



Life Model Works™

Maturity Charts

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These maturity charts are drawn from [Living From the Heart Jesus Gave You](#), a foundational Life Model resource. This book has helped thousands find language for healing, belonging, and true identity in Christ. These charts give you a simple way to see how people grow through different stages of maturity and why it matters for relationships, resilience, and faith.

THE INFANT STAGE

Birth through age four

Newborns and toddlers are included here, up to the age where they can effectively say what their needs are.

PRIMARY TASK to be completed during this stage: Learning to receive.

PRIMARY RESULTING PROBLEM in adult life when tasks are not completed: Weak or stormy relationships.

INFANT STAGE INTRODUCTION

The infant stage of life begins at birth and lasts until about age four. During this time, the brain is wired to learn how to receive care. Infants cannot do this on their own. They need Mom, Dad, and other close adults to provide the nurture and attention their brain requires.

In the best case, infants form a joyful bond with their parents. This bond assures them that they are precious and special. They learn they are not alone in their feelings and begin to discover who they are in God's eyes. These skills prepare them for the next stage of growth, when life becomes more complex and challenging.

INFANT STAGE CHART

	Personal Tasks	Community and Family Tasks	When Tasks Fail
1	Lives in joy: expands capacity for joy, learns that joy is one's normal state, and builds joy strength	Parents delight in the infant's wonderful and unique existence.	Weak identity; fear and coldness dominate bonds with others
2	Develops trust	Parents build strong, loving bonds with the infant – bonds of unconditional love.	Has difficulty bonding – which often leads to manipulative, self-centered, isolated, or discontented personality
3	Learns how to receive	Gives care that matches the infant's needs, without the infant asking	Is withdrawn, disengaged, self-stimulating, and unresponsive
4	Begins to organize self into a person through relationships	Discovers the true characteristics of the infant's unique identity through attention to the child's behavior and character	Has an inability to regulate emotions
5	Learns how to return to joy from every unpleasant emotion	Provides enough safety and companionship during difficulties so the infant can return to joy from any other emotion	Has uncontrollable emotional outbursts, excessive worry and depression; avoids, escapes or gets stuck in certain emotions

RESOURCES TO GROW INFANT MATURITY

[*I Am Happy to be With You: Building Joy and Maturity at Infant Level*](#) by Heather Meades and Natalia Ferguson

[*Joy Starts Here: The Transformation Zone*](#) by E. James Wilder, Edward M. Khouri, Chris M. Coursey, and Sheila D. Sutton

[*The Joy Switch: How Your Brain's Secret Circuit Affects Your Relationships and How You Can Activate It*](#) by Chris M. Coursey

THE CHILD STAGE

Age four through fourteen

PRIMARY TASK to be completed during this stage: Taking care of self.

PRIMARY RESULTING PROBLEM in adult life when tasks are not completed: Not taking responsibility for self.

CHILD STAGE INTRODUCTION

The child stage of life begins around age four and lasts until about age fourteen. During this time, the brain is learning how to take care of ourselves. This often means doing hard things, even when we do not feel like it. For a young child, the hard task may be brushing teeth or putting toys away. As the child grows, the tasks become more challenging, and they also learn how to ask for help when something feels too big.

In the best case, children discover what truly satisfies in life and can recognize empty promises. They begin to manage their appetites and desires in ways that are life-giving instead of harmful. Mastering the skills from the infant and child stages greatly lowers the risk of addictions later in life. Their identity continues to grow and take shape as they see themselves through God's eyes. They begin to understand that they are part of a bigger story where they are valued and have an important role to play.

CHILD STAGE MATURITY CHART

	Personal Tasks	Community and Family Tasks	When Tasks Fail
1	Asks for what is needed – can say what one thinks and feels	Teaches and allows child to appropriately articulate needs	Experiences continual frustrations and disappointment because needs are not met; is often passive-aggressive
2	Learns what brings personal satisfaction	Helps child to evaluate the consequences of own behaviors and to identify what satisfies him or her	Is obsessed with or addicted to food, drugs, sex, money or power in a desperate chase to find satisfaction
3	Develops enough persistence to do hard things	Challenges and encourages child to do difficult tasks the child does not feel like doing	Experiences failure, remains stuck and undependable; is consumed with comfort and fantasy life
4	Develops personal resources and talents	Provides opportunities to develop the child's unique talents and interests	Fills life with unproductive activities despite God-given abilities
5	Knows self and takes responsibility to make self understandable to others	Guides in discovering the unique characteristics of the child's heart	Fails to develop true identity; conforms to outside influences that misshape identity
6	Understands how he or she fits into history as well as the "big picture" of what life is about	Educates the child about the family history as well as the history of the family of God	Feels disconnected from history and is unable to protect self from family lies or dysfunctions that are passed on

RESOURCES TO GROW CHILD MATURITY

[*Growing Up, Let's Celebrate: Building Joy and Maturity at Child Level*](#) by Heather Meades and Natalia Ferguson

[*The 4 Habits of Raising Joy-Filled Kids: A Simple Model for Developing Your Child's Maturity – at Every Stage*](#) by Marcus Warner and Chris M. Coursey

[*Handbook to Joy-Filled Parenting*](#) by Barbara Moon

[*Growing Me: Becoming a Child*](#) (Book 1 of the Growing a More Human Community Series) by Jim Wilder

THE ADULT STAGE

Age fourteen to birth of first child

Age 14 is the earliest age at which adult-level tasks may be accomplished.

PRIMARY TASK to be completed during this stage: Taking care of two people simultaneously.

PRIMARY RESULTING PROBLEM in adult life when this task is not completed: Lacks the capacity to be in mutually satisfying relationships.

ADULT STAGE INTRODUCTION

The adult stage of life begins around age fourteen and continues until someone has their first child. During this time, the brain is getting an upgrade. It is learning how to handle more complex relationships. Sadly, some people grow older in body but never learn how to carry this new relational load. At this stage, the brain is ready to practice skills that make relationships strong and healthy. This means I can take care of myself and another person at the same time. A child's brain cannot do this yet, which is why this new stage is so important.

When we learn these skills, our relationships become safe and life-giving. We know how to care for others without being controlling or losing ourselves. We enjoy being together, and we also know how to rest apart. Friendships are marked by joy and peace. We even help each other return to joy when life is hard. As adults, we stay the same person over time. Our friends do not wonder which "version" of us will show up today. Churches can support this growth by giving every member a clear path to reach and live from adult maturity.

ADULT STAGE MATURITY CHART

	Personal Tasks	Community and Family Tasks	When Tasks Fail
1	Cares for self and others simultaneously in mutually satisfying relationships	Provides the opportunity to participate in group life	Is self-centered; leaves other people dissatisfied and frustrated
2	Remains stable in difficult situations and knows how to return self and others to joy	Affirms that the young adults will make it through difficult times	Conforms to peer pressure and participates in negative and destructive group activities
3	Bonds with peers; develops group identity	Provides positive environment and activities where peers can bond	Is a loner with tendencies to isolate; shows excessive self-importance
4	Takes responsibility for how personal actions affect others, including protecting others from self	Teaches young adults that their behaviors impact others and impact history	Is controlling, harmful, blaming, and unprotective to others
5	Contributes to the community; articulates "who we are" as part of belonging to the community	Provides opportunities to be involved in important community tasks	Does not become a life-giving contributor to the community; is self-absorbed and uses others – drains society
6	Expresses the characteristics of his or her heart in a deepening personal style	Holds the person accountable, while still accepting and affirming the aspects of his or her true self	Is driven to "play roles" to prove self to the world, get results, and seek approval

RESOURCES TO GROW ADULT MATURITY

[*The Other Half of Church: Christian Community, Brain Science and Overcoming Spiritual Stagnation*](#) by Jim Wilder and Michel Hendricks

[*RARE Leadership: 4 Uncommon Habits for Increasing Trust, Joy and Engagement in the People You Lead*](#) by Marcus Warner and Jim Wilder

[*Growing Us: Becoming an Adult*](#) (Book 2 of the Growing a More Human Community Series) by Jim Wilder

THE PARENT STAGE

Birth of first child until youngest child reaches adult stage.

PRIMARY TASK to be completed during this stage: Sacrificially taking care of children.

PRIMARY RESULTING PROBLEM as an adult when tasks are not accomplished: Distant or conflicted family relationships.

PARENT STAGE INTRODUCTION

The parent stage of life begins with the birth of a first child. At this point, the brain shifts in powerful ways to prepare us to care for others with joy, even when it costs us something. Parents learn how to give sacrificially, meeting the needs of their children with tenderness, even when tired or unappreciated.

In the best case, parents bring life to their families by drawing on the skills they practiced in adulthood and expanding them to include the needs of spouses, children, work, and friends. They learn how to make hard trade-offs and face disappointment with grace. Parents also grow in seeing their children through God's eyes, sharing their maturity and pouring love into the next generation.

PARENT STAGE MATURITY CHART

	Personal Tasks	Community and Family Tasks	When Tasks Fail
1	Protects, serves and enjoys one's family	Gives the opportunity for both parents to sacrificially contribute to their family	Family members are 1) at risk, (2) deprived, and (3) feel worthless or unimportant.
2	Is devoted to taking care of children without expecting to be taken care of by children in return	Promotes devoted parenting	Children must take care of parents, which is impossible, and often leads to (1) child abuse/neglect and/or (2) parentified children – which blocks their maturity instead of facilitating it.
3	Allows and provides spiritual parents and siblings for their children	Encourages relationships between children and extended spiritual family members	Children are vulnerable to peer pressure, to cults, and to misfortune, and are less likely to succeed in life's goals; parents get overwhelmed without extended family support.
4	Learns how to bring children through difficult times; models and teaches children to return to joy from other emotions	Supports parents by giving them encouragement, guidance, breaks and opportunities to recharge	Hopeless, depressed, disinterested family units devolve

RESOURCES TO GROW PARENT MATURITY

[*The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love That Lasts*](#) by Gary Chapman

[*Building Bounce: How to Grow Emotional Resilience*](#) by Marcus Warner and Stefanie Hinman

THE ELDER STAGE

Beginning when youngest child has become an adult

PRIMARY TASK to be completed during this stage: Sacrificially taking care of the community.

PRIMARY RESULTING PROBLEM when this task is not accomplished: The overall maturity of the community declines.

ELDER STAGE INTRODUCTION

The elder stage of life begins when the youngest child reaches adult maturity. This stage extends the skills of parenting into the wider community. Elders sacrificially care for those around them, becoming free-roaming agents of joy and maturity. They notice quickly when someone in the community needs extra nurture or re-parenting and step in to help.

In the best case, elders share life with people who may not have family support and guide them toward maturity. They wait for God's confirmation before entering a spiritual adoption, knowing that such work carries challenges and sometimes criticism. Elders are able to see a glimpse of God's perspective in every situation and help people return to their true selves. They stand as tall oaks in the forest, strong and steady, giving shelter and strength to those in need.

ELDER STAGE MATURITY CHART

	Personal Tasks	Community and Family Tasks	When Tasks Fail
1	Establishes an accurate community identity, and acts like self in the midst of difficulty	Recognizes elders in the community	There is meaninglessness, disorder, loss of direction and disintegration of all social structures from government to family.
2	Prizes each community member and enjoys the true self in each individual	Provides opportunities for elders to be involved with those in all the other maturity stages	Life-giving interactions diminish, along with life-giving interdependence, stunting the community's growth; fragile, at-risk people fail to heal or survive.
3	Parents and matures the community	Creates a structure to help the elders do their job, which allows people at every stage of maturity to interact properly with those in other stages and listen to the wisdom of maturity	When elders do not lead, unqualified people do - resulting in immature interactions at every level of the community.
4	Gives life to those without a family through spiritual adoption	Places a high value on being a spiritual family to those with no family	When the "familyless" are not individually taken care of, poverty, violence, crisis, crime, and mental disorders increase.

RESOURCES TO HELP BUILD ELDER MATURITY

[*The Pandora Problem: Facing Narcissism in Leaders and Ourselves*](#) by Jim Wilder

[*Building Better Community: 12 Exercises to Strengthen Your Relational Muscles*](#) by Tom Anthony

[*Growing We the People*](#) (Book 3 of the Growing a More Human Community Series) by Jim Wilder

To explore these ideas more fully, we encourage you to read **Living From the Heart Jesus Gave You**. It unpacks the heart behind these charts and offers practical steps for building joy-filled, mature communities. You can find the book at shop.lifemodelworks.org.

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Regarding the maturity charts from *Living From the Heart Jesus Gave You*—we're happy to grant permission to use or cite these with just a couple of important clarifications.

These charts were never meant to stand alone. They offer a helpful snapshot, but they're only part of a fuller picture. When you share them, we ask that you:

1. Clearly note that this is a **partial list** of maturity indicators.
2. Include attribution to the original source (see full citation below).

If you're looking for a complete developmental framework, we recommend *Theories of Psychopathology and Personality*, pages 136-156, where Erik Erikson's full stages are outlined. The Life Model blends and re-frames Erikson's stages into five key roles—infant, child, adult, parent, and elder—because these categories are relationally intuitive, biblically grounded, and recognized across cultures. You will often see the word “*young*” paired with these stages to highlight early growth within each phase.

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With gratitude and joy,

Marlene Allen
Executive Director
Life Model Works