

Emotional (Im)maturity

1. Does your maturity match your chronological age?

A veteran school teacher was certain she would get the upcoming promotion to Vice-Principal since she had greater seniority than the other teachers. When the appointment went to a teacher with less experience she was outraged. "How can you do this to me. I've been teaching school for **twenty** years" she lamented to the School Board Chairman. With gentle wisdom he responded, "Dear lady, you haven't been teaching twenty years. You've taught **one** year twenty times."

An emotionally mature person will have many of the following traits:

- Knowing what one wants and making it happen
- Thinking before acting and having control over one's behavior
- Self-reliance and the ability to take responsibility for one's life and actions
- Patience
- The ability to connect with others in a cooperative and positive way
- Genuinely caring about others and demonstrating that ability
- Honesty and living by one's principles
- Having moderation and balance in all things
- Having the ability to follow through, even when it is difficult
- Humility and the ability to say, "I was wrong. I am sorry."

SYMPTOMS OF EMOTIONAL IMMATURITY

1. Volatile Emotions

Emotional volatility is indicated by such things as explosive behavior, temper tantrums, low frustration tolerance, responses out of proportion to cause, oversensitivity, inability to take criticism, unreasonable jealousy, unwillingness to forgive, and a capricious fluctuation of moods.

2. Over-Dependence

Healthy human development proceeds from dependence (I need you), to independence (I don't need anyone), to interdependence (we need each other). Over-dependence is indicated by; a) *inappropriate dependence*, e.g. relying on someone when it is preferable to be self-reliant, and b) *too great a degree of dependence for too long*.

This includes being too easily influenced, indecisive, and prone to snap judgments. Overly-dependent people fear change preferring accustomed situations and behavior to the uncertainty of change and the challenge of adjustment. Extreme conservatism may even be a symptom.

3. Stimulation Hunger

This includes demanding immediate attention or gratification and being unable to wait for anything. Stimulation hungry people are incapable of deferred gratification, which means putting off present desires in order to gain a future reward. Stimulation hungry people are superficial and live thoughtlessly and impulsively. Their personal loyalty lasts only as long as the usefulness of the

relationship. They have superficial values and are too concerned with trivia (their appearance, etc.). Their social and financial lives are chaotic.

4. Egocentricity

Egocentricity is self-centeredness. Its major manifestation is selfishness. It is associated with low self-esteem. Self-centered people have no regard for others, but they also have only slight regard for themselves. An egocentric person is preoccupied with his own feelings and symptoms. He demands constant attention and insists on self-gratifying sympathy, fishes for compliments, and makes unreasonable demands. He is typically overly-competitive, a poor loser, perfectionistic, and refuses to play or work if he can't have his own way. A self-centered person does not see himself realistically, does not take responsibility for his own mistakes or deficiencies, is unable to constructively criticize himself, and is insensitive to the feelings of others. Only emotionally mature people can experience true empathy, and empathy is a prime requirement for successful relationships.

Are you emotionally mature?

CHARACTERISTICS OF EMOTIONAL MATURITY

1. The Ability to Give and Receive Love

Emotional maturity fosters a sense of security which permits vulnerability. A mature person can show his vulnerability by expressing love and accepting expressions of love from those who love him. An immature person is unduly concerned with signs of "weakness" and has difficulty showing and accepting love. The egocentricity of immaturity will allow the acceptance of love, but fails to recognize the needs of others to receive love. They'll take it, but they won't give it.

2. The Ability to Face Reality and Deal with it

The immature avoid facing reality. Overdue bills, interpersonal problems, indeed any difficulties which demand character and integrity are avoided and even denied by the immature. Mature people eagerly face reality knowing the quickest way to solve a problem is to deal with it promptly. A person's level of maturity can be directly related to the degree to which they *face* their problems, or *avoid* their problems. Mature people confront their problems, immature people avoid their problems.

3. Just as Interested in Giving as Receiving

A mature person's sense of personal security permits him to consider the needs of others and give from his personal resources, whether money, time, or effort, to enhance the quality of life of those he loves. They are also able to allow others to give to them. Balance and maturity go hand in hand. Immaturity is indicated by being willing to give, but unwilling to receive; or willing to receive, but unwilling to give.

4. The Capacity to Relate Positively to Life Experiences

A mature person views life experiences as learning experiences and when they are positive he enjoys and revels in life. When they are negative he accepts personal responsibility and is confident he can learn from them to improve his life. When things do not go well he looks for an opportunity to succeed. The immature person curses the rain while a mature person sells umbrellas.

5. The Ability to Learn from Experience

The ability to face reality and to relate positively to life experiences derive from the ability to learn from experience. Immature people do not learn from experience, whether the experience is positive or negative. They act as if there is no relationship between how they act and the consequences that occur to them. They view good or bad experiences as being caused by luck, or fate. They do not accept personal responsibility.

6. The Ability to Accept Frustration

When things don't go as anticipated the immature person stamps his feet, holds his breath, and bemoans his fate. The mature person considers using another approach or going another direction and moves on with his life.

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