

## Obstacles to Completing Adulthood: Why Seemingly Simple Ideals Can Be So Hard To Achieve

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As you may have noticed I haven't talked much lately about my encounters with a less than working world. Please don't assume that my world is working well. It's just that it becomes so repetitive as to be boring. Here's a recent run-down of the past month:

- I called an upholsterer in response to a newspaper ad, about wanting my office chair, ottoman and love seat redone. He never called me back. I called again, spoke with him, but he was with a customer, so he said he'd call me back. Never did. So why does he spend several hundred dollars running an ad?
- Yet another kitchen man arrived. He was highly recommended. Spent two plus hours with us. Planned to meet him two weeks later to see his work in other homes and pick cabinets. He never showed. He never returned my calls of inquiry. I'm getting paranoid. I know we weren't rude or demanding. Willing to pay anything. Doesn't seem to matter!
- Post hurricane Wilma related trades (i.e. roofers, fencers, screeners, etc.) rule. They charge for estimates, take hefty deposits and promise to deliver sometime in your lifetime. Fagettaboutit! Might have the house back together in time for Hurricane season to do damage again.
- Arranging airline reservations have always been complicated but never as difficult as now. The cause is outsourcing to far away places where English becomes a whole new language. That, plus their being unaware of U.S. geography, makes a strong case for booking over the Internet. Perhaps that is what the airlines want us to do.
- I called a web designer who came highly recommended. "Thursday at 6pm," I asked on Tuesday to schedule a meeting? "Not sure, I'll let you know tomorrow," she politely said. Never called Wednesday, Thursday...a week later: Does no one, other than me, need to earn a living?
- Kennedy Space Center is a very interesting place where we took our grandkids a few weeks ago. "It's no Disney World," my wife griped in sizing up the disinformation and relative disorganization. "Of course not" I said, "It's run by the government."

### Wounded Warriors Deliver

While attending a workshop in Arizona, I came to realize why we people can have such a difficult time following obvious guidelines for a healthy, balanced and complete adult life. I was with a group of about twenty mental health professionals. The majority were in their thirties or forties, but some, like myself, were fifties and sixties. I was struck with their openness and honesty, despite us being a stranger group all meeting for the first time. I was also struck by the observation that we were each all pretty strange. We were by many measures a solid and devoted band of people, dedicated to helping others, while simultaneously wrestling with our own limiting issues.

The workshop room was filled with exaggerated anxiety, excruciating self-consciousness, addictions past and not so past, analistic needs for perfection and control, along with a garden variety of other "idio sin crazies". Yet, I would trust any of them as my therapist

and know they would do a good job. This was the case when I directed a large outpatient-counseling center, which at its height had ninety odd therapists. The problem was that some were very odd. I came to realize that if I didn't shut the center down, I'd probably lose my license.

The irony was that these less than complete adult therapists were some of the most dedicated and capable mental health practitioners I had ever met. I had experienced the same personally during my five-year struggle with panic disorder. It occurred at the same time I began to practice therapy in Florida, having converted from an organizational psychologist to a clinician. Despite my personal pain, my professional work was exceptional. I discovered I was far better at helping others than my shrink and I were at helping me. Wounded warriors can make wonderful people helpers, while simultaneously making a mess of their own lives.

### Limited by Our Self-Perceived, Strongly Believed Limitations

From all of these observations I have come to believe that people's dysfunctional selves, arise from the times they felt or were made to feel that they just didn't measure up in the locker room of life. How old were you when you began to feel that way? Who contributed to these feelings? How did they do it? What social issues added to your feelings of inadequacy as a child, teen and young adult? How did you cope, compensate or run away from these pain filled encounters? Answers to these critical questions will begin to uncover the roots of your struggles. Untangling them takes time, patience, candor and work. They don't come undone easily, but we do because of them.

I have always believed that people's lower than deserved confidence and self-esteem, commingled with strong feelings of inadequacy begin with the nature of the human journey. Common to each and every person in the world is that initial position as a helpless, totally dependent infant. It is from that tiny and inadequate position that we all start to grow. It is from that very position that our self-image starts to shrink!

As we develop we still lag woefully behind the "giants" (i.e. parents, grandparents, teachers, older siblings, etc.) who surround us. Not measuring up is easy to feel when we are managed and controlled by so many adults. Not measuring up is so easy to feel when there are so many measures-from toilet training to speech to school to bedtime...-for which we have to be accountable. Not measuring up is easy to feel in the complex territory of peer and social relationships. All of this occurs in the "normal" process of teaching the "wild child" to become civilized.

What about children raised in abusive, impoverished, broken, addicted or mentally ill families? What about children raised in homes where the importance of grades, weight, athletic prowess are exaggerated? What about children raised in homes where Mom or Dad died young? What about kids who start life with physical, intellectual or other impediments? All of these children have the basic measures of adequacy/inadequacy staring down on them, combined with these hurtful ones. Similarly, I've hardly covered the spectrum of contributors to a feeling of inadequacy. It is a wonder any of us survive, let alone succeed. In this context, it is no wonder that completing adulthood is such a challenging process, despite the seeming simplicity of the goals and guidelines. "Still Crazy After All These Years," is more than just a song title!

## The Complex Human Equation

It is interesting to think about these core issues of inadequacy against a backdrop of exaggerated images of adult adequacy. Who wants to be a millionaire? Just about everyone! Why? To prove their adequacy. It's the car you drive, the purse you carry, the buildings and charities bearing your name, the square footage of your home and so many others measures that scream out "adequate." Yet, none of these completely cover the wounds left by early feelings of inadequacy. This explains why so many with so much stuff still feel depressed, anxious, needy, unfulfilled, etc. It also explains why so many with so much can get into so much, "what were they thinking?" trouble.

Given these challenges is it any wonder that completing adulthood isn't, by any means, an automatic rite of passage? Isn't it clear that the wounds we encounter and woes we suffer are part and parcel of our personhood? Isn't it obvious that when the challenging natural course of human events, is supplemented by accelerators and aggravators, the battle for survival, let alone, ascendance, becomes a war zone of unparalleled proportion? Isn't it undeniable that being a person is damn hard and striving to be a more complete person is a call to every part of your being to commit to finally see your SELF as measuring up, adequate and whole?

Is it any wonder that in a world that doesn't work all that well and that denies us a sense of personal power (a.k.a. adequacy), completing adulthood is not such an easy thing to accomplish. In 2006 and beyond, the biggest problem we face is that given the hurdles we have to jump just to survive, it is really hard to feel we truly measure up. In so many ways it can feel as if we are back to our humble beginnings, unable to make the grade or to feel truly adequate. The giants are now our bosses, life partners, corporations, banks, insurance companies, etc. They are no different in kind than those who surrounded us during our formative years. Once again, we must suck it up, play by their rules and at times, tolerate their abuse and insensitivity to our needs. How can we complete adulthood when it is so very hard to feel like an adult?

## Jumping Over Our Fundamental Sense of Inadequacy

Given our collective developmental challenges, the question remains how we manage to do anything as young adults. Filled with feelings of inadequacy and inferiority most continue their education or apply and take jobs, buy into committed relationships, start families and deal with the serious aspects of adulthood. What keeps us from sitting on the side of our beds frozen by emotional paralysis? The answer varies by person.

Some people are paralyzed and struggle their whole lives to begin adulthood, let alone complete it. They get lost in addiction or incapacity, never quite getting it together. Fortunately, they are in the minority, but their sad stories are of major importance.

Many propel themselves forward fighting their fears and insecurities every step of the way. They may quiver and quake at each final exam, job interview, business presentation, etc., but they push past these anxieties and go forward. The nature of human nature is to strive toward survival and to establish oneself as an independent figure. After 18 years of dependence, most people desperately want to be self-sufficient.

Yet another group, perhaps the largest, have learned to cover over their insecurities with a bold and bravado-like sense of adequacy. They implicitly say to themselves, "I can do this," "I will succeed," "I have what it takes." Borrowing their story line from, "The Little

Engine That Could," they color in the blank spaces of their insecurities with pure moxy and determination. Inner doubts are covered over with an outer coating of confidence.

Like an effective life quarterback, they just put their heads down, hold onto the ball and keep gaining yardage in the game of life. Deep-seated feelings of inadequacy can even be a powerful and energizing fuel of motivation and determination. One of the fascinating aspects of the mind is that the very same conditions can produce opposite reactions. Emotional cess can make a mess or a messiah. Almost the same experiences can promote defeat or fertilize unstoppable ambition and accomplishment. I believe there are inherited forces that account for this mindly diversity. Many are born vulnerable, some are invulnerable, if not preprogrammed to overcome whatever misfortune comes their way.

It is tempting to suggest that this differential factor is a matter of inherited intelligence. The problem is there are some brilliant people in both camps. There are also some very successful, moxie-motivated people who are far from intelligent. In fact, hard working, persistently driven people need not be smart to succeed. They achieve by a combination of their unwavering determination and good fortune.

It is precisely for those reasons that we see many very successful people stumble at some point. The unresolved emotional cess surfaces in some addictive or other senseless and inappropriate form. This is why Aristotle said, "there is a foolish comer in the brains of 2st people." This is precisely why completing adulthood is so critically important. that "foolish comer" is addressed once and for all, it threatens to topple us.

Those who appear invulnerable are often the most vulnerable of all. The very defense isms that help push people beyond their sense of inadequacy (i.e. denial, rationalization, projection, etc.) can crumble in a microsecond of time. Like the ugly of the twisted girders, rubble and stench left by the Twin Towers, when our personal equivalent comes tumbling down, it ain't a pretty sight. Our inner terrorists in foolish comers", patiently wait for the right moment to catch us off guard and us down. Striving to complete adulthood is about blocking those terrorists by ig our vulnerability. A well-managed life that is balanced and self-protective maintains a mental homeostasis that supports our defenses. Achieving that, forces us to it our cess-based feelings of inadequacy, heal them, resolve them, neutralize them go of them forever. That brings a peace of mind that is opposite to our needs to please and promote our adequacy in others eyes.

In this mindset, we feel OK with our less than OK parts and really good about our OK We finally accept ourselves unconditionally. We face life and its day-to-day pressures calmly, seeing most things in perspective without overreacting. We are aware ability to accomplish and overcome obstacles. We shed our irrational worries and our inner dialogue of nervous anticipations. Our needs to please diminish.

We face death similarly, accepting it sadly as our admission ticket to the world. "Better to have lived and died than never to have lived at all," I wrote in 1963 in a few philosophically filled paragraphs, titled "On Life and Death." m many ways, finally accepting our death potential, potentiates our life potentials as well as our healthy, self-protective behaviors.

As more complete adults we strive to accept our zones of inadequacy as part of our condition. That some can sing beautifully while I can't carry a simple tune lessen me. Similarly, others athletic prowess, business success, superior intelligence, etc. does not diminish my own worth and value. Nor, do my less than s historical moments cause me to

feel lesser than. I have learned from my past mistakes and continue to grow forward as a more complete adult. I will try not to repeat past mistakes. That I may, doesn't make me a bad person. It just makes me a person. I will do my best however, not to put myself or those I care about in harms way. I will not knowingly embarrass myself or my family. In this regard, I will err on the side of caution. I will not place my personal pride in jeopardy. I need it for the remainder of my journey and to continue to fuel my efforts toward becoming a more complete adult. Nothing tastes as good as prideful encounters. Nothing begets pride as much as prideful choices. Completing adulthood, in the final analysis, is all about consistently making choices.

### Obstacles To Taking Care of the Business of A Complete Adult

On the one hand we have some seemingly simple guidelines to sustain a responsible, balanced and fulfilling life. On the other hand we have a variety of defenses, denials and demons that come from our sense of not measuring up that represent barriers to us following those guidelines. It is this tug-a-war that perplexes us in our efforts to live a healthier life. It is this battle we need to take on and win so we can finally succeed.

Here is a brief overview of what you are fighting:

#### Boundary Violations

An inability to establish clear boundaries makes for messy living. This can play out in all zones of life including relationships, addictions, finance, work, and family. Here are some basic boundary issues that are frequently violated in the financial zone.

- Bills not paid or paid late
- Checks bounced
- Credit cards maxed out
- Money misappropriated via fraud- bad check cashing, theft, embezzlement, etc.
- Not working or trying to find work
- Letting a home go into foreclosure or a car repossessed
- Gambling recklessly
- Borrowing beyond ones ability to repay or using shyllocks

In each case, basic boundaries are being broken that are a set up for disaster. In most instances where these have occurred, the people were intelligent and able to predict the negative consequences that would accrue. Yet, they were unable to right their sinking financial ships. Some engaged in a magical thinking process, akin to child based fantasies. They were convinced they could save the house, hit the jackpot, get away with it, catch up next month, etc.

Here are some boundary violations in the relationship area:

- Promiscuous behavior
- Cheating on significant other
- Hurting or lying to friends or family
- Using others for personal gain
- Not being accountable for time, money, chores, and other responsibilities
- Yelling, saying hurtful or disparaging things or being otherwise abusive
- Telling a friend or family members secret to others
- Not being kind, caring, supportive, reciprocal or loving

There are too many variations here to be specific, but the common theme surrounds trashing, disrespecting, and otherwise violating the boundaries of others to whom we are committed in a family or love relationship. Similarly, whatever area of life we look toward, maintaining appropriate boundaries is crucial to healthy self-management.

On the surface, "coloring within the lines" seems pretty simple and straightforward. People, being people, can have a really hard time doing that. Notice that many "outside *we* lines" activities momentarily feed a sense of adequacy. Crossing sacred boundaries for love, money or otherwise comes much too naturally to many people. In a self-defeating, less than protective way they manage to make a mess over and over again. It is as if they fly in a "no learning" zone wherein experiences, even negative ones, do not prevent the next round of poor judgments.

I am convinced it is our child/teen based parts that struggle with boundary issues. The very young child lacks boundaries and must literally be held by the hand. The older child or teen resists boundaries and sometimes resents them. The adult who chooses not to follow conventional wisdom and violates boundaries is still being influenced by younger parts. These parts are self-invested and in denial regarding the consequences. They want what they want when they want it without regard to the potential risks. Think smoking cigarettes, doing drugs, having unprotected sex, gambling large sums, driving at high speeds, etc. The negative influence of our unhealthy and unrealistic child/teen parts is the most serious obstacle to becoming a more complete adult. That kid within can veto our healthy adult voice of choice so quickly, that it isn't even activated or audible. It is that wounded part of our self that needs to be identified and repaired.

### Overly Bounded Living

Of interest is that the very opposite of boundary violations can also interfere with completing adulthood. Some people maintain boundaries that are too tight. These interfere with their comfortable functioning, like too tight shoes limit ones ability to walk far distances. To these people losing control, even symbolically, is terrifying. To cope and compensate they live within narrow and restricted passageways. They compulsively embrace the routines of their lives, thereby limiting pleasure, fun, variation, and the like for themselves and those around them.

Such people also avoid emotional expressions of any kind. Feelings are suppressed to avoid losing control of them. As a result there is neither emotional venting, nor nourishment. They stay stuck on tasks and rituals. They may become down or angry at times, but the rich rainbow of feelings is covered by clouds. These around them, rarely, if ever, hear, "I love you," "Good job," "I'm proud of you." They don't tell themselves those things either.

People in this group are typically not at risk for catastrophes. Their fears and insecurities severely limit their exposures. But, they are out of balance none-the-less. The limitations they impose on their lives and those of others in their life make for trouble too. Stress is ever present as the small stuff is always sweated. Change of any kind becomes threatening and to be avoided. Cleaning and other chores are important, while playing is forbidden or greatly restricted.

I never thought about it in this context, but my father was very much like the person I am describing. Fun didn't come easy to him and fear followed him everywhere. Social

interactions, despite him being well liked with a quick and engaging humor, were a chore and a challenge. He literally cursed when the phone rang in the evening.

Dad's worries drove me nuts as a teen and no doubt drove me to panic disorder as a thirty year old man. He didn't encourage my independence and saw risk lurking at every turn. In fact, his rigid boundaries and fears caused me humiliation. Here are a few examples:

- Sixth grade party on a Friday night. All other kids allowed to go by themselves. Dear old Dad had to walk me and pick me up. I had to make up a story to cover my embarrassment with my friends.
- Wanted a two wheel bike. Dad had an older teen girl who lived in our building check me out to make sure I really knew how to ride it safely.
- Wanted my driver's license at 18. Dad didn't drive. Had more lessons at the driving school than anyone in the history of the school. Got my license on the first try and nailed parallel parking despite my own anxiety. Sent back to driving school for night driving lessons. Dad then hired a man from work to drive with me and check out that I really could drive well. I passed with flying colors, but was really, really angry.

Dad died three months later at age forty-nine from a heart attack. With all his worries he wasn't afraid of cigarettes, although in all fairness, it was an age of ignorance. Surely, the fears he instilled in me were reinforced by his death. Shit does happen! More significantly. Dad's fears were no doubt added to by his father's death, from Leukemia, when he was sixteen. Dad had to leave school to work to support his family. Surely, Dad's sense of inadequacy was exaggerated by a pronounced limp he developed after a mild case of childhood palsy. He was always painfully self-conscious especially about his walking. I recall him putting on a tie, even to go to the candy store to buy a pack of cigarettes.

I'm sure that the barriers I have encountered to being a more complete adult are directly related to all this emotional junk that I swallowed from a young age on. I'm also sure, that despite my efforts not to, I passed some of this along to my children. By the same token, I am proud that I was able to stretch beyond narrow, rigid boundaries and experience more of the world than my Dad did. The same is true for my children as well.

Clearly, we can't escape our heritage. The power of our genes and our scenes is strong and entrapping. We can however look at, understand and make peace with our past, so that our future is not limited by our earlier experiences. Most importantly, that our family of origin wasn't balanced, doesn't prevent us from setting that goal and over time, achieving it. Completing adulthood is a process, not a position, though which we slowly remove the obstacles, one day at a time.

### The Problem Relationship Barrier

Destructive, hurtful, unfulfilling personal relationships do not lay down the pavers for a path of completing adulthood. Actually, it is the opposite. Unhealthy relationships reinforce old messages of inadequacy, as well as creating new ones. Such relationships promote glopful behaviors, sponsor addictions and less than balanced living.

Of all the human dynamics that wound adults, none is more potent or prevalent than personal relationships. It is an area where dissatisfaction rules. Those not in one often and sometimes desperately want one. Those in relationships are often unhappy, unfulfilled, unsatisfied or otherwise under water or just treading. Romance seems to fade as realities, conflicts of personality and preference, incompatibilities, etc. surface over time.

There is no denying that opposites attract for all kinds of complex reasons. Those very differences corrode a relationship like batteries left too long in a flashlight. The oozing, toxic chemicals leave stains upon the fabric of love. Turmoil and tumult replace tranquility. Both sides feel victimized. Peace is fragile and subject to change without warning. Warmth, affection, and intimacy become infrequent or nonexistent. Escape fantasies are thwarted by the realities of kids, finances, co-dependencies and family pressures. Break up and divorce are not exactly wonderful choices either. Often, too often, there are not so many wonderful choices.

There are really only three healthy choices when it comes to unhealthy relationships that facilitate moving toward becoming a more complete adult. The first is moving on. It is not always easy, but sometimes necessary. A relationship that has died needs to be buried. Just as we wouldn't leave Uncle Charlie or Aunt Susan's corpse in the living room, a dead relationship demands a decent funeral.

A second choice is acceptance. Assuming there is no emotional or other abuse, you can learn to patiently accept the limitations of your partner. If you are choosing to stay, then it is obviously helpful to accept your situation and your partner. Otherwise you are forced to spend a lifetime bemoaning your fate, hitching about your mate and tormenting yourself and your partner. Sometimes we just have to say, "I appreciate his/her positive qualities, I accept who s/he is and I choose to depersonalize that which doesn't feel good because it's not about me. It's about him/her."

Choice three A is to work on yourself by critically evaluating what you are doing or not doing to contribute to the problems. I always say it takes two to tango and two to tangle. There is always your side, your partner's side and reality. All of us can do better in contributing to our loved ones. Based upon that assessment a person can modify that which provokes or otherwise stokes the cold flames of relationship hurts. Most of the time that will be appreciated and reciprocated. If it is not, perhaps its time to reevaluate choice number one. Obviously, it is hard to generalize in an area where so much individual variation exists.

Choice three B is about your partner doing what you did in three A. When two people both look clearly and openly at themselves they form the basis for a positive, instead of a vicious cycle. With each person stretching toward the other each is moving in the more complete adult and more complete partnership direction. Their relationship can only benefit parallel to their own gains. It is a win, win, win.

Choice three C actually compliments A and B. The couple works together with a coach, counselor, or therapist to strengthen the partnership and eliminate points of discord. With two motivated people, couples counseling can accomplish many positive things. I myself have witnessed hundreds of couples overcome the odds and the obstacles to achieve a healthier relationship by seeking out professional assistance.

I would go so far as to say that a healthy relationship or the absence of an unhealthy relationship are essential stepping-stones to becoming a more complete adult. The former makes the task a bit easier, but the latter is far better than languishing in the torment, insecurity and feelings of inadequacy of a problem relationship. Better to have a positive partner than being alone, but better to be independent than to feel alone and lonely despite having a partner. In sum, accept, repair or move on as you move toward completing adulthood.

Other relationships can often be obstacles to becoming a more complete adult. One of the biggest barriers to completing adulthood or even caring about doing that, are people's personal pains. Listen carefully and you will find that a sizeable number of people across all age groups are hurting from past and/or present problems. The generic cause is that others have and/or are letting them down. The specifics include parents, partners, bosses, siblings, children, and friends. The formula is, "I'm upset, angry, depressed because \_\_\_\_\_, isn't there for me, doesn't appreciate me, takes advantage of me.. .hurts me, etc. Sometimes old and new collide as the sentence concludes with the statement, "just like my mother/father/parents did.

Putting it all together makes for a grim picture. The world pounds away and charges us for the privilege. Old hurts from our youth are easily brought to the surface as the Goliaths of our life and our history band together to rip our slingshot out of our hands. Add the hurts that accumulate when our bosses, partner, children or other someones aren't there for us and before you know it you're ready to go nuclear-especially when our President can't pronounce that word correctly.

Spotlighting the multiple layers of frustrating, depressing and otherwise agitating forces, helps us to see why so many are not in charge of all areas of their lives. These conditions fertilize addictions of all kinds and perpetuate our glopful behaviors. The wounds we experience cut us deeply and demand salving. What better way than comfort food, alcohol, drugs, shopping, sex, etc. All of that and more has been made so easy for us at a time when life's pressures and problems push us toward them like a bull charging toward a red cloth that forecasts his bloody demise. We are the bulls charging headlong toward that sword. We have been programmed instinctively and trained by example to go for that which can be so hurtful and destructive. From that pained position, it is a slam-dunk for glop to rule.

Ultimately, it is our responsibility to resolve our relationship issues and eliminate the obstacles they represent for healthier, more balanced and fulfilling living. Or, to at least work around them so as to move forward on the completing adulthood continuum.

Clearly, we often engage in relationships with partners and friends that parallel old parental and family scenes.

### Leaving The Glop Behind

In this context it almost seems insensitive to be encouraging you or anyone else **to** take charge and become a more complete adult. In some ways, my words can become yet another irritating voice that just doesn't understand or care about your needs. It is not my intent to add to your frustrations. It is my intent to encourage you to address that which adds to your personal frustrations and depression.

We can't do much to change the world we live in, but we can do some things to change the way we live in it. Counseling and coaching become an experience that can support your need to make some changes in your life and guide you along a path that will help you to make them. If these toxic wastes prevent your taking charge, than counseling and coaching become places to dump that waste, neutralize it and learn to reduce its continued build up. Staying struck in the ruts of your relationships and life circumstances increases the likelihood of staying struck in an incomplete adulthood. Strengthening relationships or slowly unhooking from them ultimately strengthens you. In that stronger more stable

and more fulfilled position, you are better able to leave the glop behind and more closer to competing adulthood.

It doesn't have to be rash changes to make a difference. I am not encouraging you to quite your job, leave your partner and go to an Ashram. I am not promoting divorce. I am promoting healthy choices and interactions. I am encouraging that you find other healthy avenues of fulfillment, if work, partner, etc. do not provide that. There is a long list of possibilities including going back to school, joining a social or charitable group, changing jobs or even professions, exercising, making a new friend, taking lessons to develop a new skill or hobby, or finding some other venue to add stimulation, sparkle and pride to your otherwise frustrating situation. Taking action that has been well thought out will help to change the toxicity of your present circumstances. It won't necessarily make it all better, but will make it better than it is now. In addition, such a change can be a catalyst to other changes that can be the start of positive and prideful happenings.

The worst position is to stay stuck in the muck covered with toxic waste. Stand up, move slowly forward, lean on a coach or counselor and begin to take charge of that which you can. Glop will become less of an issue when your self and your needs become more of an issue in terms of their getting met. Moving toward becoming a more complete adult demands that we feel deserving of and able to achieve the goals implied by that ideal.

### Completing Childhood

The more we move in the direction of completing adulthood, the more we finally complete childhood. Frankly, this may be the point of trying to complete adulthood. It also may be the point of life. For most people unresolved childhood issues weigh heavily and distort and detract from healthy adult living.

There are two aspects to this issue. The first says that to become a more complete adult we need to work through child based hurts and trauma. Erasing the scars and resulting malfunctions left by our developmental experiences and dysfunctional families enables a healthier more balanced, fulfilling and prideful lifestyle.

The second is about the fun based part of our child-based parts. Despite less than positive childhood experiences, our kid knew how to play, have fun, be silly, fantasize and enjoy. Though completing adulthood sounds like serious business, it is also about being able to reconnect with the fun loving spirit of our younger parts. This involves freeing ourselves from the "heavies" of our life, so we can get back to more playful, casual positions, at least some of the time.

### Toward Moving Toward Completing Adulthood

A person striving toward more complete adulthood ultimately finds balance. A sense of adequacy short circuits extremes in both directions. A more complete adult doesn't need to prove him/herself. Their basic feeling is one of timer peace and self-acceptance. I hey say to themselves:

I like me. I have done well despite all kinds of mistakes and miscues. I may have lost my way at times, but I've always strived to find my way back. I am proud of my efforts and accomplishments. I forgive myself for my shortcomings. I will continue to live in a balanced way. I am vigilant to inner or outer forces that could be self-defeating. I am ever alert to glopful temptations. I will resist them as best I can or desist and reset as quickly as I can. I learn from my experiences. I love me.

If you can say that to yourself or some variation therein, then you have come a long way toward completing adulthood. Feel proud of that. If you cannot make a similar statement find one you can make. Consider the following:

I'm proud I am trying to become a more complete adult. I have a ways to go, but at least, I am focused on getting there. I don't always like me, but I am trying to correct the things that make me upset with me. It's not easy, but I'm trying to be as patient with me as I am with others. Saying I love me right now just doesn't feel comfortable, but I hope to get there soon.

If you can't make that statement or a similar one now, let it be a goal for the future.. Consider a counselor, life coach, therapist, or some supportive activity to help you toward self-acceptance and a stronger sense of adequacy. Some of the people I've met who have strong feelings of inadequacy, are the most adequate of all, in the most important areas of life. They are kind, caring, compassionate to others almost to a fault. Unfortunately, they are not that way with themselves. Completing adulthood demands that they do just that.

### Up and Down The Mountain of Life

I believed that life is an upside down U curve. We start as helpless infants and if we live long enough, we end as helpless adults, with all the characteristics of an infant. Completing adulthood begins at the high point of the curve (i.e.n). The closer we get to that goal, the slower the ride down the curve.

Fun and laughter are wonderful brakes to the decent. So are healthy habits, self-protective behaviors and all the other characteristics we have associated with completing adulthood. By the same token a glop based lifestyle acts as a lubricant to speed up our decent down the mountain of life. Personally, I'd like the ride to go as slowly as possible. After 40+ years of being a serious adult and working hard, I'd like to increase my opportunities for fun and enjoyment. I assume the same is true for you at whatever age you happen to be.

Talking about rides reminds me of a metaphor someone recently suggested. When we are kids we sit in the back of the car. We are in the powerless position of a passenger. As we grow, we move to the "shot gun" position-the one over which siblings will fight till the end of time. In that seat we can see what is ahead, but are still not in charge of choosing the direction, the speed or whether we take local roads or highways. Ultimately, as adults we get to steer. We can chose our destination and route. Completing adulthood implies that we move forward in healthy directions by safely steering our life vehicle to avoid an upending crash, while being ever alert to obstacles that lie in our path. Under the pressures of being "in charge" we may, from time to time, come to realize the advantages of sitting in the back of the car.

All of that said, the choice is undeniably yours. As we have previously indicated, a complete adult knows intuitively not to dictate philosophy of life or lifestyle issues to anyone. Every adult has the right to do life as they like. Equally compelling assertions can be made for a live for today model. See my encouragements as food for thought and stimulants for introspection and self-awareness. Use those that might apply, whenever, if ever. Feel proud for your prideful accomplishments every day. Work on that which is glopful if you so chose, when you so chose. In whatever way you chose, I wish you well.