

Six Levels of Emotional Maturity

By Kevin Fitz-Maurice

Emotional Maturity Is Your Choice for Your Happiness

6 Levels of Emotional Maturity	
1	Emotional Responsibility
2	Emotional Honesty
3	Emotional Openness
4	Emotional Assertiveness
5	Emotional Understanding
6	Emotional Detachment
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6 LEVELS OF EMOTIONAL MATURITY

The six levels of emotional maturity are presented from lowest to highest. However, the interdependence of the levels of emotional maturity makes listing them from lowest to highest somewhat artificial. Feel free to reorder the list as suits your needs. The six levels are emotional responsibility, emotional honesty, emotional openness, emotional assertiveness, emotional understanding, and emotional detachment.

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Level 1 of Emotional Maturity: Emotional Responsibility

When a person reaches level one of emotional maturity, then he or she realizes that he or she can no longer view his or her emotional states as the responsibility of external forces such as people, places, things, forces, fate, and spirits. He or she learns to drop expressions from his or her speech that show disownership of feelings and a helpless or victim attitude towards his or her feelings.

Expressions such as: “They made me feel...,” “It made me feel...,” “I made them feel...,” and any others that denote external emotional responsibility are first changed into I statements as opposed to “You...” or blaming statements. For example, common expressions are changed from, “You make me so mad when you do that,” to, “I feel mad when you do that because....”

People at this level of emotional maturity regularly use the following two expressions:

- “When you did that, I felt ..., because I thought it meant”
- “When that happened, I felt ..., because I interpreted it to mean”

As time and maturity advance, they begin to use even more accurate statements that inhibit the Blame Game such as:

- “I chose to feel ... when you or I did that, because I thought it meant”
- “I choose to feel ... whenever that happens, because I choose to think it means”
- “I chose to feel ... when he, she, or it did that, because I chose to think it means”
- “I am in the habit of choosing to feel ... whenever my or your [mother, father, sister, brother, etc.] says anything to me, because I think it means”

Level 2 of Emotional Maturity: Emotional Honesty

Emotional honesty concerns the willingness of a person to know and own his or her feelings. This is a necessary step to self-acceptance and self-understanding. The issue of resistance to self-discovery is dealt with at this level. Resistance issues stem from the person’s conscious and unconscious fears of dealing directly with the critical voices he or she hears inside his or her mind.

When people don’t learn emotional coping skills, they generally lose most interactions with their internal adversary, internal critic, negative self-talk, or hyperactive conscience. Therefore, people’s fears of emotional honesty are based on past ego pain from being internally judged as worse than, lower than, or inferior to others. People at this level of emotional honesty know how to choose to feel so that they can keep from being hurt. They also know how to choose to not interact with their inner accusers by using ignoring, distracting, or redirecting techniques. (For more on ignoring, distracting, and redirecting techniques, see FitzMaurice’s [*Garden*](#).)

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The realization of the old maxim, “To thine own self be true,” is the primary goal at this level of maturity. In this context, the meaning of the maxim is that you are always true to what you feel. At this level of emotional maturity, you do not hide, stuff, suppress, or repress what you feel, but you honestly experience what you feel. You are at least honest with yourself about how you really feel despite what you are supposed to feel.

As a secondary goal on this level, people learn to locate others with whom they can safely share their real feelings, their real selves, in an accepting and supporting manner. At this level, the work is also begun to never again accept self as your behaviors or experiences. If you act like a dog forever, you will still never become a dog. Similarly, you will never become stupid from acting stupid. But you might want to focus on switching your stupid thinking for more realistic and effective thinking.

Level 3 of Emotional Maturity: Emotional Openness

This level concerns a person’s willingness to share and skills in sharing his or her feelings in an appropriate manner and at appropriate times. Persons at this level experience and learn the value of ventilating feelings to let feelings go, and also the dangers involved in hiding feelings from self and others. Self-disclosure is the important issue at this level of emotional maturity. Yet, self-disclosure will never be as important as the willingness of the person to be open to experiencing all of his or her feelings as they arise without the critical voices he or she hears inside trying to change, control, or condemn those feelings. The dangers of suppressing feelings and the value inherent in exploring all feelings and allowing them internal expression are investigated further over time at this level.

It is important to note that the ventilation of feelings has to be done correctly. If it is not your intention to let go of a feeling when you are ventilating that feeling, then you will feed and reinforce that feeling. Ventilating feelings can be destructive and counterproductive, or ventilating feelings can be freeing and open up your self to better options and choices. Express to let pass. Ventilate to detach. Share to let go. Stop stewing and start swimming.

At this level of emotional maturity, a person has the openness and freedom to experience any emotion without the need or compulsion to suppress or repress it. The suppression and repression of emotions is to protect the ego from harm and to protect the self from the ego pain that comes when the ego is harmed.

Level 4 of Emotional Maturity: Emotional Assertiveness

A person at this level of work enters a new era of positive self-expression. The primary goal here is to be able to ask for and to receive the nurturing that he or she needs and wants—first from self, and then from others. He or she asserts his or her emotional needs in all of his or her relationships, if it is safe to do so. As a secondary goal, he or she also

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learns how to express any feeling appropriately in any situation. (For example, how to express a feeling without aggressive or manipulative overtones.)

A person at this level of emotional maturity makes time for his or her feelings—he or she prizes and respects those feelings. Such people understand the connections between suppressed feelings, negative stress, and illness.

Some actions that can be characterized as emotional assertiveness include:

- Asking for alone time to contemplate, meditate, and pray.
- Asking for encouragement to complete a task or to achieve a goal.
- Asking for help to grieve a loss.
- Asking for time and space alone to process feelings.
- Asking for understanding and compassion for some unpleasant feelings.
- Asking to be heard out without advice or judgment.
- Being able to accept compliments with a simple, “Thank you.”
- Expressing what you are feeling while giving the other person permission to feel differently.
- Expressing what you are feeling without requiring others to understand or appreciate your feelings.
- Informing others that you are feeling vulnerable and may react poorly under stress or to confrontation for a while.
- Letting someone know you love and care about them in a non-sexual and safe way.
- Offering congratulations to others for their achievements.
- Rewarding positive social behaviors with approval and support.
- Telling someone that you think what he or she did was smart, timely, or important.

Level 5 of Emotional Maturity: Emotional Understanding

Persons on this level of emotional maturity understand the actual cause-and-effect processes of emotional responsibility and emotional irresponsibility. Self-concepts are understood to be “the” problem interfering with emotional responsibility. Such a person realizes that it is not possible to have a so-called good self-concept without a complementary bad self-concept. Because of the nature of knowledge and the formation of self-concepts, such people experience firsthand, that all self-concepts contain their opposites. Knowing that one half of some self-concept duality is still active in him or her even if he or she hide it in darkness (unconsciousness), he or she begins to regularly leap beyond the pitfalls of self-concepts, self-images, and self-constructs. This knowledge of the unity of the opposites (of self-concepts and of knowledge) is applied daily to new situations. (For more on the unity of the opposites, read [***We're All Insane, Second Edition.***](#))

Other understandings at this level include the following:

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1. Attempts to capture a moment of self can only kill the self, because the self is a living process and not knowledge or memory.
2. To reduce self to knowledge is literally to kill the self.
3. Either one has his or her self and is alive and experiencing, or one has found his or her self as knowledge, lost his or her self, is dead, and is remembering, not experiencing.

By their very nature, self-concepts are always externally referenced, and therefore, they are the forever perfect targets and hooks for the Blame Game. Knowing that self-concepts are the only hooks that can be used in the Blame Game, people at this level of emotional responsibility remember to work on seeing their own self-concepts and finding release from them. Self-knowledge is used to free the self from self-concepts rather than to form more self-concepts to imprison the self in.

The main work here is a total shift from identifying with any self-concepts to identifying only with the true or natural self as a host.

Level 6 of Emotional Maturity: Emotional Detachment

At this level, the person lives without the burden and snare of self-concepts, self-images, self-constructs, group-concepts, and thing-concepts. Such a person is only aware of self as process, as a sensing being, as an experiencing being, as a living vessel, as unknowable and untrappable—because self is alive and not static or fixed.

Such a person has died to the life of self as self-concepts. True detachment from all self-concepts has occurred. Thus true detachment from others has also occurred, which means that absolute emotional responsibility has been achieved (actually discovered).

Not having self-concepts to defend or promote, this person can remain unaffected by the Blame Game. not having self-concepts to defend or promote, this person can experience unconditional love for their enemies. (For a method and a plan for overcoming your ego, please read FitzMaurice's book [*Ego*](#).)