

The differences between emotional maturity and immaturity

by George Bielay

Why should you care about emotional maturity? Because it can mean the difference between a happy, rewarding and satisfying life and relationship versus a stressful unhappy existence with crises that never seem to go away. This newsletter introduces the signs of emotional immaturity, qualities and characteristics of emotional maturity and how to develop these aspects.

Signs of Emotional Immaturity

We all have bad days and at times have our own individual temper tantrums. Sometimes, we simply feel bored and need to look for something to do. But for some people, these traits can get in the way of having a good relationship. Consider the following signs of emotional immaturity:

***Emotional Volatility:** This generally refers to the tendency for your emotions to get out of your control. Review the list below and if you notice one of more of these traits in yourself or someone you care about, emotional volatility may be a problem:*

- temper tantrums, like screaming, yelling, breaking things or hitting others
- getting upset extremely easily, having a low frustration level
- responses out of proportion, that is, making a mountain out of a mole hill
- inability to take criticism, rather taking it too personally or taking yourself too seriously
- extreme jealousy,
- unwillingness to forgive,
- unpredictable fluctuation of moods

***Lack of Independence:** People who have a balance of independence vs dependence are both relatively self-reliant and cooperative with other people. An unhealthy dependence has the following characteristics:*

- too reliant on others for things you can do for yourself
- needing someone around all the time
- not having your own opinions, or being willing/able to express them
- being very easily influenced by others

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- prejudging other people

***Constant Attention and Gratification Seeking:** Emotionally immature people spend a lot of time and energy looking for attention and gratification from other people. This is characterized by:*

- superficial values
- loyalty that lasts only as long as the person views the relationship as "useful"
- needing immediate gratification which may result in financial or personal problems
- thoughtless and impulsive behavior

***Extreme self-centeredness:** Self-centered people are often viewed as selfish. Usually, this suggests having low self-esteem, self-centred people can be extremely competitive, make unreasonable demands, are constantly preoccupied with themselves, seek out positive feedback or sympathy relentlessly, and don't tend to accept responsibility for anything.*

In summary, the emotionally immature person can't understand the needs and feelings of others, and therefore have a difficult time being a partner or a parent.

What is emotional maturity?

Emotionally mature people tend to demonstrate the following 5 characteristics.

***Give and receives love and affection:** Emotionally mature people are able to trust themselves and others enough to be willing to give of themselves and receive genuine love, affection and friendship as well.*

***Deal with reality:** While emotionally immature people spend a great deal of time and energy avoiding responsibility and reality, emotionally mature people eagerly face the realities of daily life and deal with them in an up front and ethical manner.*

***Learn from experience and deal with frustration:** A part of accepting personal responsibility is the ability to learn from experience. If you have a positive attitude towards others and towards life in general, you are able to accept not always getting your way/frustration as a part of the equation. Emotionally mature people are willing and able to learn from their experiences, both good and bad,*

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problem solve and make adjustments as needed. Emotionally immature people just look for someone to blame and have a tantrum.

Accept constructive criticism constructively: *An emotionally mature person knows and accepts that they are not perfect and does not get mad that someone else has noticed. Being emotionally mature means accepting and using feedback to help make personal improvements.*

Optimism and Self-Confidence: *Emotionally mature people are optimistic about life in general and tend to see the good in themselves and others. This helps them to feel confident in their abilities to get things done and be successful.*

How to increase your emotional maturity

It is possible to become more emotionally mature. Here are some activities that can help:

Do things for others: *Look for opportunities to be unselfish, whether it's not talking about yourself and instead, asking your partner about their life, and genuinely listening to them. This helps make it easier for you to give and receive genuine love and affection.*

Expand your social circle: *Take an honest look at who you spend time with. Are they personally and professionally successful? Or are they excuse makers who blame others? Seek out people who can bring out the best in you rather than the worst.*

Play fair: *Cooperate with others rather than trying to win all the time. You can practice this with friends by not always having to have your way with where to eat or what movie to see, with your partner the next time you have a disagreement, or at work by asking for others opinions and seeking mutually beneficial solutions to problems. Practice being happy instead of right.*

Be honest with yourself: *None of this will work if you are not willing to take a good look at yourself from the outside. Consider how others see you and face reality. It isn't going to go away so you might as well face it and deal with it constructively. Being honest with yourself will only increase your self-esteem because deep down, you know if you are avoiding reality and it keeps you feeling like a fraud. If you start facing it, it can only get better.*

Find something bigger and better to focus on: *Whether it is something spiritual or a more concrete contribution like helping to clean up a local park or river, getting out and realizing how much beauty there is in the world and being a part of it can help you be a more optimistic person. Being an optimist means looking for and often finding the good in yourself and others. It's there if you are willing and know where to look.*