

SereneScene

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IMMATURITY AND

THE ADDICT

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**NEW LAYOUT
FOR 2012**

Time for Change

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IMMATURITY AND THE ADDICT

By Andrew Martin, MBA, CADC II, SAP

The maturity of an individual refers to their ability to respond appropriately to situations and their environment. Maturity is learned through experiences and observations, and it is not determined by age or gender. Since maturity is learned, much of the maturation process is linked directly to the ability of the individual's brain to learn and associate information.

When an individual is under the influence of a mood altering addictive substance, they lose much of the learning and memory retention capabilities of the brain. This means that experiences and observations are not retained, or are retained in a distorted perspective. Either way, the individual is not able to use the information to make appropriate responses to situations and their environment.

It is often said that the maturity of an addict is frozen at the age when they started drinking and using. While this is not scientifically accurate, the statement does indicate the commonly experienced setback in maturity

that addicts exhibit. The word setback is used because the condition is not permanent. With willingness, abstinence, counseling and healthy experiences, the recovering addict will quickly develop more appropriate maturity.

For the addict to mature, they must first remain abstinent from all mood altering addictive substances and be free from acute withdrawal symptoms. If the brain is impaired, learning mature behaviors is futile. The addict must be in recovery.

Setting expectations for improvement in maturity is critical to the process of growth. If the expectations are set too high, then failure is imminent. Failing will only reinforce the immature behavior, so the objective is to set expectations appropriately and achieve successes.

In order to set appropriate expectations, one must consider the starting point. Although rapid growth and relatively immediate changes in behavior are desired, these types of changes are not likely to happen.

The brain images below show how alcohol may harm teen mental function. Compared with a young non-drinker, a 15-year-old with an alcohol problem showed poor brain activity during a memory task. This finding is noted by the lack of pink and red coloring.

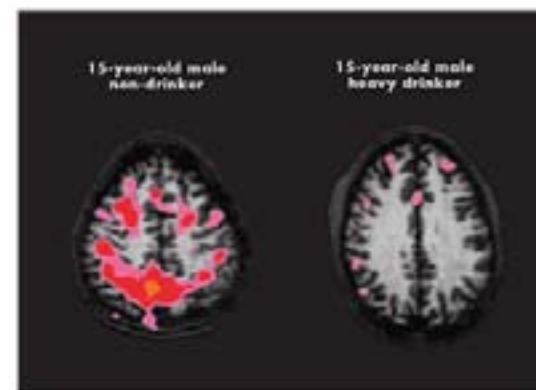


Image from Susan Tapert, PhD, University of California, San Diego.

Instead, understand that one must begin with where they are at. Progress should be slow and steady, and expect the occasional set-back.

It is an excellent strategy to plan activities and exposures that will target specific areas of mature growth. For example, if impatience is a serious challenge then plan an activity where patience is modeled and positive feedback can be realized from acting with patience. Keep in mind that going from a place of radical impatience to a place of intense patience and peace is simply not going to happen quickly. Design a plan that will slowly introduce patience a step at a time, and celebrate each success along the way.

When working to develop maturity, it is important to have a sense of togetherness in the growth effort. Other people need to be involved, and perhaps those people can offer to provide advice using terms that are inclusive; such as 'we' statements. Consistency is also a key factor, so the same people, or a group with similar traditions and values, would be an ideal training partner.

Sometimes growth is not perceived for a very long time. Persistent follow-through is necessary in these cases. Some of the growth required to develop maturity can take years, so be ready.

Long-term goals should be centered on a healthy philosophy of living. Balanced Center Living is just such a philosophy.

While maturity impacts nearly every part of the daily functions of one's life, there are several significant themes that appear within the lack of maturity in the addict.

Health

Immature behaviors include erratic sleeping patterns, eating junk food, drinking energy drinks, lounging around all day, avoiding anything out of the norm, ignoring creative urges.

Intention

Immature behaviors include paralysis from fear-based and shame-based thinking, a lack of goal development, stagnation, and avoidance of risk.

Spirituality

Immature behaviors include taking on all responsibility for all life's situations, a highly self-centered perspective, lack of empathy, persistent agitation, highly pronounced self-importance, and resentments.

Prudence

Immature behaviors include dishonesty with others and one's self, a lack of principles, contradiction, and inappropriate and ineffective communication.

Accurate Thought

Immature behaviors include living in the past or living in the future, a lack of awareness, stubborn lack of acceptance, inability to consider options, lack of judgment, and a lack of self-awareness.

Love

Immature behaviors include objectifying people as sex objects or as means to an end, isolating, pessimism, lack of interest in others, lack of participation, thankless, and brooding.

Self-Efficacy

Immature behaviors include a lack of discipline, irresponsibility, meaninglessness, and boredom.



Health

Rest

The physical body requires rest to recover from strain and to grow. The cognitive mind must rest, or enter into an anabolic state where simple substances are synthesized into complex living tissues, in order to maintain normal function. The average adult requires 7-8 hours of sleep each day, although some require as few as 5 hours and some as much as 10 hours each day.

Nutrition

The best way to give your body the balanced nutrition it needs to function properly is by eating a variety of nutrient-packed foods every day that stay within your daily calorie needs. Just be sure to stay within your daily calorie needs. A healthy eating plan is one that:

- Emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products.
- Includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts.
- Is low in saturated fats, trans-fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars.

Exercise

Moderate cardiovascular exercise for 20-30 minutes each day will significantly improve the body's health. Moderate exercise is the equivalent of walking or jogging at a 4 – 5 mile per hour pace. Strength training is also beneficial because muscle tissue tends to break down without use.

Play

Play energizes us. It makes us happier, renews a natural sense of optimism and allows our imaginations to

thrive. Play allows us to practice, elaborate on, and perfect skills before they become necessary (Rubin, 1982).

Adventure

Activities for the purpose of recreation or excitement, whether potentially dangerous or not, creates psychological and physiological arousal that is interpreted in our mind as positive or negative. Adventurous experiences push our limits and provide opportunities for internal growth.

Creativity

Mental processes (e.g. art, music, abstract thought, writing, etc.), involving the generation of new ideas or concepts, or new association between ideas or concepts. Creativity stimulates the brain and causes intellectual growth and elevates mood. Creative insight can evoke feelings of elation, personal awareness and spiritual enhancement.



Intention

Courage

One's ability to confront shame, scandal, intimidation, fear, pain or uncertainty and push beyond these physical and moral barriers empowers the individual to realize confidence in his/her abilities as well as boundaries for their behavior.

Goals

One's desired states of affairs which are specific, measurable and attainable are one's goals. Goals give structure to desires and cause thought around the surrounding circumstances as they are now, how circumstances can change, and what it will take to change the circumstances. Goal setting is a practice that produces improvements in circumstances without fail.

Determination

Firmness of purpose when encountering life choices, desires and circumstances yield forward motion rather than stagnation.

Risk

At times it is necessary to act regardless of the possibility that an event may occur that will have a negative impact on the results, because it is also a possibility that the same event will have a positive impact on the results. With some risk, there is the possibility of greater rewards.



Spirituality

Higher power

A power greater than one's self which one can turn to for connection, whether a formal religious figure or not, is essential in developing and maintaining a spiritual system. By turning to a higher power for help, guidance, strength, and opportunity one is relieved of the burden of solving all life's difficulties alone.

Kindness

Being charitable or acting charitably toward others creates a sense of fulfillment for social animals such as human beings. Kindness bonds us together with emotions such as compassion, empathy and generosity.

Serenity

The peacefulness resulting from the absence of agitation is known as serenity. It is in the mental state of serenity that one can be fully present.

Humility

Understanding that one is not more important, better

than, or more valuable than another is a belief system that is virtuous because it contributes to one's ability to comprehend that they are not in control of most circumstances.

Forgiveness

The spiritual process of relinquishing feelings of resentment, offense or anger against another person or one's self, and liberating one's self from the expectation of punishment or restitution. Forgiveness is central to one's ability to let go of the past and move into the present.



Prudence

Integrity

Consistency in adhering to a framework of principle beliefs creates integrity to the extent that behaviors match those beliefs. Integrity bestows emotional security in decision making.

Honesty

One's ability to communicate and act in harmony with one's views as one truly believes them to be. Honesty relieves one of internal conflict.

Truthfulness

One's ability to communicate and act in harmony with one's understanding of facts as one truly believes them to be. Truthfulness relieves one of contradiction.

Communication

Any method of transferring a message from one to another is communication. Effective communication includes a method of feedback to confirm that the intended message was received by the recipient.



Accurate Thought

Presence

Being in the current moment of time and space delivers true clarity and the personal ability to think and act in a healthy way. Some consider being present a spiritual connection revealed, or a direct link to one's soul. Being present can also be interpreted as having mind, body and spirit connected together all at once.

Mindfulness

A state of non-judgmental awareness of one's thoughts and behaviors in the present moment is the basis for one's independent existence.

Acceptance

The belief that a circumstance does not require one's efforts to change the circumstance creates agreement between the reality of the circumstance and one's self-will.

Wisdom

One's ability to form an opinion, after careful consideration, of what is true, right or lasting will result in healthy attitudes, beliefs and courses of action.

Self-awareness

Understanding that one exists as an individual with private thoughts, personal traits, particular emotions and unique behaviors distinguishes one from other people and causes a willingness to accept one's self as well as others.



Love

Relationships

Family, friends and intimate partners with whom one forms social associations and a particular type of connection that provides mutual support and affinity creates a sense of confidence, fulfillment and well-being which enables one to take healthy risks.

Fellowship

Friendly relationships associated with people of similar tastes, interests or experiences sustain a sense of community and involvement.

Joyful focus

Attention given to people, places and things that give one happiness, delight and elation positively guides one's attitude and outlook on life.

Optimism

One's belief that good ultimately predominates over evil and that people and events are inherently virtuous will bring about an understanding that most situations will work themselves out for the best.

Participation

Taking part, or sharing, in something nurtures one's need to belong and contribute.

Gratitude

The state of being ready to show thankfulness increases one's ability to be happy and tends to make one more helpful, forgiving and less depressed.

Laughter

Laughter is an expression of merriment that also clarifies one's intentions in a social exchange such as a posi-

tive contribution in conversation or acceptance of being part of a group interaction.



Self-Efficacy

Discipline

One's ability to exercise control over one's behavior and emotions empowers one to improve upon a skill, train for particular conditions, or refrain from unhealthy behaviors.

Responsibility

Being answerable to one's self for one's conduct when social forces bind one to a specific course of action qualifies one to be a part of a society which includes a basis of rules and acceptable behaviors.

Fulfilling work

Work that satisfies one's healthy desires, expectations, needs and demands in order to deliver a feeling of contentment is beneficial in supporting a positive self-image and attitude.

Activity

Exercising one's normal mental and bodily powers causes energy to flow and invigorates mind, body and spirit. **SS**



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Andrew Martin began his entrepreneurial approach to business in 1982 at the age of fifteen. Throughout his career, Andrew has fulfilled his duties as a senior executive in viable business ventures in various industries including; health care, sound reinforcement and lighting, electrical safety equipment, commercial catering, specialty metal

shapes manufacturing, and the entertainment overhead suspension industry.

Andrew's current business efforts are encompassed by Serene Recovery Network, a group of branded organizations with a common vision of helping people in early recovery to help themselves to a long-term rewarding quality of life without addiction. The individual businesses include Serene Center, a 36 bed transitional sober living facility in Long Beach, CA which also conducts outpatient counseling services, drug testing and monitoring, and outpatient detoxification. Serene Connections, a publishing and professional educational conference production company catering to the field of addiction treatment. Serene Directory, an online directory of professionals and organizations affiliated with behavioral and mental health. Serene Foundation, a micro loan lender providing funding for the continuum of addiction care.

Andrew has authored many articles related to addiction treatment, health care agency productivity, industry specialties, as well as business approach and leadership and has been published in Serene Scene, Behavioral Health, Freedom Newspaper, Sound & Video Contractor, Western Wall and Ceiling Contractors Association Bulletin, Connections Magazine (Australia), dB Magazine, EQ, Lighting & Sound International (Canada), Sound & Communications, Live Sound International (UK), Recording-Engineering-Production. Additionally, many patents and trademarks have been awarded to Andrew Martin for various business related products, brand names, and service marks.

Andrew is also very active in the California Association of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors (CAADAC) Board of Directors and Sober Living Network. Andrew also keynotes for many organizations.