

Stages of Adult Development

I. Identity

the task of forming a personal identity

discovering who we are

it is fostered by a background of security, love, belonging, sense of worth

it is discovered by explorations of roles, searching out alternatives and possibilities

it is forged in identity crisis

and cemented in choices and commitments to beliefs and vocations

incomplete identity may be: diffuse
too rigidly defined
prematurely foreclosed

II. Intimacy

the development of those strengths which enable a person to share deeply with another

capacity for mutual devotion

* the consistent strength of love

(Whiteheads)

the capacity to commit oneself to concrete affiliations and partnerships and to develop the ethical strength to abide by such commitments even though they may call for significant sacrifice and compromise.

(Erikson)

the ability to sustain a relationship with others in which mutual appreciation and gratification consistent with the nature of the relationship is enjoyed

the ability to form warm friendships that are reciprocally rewarding on the emotional, intellectual, moral, and social levels, and stick with them through ups and downs even at some cost to ourselves.

(Madden)

Characteristics:

mutual trust, sharing, lack of fear, dropping of defenses, openness, presence (emotional and moral, if not physical), availability, vulnerability, dependability -

(Madden)

It is the developmental ability which is the heart of friendship, of love -

(Intimacy)

Psychological resources developed in the struggle for intimacy include:

a supple sense of self: I have a basic knowledge and acceptance of myself, and yet retain some openness to new information about who I am

an empathy with other people and awareness of their individuality

a willingness to be influenced by my awareness of others, an ability to modify myself in response to new information and the requirements of different interpersonal situations

the flexibility to incorporate these modifications into my personality in a way that strengthens me rather than diminishes me

the creativity which enables me to devise, with other people, patterns of behavior and lifestyle that are mutually enhancing

a tolerance for the inevitable strain that is involved in personal accomodation and compromise

(W)

Some situations when resources for intimacy are evoked and strengthened, when people are called to risk some of their self definition:

close friendship, group solidarity, sexual love and orgasm, social experiences of cooperation and competition, combatitive relationships, inspiring encounters with others, experiences of intuition from within oneself.

(W)

In intimacy I share myself, my friend shares in return. We offer one another support and challenge and comfort, affirmation, but also caring criticism. My sense of myself can grow. I can take in new information about myself, and modify my identity. My ability to be with another grows and strengthens.

When intimacy fails - inability to resolve opposition between merging with others and defending self produces a strain in interpersonal situations which can provoke three kinds of avoidance: isolation, stereotyped behavior, and promiscuity.

In intimacy there is challenge to the newly established identity--a risk, if I am unsure of who I am. I may be overwhelmed....

(W)

True engagement with others is the result of and the test of firm self-delineation.

(Erikson)

When I know who I am with some consistency, then I can give myself.

(Madden)

"...that most delicate and enigmatic balancing act of all: the art of giving to another while still maintaining a lively sense of self; or, to put it another way, the capacity for intimacy.

(Sheehy)

**WORDS OF
AFFIRMATION**

"You look nice in that outfit!"
Or, "I really appreciate
what you did."

ACTS OF SERVICE

Cooking meals, mowing
the grass, washing the car.

**WHAT'S
YOUR
LOVE
LANGUAGE?**

In his own words, Gary explains
the five categories he uses to
identify how we each like to receive
communication and connection
from our partner.

RECEIVING GIFTS

"It can be anything—it's
the thought that counts."

QUALITY TIME

"Our phones are off, the
TV is off. We're giving each
other our full attention
and simply sharing
life together."

PHYSICAL TOUCH

"Hand-holding, hugging,
kissing, the sexual part of
marriage—basically
affirming touches."