

The two important development stages of life

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The approach we have to life, our relationships and the beliefs we hold about ourselves, are directly related to the two most important stages of our life.

As human beings grow and develop, they have special needs. Psychologist Erikson spent many years developing his ideas around this and concluded that there are seven stages that every person goes through. He concluded that at each stage there is a special developmental need that must be met, or the next stage will be built on a faulty preceding stage.

He was right about the needs needing to be met but one of the oldest civilizations had a much simpler understanding about the number of stages. The ancient Israelites practiced a simplified approach to human development that desperately needs to be revived today.

They divided the development stages into just two.

From birth to around 10 and from around 10 to 18.

In the first stage, the principle needs for a child are to discover they are unconditionally loved, feel safe, secure and accepted as they are.

This is fundamental to humanity. We all need to know we are loved by significant others in our life. Both parents are to be involved in the discovery process, but the principle task falls to mum, as she is better gifted in some of these areas.

Although it is a simple task with a simple goal...

it takes ten years to for a human to
fully grasp the significance of being
loved and safe.

There is nothing complex about this development stage. It only requires what should really come naturally to parents. To love their children unconditionally.

When stage one is complete, the stage is set for the next significant learning period.

The second stage begins

In the second stage, children enter one of the most challenging times in their whole lives.

Drastic changes are taking place. Both genders begin to experience the physical changes of puberty which includes a changing voice, growing of facial hair, genital activity, and the awaking of interest in the opposite gender.

As they begin to feel the tide of life pushing them into adulthood. they are being told it's time to grow up, to start thinking about what they want to be, and to act like adults.

But a far greater force is at work.

There is an avalanche of messages that shout at them to be like everyone else... wear these clothes... these sneakers ... talk like

everyone else.. have what others have... like what they like... be part of the crowd.

But in the midst of all of this, is an emerging desire to be themselves. The questions begin to flow around the head...

How can I be like my friends, but be
still be myself?

At the bottom of this pool of confusion, is the fundamental questions...

Who am I really? What would it be like to be myself?

A simple goal with complex
consequences

Beginning roughly at puberty, stage two is fundamentally concerned with achieving just one thing... **to receive and understand identity.**

This is learning about what and who we are, and how we are different from everybody else. It's a critical time of discovery. It's when we learn that there has been no other person in the history of the universe who was like me and there never will be. I am unique.

The concepts of who I am are based firmly on the premise that is sadly overlooked by most parents, the acknowledgment of what I am.

We are not another variety of budgerigars, caterpillars or broccoli. We are a species like no other- Human Beings. The understanding of what it means to be human is fundamental to learning about the concepts

of my uniqueness. No other platform will do.

Of all the species living on the planet, there is none like Humanity. We are uniquely designed and made, having qualities and attributes like no other species. I learn that I am all the more special because I have been made in the image of God. Understanding the full significance of what this means will take a long long time for all of us.

This is the stage when I discover that even though my parents may not have planned my birth, I was not an accident. I was meant to be. I am part of a universal plan. The timing of my entry in life was not premature or too late.

It's when I discover that I have purpose in life and a place in the world.

More significantly,

it's when I discover that I am meant to
be in relationship with God and that
he wants to be in relationship with me.

The concepts and beliefs about my personal value begin during the first stage but are firmly cemented during the second.

How do we receive and learn about identity?

At the change of the stages, a fundamental shift in allegiance takes place. Where a child has been very close to his or her mother during the first stage, a veering away takes place.

Unknowingly, a teenager instinctively starts pursuing the person they feel has the answers they don't even know the questions for ... dad.

Stage two has begun, and the fundamental goal is to receive Identity.

You'll notice the word, "receive". Identity is not something we have to search for, create for ourselves or seek. It is imparted. One of the six fundamental characteristics of identity is that it is assigned by the person who designed, created or discovered something.

When a manufacturer invents and makes something, it's the manufacturer that gives it its identity. He does that simply by giving it an identifying label or name.

Our true Identity is imparted

Human identity is no different. Our identity has already been decided by the one who created us. It only remains for it to be imparted or assigned to the individual.

And this is the father's role. It is dad who tells each of his children what and who they are. Like the manufacturer, it is spoken into the life.

A father speaks identity into the life of both his sons and daughters using words that affirm the person's gender, significance and role.

However, unlike a refrigerator or a piece of clothing, humans have the ability to receive, consider, appreciate or reject. Considering the enormity of the significance of what it is to be human, this takes time to fully grasp. In fact... nearly ten years. So the imparting of identity is reinforced repeatedly over the entire period.

Having such positive affirming words spoken into us over such a long period helps us to separate who we are from what we do. We learn that even though we might do bad things or make mistakes, we are still loved and have significance.

Typical words of affirmation

Dad doesn't need a degree in linguistics, communication or grammar. Words are best when they are simple, genuine and real.

You are my son.

You are a human being created in the image of God.

You are meant to be part of His family.

You are much loved.

You have the characteristics of God.

You have a purpose in life and a mission that is just for you.

For a daughter...

You are my daughter.

You are a human being created in the image of God.

You are meant to be part of His family.

You are much loved.

You have the characteristics of God.

You have a purpose in life and a mission that is just for you.

When we fail to receive the essential benefits of either development stages, we tend to continue to look for those things, right throughout life. We don't usually know exactly what it is we are looking for, but we look none the less. Seeking answers to our unexpressed needs by becoming involved in endless pursuits and activities, none of which will ever satisfy us.

Many people missed out on some of the elements of either or both stages of development. If this sounds like you, don't despair. The acknowledgement and affirmation of what and who you are, are still needed.

When we have reached adulthood or left home, it's unlikely that our parents either can or will be able to perform their roles as have been identified.

Affirmation is still needed, and it's important to receive it. The good

news is that you can affirm yourself.

If you need help with any of this, feel free to contact the author who is happy to chat with you about how to do this.

Related Reading ...

Book: **Identity & Uniqueness**, Understanding what and who you really are, Ray Slade