

A Young Persons Guide to ~ Personal Development ~



A Peer Counselling Handbook

Personal development

Personal development is concerned with physical development and growth and also with mental and emotional growth. During the teenage years and in early adult life the body is growing and developing, many physical changes are taking place, changes of shape, size, strength and of function as we also become capable of producing children.

Development should be in balance

Physical = Mental = Emotional

It is an advantage if physical development takes place at the same rate as mental and emotional development – we then feel in harmony and able to cope with life changes. Maybe you have known people whose development was not in balance. For example – some ‘gifted’ children who are very intelligent often have a mental development which is faster than their physical or emotional development – in school they are often put in classes with older pupils but this can make them socially isolated and lonely because their class mates are more mature and doing things that older pupils do. The same problems can happen if someone is physically mature but emotionally immature (younger) – a boy might grow quicker than his class mates and might feel different and out of place – or a girl might mature sexually when she is too young to cope emotionally with this – that might result in her becoming pregnant and becoming a mother before she is mentally or emotionally able to cope.

Can you think of an example of someone who was upset by unbalanced development? (make up a story if you can't think of an example).

What problems did this cause?



Personal Identity

Personal development is also concerned with becoming an individual and discovering your personal identity. This means that you are no longer just a child or family member – but you develop as a separate person – you discover who you are and what you believe in. You have your own ideas and decide what your own values will be.

Independence

Becoming an Individual also means becoming independent. Babies are completely dependant on adults for everything – their food, clothing, shelter, love and caring. As we become older we gradually learn to do things for ourselves and become more independent. Teenagers often want to show the world how independent they are and can sometimes go too far becoming rebellious just to make a point. Even if we are independent and adult we still need others to do things with us, support us emotionally and 'be there' for us.

Dependance and being alone are two opposite extremes- eventually we want to achieve a state of 'interdependance' – doing things together. Complete independence can leave us without security, without any 'boundaries'. We need some limits to make us feel safe and cared for – that way we feel protected and contained.

Dependance



I'll do it for you

Independence



Go away, I'll do it on my own!

Interdependance



We'll do it together



Personal Values

Throughout childhood we are told by adults what is good and what is bad. At home our parents show us how to behave – they may tell us how they would like us to behave – but we may see them behave differently and it is their example that is more important than what they say. At school teachers also tell us what to do, teach us about right and wrong and we get other examples, opinions and beliefs and prejudices from the newspapers, television and films, religious views and politics. As we grow up we need to sift through all these ideas and decide what we believe in ourselves – How do we feel about life, about the world around us? What makes a good parent? Who is a good friend or partner? How do we judge others? Who is safe to be with and who is not. How do we feel about ourselves?

Self Esteem / Self Worth.

As we develop our own identity it is important to feel good about ourselves and appreciate and accept ourselves for what we are. Some people who have been treated badly, or criticised and not valued or loved by others, grow up feeling that they are not good enough. They do not value themselves and constantly compare themselves to other people – I'm not as pretty as my sister or My brother can work better than I can. Or they try to change themselves – try to be what other people would like them to be instead of being themselves. If I was slimmer maybe my mother would love me. If I worked harder at school my father would care for me.

How do you see yourself - how would you describe yourself?

Is that picture good, positive?

List five things you like about yourself and what you don't like :-

What I like about myself	What I don't like about myself



Responsibility

When we are little children adults make decisions for us – it can seem as if the world is out of our control and we have no responsibilities. Things happen to us, we believe in luck, fate and perhaps magic. The things and people that control our lives are ‘outside’ – this is called an ‘external control’. As we grow up and begin to make decisions for ourselves, we begin to feel in control of our lives and we begin to take responsibility for our actions. We then develop an ‘internal control’. We can be in charge.

This means we can make decisions about important things in our lives – like whether to study or take a job, or go out with a girlfriend, or whether to kiss a boy, whether to have sex and whether to use contraception or to have a baby.



Make a list of things which were done for you when you were younger and that you are now responsible for –

Task	Who used to do it?	How does it feel to do it yourself?

Consequences

Being in control brings a feeling of power .but also brings responsibility. You can no longer do what you like and hope someone else will tidy up your mistakes or sort out your mess. You are in control, you are responsible and it means that you will need to take the consequences of your actions.



It means that if you don't study, you might fail an exam – and you accept that it is your fault – not because your teacher was not good enough. If you get drunk and give yourself a headache or are sick – it is your responsibility and not that of your friend who offered you a drink. If you steal from a shop and are caught by the police – then you are to blame for your punishment – not the policemen who stopped you. You take the consequences of your actions. Being responsible means assuming responsibility for your life, your decisions, your future, your actions and their consequences.

Think of some examples of situations when someone you know has not taken responsibility for their actions and has blamed someone else?

What happened	Who was blamed?	What do you think about it?

Changing Roles

As we develop we change our position in the family and in society. What is your role now? - daughter / son : brother / sister. What roles are there? Imagine how your role could change from say daughter to mother or from baby to child to son and then to father. As you change role in a family you go from being cared for to caring, maybe from being parented to parenting someone else. As your own parents become old they may need looking after in much the same way as they did when they were children – so our roles and responsibilities keep changing throughout life

As our roles change – so do the tasks which we have at different stages of our lives. Children need to grow and learn, teenagers need to develop and mature, young adults develop skills and start work, support themselves and become productive member of society, and later reproduce and parent. So there is a gradual moving onwards and outwards to different levels of concern and responsibility from home and family, to school, to society at large as we also take on civic responsibilities and duties.



Can you think of a responsibility at each of these levels? A duty to:-
self

family

school

neighbourhood

society

world

Sense of future

One of the things which can make it hard to appreciate the consequences of our actions is our sense of past, present and future. When we are little children, we do not really appreciate what the future really means for us and as young adults we often don't really want to think about the future. We are too interested in what we are doing NOW. We want to enjoy life, do new things, try things out, new experiences, we feel young and full of energy – we don't want to think about consequences. We don't want people spoiling our fun by saying – if you have another drink you will have a headache tomorrow or if you eat that you'll get fat – we just want to enjoy the moment. We call this not having a sense of future time perspective. We don't have a sense of our own future. As we mature and develop and become responsible, we develop a sense of future, of what we want for our futures and what we need to do or not do to achieve our goals. We can have ambitions and visualise what our future will be in a more realistic way – not as just a fairy tale dream that little children may have. So you realise that you need to work to get money and that it is unlikely that you will win a lottery or marry a millionaire.

Relationships

Part of personal development also involves being able to develop relationships and to care and be caring within relationships – to develop trust and to be able to share with others. It also means understanding our own needs and what we want from a relationship so that we do not have relationships that are harmful to us. Good relationships help us to develop into fully mature individuals.





How do you value yourself? Put a cross or tick to mark yes or no to the questions - there is no right answer.

Self Esteem Questionnaire

		TRUE	FALSE
1	I wish I was younger		G
2	People like to be with me	S	
3	I usually give up if a job is too hard		A
4	My family never get angry with me	L	
5	I only have a few friends		S
6	I have lots of fun with my parents/family	P	
7	I like being a girl (woman)/boy/man	G	
8	I am a failure at school/college/work		A
9	My parents make me feel that I am not good enough		P
10	I usually fail when I try to do important things		G
11	I am happy most of the time	G	
12	I have never taken anything that did not belong to me	L	
13	I often feel ashamed of myself		G
14	Most people do things better than I do		S
15	I often feel I am no good at all		G
16	Most people are cleverer than I am		A
17	My parents don't like me because I am not good enough		P
18	I like everyone I know	L	
19	I am as happy as most people	G	
20	Most people are better than I am		
21	I like to be with people younger than myself		S
22	I often feel like giving up		A
23	I can do things as well as other people	S	
24	I would change many things about myself if I could		G
25	There are many times when I would like to just run away		P
26	I never worry about anything	L	
27	I always tell the truth	L	
28	At school/college my teachers thought I was a failure		A
29	My parents think I am a failure		P
30	I worry a lot		A

This handbook has been produced by Dr Diana Birch of Youth Support in conjunction with the peer counselling courses at the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation.

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