from peers and TV, children can become exposed and susceptible to a wide range of unhealthy choices. Prevention works best, through education and the development of pride in healthy living. Adults can hold a relatively strict line, and limiting what comes home from the supermarket to sit in cupboards is one way to do it. Remember, the thymus is slowing its activity, and the child no longer has natural immunity. Building a strong immune system requires proper nutrition.

## PSYCHO-SOCIAL & CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

### Developmental Urges & Tasks

With natural, innocent purity coming to an end, the child is urged toward self-purification. In physical terms, this means building a strong immune system, In psychological terms, it means leaving behind the purely subconscious world of imitation and entering the more conscious realm of self-authority. Purity of heart does not come easily or automatically any longer; it must be maintained by the expression of

assurance, courage, and willingness to try new things. Also related to this is the sudden increase in the desire to relate to others socially and feel a sense of belonging. You can see evidence of this in the number of youngsters who join clubs and teams and have "best friends" at this age.

Erikson described this stage as a time to develop industry. This would mean proving one's value, ability, and loyalty. Again, this relates to maintaining purity, for the reverse of industry is inferiority or low self-esteem. This is the root of many "impure" behaviors at this age, including disrespect, laziness, bullying, and vandalism.

## Sense Development

Older children are compelled to develop their feeling or exploring realm, and senses now begin to take on both literal and metaphorical meaning:

- taste begins to be transformed from gathering flavors to cultivating interests and a sense of fineness, as in specialized hobbies;
- warmth is transformed from a "getting" sensation to a giving one, as in caring for a pet or looking out for a friend; and
- vision begins to transform from passive reception to active, radiant imaging, as in envisioning plans or how another person lives and feels.

Listening is not easily developed during this stage, as many parents and teachers will testify, and it actually does not refine a great deal during this stage. However, as the child develops other senses, and learns the value of stillness and inner peace, listening becomes as refined as it can get for now. With the development of these more accurate tools of sensing, the older child is ready for external learning, which is appropriate at this time.

## Character Development

When the child reaches this stage, there is a need to begin more active and concentrated character training. Up to now the child has imitated the actions and attitudes of the adults around, so the behavior was not so much an expression of character as it was a reflection of the character of others. With the advent of this new stage, the child begins to demonstrate a more individuated personality which is less reliant on external influences. Simple compliance is no longer the goal of discipline. Now the goal is to bring out a natural sense of authority or "can-do" that blends with the rhythms and needs of the family.

Utilizing the child's emerging capacity for memory and observation, character development can include numerous practical activities. Choices can be allowed, and the consequences can be reviewed. Chores can be an expected part of daily routine (actually a stepping-up of those repetitive actions developed in early childhood). Plans can be made for a personal activity, or contributed to a family activity. Team sports or clubs can become part of the child's life. All these things help build a sense of authority and the ability to make accurate discernments.

Even with the best of situations, the middle-age child will still experience a period of crisis, most notably around the age of nine. So much is changing, neurologically, hormonally, socially, and mentally, that there will inevitably be moments when the child's internal world feels overwhelming. This may take the form of regression, isolation, rebellion, or any number of other reactions. Proper parental encompassment of this storm may need to take any number of forms: soothing to meet a child's confusion, sternness to meet rebellion, or perhaps non-interference to give the child room to do some inner processing.

## Educational Approach

Middle Childhood and Adolescence include a span of years in which learning is primarily external. It need not always be physical, although there is a need for a balance of motor/tactile development with mental/logical development. Primarily, the emphasis of focus for the child is the external world: "How does it work? Why does it behave that way? What can I do with it?" This is the time for exploration of the environment, through action, numbers, words, movement, and art.

As the older child explores the outer world, there is a need to be able to articulate what is learned. Practical skills are needed, but they need to be introduced and practiced with a recognition of design and purpose. Reading, penmanship, and spelling are practical tools, and as such there is a question as to why they must be imposed. Children will develop the need for these tools, and perhaps that is the time to teach them. Remember, eyesight is not developed until around age eight. Shouldn't reading and writing skills follow such a natural timeline and begin after that? In the meantime, and while learning these skills, why not train children in other language skills such as speech and storytelling. This can help develop memory and a sense of authority.

Children in this stage will benefit from exploring design in the world, through natural patterns (in nature, numbers, maps, and geometry), and through practical sciences (gardening, animal husbandry, anatomy). Even the art, music, and movement of the earlier years can be refined and incorporated into the study of design. (They also can be used in learning to read and write, as many proponents of "right brain" learning will testify.)

Above all, children love to do all these things in the context of human interaction. This is an essential element in the development of character and intellect.

## SOCIALIZATION & GUIDANCE PROCESSES

### Parenting Patterns

During these years, parents can participate with the child in the maintenance of a pure heart and high self-esteem. This gives parents several tasks. First, since the child is moving out of the "naturally adorable" stage, parents need to purge themselves of the notion that the child will or should always be "angelic" in appearance or behavior. Second, they need to be aware of the child's needs to express courage and authority, which means allowing more trust and responsibility. Third, they can begin to share the role of guardian angel with the child, helping him or her make wise choices and reviewing consequences of choices. This involves what Galinsky calls the interpretive role of parents: watching TV programs together, discussing the news, checking out which current movies are acceptable; in other words, helping the child gain a clear-hearted perspective or interpretation of the world. This will influence whether the child will approach the world with an overall positive or negative attitude.

Fourth, and perhaps most important, parents can acknowledge the growing abilities of the child. This gives assurance that all is well, and the child can feel loved even during times of social turmoil and self-awakening. In this way, parents can instill a sense of authority in the child, an authority that is cooperative, so there is no need for coercion or bribery. This is the next natural stage of discipline after teaching by example: inspiring a sense of willingness and ability.

### Responsibility

By the age of eight, the child has begun to exhibit a character that is not so dependent on parental and home atmosphere. Now other adults can have a powerful influence, and that immediately brings them into a sharing of responsibility. Teachers are the most obvious adults in this regard. Also, members of the extended family may take on greater roles if they are willing and able and geographically close. Even club sponsors and team coaches can have a strong influence at this time. However, the bulk of the responsibility is shared between the home and the school, and communication between the two is essential. Often this only happens when the child is performing or behaving inappropriately, with occasional mention of fine achievement. The proper form of communication at this stage is more consistent, relaxed, and anecdotal. In other words, parents and teachers can establish a bond of partnership and friendship that holds the child safe and communicates about all areas of development on a regular basis.

### Society and Community Involvement

The school is the primary social agency for the child. Out of this setting come friendships, clubs, sports, etc. Parents sometimes recognize this and in turn give their support to the school as a neighborhood social center. Through PTA, volunteer programs, sports, and other activities, parents can make the school a vital part of the family's support system.

Grandparents can also play an important role at this time. Whether they are nearby or at a great distance, they can provide critical services to both parent and child (beyond occasional babysitting). Being removed from the direct responsibility to raise the child, they tend to give more non-judgmental attention. Although this may lead to spoiling, it often just gives everyone a break from the routine and helps the child see life from a different perspective. In this way grandparents act as godparents -- adults who sense a strong bond with the child and offer a guidance that is almost subliminal. Of course, others may take on this role, but when grandparents do so, there is a natural ease within the entire family structure.

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# ADOLESCENCE

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

### Growth Patterns

Puberty marks the beginning of this stage. Although we tend to think of this stage in terms of sex hormones and their work on the body and its urges, it is actually a "think" cycle. Thought becomes as crucial a signpost of adolescence as physical changes: teenagers are constantly thinking, about what they feel, what others feel, what they want to do or not do, etc. Also, by this time the thymus has completely atrophied to the size it will remain for the rest of life, which means that the immune system is "on its own." The adult teeth are all in place, with some back molars coming a little later in the cycle. This gives a decidedly more adult appearance.

### Nutrition

Teenagers are notorious for eating poorly, regardless of whether they eat a lot or almost nothing. Parents can combat this in the early years as a preventive measure, although adolescents may choose to ignore sound practices (for a while, at least). However, since the same foods that contribute to health also contribute to clear skin and healthy hair, it is possible to appeal to a teenager's vanity as a way to keep up good nutrition.

## PSYCHO-SOCIAL & CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

### Developmental Urges & Tasks

Although the typical view of teenagers would not seem to verify it, young people at this stage actually harbor a great sense of giving, service, or blessing. Entering a period of great self-realization, they begin to feel stirrings of power and destiny -- making a difference in the world. These feelings are translated into various desires, such as making money, creating art, or helping others. Typically they help their peers, but they also pour this desire to give into team sports, service clubs, and volunteer programs.

Adolescents are also dealing with their new-found sense of intellect and self-consciousness. The compulsion to think can be effectively channelled in service: it gives them something constructive to think about. It also gives them a new arena to find their sense of identity, which Erikson describes as the task of adolescence. True, teenagers need space apart to rediscover their relatedness to things, outside of

family influence. But too much space and reflection can lead to introversion and self-absorption. This tends to magnify what is distorted and confused, and the resulting lack of perspective can lead to morbid thoughts and behavior -- even suicide. So getting "out of themselves" in active service and creativity benefits young people as much as those they serve.

## Sense Development

Teenagers are compelled to develop their sense of clear, precise thought. For this, certain abilities need to develop:

- the sense of appropriate speech, which relates to building vocabulary and a discernment for fine shadings of meaning, as well as a recognition of a proper tone of respect;
- active listening and hearing, which relates to the ability to follow instructions and also the development of empathy, "hearing" both the words and the undertones or body language behind them;
- the sense of thought generation and flow, which relates to keeping a train of thought and avoiding tangents and other errors of thinking; and
- the sense of ego, which relates to the discovery of the individuality and uniqueness of oneself and others.

These skills provide the foundation for true thinking: discernment of purpose, opportunity, and relationship -- knowing when one is in the right place at the right time with the right people, and for the right reason. Armed with these senses, the adolescent can make fine distinctions when processing both external and internal information. This establishes the proper learning mode for the rest of the life cycle.

## Character Development

Before this stage, emotions were quite primitive: the child was happy, sad, angry, silly, etc. Now the emotions develop with vast shadings and subtleties. As the emotions take on this new coloring, there is a need to harness mental energy so that the emotions do not become the dominant factor. Teenagers instinctively know this and pour their passion into activities that are mentally stimulating (at least to them). Sports, academics, cars, beauty and fashion, jobs, gossip, and any one of innumerable other topics may occupy their thoughts and energies. Still, the emotions, as yet unbridled, can creep in at times and turn exuberance into chaos.

In early adolescence, there is a great desire to break away from family identification and move toward

peer identification and self-absorption. These tendencies are healthy, although they can take on rebellious or morbid aspects if parents have not tended to certain matters: nutrition, home atmosphere, respect, and the encouragement of self-authority and pride during childhood.

One critical way in which the young-to-middle teenager will move out of family identification is to feel and express conflict with the opposite-sex parent. Why? Because this is the parent whom the child has wanted to please the most. So the teenager suddenly needs to break this inner sense of obligation to that parent, who represents the bonding-point to the rest of the family. It is not uncommon for a young teenager to project these feelings onto the parent and come out with statements like, "You don't even like me, do you?" What should a sensitive parent do? First, try not to fight back or make the young person feel guilty. Second, encourage a closer connection with the same-sex parent. Third, be alert for ways to keep a connection with the child that do not fall into old habits of relating. Fourth, accept the inevitable.

In later adolescence, the young person has a shift and begins to feel and express conflict with the same-sex parent. This again is natural, but for a different reason than before. This parent represents the role model for adult behavior, and now the child needs to break the inner sense of having to live up to someone else's standards. This is part of the natural progression into adulthood: the desire to discover "my" unique way to meet the world. The sensitive parent will understand this and let the young person make mistakes and "go the long way around" situations without ridicule or judgment. So the parent may have to stand back and watch money being overspent, or employment opportunities get wasted. However, there cannot be any sense of abandoning the child, who is only exploring, perhaps clumsily, the fringes of adulthood. Just the fact that this young person has such a strong sense of self-responsibility at this point is indication that something right is happening in the overall process.

It must be noted here that one of the major reasons for adolescent trauma is the lack of clear-headed, non-judging, actually grown-up adults in their world. In all candor, most people in adult bodies are still carrying around childish and adolescent emotional patterns. They still want to have their own way, and they still throw tantrums (perhaps more sophisticated) when they do not get their way. Children tend to accept this without necessarily noticing at a conscious level. But adolescents know it all too well. They are quite often self-taught experts on human motives and behavior, and they can spot a "phony" in an instant. Parents who have never really grown up and learned to handle their emotions and live graciously with the Creative Process will alienate their teenagers. But watch teenagers gravitate and stick to adults they perceive as having integrity and comfort in their own skin. It should be no surprise: young people need to know that it is fun to grow up and take responsibility, that enjoyment of the adult world is natural. That is exactly what they are looking and listening for in adults, because they need reassurance that it is "worth it" to grow up.

## Educational Approach

More practical skills are needed at this stage, and they can match quite well with the individual's growing

intellectual interests. Math can be as abstract as algebra and trigonometry and as practical as bookkeeping. English can incorporate speech, literature, and composition. Health and nutrition, as mentioned earlier, can be very practical in appealing to teenagers' desire for good looks and stamina. History and geography can be relevant when they focus on human behavior and trends across time and space. Art and industrial arts are also fine tools for learning at this stage.

Vocational training at the high school level has begun to move beyond the "shop class" of previous generations. Now even college-bound students can take advantage of hands-on training in everything from food service to auto mechanics to business office simulation. Home economics classes have also begun to re-format, providing training far beyond simple cooking and sewing to include family budgeting, marriage preparation, and child care training. This kind of instruction is both practical and character building, since it provides skills that are marketable and an opportunity to discover the value of work and forethought.

## SOCIALIZATION & GUIDANCE PROCESSES

### Parenting Patterns

When the child comes into adolescence, parents can offer the spirit or essence of Life. Previously, the child viewed adult life as remote and even mysterious. Now there is a keen interest, even scrutiny, in "grown-up" function. Parents would do well to exhibit the fullness of their adulthood at this time, revealing (as appropriate) the intricacies and radiance of life at its fullest.

This is also a time to be radiant in the sense of offering enlightened reason and guidance, which is the next step on the road to self-discipline. Here, the parent begins to work with the burgeoning mental ability in the child, letting it develop along lines of interest while guiding the processes of rationality and logic. This also means keeping tabs on emotional states which could upset the delicate balance of this new-found intelligence. In a world that seems to encourage criticism and blame, parents can take a firm stance in maintaining a tone of respect in the home. Regardless of the feelings of conflict and anguish, adults who are emotionally mature can establish a "bottom line" with the teenager that enforces mutual respect and rational handling of crises. This can be seen in the "Tough Love" movement, which has healed many families with adult-teen conflict.

### Responsibility

As the child moves further into this stage, the parents should be able to slowly back out of their role of responsibility. This may not always be possible as the world is now. Teenagers need to break ties with the nuclear family. However, there is often no one to turn to for guidance except parents, and with that

choice, many teens choose to bring their thoughts and hearts to their peers. This is ultimately disastrous, for peer counseling can never bring a teenager to a sense of purpose, since purpose is tied in to seeing the "next step" beyond the stage one is presently in.

Some teenagers can bring their world to their parents, who leave their former parental roles to become counselors and guides. Other teens do find someone, often in their twenties or well into later adulthood, to fill this role. This may be a friend, relative, or teacher. Whoever it is, this is the person who has responsibility for the child, and it would be wise for parents to acknowledge and accept this person for their child's sake. True, the parents will continue to be financially and legally responsible, but responsibility for the heart, for the delicate process of guiding mental and emotional energies, now rests with this person and the adolescent. Together, they will begin to unlock the potential that longs to be revealed.

### Society and Community Involvement

During this stage, many people and institutions vie for the young person's attention, and the support network can become very broad or very narrow. Peers offer a certain kind of support, which is natural but somewhat limited, since it lacks the larger perspective which an adult can provide. Teachers and other adults associated with the school can be approachable, and extracurricular activities can offer a wealth of support, mentally and emotionally. Also, many communities run recreation and drop-in centers for young people looking for companionship or athletic challenge.

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# YOUNG ADULTHOOD

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

### Growth Patterns

Now there is full development of the physical form. Body proportions are now fully mature, and muscular strength is potentially at its peak. This is a "walk" stage, in which the individual begins to explore the adult world through a newly completed facility.

### Nutrition

The young adult has probably had a great deal of training in proper nutrition over the years. Now it is time to put it into practice, with no one looking over the shoulder to enforce good habits. Unfortunately, poor habits at this time may only show up in occasional colds, since there may be a large reserve of health left over from childhood. However, those little sniffles can be the warning sign of major problems later in life, for if the body is made to suffer through fast foods and hurried eating long enough, it will start clogging up (in intestinal and arterial blockage) or breaking down (in ulcers or colitis). The best cure is prevention, and that means avoiding convenience and indulgence in favor of quality and good sense.

## PSYCHO-SOCIAL & CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

### Developmental Urges & Tasks

Moving into adulthood, the spirit of single-mindedness (or single eye) comes to focus. There are so many options for the young person, so many choices of seemingly equal benefit. Actually, most of those so-called options are really distractions, because a sense of purpose would dictate much more precise action than just choosing from a social or occupational "menu." Whereas adolescence was a time to gain mastery of the intellect, this is the stage for learning to control the emotions -- to learn tranquility and the ability to listen, outwardly and inwardly. Through this learning, purpose can be more accurately perceived, and subsequent choices of job, relationship, etc. can be appropriate.

Erikson sees this stage as a time to learn how to be intimate rather than isolated. Usually this is seen in terms of boy-girl intimacy leading to marriage. But this urge goes into every area of life: the young adult feels the need to learn how to be intimate and facile with all the details of living, including money and job performance as well as social relationships. This kind of intimacy can only be known as one comes to

know oneself, and that must include the mastering of emotions.

## Sense Development

Once the rudimentary senses are developed, the individual can begin to develop and fine-tune the more subtle senses. This is the time for formal training in the Creative Process and emotional education. Although such training is difficult to find in the world today, it does exist through various group seminars and retreats. Unfortunately, it does not appear in college course offerings, although some elements of it exist in certain non-credit continuing education listings.

How does one determine what might afford emotional education and/or creative process training? The criteria would be one or more positive answers to such questions as: Does this course help me come to grips with my need for stability and assurance? Does it help me learn to process or re-evaluate my attitudes? Does it help me learn to stand back from my feelings and circumstances and see from a larger perspective? Does it help me learn how to participate, take risks, and communicate with others? Does it allow me to make my own decisions, to come face-to-face with myself, rather than force some kind of technique or structure on my thinking and feeling? Does it help me become more effective in discerning what is appropriate and fitting?

Time and stress management courses may help a young adult stay calm in pressure situations. Public speaking courses may help develop confidence and relaxation in social situations. Even mountain climbing and white-water rafting have been used to help adults come to grips with such qualities as teamwork, self-esteem, and personal initiative. Young adults long for a rich quality of experience in their jobs, their social relationships, and all through their lives. These are some of the ways they can come to know it.

## Character Development

This is the stage in which character development is expressed through life skills. This includes occupational skills, surviving-on-your-own skills, and social skills. It is a time for standing on one's own two feet in the Creative Process. Fine character in this stage would reflect a balance of adventurousness and practicality, of respecting convention while exploring personal lifestyle. At this stage, emotions can come under control, to be used by the person instead of the other way around.

A young adult who is "on track" would be able to handle the initial responsibilities of the adult world while living within one's means. This would be exemplified by steady employment, financial stability, and social ease. There would not be any overreaching economically or emotionally, nor would there be any sense of "soap opera" or that the world is overwhelming, unfair, or difficult. The natural drive and

initiative of this stage would not be translated into hurrying or "pushing" natural cycles. The Creative Process would be proved in daily living, and there would be an overall excitement at the possibilities of what it would bring next.

## Educational Approach

The majority of adult learning is concerned with internal processing. Of course, there are job-related and household skills to be learned, but the primary focus is in one's own personal processes. This is not to imply egotism or self-absorption. The individual is concerned to stay attuned with the Creative Process, and this requires "minding one's own business." What others think and feel is taken into account, but ultimately one must learn to move with assurance as integrity dictates, then work with the consequences as they come.

So this is a time for two types of learning: occupational and emotional. The first comes in professional coursework or on-the-job training. The second comes in the types of courses or seminars described earlier, in which individuals apply the Creative Process in special or simulated settings, then evaluate their performance and participation. Many corporations are discovering that these two types of learning go hand-in-hand, employing outdoor adventurers to take junior and even senior executives through rather strenuous activity. When properly supervised and "debriefed," this can help enhance company loyalty, team effort, and overall creativity.

## SOCIALIZATION & GUIDANCE PROCESSES

### Parenting Patterns

As their offspring comes into young adulthood, parents can offer the spirit or wisdom of the womb in a symbolic sense. This may sound strange, but there is a birth taking place: an adult is about to come into the world. For this, the parents give of their wisdom, perhaps in the form of counsel or advice, but mostly in the form of friendship. This means leaving the parenting role as it has been known and discovering a new relationship. Not only is there is wisdom in doing this as far as the parent is concerned, but there is a certain wisdom revealed to the young person as well.

### Responsibility

Moving into the adult years, the individual becomes self-responsible. This is not a time to look back (try to be parented), nor is it a time to try to overreach (try to be responsible for much more than oneself).



There is an urge in the young person to stand on two feet and prove the Creative Process in daily living. That is enough in itself. Ask almost anyone who has tried to start a family or run a large business while still in their early twenties, and you will hear how difficult it can be. Self-responsibility is a tall enough order, requiring much more care than one might imagine.

## Society and Community Involvement

Most likely, the young adult has left not only home but neighborhood and city as well. An entirely new support network must be created. New friendships form, often centered around one's work environment, although other alternatives do present themselves. Aside these new friends, the young adult comes to experience a new kind of relationship with colleagues and superiors. These are the ones who will influence the work ethic and the possibility of future achievement. Colleagues can reinforce in each other the desire and ability to let the Creative Process work through to completion. Superiors can inspire the vision of how consistency and integrity will lead to expansion of ability and responsibility.

Because of the importance of the workplace, the young adult would be wise to observe carefully and learn its unspoken and informal "rules." This is not an encouragement to "learn the system" in order to take advantage of it for self-gain, but to take advantage of the setting to learn the ways of the world and to learn to read character in others. The knowledge that comes from this can help the young adult make wise choices of words and actions in both professional and personal life.

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# MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

### Growth Patterns

This stage has its physical markings, but they come about slowly, almost sneakily. Body hair may increase; scalp hair may decrease. But more importantly, there are internal changes that can have critical effects. As the body becomes more "efficient" (not needing to produce extra hormones, cells, and energy for growth), there is a natural concurrent lowering of appetite. If this is not respected, the body will be given more food than it needs, and overweight and sluggishness will ensue. Similarly, with the increased efficiency, the individual has (potentially) more stamina than ever, and this can be maintained all through this stage. This is a "talk" period of life, active and achieving, but there needs to be care that the talk is matched with enough muscle movement and emotional equilibrium to stay healthy.

### Nutrition

What applies to young people also applies to adults. They can abuse their sense of self-responsibility and load up on whatever they please, or they can let the Creative Process work here as well, guiding them to a sense of fitness of quantity and quality. As mentioned above, a heightened sensitivity is needed, for the metabolism is changing -- actually becoming more efficient -- and food intake should be adjusted accordingly.

If wise eating habits were not followed earlier in life, the body may start giving its owner messages of disease. Heartburn, ulcers, colitis, high blood pressure -- all these and more are at least partially caused by poor diet and poor digestion. Because of this, many adults have turned to intestinal cleansing to restore balance to their systems. Still, nothing beats prevention, which includes nourishing food, properly prepared and eaten with a light and thankful spirit.

## PSYCHO-SOCIAL & CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

### Developmental Urges & Tasks

As one moves into their thirties, a more consistent lifestyle and personality has formed. There is less searching and more a sense of achieving. This is a perfect setting for the urge toward what Erikson called generativity, or the spirit of the new earth. In this mode, the individual is ready to "spread wings" and

"conquer the world." However, patience is needed at this time. There has been much preparation, and it seems that all the learning is over and it must be time to get on with great things. But learning is not over. Patience brings a fuller sense of life purpose, one's own and in partnership with a spouse. Patience is also needed to see each creative process through to completion.

The midlife crisis is the perfect example of what happens when patience is not in place. Here the adult runs out on the Creative Process, dissatisfied with how things seem to be working out. This leads to the stagnation that Erikson noted in neurotic adults. A truly mature person at this stage has the willingness to persevere, to iron out rough spots, and to be flexible rather than frustrated and disappointed. Greener pastures do not exist. Fulfillment starts with accepting and loving circumstances just as they are.

### Sense Development

Having trained and incorporated the fundamental and fine sensing mechanisms, the mature adult is in position to actively "make it" in the world. This individual can and does sense what is fitting, then acts upon that sense. Integrity is expressed, rather than preferences. The main sense being developed now is finesse -- not a phony sophistication, but a concern to make finer and finer distinctions and to create with more and more accuracy.

With years of experience comes the ability to sense larger and longer creative cycles. This is extremely helpful when watching one's child grow up or reviewing one's career. All the stages and phases and transitions can be seen as parts of a much larger drama, and this kind of perspective can give the mature adult the beginnings of wisdom, as well as a more relaxed approach to all the achieving that seems to be needed.

### Character Development

The character of a mature adult is marked by relaxation and potency. The individual at this stage, fully integrated with the Creative Process (no longer "proving" it), exhibits a comfort with the environment, regardless of who or what inhabits it. Family life is stable yet dynamic. Occupational life is fulfilling and expansive. There is comfort with people of all ages and all positions: there is no feeling of arrogance around the less mature and no sense of awkwardness around the more substantial. There is only proper respect for all.

Being at ease in the process, where there is no sense of need or want, one has space in consciousness to discern what is fitting for the sake of the entire outworking, not just to benefit oneself. This is not a mental activity so much as it is a knowing that comes from experience in letting the Creative Process work all the way to fulfillment. Once fittingness is perceived, action is automatic, without excuse or

rationalization. However, there would naturally be a sense of coordination with others, for a mature adult would not be arbitrary or insensitive. Thus it is reasonable to expect this adult to be an effective communicator regarding the Creative Process. Spouses, colleagues, superiors, and friends would all be included, as appropriate.

People often speak about how flexible little children are, how they seem to bounce both literally and figuratively. Then they will speak about how rigid adults are. Yet if you observe young children, and even teenagers, you will see that they are the rigid ones. Young people have limited perspective and thought processes, so they set up rigid expectations. When those expectations are not met, emotional trauma ensues. It may be that children need their "rubber" bones to buffer them from their own headstrong impacts against life's realities. On the other hand, truly mature adults know how to change plans, how to be diplomatic, and how to be appropriate in the social context. They are the ones who are really flexible, provided they have learned to be in harmony with the Creative Process. It is this ability to be flexible yet still effective that marks the adult who is gaining wisdom and stature.

In our present society, few adults have come through previous life stages fully integrated in character formation. Neuroses are prevalent, and many are considered acceptable -- "battle scars" in the growing up and coping process. But many adults are not willing to live with such scars and gaps in personality. Note the many "self improvement" books and courses on the market. From Werner Erhard's est training to Leo Buscaglia's lectures on affection, adults are seeking to take care of what has been called "unfinished business." This is the best time of life to do this, for now there can be a larger perspective than in young adulthood, and there is more of a sense of what damage has been caused by interrupted cycles. Deep change is possible because there is enough maturity now to sense how much one is "straight-jacketed" by old patterns of attitude and behavior. While all this is commendable and sometimes even essential for full character development, middle adults need to beware of becoming self-improvement "junkies," becoming so enamored with healing personal wounds that they neglect their own responsibility to steward creative rhythms at home and work.

## Educational Approach

Educationally, mature adults need skills for administering larger creative cycles. Such individuals find themselves with increasing responsibilities in all areas of their lives, and they are often called upon to oversee, supervise, or create things and events. Some additional formal instruction may be needed, especially if they are outside one's specialized training or experience. However, much of the learning at this stage can be self-taught, since a mature adult is attuned with the Creative Process well enough to grasp the way the world works, even in unfamiliar situations. Nothing is ever overwhelming. Indeed, mastery in the Creative Process brings a sense of world governance -- not in a political sense, but in the sense of recognizing one's role as steward.

## SOCIALIZATION & GUIDANCE PROCESSES

### Parenting Patterns

When the offspring reaches full adulthood, parents can know the fullness of love -- a sense of completion of the parenting cycle, with affection and pride for the "finished product." They feel fellowship with this grown friend who is now fully functioning with purpose and honor. Their bond is more than familial: it is partnership grounded in a shared sense of responsibility for mature action, regardless of differences in occupations or interests.

### Responsibility

Moving out of the self-absorbed twenties, the individual comes to recognize an ability and willingness to be responsible for more than just personal activity. Managing a family, a business, or any other endeavor is much easier now. At a stage beyond self-responsibility, the individual senses the urge to be of service to others. Thus begins a long career of offering one's talents and energies into the social whole. Fulfillment comes not so much in position or money as in knowing that a job was done with integrity, creativity, and initiative.

### Society and Community Involvement

The support network and the middle adult are mutually nourishing during this stage. Maturity has brought the ability to be of service, so those who offer support also receive support by this individual. Family, friends, community, and profession are all included in the world this adult encompasses. Sometimes it may seem like a lot to juggle, but priorities are maintained and everyone receives the attention and care that is needed. As this individual is closely attuned to the Creative Process, there is a natural sensitivity to where attention must be given in each moment.

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# ELDER YEARS

## PHYSICAL FACTORS

### Health Patterns

This stage is noted for its decrease in physical strength and stamina. However, we probably have little idea what is possible if nutrition, exercise, and emotional stability have been the rule up to this point. Elders are in a "think" stage, and they do not need to use their bodies inordinately. However, they may be much more robust (without great exertion) than we presently think they can be. It all depends on what has gone before and the preparation and dignity with which they approach this time.

### Nutrition

This stage reveals the culmination of all previous habits in diet. Along with disposition, diet can contribute to elder years full of vigor. Health is a natural state; disease is the evidence of unnatural impositions on health. There is no reason why this should not be so in regard to persons of mature years. Of course, some physiological processes must be given careful consideration during this stage. Osteoporosis is a familiar condition, caused by the leaching of calcium from the bones, making them more porous and brittle. So absorbable calcium intake should be adjusted. Menopause may also require some dietary shifts to account for chemical changes. Other examples could be given, but all conditions can be met with conscientious diet and a healthy disposition.

## PSYCHO-SOCIAL & CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

### Developmental Urges & Tasks

The urges of life come full circle, and this stage, like the first, contains the seeds of love. However, this love is full-blown, a culmination of all the experience, wisdom, and virtues that have been accumulated. Full integration of personality brings one once again to a simple sense of Being, but now with more innocence than any child and more potency of expression than any younger adult. At this stage, love and wisdom are expressed through one's very presence, not by achievement or demonstration of ability.

Erikson also speaks of this stage containing the compulsion to integrate experience and personality. This is seen as the elder's best hope against despair and loneliness. However, one who has spent a lifetime coming into alignment with the Creative Process cannot help but integrate -- he or she is full of integrity.

Such a mature adult is not battling against despair; this person is too busy being useful and productive, too full of a sense of purpose and design to be bothered with the feelings of dejection that may arise.

## Sense Development

The older adult rightly moves from finesse with the material world to fine-tuning the ability to discern subtle essences of situations. The concern now is for noting and following the invisible rhythms through which the creative expression flows naturally. In attunement with these rhythms, it almost seems that results appear for this person just by being. Expression is effortless, possibly quite practical and matter-of-fact. But actually it is quite potent, because behind the words and acts is a deep recognition of how everything fits together with perfection and harmony -- letting the Creative Process work.

The elder has a very different sense of time, of what each moment contains. Time seems to be elongated, now that the rush of accomplishment is over. This contributes to the aura of wisdom elders project. It also can make them excellent companions for young people, who have yet to know the contraction of time in the adult world. Many preschools and elementary schools have adopt-a-grandparent programs, and many teenage "candystripers" have found great fun and reward in working with elders in hospitals and nursing homes. Elders have time to share with everyone.

## Character Development

With a lifetime of experience in the Creative Process, and the stability of character that naturally elicits, the elder exudes wisdom and compassion. A sense of simple and powerful being is present, and this takes the place of former achieving. There is absolute dignity in the elder -- not haughty, but assured and completely accepting of life's rhythms. As life draws to a culmination, the elder knows that all is well. Fear of infirmity and death may arise, but not enough to sway this person from continuing as a living symbol of sweet and effective movement with the Creative Process.

If this is so, why is it that in our society there is so little regard for the elderly? And why are there so many older people living in fear, neglect, infirmity, and despondency? The answers are many. First, there is no respect for the Creative Process; most people think decay and death are the only factors in old age, and they do not want to be associated with it. Second, the experience previous to old age has almost insured misery: poor nutrition, the harboring of ill feelings and attitudes, lack of care for the body, and a refusal to completely grow up emotionally.

It is interesting to note two authoritative views on senility. One states that senility is mainly attributable to lack of oxygen over a long period of time; simply put, the brain has been slowly starving. The other view states that senility is the childish personality that never matured, but was only covered up by a "grown-up act" that is crumbling because there is no longer the mental, physical, and emotional strength to keep it

up. In either view, there is indication of a lack of dignity and self-worth that had been going on for some time. In other words, the Creative Process has been ignored at certain levels, and the fulfillment of life's design and purpose has been thwarted.

The elder years are meant to be the "fire" cycle of the life process, the harvest of a long and generous sowing. This would be reflected in the heart, not so much in outer activity (although there may still be a considerable amount of that, too). To witness this in an older person is to know that life on earth is truly fulfilling and purposeful. In this light, even death may be met creatively, and the process of dying can be a time of thankfulness for the completion of a life work. For those who remain, bereavement is appropriate when it is balanced with appreciation for the process and the design that can bring fulfillment to the life cycle.

## Educational Approach

As in the stage before, learning is self-induced. Since there is a gradual lessening of emphasis on managing/administrating material processes and events, the elder begins to translate the sense of governance and stewardship in more subtle ways, having to do with personal rhythms and how they tie into world rhythms as well as archetypal rhythms. This is a time of "learning" what full humanness means, consciously and subconsciously. It is a time of "learning" how to integrate experience, thought, and feeling so that one is an effective and radiant example of fulfillment, right up to the end of the life cycle.

In practical terms, many elders find themselves very active in the learning process. Some seek degrees once childrearing and professional commitments are over. Elderhostels are convened on college campuses every summer, offering relaxed and congenial learning settings for this age group. In these, elders can learn for pleasure and pursue new or lifelong interests with experts in the field. Needless to say, everyone benefits.

## SOCIALIZATION & GUIDANCE PROCESSES

### Responsibility

As achievement gives way to simple being, the elder graciously gives up the feeling of being responsible for running the world in a material sense. Now the sense of responsibility is found in being a resource and an inspiration to others. Simple acts are the avenues to this as much as great triumphs in some field of endeavor.

As this stage progresses, the responsibility for physical care may rightly pass on to others -- family or group living. There need be no sense of imposition on the part of younger people, nor sense of shame on the part of the older. For if this elder is still letting the Creative Process be exemplified, everyone



recognizes that although physical needs may need assistance, there is something offered in return that is beyond price.

## Society and Community Involvement

In the later years, there is a new kind of mutual support system. Since physical achievement is receding, the support given by an elder comes more and more in the form of nurturing and inspiring younger people. As this process increases, so does the need to provide care for the elder. As stated earlier, there is no sense of burden in doing this, for there is great appreciation for the essences this person carries, even if physical and material means are diminishing. This holds true all the way to the end of the life cycle, when mutual support and appreciation reach their highest awareness.

Housing for the elderly is a concern in many communities as well as many families. A rich variety of options is becoming available, from communal group homes to luxury retirement communities to temporary cottages that can be set up in a suburban back yard. For the infirm, ideas from around the world are being brought together to create enabling environments. These are housing plans that allow those assigned to wheelchairs or beds to live with maximum dignity and independence, yet still allowing inclusion in the family or community. In all these options, there is a recognition that it is important to have elders around, not shut out of society in institutions. Elders have invaluable gifts which can only be known when the heart of our society is open to receive them.

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## Working with the Subconscious

When John and I hosted parent/educator seminars, we always included the topic of subconscious symbolism. Our favorite way to do this was through Grimm fairy tales.

Rather than write children's fiction, the Grimm brothers compiled stories that had been part of Germanic oral literature for many generations. What stories grew out of that culture and why? And why have similar stories evolved in other cultures? And why do children continue to ask for these stories over and over? Are they listening for something instructive or reassuring under the surface?

Besides being colorful and/or moralistic, some psychologists think folk stories contain hidden messages that need to be imparted to each generation. These messages are a part of the culture's "collective unconscious."

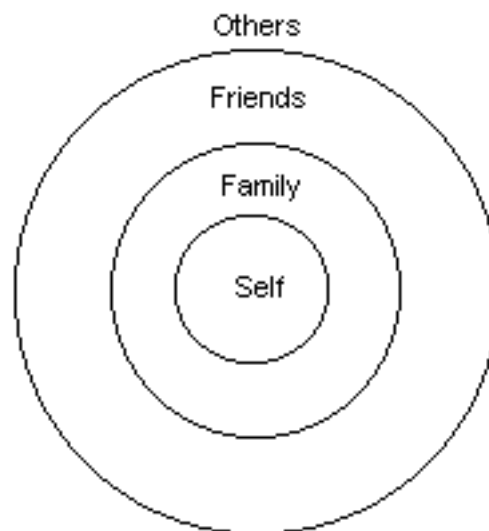
So we would present a couple of stories. At different times, we used *Iron John*, or *Jack and the Beanstalk* to study male development and *The Three Tasks*, *Sleeping Beauty*, or *Cinderella* to study female development. After reading the stories aloud, we encouraged participants to find symbolism for characters and events. Then we would ask them to assess the "life lessons" that such symbols might convey to young children -- lessons about what to expect at later stages of life, lessons about how to meet various types of challenges, lessons about how various aspects of one's own personality work in relation to each other. (This last one is especially revealing when you look at all the characters in a story as facets of yourself.)

# SEX EDUCATION

This is a tender area, not so much because it is controversial as because it relates to such a powerful and creative aspect of human life. It is rarely handled with the finesse it requires, since few understand the power and creativity that is possible -- or the destructiveness of its misuse. Sex is more than an act or a feeling, and its handling needs to be more than an attitude. Sex involves an entire principle of living, and in it is a key to fulfillment and personal effectiveness in all areas of life. Let's take a look at that principle.

To begin with, think of sex, in the symbolic sense, as pervading all areas of human function: people have "love affairs" with their jobs, their cars, their homes, their spouses, their children, their neighborhoods, their pets, even their clothes. This is not meant to be facetious; in a symbolic sense, this is simply fact. This grand love affair takes on many shadings of appropriateness, as it should, yet it is all a part of one's love for life and its inhabitants, both animate and inanimate. This, in the broadest sense, is sex.

Obviously, we don't have the same feelings or relationships with our car as we do with our spouse. Some people and things seem to be right up next to us, others further away, both in how we feel about them and in how they feel about us. It becomes important to have an accurate sense of where each person and thing belongs, according to the mutuality of the relationship. This is illustrated in the "Rings of Intimacy" below.



Have you ever wished a certain person or object was closer to you, even right by your side? Have you ever wished someone or something further away? We may not realize it, but such feelings affect our relationship with everyone and everything in our "orbit."

It has been said that the way a man shaves in the morning is a reflection of his attitude toward sex. So is the way he treats his mother and his dog. After all, each person is an entire ecology, the center of many rings of intimacy, and how we behave or feel about something on one ring affects every other thing on every other ring -- a ripple effect on the illustration above. If that is difficult to grasp, take a simple example: the quantity and quality of what you eat for lunch will determine your ability to function in many areas for the rest of the day -- even areas that have little direct connection with food. The approach to sex is much the same. It relates to one's entire ecology, and thus sex education is necessarily related to much more than birds and bees. It deals with one's relationship to all things, although it does come down to human interaction.

So having an appropriate relationship with each person and thing is a crucial element in the area of sex. What is an appropriate relationship? There is no fixed answer, but it would be appropriate according to the Creative Process -- no controlling or being controlled, just letting each relationship find its own balance and movement. Change is inevitable, and our ability to let the rings of intimacy move freely will say a lot about our understanding of sex.

Seeing how vast the field is, sex education would rightly begin at the beginning. As parents exemplify proper respect and care for each other, the child absorbs that (both in the womb and later). Beyond that, who is responsible for training the child in this area? The answer is: the same ones who are responsible for character training at each stage. The person responsible for attunement in the Foundation and Gestation stages would also need to be on hand for the pre-parents. Later the parents would be on hand for the child. This is not particularly meant to be instruction in sexual function, but what might be called training in intimacy.

Intimacy training would involve learning to sense the rhythms of the Creative Process in relation to another person. Communication would be a large part of this: learning to speak from the heart, to listen with the heart, to read silences and body language. Training in intimacy would mean learning to be so stable in oneself that another person can be heard and included with complete openness. Such training could be life-changing, even world-changing, for intimacy is one of the most delicate acts of harmonizing with creative rhythms, requiring of us all a deep sense of inner attunement.

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# CEREMONY

This topic requires a special section, for it can bring together the elements of home and community in a most impactful way. Ceremony is the marriage of conscious and subconscious, taking a worldly event and clothing it with symbolic or "heavenly" meaning. Human beings have demonstrated the need and love for ceremony in all cultures and in all eras. From the Australian aborigine "walkabout" (which can take months of self-survival in a desert) to the common high school graduation, from christenings to weddings to funerals, we humans create ceremony to celebrate the turning points in our lives.

Ceremony requires certain elements: purpose, participants, symbols, action, and atmosphere. Each element is specific to the culture and the occasion, yet some conclusions can be drawn:

**Purpose:** The purpose of ceremony is to recognize or commemorate a transition in someone's life. Examples of significant transitions are: conception, birth, entrance into school, the receiving/acceptance of godparents or guides, entrance into adulthood, entrance into a profession, marriage, and death. Smaller transitions may also have fitting ceremonies, such as departure for and return from a journey, elevation to a higher position in one's profession, or losing a first tooth.

**Participants:** The participants have an important part to play, so they should be chosen with care. Since each transition has its own "flavor," it is not possible to outline what is fitting here. However, there would most likely be representation from each of these three areas: family (immediate only or extended), community (neighborhood, school, profession, friends), and spiritual leadership (clergy, elder, attunement guide). These areas cover the spectrum of an individual's life experience, and thus need to be represented so that there is a sense that the "whole" person has made the transition.

**Symbols:** Ceremonial symbols are the element which distinguishes this event from a casual party or get-together. A symbol can be any object, sound, or movement that all participants agree represents something about the transition being celebrated. Many symbols have traditional meanings, such as wedding bands or the graduation "Pomp and Circumstance" music. However, symbols can be created or improvised, for anything can be "charged" with symbolic meaning by the agreement of those concerned.

**Action:** Ceremonial action can often be ritualistic. The traditional wedding ceremony is a good example of this: it has specific words and a particular sequence of motions. One might think of this kind of action as a drama, and this would be an accurate analogy. Traditional, ritualistic ceremonies have been thought of as re-enactments of "cosmic" dramas by many cultures. This relates to the idea that we function with subconscious archetypes in the back of our minds, and these guide our actions, particularly at times of symbolic significance.

The notion of proving oneself is just as important in some ceremonies as the rituals and the honoring by the participants. This is true in rites of passage, but it is also true to some extent in the ceremonies of

marriage, graduation, and birth. This proving is a powerful motivator, causing people to endure much physical and mental exertion in order to receive the recognition of the community and justify the "right" to move into the next stage.

**Atmosphere:** This is perhaps the most important aspect of ceremony. At some point in every ceremony, through symbolic words and motions, and particularly through the presence of the one who represents spirit, there is a sense of the sacred. Whether it is an elegant church wedding, the opening of the Olympic Games, or a grueling trial of strength, behind it all there is a recognition that this is a sacred and holy event. Human beings yearn for this experience, although many moderns are almost embarrassed by it for lack of familiarity with it. Still, this is the feeling that is most desired, and planners and participants do everything to bring it about. This is quite appropriate, for if design and purpose are ever going to be honored, it will be in ceremony; and if ceremony is going to truly honor anything, it must contain stillness and reverence so that the "tone" and beauty of life can come through.

After sacredness has fulfilled its purpose, joyous celebration can follow. This is a "cooling down" or release of the deeper energies into a more relaxed pattern. This is appropriate, although there is often a dissipation of finer essences through over-indulgence (intoxication, coarseness). This is unfortunate, for in the revelry the symbolic meaning and purpose get lost. When celebration is in keeping with the significance of the event, it becomes a welcome extension of the special time.

## Innovation

Although our society has many occasions for ceremony, some transitions get by-passed. For instance, entrance to puberty has been marked in many cultures by "rites of passage," in which young people were inducted into the adult community. These rites included some or all of the elements of music, movement, chant, and ordeal. Western society today does not recognize puberty as the beginning of adulthood, and young people most often do not have a symbolic honoring of that natural transition. It is as if it had no significance, or society could not figure out a significance for it. Thus there is a subconscious message given to adolescents: "We don't know what you mean or what you are here for." Graduation is not a substitute, for it comes later and honors a different kind of transition. So the compulsion to prove oneself, to be recognized as a special part of the fabric of society, gets ignored, and at a symbolic level, the young person starves.

It could well be that some very beautiful and needed ceremonies have yet to be created. It may also be possible that traditional ceremonies may need replacing, not by new traditions but by creating ceremonial symbols and procedures that fit just the people involved in that moment. As more and more humans come into attunement with the Creative Process and have finer sensings for how to clothe design and purpose, there may be a resurgence in the creation of ceremony. Perhaps we are all responsible for being creators, in this field and many, many more.

## Application

One of the finest ways to become aware of the usefulness of ceremony is to work with one of the simplest and most routine transitions of all: moving from wakefulness to sleep. This transition is not as mundane as it may seem, and it would do adults well to explore this for themselves. A quiet time to consciously relax, review, and let the day's activities subside in thankfulness, rather than "crashing" into bed, can result in better sleep and a more alert awakening. It may also help increase one's sensitivity to the rhythms of the Creative Process, as patterns of relatedness and connection come to mind in these moments of stillness. Without emotional involvement, cycles and their transition points can begin to clarify and resolve. This can be especially useful at times of intensity, when it seems that decisions must be made or there is a need for perspective. Establishing a routine with this kind of peaceful ceremony may be invaluable for health and character development.

Children give an indication of just how significant such an evening transition can be. Those who have a story, backrub, or quiet chat before bedtime often have a more relaxed attitude about going to sleep and a more sound sleep rhythm. It seems to help settle their hearts as they give control to someone who is strong and trustworthy while they drift out of wakefulness. Childhood fears and worries can dissolve, and rest can be deep and refreshing. For younger children, all this can be communicated through touch, word, and song. For older children, issues can be addressed more directly. Parents can listen to what is troubling or confusing and can actually "absolve" feelings of guilt and hurt. Parents can also occasionally take this opportunity of the child's open-heartedness to "wipe the slate clean" of past misconduct, known and unknown. In this way they act as intercessors for hearts that still need protection and nurturance, while teaching the value and power of forgiveness.

There is a wealth of untapped power in the deeper recesses of human consciousness, which can only be revealed through the language of the heart, or what psychologists call the subconscious. There is no better way to speak that language than through the magic and symbols, the art and science, of ceremony. This may have greater implications than we can currently imagine. For no matter how much we may prize clear thinking and noble achievement, a resilient and understanding heart may be the most powerful instrument in our lives.

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## **SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SHAMAN:**

### **THE CASE FOR SECULAR SPIRITUAL EDUCATION**

A couple, previously non-religious but suddenly in awe of their newborn, want something akin to a christening ceremony; not knowing where to turn, they drop the idea. Two parents realize their child is entering adolescence and want to honor the transition; they settle for giving a gift and a store-bought card. High school sweethearts are thinking about marriage; neither of the skeptical families can afford counseling and no one has church affiliation; the couple elopes, and two years later they divorce.

These are not uncommon scenarios. Our society is full of stories about people in transition, in turmoil, in decision-making situations. What many of these stories have in common is a secularism that leaves the protagonists in a sort of moral limbo. They sense that some action or guidance would be appropriate, but they have nowhere to turn. The clergy is out of the question, for they have no ties to religion. Counseling is out of the question, either because it costs too much, has a stigma attached, or because what they are sensing is not really a psychological problem so much as a turning point to be considered or honored. What these people seek is a guide, a person of wisdom -- a person of spirit.

Wisdom does not necessarily reside in family elders (who are most likely hundreds of miles away), and most likely not in friends who are in the same life stage as the questioner. Counselors and therapists possess expertise, but that is no guarantee of wisdom or an ability to offer spiritual guidance.

#### WHAT IT IS:

attunement (energy balancing, alignment to calm, clear & heighten awareness)

perception/purpose clarification (as in counseling, advocacy, & mediation)

ceremony/ritual creation & facilitation (for life transitions)

legal ceremony witnessing (for spiritual component in secular rites)

developmental/perceptual-experiential education

pre-parenting & parenting education

child guidance/advocacy/challenge facilitation

adolescent mentorship/counseling/challenge facilitation



adult-elder counseling/process facilitation/leadership training (?)

WHAT IT IS NOT:

psychotherapy or problem-oriented

religious or clerical

new age, mystical or "other world"-oriented

advocacy of particular philosophy or world view

for-profit or institutional

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QUESTIONS:

Recruitment? from disenchanting traditional & new age clergy? training?

Shaman or charlatan? bonding? certification? licensing?

Payment? donation? retainer?

Legalization/Incorporation? witness vs. legal representative (e.g.wedding)

**MORAL DEVELOPMENT: THE EXPERIENTIAL PERSPECTIVE**

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## Abstract

Moral or character education has settled mainly into two distinct and opposing 'camps' of thought and application: the conventional-behaviourist and the developmental-cognitive. The author introduces a third perspective based on a perceptual-experiential model. Here, young people construct their moral reality through a curriculum of stage-appropriate sensory challenges. This new perspective finds support in a variety of theoretical and clinical works. Implications and applications of this model are discussed.

**MORAL DEVELOPMENT: THE EXPERIENTIAL PERSPECTIVE**

Currently there are two 'camps' of thought or perspective on moral education. The Conventional perspective is essentially behavioural, asserting that morality involves discernible rights and wrongs and that moral action involves the ability to discern or remember those rights and wrongs. The Developmental perspective is essentially cognitive, asserting that morality runs parallel with cognitive development and that moral action involves the ability to set and solve moral problems. This paper introduces the Perceptual-Experiential perspective, which asserts that morality involves the development of perceptual mechanisms through stages and transformations and that moral action involves the ability to create an accurate and appropriate synthesis of perceptual and psychological factors. Figure 1 provides a further comparison of the three perspectives regarding their stances on moral aptitude, training, and remediation.

Figure 1. Comparison of the two current approaches to moral education with the Experiential approach.

	<u>Conventional</u>	<u>Developmental</u>	<u>Experiential</u>
Source & nature of moral aptitude	'tabula rasa' (no moral predispositions)	psycho-neural aptitudes & predispositions identifiable by cognitive stage	psycho-sensory predispositions tied to personal urge to develop & transform senses
Rationale & form of moral ed.	character training: model, reward, punish, explain	facilitation in cognitive problem-setting/solving	model, expect; guide sense-heightening challenges/projects
Sources of character flaws	character flaws as result of improper training or modeling to thinking about moral dilemmas	character flaws as result of poor or lack of exposure contrary to natural sensings & rhythms	character flaws as result of imposition of expectations or values
Methods for correction	correct flaws through punishment, re-training/programming (behavioural & social learning models)	correct flaws thru dialogue over real & hypothetical issues requiring moral judgement	correct flaws through opportunities to resolve sensory distortions/discrepancies toward self-trust

Ideal setting	'social lab' with staff with high ethics & effective management; curriculum to include learning about highly moral figures in history & literature; emphasis on student duty & responsibility	'just community' school with peer groups/support & facilitative staff; curriculum to include problem-solving, especially on moral issues; cooperative learning to reinforce skills of social mediation	'mini-society' including interface with nature, husbandry, community for realistic challenges to refine & transform senses; perceptually mature & insightful staff but facilitative in approach; balance of individual & cooperative activities emphasizing the development of the sense of appropriateness
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Proponents of the two current perspectives are given excellent coverage in Nucci's (1989) Moral Development and Character Education: A Dialogue. Conventionalists (e.g. Kevin Ryan, Edward Wynne, Herbert Walberg) tend toward a view that humans are born with no moral aptitude or predisposition, that a moral 'tabula rosa' exists that must be filled with 'character training'. That training would include reinforcement, modeling, exhortation, explanation, and practising social responsibilities. The ideal setting for moral education would resemble a 'social laboratory'. Morally mature teachers would use effective management that reinforced ethical behaviour through consequences and through student involvement in classroom responsibilities. The curriculum would further reinforce moral understanding by introducing moral issues from literature and history. Students who were not responsive (character-flawed) would receive a more individualized and intensive programme of reinforcement and the study of consequences to counteract an assumed background of faulty training or modeling.

Developmentalists (e.g. Lawrence Kohlberg, Carol Gilligan, Nona Lyons) tend toward a view that humans are born with moral predispositions that parallel their cognitive development towards metacognition and formal operations. Training in moral development would coincide with the honing of cognitive skills at each stage. That training would include cognitive deliberation over hypothetical or actual moral dilemmas. (Current theory allows for two types of 'solutions', based on either a morality of justice or of caring.) Students might also receive training in setting issues into contexts of either morality (justice and rights) or convention (customs and expectations). The ideal setting for moral education would be a 'just community' with peer groups problem-solving on real and imagined issues. Teachers would act as facilitators, both in discussion groups and in cooperative learning in the

subject areas, so that students would receive an education that consistently stressed cooperation and cognitive processing in both form and content. Students who were not responsive would be viewed as lacking in cognitive processing skills and would be given extra opportunity to engage in dialogue with others to learn their perspectives and skills.

Training programs have been devised which incorporate both Conventional and Developmental components. For example, Nucci's volume describes the Child Development Project, where adults set expectations for children regarding behaviour and discipline, but also where children learn cooperatively and discuss issues of cooperation.

The Perceptual-Experiential perspective, based initially on the developmental work of the late John Waskom (1972; Rose, 1991), views humans as born with moral predispositions that parallel their natural psycho-sensory development towards clarity and meaningfulness. ('Psycho-sensory' involves the interplay of basic physical senses, subtle bio-sensory mechanisms, and psychological sensibilities, as described in the following section.) Training in moral development would coincide with the honing of psycho-sensory skills through direct experiences and challenges, since it is only through these that senses and sensibilities can develop. Thus an ideal setting for moral education would resemble a 'mini-society' in which students experienced realistic challenges as they interacted with nature, husbandry, peers, and community. Teachers would model perceptual clarity and psychological health but would use their psycho-sensory refinement to help young people through their own challenges, rather than to teach morality. Students who were not responsive would be seen as character-flawed through previous imposition of expectations or values that were contrary to their natural psycho-sensory rhythms. Remediation would take the form of opportunities to resolve their sensory distortions and discrepancies through carefully guided challenges and de-briefings which would help the young person to establish perceptual acuity and thus regain self-trust and self-assurance.

Although the Perceptual-Experiential approach may include elements similar to those of the Conventionalists and Developmentalists, it involves a view of human development that differs significantly from the behavioural and cognitive stances, upon which the others are, respectively, based. A further discussion of the Experiential view of development, and its implications for moral education, follows.

## Major Constructs of the Experiential Perspective

### Psycho-sensory Urges

Psycho-sensory urges are the drives toward perfection of the 'human equipment', that is, towards perceptual acuity, psychological stability, and an overall sense of personal coherence and meaningfulness. These urges involve the development of the senses, which can be divided into two levels, the basic and the subtle.

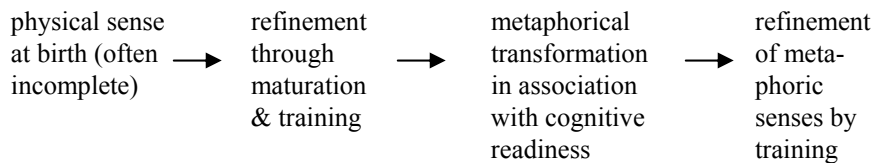
At the basic or tangible level are the physical, muscular, and motor senses, such as the senses of sight, hearing, muscle tension, and balance. These are developed through age-appropriate training and through natural maturational processes, if they are allowed to progress without the interference of age-inappropriate stresses. (An example of age-inappropriate stress is instructing children in reading skills before eyesight is fully acute.)

At the subtle level are biomagnetic senses that 'read', interpret, and adjust to electromagnetic impulses which emanate from living organisms (Levine, 1985; Zimmerman, 1988, 1989). One such sense is the ability to monitor internal feedback, as when one suddenly craves certain foods without knowing that those foods will counteract an impending illness, or when one makes undetectable adjustments to change a mood or attitude. Another subtle sense is the ability to ascertain hidden aspects of the environment, as when one 'senses' another's honesty or insincerity or 'senses' danger or excitement when entering a new setting. These senses are most likely developed through non-interference; that is, they probably refine through allowing a child to trust and act on hunches (Licauco, 1984). Training these 'biomagnetic' senses may be feasible, but such training is outside the domain of education as it is presently known.

Both basic and subtle senses mature, and they can also be refined to a great degree, depending on the needs of the individual and the demands of the culture. But beyond such refinement, the senses have the potential for *metaphorical transformation* and further refinement after transformation. For instance, sight is not fully developed at birth, and physiological processes continue for several years to complete the visual mechanism. During that time, usage of the visual sense helps bring it to acuity, and that combines with cultural and individual training to bring about perceptual refinement, as in the ability to read or to note subtle differences in hues or to discern slight

movement in tall grass. At some point, which is associated with the cognitive abilities of conceptualization and abstraction, the individual becomes ready to realize that there is a metaphorical or symbolic experience of seeing that is at once similar to, yet greater than, physical sight. Now the sense of 'seeing' can also take on the meaning of cognisance, of 'Aha!' or 'vision' about abstract concepts and possibilities. This transformation can be further refined as the individual is trained to envision on increasingly abstract levels and to discern increments and shades of meaning on the road towards comprehensive perception. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 2. The process of metaphorical transformation of perception.



By the same token, the sense of balance is quite imperfect at birth, and it improves with maturity and usage to aid in standing, walking, and running. Beyond such ordinary improvement, the sense of balance can be refined to include physical grace and poise, as applied in dance and athletics. Beyond that yet again, the sense of balance has the potential to transform metaphorically into psychological and aesthetic appreciation. In other words, as one comes to know fully, and appreciate, the sensation of physical balance and poise, one can realize that it is possible to know and apply that same sense in psychosocial contexts (i.e. expressing 'balance' or tact in relation to people or circumstances) and in matters of aesthetic discernment (i.e. choosing art forms, attire, or even words that reflect appropriate balance and proportion).

As with vision, the newly transformed sense of balance begins at a primitive level and needs refinement through training for its potential to be realized.

Of course, there is no one-to-one correspondence of physical senses with psychological sensibilities, and it would be futile to try to map the direction each transformation takes. For instance, the sense of touch transforms into components of both empathy and discrimination, as does the sense of warmth. The idea here, then, is to



introduce the reader to the avenue by which psychological sensibilities occur (namely through the senses), rather than try to establish or even suggest one-to-one correspondence.

How does the notion of psycho-sensory urges and transformations relate to moral or character education? As Waskom intimated, as senses are refined and transformed, character is established. This would be especially true if one looks at the sum of all transformed senses (discernment, balance, empathy, etc.) as the most important and most morally critical sense of all: the sense of appropriateness. If such is the case, moral development would be at least as much a function of sensory refinement as it is of modeling (per Conventionalists) and problem-solving (per Developmentalists).

The Experiential, psycho-sensory viewpoint establishes a naturalistic basis for character development and moral education. This gives educators a rationale for training young people in citizenship and moral reasoning without having to resort to 'moralizing' on the one hand or 'mentalizing' on the other. Instead, educators would concentrate on heightening awareness and ability by providing opportunities for refinement and transformation of sense mechanisms. Such a psycho-sensory development curriculum would begin by listing those senses or qualities educators consider critical for academic success and psychological well-being. Such a list might look like Figure 3, with other senses added as deemed appropriate.

Figure 3. Some possible target senses for an Experiential curriculum of moral education based on psycho-sensory development.

Observation	Discernment	Courage	Vision
Resourcefulness	Responsibility	Stamina	Empathy
Concentration	Interdependence	Intuition	Balance
Proportion	Metacognition	Justice	Humour
Loyalty	Self-reliance	Pride	Esteem

These senses could then be developed through a three-stage process of instructional planning and implementation:

1. pinpointing basic and subtle senses that best relate to that quality;
2. providing natural or realistic settings and activities (outdoors, community, hands-on or interactive teaching and learning, etc.) which require the self-controlled use and refinement of those senses; and
3. providing age-appropriate opportunities and strategies for consciously processing the experience (verbally or in writing) during and after the activity, so that sensory learning is cognitively reinforced.

#### Meta-senses and Developmental Stages

In order to establish an age-appropriate curriculum of psycho-sensory development, it would be necessary to map the development of the individual in an overall sequence. This necessitates the positing of a sequence of *meta-senses*, which relates to Erikson's (1982) sequence of psycho-social urges or tasks. Like Erikson, the idea of a meta-sense acknowledges a powerful milieu or backdrop upon which all subsets of current development are played out. Unlike Erikson, a meta-sense is a perceptual milieu, based on psycho-sensory urges to perfect, rather than a psychoanalytic milieu which is based on psycho-social urges to cope. This difference is crucial, for whereas the psychological theorists of the early twentieth century relied on the medical (largely pathological) model of human adjustment or coping, the psycho-sensory approach affirms the more recent model of 'wellness', or the drive toward self-actualization.

A meta-sense, then, determines or at least highly influences the nature of developmental activity in each stage of the human lifespan, including sensory and moral development. Using a scheme developed by Waskom (1972) (influenced by Steiner) and refined by Rose (in press), a sequence of meta-senses for the ages of schooling, and their implications for moral education, is outlined below.

Early Childhood: **WILL**

This meta-sense involves urges to gain control over the physical domain and express/know the sense of life in self and others. It includes Erikson's tasks of trust, autonomy, and initiative and spans the sensorimotor and pre-operational cognitive stages.

The individual's initial sense of morality is tied to the developing understanding and expression of Will. On the one hand, the child is absorbed in discovering and expressing self-will, but on the other hand is confronted with the challenge of sensing, accommodating, and even imitating the will of others. This presents a need for balance between self-control in the sense of self-mastery over body functions, motor dexterity, and free expression, and self-control in the sense of self-restraint or delaying gratification in order to meet social expectations and learn social roles.

Basic perceptual and motor senses are developing at this time, and since they will later transform into formative character traits, these need to be carefully guided through activity. The development of Will is accommodated through games, song, rhythm, manipulatives, and a balance of exploratory, imitative, and repetitive (routine) activities that allow the child to gain initial control over body and environment. By learning to control the self through guided activity, the child learns natural laws and limits. This probably works as well as (and certainly more healthily than) learning laws and limits through fear, reprimands, threats, or age-inappropriate explanations, all of which impose stresses on the child.

The sense of *sentience* is also critical at this stage. This is the ability to sense 'aliveness' in oneself and others. The young child tends to attribute sentience to nearly everything (rocks, dolls, the moon), yet does not always behave as if it mattered, as when he/she pulls the dog's tail or hurts a playmate. So it would seem imperative that this sense be given careful guidance, as morality hinges on the ability to sense aliveness and demonstrate understanding of its implications in feelings and acts of reciprocity (justice) and empathy (caring). Guidance could

include exposure to gardening and husbandry, where a child can witness directly the interdependence and cross-nurturance of living forms in mutually beneficial ways. At this stage of limited memory and cognition, such observational and participatory activities would be preferable to reprimands or explanations to guide the child into moral sentience.

#### Middle Childhood: **FEELING**

This meta-sense involves urges to feel confidence and competence, which entails the refinement of senses and initial transformations. It includes Erikson's task of industry and spans the cognitive stage of concrete operations.

Physical, perceptual, and cognitive abilities are expanding in a context of broadening social awareness. Thus it is, at this stage, that sensory refinements can be specifically trained and their metaphorical transformations have the greatest potential for occurring.

Morality is now associated with Feeling, including such senses as pride, courage, fair play, loyalty, accomplishment, and getting along. Specific training or challenges in sensory refinement (e.g. detailed observation of attributes and patterns) would help build competencies which could result in confidence or self-esteem. This would, in turn, tend to make the child less self-conscious or self-centered, and thus more 'moral' in outlook and behaviour. Such training for refinement of perception would need to include a wide range of senses (muscular, aesthetic, cognitive, perceptual, etc.) in order to accommodate the range of potential competencies in children. For this reason, a wide variety of learning objectives, settings, and styles would need to be utilized.

As sensory transformations are imminent, moral guidance would also need to include the nurturance of these budding potentialities and traits. Since many years will be needed actually to refine these transformations, and since abstract cognitive skills would need to be in place for much formal training to be of benefit, it would be enough for those in Middle Childhood simply to get a 'feel' for how sensory transformations can influence life choices and moral sensibilities. For instance, having prime responsibility for a pet or small garden plot can help

foster the transformation of feeling/receiving physical and emotional warmth into the ability to sense and offer warmth and care. Likewise, having a part in a play or academic project can help foster the transformation of egocentrism into a sense of interdependence. Although the middle child cannot fully appreciate or understand what is happening cognitively and morally in such settings, such experiences can serve as vivid and poignant exercises to introduce a larger world of moral concerns and behaviour.

#### Adolescence: **THINKING**

This meta-sense involves the urge towards metacognition: to know how to use/control thought processes and to know oneself in terms of values (sexual, political, social, etc.). It includes Erikson's task of identity and is marked by movement into the cognitive stage of formal operations.

Whereas the young child's moral choices are a function of Will ('Should I gratify or restrain?') and the middle child's moral choices are a function of Feeling ('What action will make me feel most happy/proud/assured?'), the adolescent confronts moral choices largely through Thinking, and ultimately that thinking is about values. Paraphrased, the adolescent's choosing would sound like, 'What do I think about this issue, and what do others think about my thinking?' So as morality at this stage is tied in with the ability to think, the clarity of thinking will determine the clarity and logic of moral values, choices, and behaviours.

Training adolescents to think clearly (especially in the area of values) is a considerable challenge. Immature emotions, which are often the very subject of thought, can play a distracting role. Lack of real experience on which to base thought is another impediment. The 'just community' schools have gone a long way toward giving young people a forum (with ground rules and a safe, neutral setting) for processing values-related issues. However, these schools do not seem to provide guidance for working through or avoiding emotional confusion, nor do they afford opportunities for novel and challenging experiences upon which thought and feeling can be expanded and values re-assessed. Without such components, adolescents may show some gains in moral stage progression, but in

other ways they will be 'spinning their wheels' into ruts of perceptual sameness and emotional 'soap operas' that never resolve.

Adolescence would be an excellent time to introduce novel types of learning settings. Apprenticeships and mentorships would require the young person to think clearly, to acquire real (not imagined) expertise in an endeavour of interest, and to learn to avoid trivial emotional distractions. Outdoor experiential learning would also provide experiences for testing one's ability to process thought clearly, on one's own and within a group context. Of course, for these or even more traditional settings to be beneficial in the development of thinking and valuing, the adults in charge must be clear-headed and able to provide the mental and emotional support needed by young people in their care. They must be models as regards their own sense development and values, so that they can be completely available to facilitate the deepening understanding of young people, by sensitive interaction, not by lecturing or explaining in the abstract.

Finally, the value of a 'Walkabout' fits well here. This term is borrowed from the Australian aborigines, who send young boys into the Outback for months of self-testing. Upon their return, they are inducted into the tribe as adults. Our young people, of both sexes, would benefit from a similar experience at the culmination to their educational 'childhood'. It might include wilderness adventures, inner city projects, foreign travel, scientific exploration, or any combination of challenges requiring self-reliance, and synthesis of previous learning. Besides the benefits of such experience in sharpening cognition and self-esteem, it would give society a 'marker' upon which to base a true 'rite of passage', something many psychologists say is missing, to the detriment of everyone's mental health. Thus a Walkabout of some kind would offer adolescents a major stepping-stone for clarifying their sense of values and thus their moral outlook as they move into young adulthood (Gibbons, 1974; Knapp, 1989).

### Psycho-Sensory Remediation and Healing

When a child has received repeated sensory input that is antagonistic to natural sensings, rhythms, and sequences, a developmental flaw is likely to occur. That flaw will be initially a perceptual flaw, then an emotional and cognitive flaw, as it manifests itself in observably flawed behaviour.

For example, a child who is neglected during infancy (due to inattention or the lack of a single, stable caregiver) will tend to perceive the world as an untrustworthy place. This perception, although accurate from the child's standpoint, is too overgeneralized to be an actual fact. However, it is believed, and it constantly reinforces the message, 'Watch out for yourself; no one is on your side.' This message becomes self-fulfilling, since the child will unconsciously avoid intimacy, which would disprove the initial perception, in the name of self-protection. This perceptual set becomes an emotional issue as the child comes to interact with other children, taking the form of slyness, bullying, or uncaring attitudes. It also may influence the child's cognitive mode, forcing the child into denials and rationalizations when confronted by peers or adults. This is the typical psychology of the young psychopath (Magid and McKelvey, 1988).

From a psycho-sensory viewpoint, this child has been flawed by a sensory imposition of uncaring which has distorted the meta-sense of Will. Due to the perceptual influence of that imposition, the Will has been side-tracked into an unbalanced and paranoid mode, and behaviour shifts toward expressing self-will and away from accommodating to the will of others.

Another typical, but less recognized, developmental flaw is caused by adults who repeatedly impose their (faulty) perceptions on a child, who must then repress his or her own natural responses. This occurs when adults tell the child what feelings to have toward a third person (relative, playmate, etc.). It also occurs when a child is forced into unnatural eating, sleeping, activity, or learning patterns. If the child has perceptions that are at variance with the imposed message, self-trust is diminished, and, over time, this might lead to serious problems. The individual may be unable to trust his or her own judgements, to take even minimal risks, to 'read' even the most obvious body language in another person, or to recognize and act on the most obvious internal messages regarding health or safety. In short, the individual is reduced to dependency on the perceptions of others and must seek refuge

in that which is secure and well-demarcated. This flaw has no clinical name; it is proposed that it pervades society so widely that unless it causes near-paralysis of action, it is considered within the range of normal functioning.

Many other developmental flaws can be traced to perceptual or psycho-sensory distortions that manifest in emotional, cognitive, and behavioural distortions. It is proposed here that this not only includes so-called character flaws, but also many learning disabilities. It is difficult to establish cause-and-effect relationships between imposed values and perceptions on the one hand and learning disabilities on the other. However, if psychological stress can cause somatic disabilities, i.e. disease, it stands to reason that such stresses could also cause cognitive or learning disabilities through similar psychosomatic mechanisms. So if the individual's perceptual set influences development, any distortion imposed upon that set could be a potential stressor in the generation of developmental dysfunction, whether physical, emotional, or cognitive.

The cure of psycho-sensory distortions that have manifested as physical disease and learning disabilities is beyond the scope of this article. However, these two areas are being tackled by workers in their respective fields, and point to perceptual and/or character flaws as the basis for many ills and their alleviation. In the medical field, researchers and practitioners have established conclusively the role of self-perception and attitude in both the onset and treatment of many diseases. In the field of learning disabilities, the link between self-perception and remediation is also well documented, although a link between perception and the onset of learning disabilities has not been established so far.

To remedy psycho-sensory distortions that have manifested themselves emotionally, and that impair moral sensibilities (e.g. psychopathy, distrust, hopelessness, rage), a new perceptual set must be introduced to the child, and it must be delivered in an emotionally powerful enough message to break through the faulty perceptual loop already established. Ken Magid has developed a treatment mode that does this for the young psychopath, one that is highly experiential, even physical, between patient and client. Other than this, what else is available to counteract the emotional ravages of previous psycho-sensory impositions? One promising area is that of experiential education and some of its more therapeutic offshoots. In particular, the Outward Bound program has worked with young people with various character (as well as physical) distortions with great success. When confronted with the



unemotional and unforgiving face of nature, young people respond relatively quickly to the notion of dropping their selfish and defensive attitudes and facing circumstances from an interdependent perspective.

The above-mentioned therapies and techniques were developed outside a well-defined psycho-sensory paradigm or formalized school of thought. However, at the root of their work the developers have recognized that changing perceptual sets is the key to changing attitudes and behaviors. The paradigm is growing among social scientists, each working independently and developing differing approaches. But their premises and conclusions are very similar, as summed up in the title to one current book which emphasizes perceptual or psycho-sensory healing: You'll See It When You Believe It (Dyer, 1989). As the field becomes more organized and coherent, and as the physical sciences refine our abilities to ascertain and measure subtle perception, our ability to offer sensory infilling interventions will most likely become more precise and effective.

Obviously, it is much easier to teach or facilitate than it is to remediate, and this applies to moral development no less than academic studies. However, as long as there are distorted adults, there will be distorted children, and it is heartening to know that there are highly experiential treatments available to bring balance back into the lives of those who have been perceptually abused.

### Implications and Conclusions

An Experiential approach to moral education may look intriguing on paper, but the idea undoubtedly sparks a host of questions that others may want to answer through investigation and application. Researchers may want to explore specific links between the development of perception and moral outlook. They may also want to explore more closely how psycho-sensory interferences might lead to character flaws.

Practitioners may want to explore influences of experiential education on moral outlook, choice, and behaviour. They may want to plan a detailed curriculum and consider methods for implementing and evaluating it. Curricula that address the remediation of character flaws would need to pay particular attention to the overall psycho-sensory environment and to the level of intensity participants can accommodate in their challenges.

In summary, it has been proposed that the moral person is one who possesses perceptual acuity, emotional stability, and a sense of meaningfulness. In other words, this person sees a situation accurately, is free from emotional distractions in relation to the situation, acts appropriately, and sees the entire episode as part of a meaningful life gestalt. To reach this point of maturity, the moral person must have developed psycho-sensory skills through experience -- ideally, directed or facilitated experiences which challenge and provoke growth.

Guiding moral growth is allied to guiding sensory refinement at the physical-biological and perceptual-psychological levels. This means that moral development can be guided by refining psycho-sensory mechanisms, which are present at birth, and their metaphorical transformations, which occur later in childhood and adolescence. A curriculum of moral education would include a set of target senses for growth and transformation, and a plan of naturalistic experiences and challenges which would spur the refinement of those senses. Age-appropriateness of objective and content would be determined by the meta-sense stage of the child, which includes psychological, neurological, and physical capabilities and urges. A final, culminating school-age challenge would be useful both for the individual and the society as a marker to designate the entrance to young adulthood.

Moral remediation would be highly naturalistic and experiential. Without involving undue amounts of moral exhortation or mental exhumation, adults could set up challenges which would 'jump start' young persons to new perceptions and attitudes.

The Experiential approach to moral development and education gives youth stage-appropriate tools for constructing their own moral reality within a social and environmental reality. This is crucial, for as many educators would agree, when an experience becomes one's own reality, the learning sticks. This may be the greatest advantage of the Experiential approach: rather than as issues to be explained by adults or discussed by peers, moral concerns are *experienced -- and verified --* by own's own sensory mechanisms. That can only lead to a continuing, formative interaction between the experiencing individual and the field of experience -- life itself.

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## AFTERWORD

The creative process of life works according to natural design and control. It governs the orbits of planets and the combinations of atoms, with the elegance and simplicity of a graceful dance. We humans join that dance when we are aligned with life's natural laws.

When the dance feels jerky or seems to grind to a halt, the human tendency has been to blame and then justify the blame. Few people are willing to take the responsibility for their own discomfort, exercising their choice to create rather than destroy. After centuries of destructive ABC's -- accusation, blame, and criticism -- there is the possibility of rediscovering the alphabet of creation: attunement, blessing, and coordination.

This book has sought to evoke an experience of an essential but often unused sense in the process of creation: the sense of wholeness, of what is larger, of how people and events coordinate smoothly when dancing with the rhythm of life's design. This book has also sought to depict the skills that bring about such easy coordination: stillness, patience, and single-mindedness, to name a few. Through these, an atmosphere can be created in which coordinated movement and healthy development can occur. Although not scientific in the traditional sense, these skills are exact, as is the rhythm which is revealed when they are applied.

Perhaps you can sense more clearly now that there is a design for human life and a rhythm for its unfoldment, as it has been portrayed in these pages through number, design, and life stages. Perhaps you can also sense more clearly the purpose that is inherent in this ever-unfolding design. However, this remains nothing more than theory unless you put the Creative Process into action for yourself. Only then can you discover what all this might mean in your own experience -- which is the only place it really counts.

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## STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT: A NARRATIVE

Rather than repeating details of developmental stages (reading down the columns of the chart), this section will contain a life history of a fictional family. As they move from stage to stage, the major themes will be addressed as parts of the maturing process. In some ways this will be an "ideal" life, yet it will stay in line with resources and institutions that can be found in our society. This is best read as a narrative, rather than as a case study. It is to be enjoyed as much as it is to be learned from.

Harold and Paula Hamilton, after 4 years of marriage, began to discuss the idea of starting a family. He was 30; she was 28. He had a steady job as a carpenter; she worked part-time as a dental office receptionist. They realized that she would have to quit her job, which would cut down on their income just as their expenses were sure to go up. However, they were willing to do some sacrificing and dip into their savings if necessary. Most of all, they had a stable marriage which had already withstood some strains. They loved each other, and they loved their union. They also loved something larger than themselves, and although they were not members of any church or religion, they had friends (especially an older couple, John and Ruth Deters) who were interested in matters of spirit and ethics.

One night the Hamiltons were visiting the Deters. They had doubts about the examples their own parents had provided, and since they had always admired the Deters' family, they brought up the subject of having a child. They laid out their ideas and plans and asked the older couple if they thought anything was missing. "Indeed there is!" announced Ruth with a twinkle behind her intent gaze. "First of all, you forgot us!" Everyone laughed.

John picked up from there. "I know what Ruth means. You two have a great plan, and no doubt it would work. You would have a happy, healthy baby and a minimum of stress on yourselves. I know you two well enough that you would make sure of all that. But believe it or not, there's more to it than just happy baby/happy parents. There's something a lot more important going on in bringing a child into the world. Do you realize this child we're talking about is going to have a destiny, a sense of purpose? Now, you can do all sorts of things, even with good intentions, that can squash that sense of destiny. Or you can let it be the thing that guides everything you do from now on. For instance, coming to us wasn't just a social pleasantry. Deep down, you knew we had a role to play. So let's put our cards on the table and really look at the Hamilton's new baby!"

By the time the evening was over, Harold and Paula had reformulated their plans. Now they knew they had some very deliberate things to do and think about. They would be careful about what foods they ate, cutting out many of their favorite snacks and beverages. Paula would begin to exercise regularly and take vitamin supplements. They would maintain an even disposition toward each other and everyone else, not by repressed feelings, but by reminding themselves that they were bigger than anything the world could dish out. They would take time many evenings to talk about their feelings regarding childbearing and childrearing, making sure they understood each other and working out areas of anxiety or doubt. They

met with the Deters once a week, alternating between their two houses. At these meetings, they would review the progress of the couple and bring up new issues, such as how they sensed their larger purpose as parents and community members, how they could sense and wait for the right time to conceive a child, how solid and stable they were, how to function as a team rather than as two mutually dependent young people, and how to keep their home safe, sweet, and secure. They ended each meeting with a few minutes of quiet sanctification.

About six months after their first meeting with the Deters, they learned that Paula was pregnant. Now the couple began to feel the stress of their decision and the huge responsibility they had taken on. Still, they maintained their sense of humor and graciousness. As friends and relatives heard the news, the Hamiltons had to discover charming and ingenious ways to keep away unnecessary visits and calls. Their home became a safe refuge, and Paula gratefully quit her job during her fifth month. Their obstetrician met with them regularly, and a few times the Deters came along. The doctor was impressed with the sense of teamwork of all these people, and he joined in, allowing them all to participate in the preparations.

Back at home, Harold and Paula spent many evenings at home, listening to music--classical, quiet jazz, and other favorites--and sometimes reading aloud. They talked to each other and worked on the nursery. They traded ideas for their child's name; they joked and hugged as best they could. They attended natural childbirth classes. And they finished each night as the Deters had taught them, with moments of quiet thankfulness.

Near daybreak on a memorable Monday, after 4 hours of labor, Paula gave birth to a son. Harold was with her as her coach; the Deters were in the next room, sitting quietly and patiently. They had narrowed down the list of names to three, and now looking at their son for the first time, they agreed that he should be named Philip.

The next week, the Deters gathered a handful of friends to honor the baby and the new family. Everyone got a chance to express appreciation for the couple and to "bestow" a quality of fine character upon the child. That day, Philip "received" Patience, Trustworthiness, Care, Courage, and Humor.

The next twelve months were busy and magical. The Hamiltons discovered routines that suited the rhythms of all three members, and this allowed them to be relaxed with all the changes. Philip crawled and teethed, toddled and babbled, just as any other child. But on close inspection, one would notice some differences.

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"She's so cute! I think babies are so adorable. And look. See how she wrinkles her brow? It's just like her father."

"Yes, but look at that nose. You can tell who her mother is! Who do you think she takes after the most?"

"Well, I have to agree with both of you. But do you know what? Sometimes she does things, or just looks at me a certain way, and I say to myself, 'That's not me or Bob. That's a unique person.' I know it sounds strange to say it at her age, but she really has a personality all her own. It's almost frightening!"

Philip, like his parents, had an assurance about him that was almost uncanny. He met the world head-on, exploring with gusto and glee. He imitated many of his parents gestures, yet he filled these gestures with his own spirit and enjoyment.

The toddler years were much the same. Although he had his expected phases of "separation anxiety" and saying "no" to things, he had an easy-going disposition. The parents were still meeting with the Deters regularly, and one night they brought up the idea of day care and preschool. All John would say was, "It all depends...."

But Ruth had more to say about it. "Right. It all depends on why you want Philip to be under someone else's care. Is it so you can get some relief or go shopping or get a job? Is it to get him intellectually stimulated so he can get to Harvard by the age of thirteen? Or is it so he can start to let his world expand into other people and other settings? Be honest now!"

Over two hours of conversation ensued, and the Hamiltons found themselves being more honest than they realized they had things to be honest about. Hidden feelings and motives began to come to the surface, and with the Deters' quiet presence, everything began to get sorted out. It wasn't the first time, nor the last, that this older couple would perform this service for these parents. At last, Harold announced, "I think we've got the picture now. Philip's own body language has been telling us he's been ready for a larger world, and we've interpreted his behavior as our own frustration. He definitely needs some outside contact, but now it will be for the right reasons. And no, we won't look for a "superchild" school. We're going to look for a "second home" for Philip, someplace with TLC and discipline and real energy." Paula agreed wholeheartedly.

So the Hamiltons became fussy shoppers, and finally found a playschool that met their stringent requirements. Like home, the school provided an atmosphere of safety and love, and plenty of opportunities for touching, moving, exploring, singing, and creating. Philip learned to follow his interests through in an activity, all the way to completion. He also learned to coordinate with other children under the focused but gentle eye of the teacher.

During these years, Harold Hamilton was becoming a carpenter in demand. Not only was he given plenty of work, due to his professional skill and personal integrity, but he was becoming recognized by other carpenters as a spokesman for quality work and fair trade. Harold sensed he had the support to start his own business, and after discussing the idea with Paula and the Deters, he began. However, he did not follow a normal business plan. Instead, he was willing to try something John and Ruth had suggested.

Rather than trying to get a bank loan and workers, he just "romanced" the idea of a business for a while. Then he put out "feelers" in the trade community to see who thought it was a good idea and who might want to help in various ways. Within a month he had three promises for help with finances and equipment and six promises from fellow carpenters to come work for him. With this information, he was able to secure a bank loan within ten minutes--a loan that was only half what he originally would have needed. This thing called the "creative process" really worked!

By the time Philip was school age, it was agreed that he was resourceful and resilient enough to go to public school and not be overwhelmed. The week before school began, the Hamiltons had Philip's teacher-to-be over for dinner. After a few moments of awkwardness, Paula exclaimed, "Goodness, aren't we stiff! Really, we didn't invite you here to impress you or get you to give Philip more attention in the class. We just want to be friends. After all, you're going to see Philip almost as much as we will for the next nine months. We want you to know we support you--and trust you. OK?" The rest of the evening was so successful that it was repeated twice more during the school year, and several other parents followed suit. In fact, this little ceremony became one of Philip's favorite end-of-summer activities for the next five years.

So Philip attended the neighborhood school, and his parents became as active as possible in the parent-teacher organization. When it was discovered that he had difficulty reading, the Hamiltons met with the teacher and came up with a plan to let Philip work more with visual and tactile material, rather than forcing him to read. After four months, Philip became naturally attracted to the reading process and "caught up" with the class by the end of the year. More importantly, he liked to read, especially "because it was my idea, right?"

Philip loved math and sports during his elementary years. He was always ready to help another child in the classroom, and he was always a great team player in soccer and baseball (his favorites). He took risks and exhibited a love for doing daring things. He had several good friends, and he spent most afternoons with his pals in very active play. He went through his expected period of middle childhood anxiety, which for him took the form of sudden anger or sullenness. But his father took the matter squarely in hand, comforting his son when it was needed and being quite stern when Philip was not exhibiting self-control. Philip, although he wouldn't always say so, loved it. He was growing in assurance and authority.

He was also growing in observation. He could find things people lost, as if he had radar. He could "second guess" pitchers so he could steal bases. In soccer, he would notice the opposing forward's hips shift and know to which side of the field the ball would be passed. He could watch an incubator for an hour to see a chick hatch, while other children could only watch for a few minutes at a time. Yet in all these skills, he was never arrogant.

When he was eleven, Philip helped his parents host a party in honor of John Deter's retirement. About a dozen people attended, and each one gave a gift and a homemade card. Harold mounted the cards on a posterboard he had prepared, and the final product was a fitting tribute to a man who had made his career a shining example of "love in action." Harold gave the toast, but Philip wanted to add one, too.



Addressing a formal gathering of adults for the first time, he looked around nervously, then focused quite seriously on John. "To a man who taught my father a lot of things, so he could teach me." The two gazed at each other for a few seconds before drinking, and in that moment Philip felt his own manhood stirring. He had found a significant friend.

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Probably close to daybreak, he thought. For some reason, he was wide awake. Crickets were chirping, and a few distant birds. There was the whir of an occasional car out on the highway, but he didn't pay much attention to that. No, there was something else, and before he knew it, he had pulled his lanky adolescent body out of bed.

Quietly, he made his way down the hall and out the back door. Walking to the end of the yard, he looked out at the silhouetted trees beyond. He looked ... and listened. And what had been a question, a confusion, a noise clamoring in him so long he thought it was part of him, began to subside. Now it was just him -- just him and the wind and the moon and trees. And in that moment of quiet and peace, a new sound came to him -- his sound, his destiny.

Suddenly, everything made sense, everything fit -- he fit. He felt at home in the universe. He didn't just think or hope or believe it. In this moment he knew. And that was enough. That was everything. He smiled, then turned back to the house.

Philip entered puberty without any great earthquakes. Of course, his father had prepared him well, and he knew that both his parents were open, honest people who would answer his questions or set him off on the right direction for answering them himself. In fact, that was something he came to really appreciate about his parents: they almost never told him that things had to be a certain way or that he had to be a certain way. But they wouldn't let him get away with "fuzzy" thinking, either. They expected him to articulate what he meant without excuse or rationalization. And they expected him to really listen and understand and not just pretend to know what was going on. And although these expectations caused him some embarrassment at times, he was thankful for the training.

He spent more and more time with John Deters, and sometimes with Ruth. They did simple things together, like repair appliances or rake leaves or shop for little things. Sometimes they talked, for hours and hours. Sometimes a whole afternoon would go by in complete silence. Once Philip asked his parents if they were jealous of the Deters. "Of course not," replied his mother. "John and Ruth are our dear friends. We love them, and we trust them." She paused, as if she were reading his mind. "And they don't tell us a thing about what goes on between you." Philip smiled, relieved and proud.

In the next few years, Philip saw the Deters less frequently, and his parents less frequently as well. He got involved in the school soccer team and track team, and he had a lot of friends to be with when he wasn't deluged with homework. He seemed to avoid his mother especially, and didn't want her to come to his games or into his room. Sometimes he felt justified, thinking how fussy or intrusive she was; sometimes he felt guilty about it. He alternated between happy and assured and sullen and confused. He would talk to his friends about it, and they helped each other as best they could. But just a three minute chat with John Deters (who would just happen to walk by the practice field) would seem to heal something no friend or parent could touch. Then he would feel OK for several days. He wondered about that, after a few instances. Why did John show up at just those moments of personal crisis, not demanding a lot of time, but just "touching in" as he called it? How did he know when to come on the scene, and how did he manage to calm everything down without ever talking about anything in particular? Even though he still didn't make special efforts to visit the Deters, he knew he still had a friend--in fact, two friends.

By now Harold's business was quite successful, running itself most of the time. Harold had discovered how to work "smart" instead of hard, and he had plenty of time for family matters and for exploring other avenues of activity. He turned down the idea of running for a town office, and he rejected the idea of going back to school to get a college degree. Instead, he and Paula spent more time with the Deters and other friends, discussing matters of spirit as they related to current issues of family and community. They also discussed the possibilities of many projects: a new school playground to be constructed by the families themselves; fundraising for various civic organizations; neighborhood and town social events, such as picnics and fairs; and Harold's favorite topic, building an addition to the Deters' home so they could host guests and "students" more graciously. All these plans went through many changes. Some seemed to go nowhere, and others were altered beyond recognition. But no matter what happened, the Hamiltons remembered what they had learned of the creative process. It worked for their business, it worked for their marriage, and it was constantly working with their son. So they made sure it would work with these plans. They would never "marry" an idea to the point that they couldn't let it go. They were always willing to let it become whatever it could be, considering the response of those around. No pushing of ideas was necessary; it all worked out fine in the end, even if it wasn't what was anticipated. Needless to say, John Deters was very pleased with his younger friends.

In the summer before his senior year of high school, Philip got to help his father build the addition to the Deters' home. He had worked for his father occasionally during other summers, but this time his heart was really in it, and his father was paying him as much as any of the other workers--nothing. It was all being done out of love for the Deters, and this pleased Philip's sense of justice. He had somehow made peace with Paula, who turned out to be not such a smothering or demanding mother after all. (He finally realized he had been fighting himself and his image of her, not the woman herself.) The world seemed to be going well for him. He had friends, supportive family and friends, sharp mental and verbal skills, and above all, confidence.

During the summer, Philip learned some new things about himself. Although he had always known his father to be an expert craftsman, standing in a hot sun on a rooftop he found himself doing things differently from normal procedure. And he found himself calmly telling his father why he had done

things the way he had. Sometimes they argued, and Philip thought it was because his father was trying to throw his weight around or cover his pride rather than learn something new from his son. Actually, his father was a bit of a construction engineer, and he knew why proper carpentry procedures would create a sound structure. So he demanded things to be done a certain way. He respected his son, and told him so, but he still made the boy re-do the work.

One day Philip came up with a new way to divide up the work for the day. This time Harold stopped and looked at his son. "OK, let's try it your way. This can't hurt the structure of the building. The worst it can do is gum up the flow of our work for a day." But it didn't gum up the works. At the end of the day, the workers said they enjoyed the rather unorthodox system. Harold agreed, and later he gave Philip some reading material on management skills and organizational development. The boy read it with passion and went to the library for more. Here was his new love.

During his senior year, Philip decided to attend college and perhaps pursue a career in organizational management. Although the family had enough money to pay for him to attend a state university, they all agreed that he would benefit more from earning his own way. On his own initiative, he received loans and entrance to a smaller, professionally-oriented college.

The Hamiltons were now part of a core of friends and associates who met weekly at the Deters' home. This was not a clique of esoteric thinkers, but a gathering of friends who were concerned to bring dignity to their family life, professions, schools and neighborhoods. They spoke on many topics, and John Deter always had the perfect way to "wrap up" the discussion and uplift it to new heights of awareness for everyone. They all loved him, as he loved something larger. In fact, there were times it seemed that he was listening to something deep inside that revealed more wisdom than he consciously knew he had.

Philip attended these meetings now with some regularity. He had never been forced to do so, but he began to see the value in them and volunteered his time. He even spoke up a few times, and when he saw the look on the Deters' and his parents' faces, he knew that he was an accepted part of things, and what he had to say really mattered.

At graduation time, Philip was honored by this grouping at a banquet in his honor. He had never imagined that he was so included in so many people's lives, and when he got up to thank everyone, all he could say was, "Thanks. I hope to live up to what you see in me. It's a lot, but I think I can do it." They assured him he would, and then some.

During his college years, Philip turned down the opportunity to stand out at different times. He seemed to be driven toward a goal he could not determine, and many typical college activities became distractions to him. He dated a bit, studied a lot, played intramural sports whenever he could. He wrote his parents and the Deters more than he visited, and they understood. Some of the correspondence of those days he would look back on as essential for the formation of his life direction. Not one letter mentioned anything about careers or job opportunities or even general advice. Yet they were full of assurance, answering all his wonderings and doubts in off-hand remarks or stories about someone's youth. The remembrance of all

those years of nurturance were beginning to converge into a desire to honor all those who had prepared his way. Above all, he wanted to be of service--in his career and in his character. It was as if something inside was waking up to himself....

Harold and Paula were looking at how to best use their later years. All the excitement of discussing and planning ways to refine their sense of service was passing away, and they realized it was not because they were getting disinterested, but because they were more mature. They began to share the Deters' responsibility for hosting meetings and guiding younger members through their awakenings to the creative process. And while they did that, the Deters were becoming less active in the discussions and more available for quiet, private chats and simple ways to bring graciousness to their setting. All this seemed very natural, and everyone who attended, regularly or not, accepted and loved the way it was working.

On Thanksgiving of his sophomore year, Philip returned home and attended a dinner meeting at the Deters' home with his parents. After the meal, everyone convened in the meeting room. John picked up a book called "Beyond Belief" and turned to a page he had marked. He began to read without introduction:

"There needs to be a balance point, so that all who will may associate with that balance point. And that does not mean join some organization, believe some creed or other. It merely means come into alignment with the way things are, the truth. Come into alignment with that. Human beings have been so long out of alignment that they have forgotten what that might mean. So there must be those present on earth who know what it means, know what it means not because they have been told by somebody or other but because they themselves have the experience of it. It is the only way you can know anything."

Philip understood perfectly what it meant. It meant integrity, letting the creative process work even when it's uncomfortable. It meant being an example to others, not by mental greatness or financial wealth, but by being right all the time. It was inspiring but also discomfoting. How well did he do it? How could he ever improve? And why was John reading this particular passage today?

Back at college, Philip seemed to have a knack for "sniffing out" extracurricular programs that gave him the kind of training he felt he needed. He went white-water rafting with a group of students. He took an outdoor adventure course. He took a seminar in group dynamics in which the participants simulated a production team for a whole day. He gained skills in dealing with people and in being patient with his ideas, and he made special effort to apply what he learned in every situation.

By the time graduation came around, he had three job offers and two marriage proposals. He graciously put everything on hold while he made arrangements for his parents and the Deters to arrive for the festivities. After it was all over, he had a long talk with the four of them, outlining his ideas and asking for their input. Out of their discussion, it was decided that it was best for Philip to work in his father's business for a limited time, then re-evaluate. And the marriage proposals were tenderly declined.

On his first day of work, Philip was introduced as "the junior boss." Everyone was made clear that he

was on his own, not his father's heir apparent. Then everyone relaxed and welcomed him into the office community, complete with his own tiny office and broken-down typewriter.

Philip wanted to prove himself and his understanding of business management. But he wanted to prove his understanding of the creative process even more. So he listened more than he spoke, and he quickly gained everyone's appreciation. He learned quickly, "read" people accurately, and before long he was comfortable in making suggestions and testing results, just as he had learned in school--and at home. His father was proud, not because his son was a brilliant college-trained manager, but because his son was an energetic and humble young man.

Early on a Sunday morning, Harold received a call from Ruth. John had passed away during the night. She said it simply and quietly, and Harold was deeply touched by this woman who had the strength and assurance to know that all was well. He told his family, and they shared several moments of quiet thanksgiving for the friend they had loved so much.

Harold presided over the memorial service, and Philip was given a chance to speak. It seemed that half the town was there, and at least half of those had attended at least a few of the Deters' meetings over the last fifteen or twenty years. After the service, Philip told his father he found himself saying things he didn't know he knew. Harold told him the same thing had happened to him. He said it had to do with being still right down to the core, where the real intelligence is.

In the next few days, the Hamiltons had many quiet talks with Ruth. One day they brought Philip into the discussion, then a few others of their circle of friends and associates. A very carefully monitored creative process was underway.

On the next meeting night, although no announcement had been made, most of the "regulars" showed up. When they entered the room, they saw Harold sitting in the seat that had been John's. There was no mention of this; everyone accepted it as natural.

Once everyone was settled, Harold spoke: "Over these last few days, some things have been becoming clearer in my heart and mind. What John did in this house over the last number of years is quite remarkable. With Ruth's constant agreement and love, he brought together a new kind of family, made up of very diverse people. And he brought strength and purpose to our awareness. There is a general consensus that this should not end with John's passing. So, in order to keep the rhythm and perhaps see how it can grow, Paula and I will be purchasing this house. We have asked Ruth to stay here with us, and she has accepted.

"A lot of things are still uncertain. I may take an early retirement and turn over the business to someone else. That someone may be Philip, but then again it may not. Philip will have plenty on his mind, since he's going to take over our house. I hear he wants to fix it up. Since I know some of his skill as a carpenter, I'm glad we're moving out first!" Everyone laughed. These words were comforting and encouraging, and everyone could sense the largeness and carefulness of what was taking place.

"Anyway, there is work to be done, for all of us. I'm not John, and I'm not like him. If we are going to see this family really come together and be effective, it will happen because we all grow up and participate. I'm not sure I have any words of wisdom that you haven't already heard from John or from the books he read. So now it's up to us all. I feel it will be exciting. How about you? Ready to be of real service?"

Paula was the first to voice agreement, then Ruth. Then several others spoke their agreement. Then Philip spoke up: "Up to now you've been a fine father to me, and I appreciate what you gave me for all those years. Now you're asking us to grow up and join you in some adventure. I accept that challenge, ... Harold."

Everyone understood Philip in that moment. He had accepted more than a challenge. He had accepted his own place in the adult world. Of course, he was still a bit brash at times, but he was learning quickly. Now he was ready to learn to be a man, in the company of clear-headed and large-hearted friends. And if the creative process would bear out, one particular woman would join him ....

After a final moment of thanksgiving, the group rose and greeted each other with hugs and handshakes. Philip was right in the middle of it all, loving every embrace. He caught his father's eye across the room. In silent agreement, they winked at each other, right in sync.

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## Links, References, and Ideas for Further Research

For more on *phi*, the Golden Mean, and Fibonacci:

- [The Golden Number](#), the "Phi-Nest" Web site for the layperson who wants to learn about cosmic geometry and its applications without needing a degree in math

For more on stage theories of human development:

- Erik Erikson
- Jean Piaget

For more on working toward psychological health:

- Abraham Maslow
- "human potential" movement and transpersonal psychology
- Carl Jung (on the collective unconscious)
- Bruno Bettelheim (who didn't believe in the collective unconscious, but wrote well on fairytale symbolism)
- Gestalt psychology
- Carol Gilligan

For more on non-traditional theories of education:

- Rudolph Steiner and Waldorf education
- Maria Montessori and Montessori education
- Outdoor, experiential, and challenge education

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