

IMPROVE YOUR CAREER

MASTER YOUR PART IN THE
ART OF RELATIONSHIPS

In the World of Work



By Dr. Jan Hoistad

Improve Your Career, Master Your Part in the Art of Relationships in the World of Work



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Please note that much of this publication is based on experiences and observational evidence of numerous coaching clients. Although the author has made every reasonable attempt to achieve complete accuracy of the content in this eBook, she assumes no responsibility for errors or omissions.

Also, you should use this information as you see fit, and at your own risk. Your particular situation may not be exactly suited to the examples illustrated here; in fact, it's likely that they won't be the same, and you should adjust your use of the information and recommendations accordingly. Finally, use your own wisdom as guidance. Nothing in this book is intended to replace common sense, legal, medical or other professional advice, and is meant to inform and entertain the reader. So have fun with your guide as you design your successful work and life!

DJHPartners, Inc.
Minneapolis, Minnesota

ISBN 978-09979063-8-7

Printed in the United States of America

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

DEEPEN YOUR INDIVIDUALITY, STRENGTHEN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

Effective communication strengthens relationships. Like a good workout, “building the muscles” of a strong, mature adult self is a necessary foundation on which to grow relationships. It’s crucial to professionals. When everyone in the work environment relates to from a mature place, individuals and teams are more effective; cooperation and collaboration come more easily; energy is preserved for creativity, getting tasks accomplished while having more enjoyment and even, playfulness!

In this guide we’re going to explore the importance of establishing a solid foundation of individuality, of developing a solid, whole adult self, so that you can become more creative, and connected in your work life. Everything that you practice at work is fully applicable in your personal relationships. We’ll talk about how you can achieve and exercise the muscles of your adult self, and improve all your relationships by doing so.

The guide is in 3 parts; plus there is a companion workbook. Part 1 includes an overview of the “Big Picture” and what it means to develop as a person and create a life that is happy and healthy. Part 2 helps you explore different aspects of relating so you easily access your mature, adult, professional self so matter what the circumstances. Part 3 are exercises to strengthen this awareness and practice in your daily life.

Developing new awareness, then changing behavior, takes a bit of time, concentration and practice. Therefore, it is recommended that you read this guide a number of times. Then, adding the exercises, distinguishing your past experiences and revising present interactions will help you make the improvements that you desire. Writing, either in a notebook or in the companion workbook when you are doing the exercises, is important. Writing clarifies your learning and will show your progress over time. If you have other people to practice with or a coach to help guide you or your work group this will also speed your progress and reinforce your effectiveness.

Most importantly, I hope you relish and enjoy this experience. I have seen it change many lives, often dramatically, always for the better.

Part 1: Strengths of Happy, Healthy Adults

OUR HUMAN ABILITY TO EVOLVE

Human beings are remarkably diverse creatures. We are imperfect, yet extraordinary in many ways. Our diversity, idiosyncrasies, and uniqueness are hallmarks of individual development. The development of our unique self is impacted by genetics, culture, upbringing, and life experience. In the early phases of our life, these coalesce into what becomes the core of our individual identity. That identity then continues to blossom over many decades. Such personal growth happens when we are curious and flexible, and when we accept challenges and engage in new experiences. On the other hand, identity becomes static or rigid when we are inflexible, isolated, or fearful of change.

Scientists and psychologists used to believe that development occurred only in childhood—that by the time we arrived at early adulthood our personalities and patterns were pretty much set in stone. They thought that if a person had a certain type of early experience, it foretold the positive or negative outcomes of their adulthood. Sometimes we find that this does appear to be true; however, current science and recent longitudinal studies of human development paint a very different picture of our capacity for growth and change. We now know that we can change and evolve throughout our lives. As medical science keeps our bodies in better shape, people well into their nineties and beyond continue to have the capacity to evolve as individuals psychologically, mentally, interpersonally. While we never reach a state of perfection, we do continue to evolve. So we can think of ourselves, at every stage of our lives, as works in progress.

This ability to continuously evolve is a wonderful aspect of our human nature. It means it is never too late—you are never too old or too stuck—to change, for yourself and for your relationship. It means that old habits may die hard, but they can be replaced with new thoughts, perceptions, and even behaviors. It may take hard work—or not. You may have already made many changes. It may take some education or new resources. It may take a great desire to learn something new or do something in a new way. But any of this is possible for you, just because you are one of the remarkable species called human.

DISCOVERING AND DEVELOPING YOUR UNIQUE ADULT SELF

Exploring and developing our uniqueness—the characteristics, talents, and values that define who we are as individuals—is the essential task of growing up. What we develop in this process is our Adult self. This is the self that defines who we are, what we share with others, and what we bring to our partnering and family life. It is our responsibility to continuously nurture and develop this self over the course of our lifetime.

Your unique creativity allows you to express yourself in the world. This self-expression may be manifest in how you parent, teach, write, or paint. It may be in the making of wonderful food or in the garden you grow. Your self-expression may come out in how you dress, talk, dance, walk, sing, or play. Think about it. You have the opportunity, and the choice, to express yourself every moment of every day.

In the world of work, you can behave in a rote way, following what other's think you should be. You can hide yourself under a bushel basket simply following the rules. Or you can take risks to become just a little more fully connected and creative—and thus, more fully you. As you both do so, your relationships will reap the benefits.

CHARACTERISTICS OF HAPPY, HEALTHY ADULTS

Within our Western culture, we are among the first generations to have many opportunities so we are the first to consciously seek happiness. What encompasses or promotes happiness or contentment in life is a relatively simple list of characteristics. Sometimes life circumstances, our personal struggles with desire, or the flashiness of advertising and media confuse us. Yet, strip these away and the building blocks of contentment are relatively accessible. Throughout childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood, we develop the knowledge, capabilities, and values that become the template upon which we build our characters.

The following characteristics contribute to ongoing personal growth, contentment, and happiness in one's adult life.

Develop self-awareness and take time for self-reflection

Develop vigorous curiosity about life

Develop, balance, and strengthen masculine and feminine characteristics

Develop the ability to empathize and express compassion

Develop and enjoy close and satisfying relationships

Develop deeper meaning in your life

Happy, healthy adults have a balance
of these aspects in their lives.

DEVELOPING YOUR SELF-AWARENESS AND DEVELOPING CAPACITY FOR SELF-REFLECTION

Self-awareness is the ability to observe our own actions and reactions; self-reflection taps memory and hones an ability to evaluate our behaviors and responses. Such inner observation helps you to make choices about the effectiveness of your pursuits and the success of your actions, your emotional responses, and communications.

Awareness and self-reflection are also connected to deeper levels of knowing oneself, sometimes known as the intuition, inner voice, or subconscious mind. In everyday life, sometimes we have little time to tap into this powerful asset. It takes a little time to become self-aware. Contemplating quietly, meditating, listening to wise counsel, reading self-help or philosophical books, writing in a journal, and focusing your thoughts while you run or swim or bike are some ways to hone this necessary skill. I recommend that you give yourself 10-30 minutes each day to become quiet and reflect, to tap into your center of calm, deeper wisdom, and greatest dreams. (Many suggestions may be found on our website and in the links at the end of this guide.)

DEVELOPING A VIGOROUS CURIOSITY ABOUT LIFE

Having the ability to be adaptable goes a long way in life, especially with current longevity. Developing a curiosity about all that life has to offer keeps us flexible, and feeds our creative juices. A perspective of curiosity helps us accept the many changes that our fast-paced world demands.

Studies show that when we are deeply curious about something, we get lost in the moment. That lost-in-the-moment feeling is akin to contentment or happiness. In addition, the flexibility that comes with an open-minded, open-hearted, flexible approach to life helps us to become like trees with deep roots—the winds may buffet us about a bit, but we do not topple.

DEVELOPING, BALANCING, AND STRENGTHENING YOUR MASCULINE AND FEMININE ASPECTS

We struggle to achieve a comfortable balance in many aspects of our internal and external lives: between our social and contemplative sides, our work and personal life, earning a living and giving back to the community. Attaining such balance strengthens us. Balancing the masculine and feminine characteristics within our personality is also strengthening. Studies show that individuals who have integrated high masculine and high feminine aspects in their personalities do better in life. Specifically, they have higher self-esteem and function better in society than individuals who have very low masculine and feminine aspects.

Developing strong masculine and feminine aspects does not mean becoming overly macho or overly sweet and sensitive. Instead, it is allowing yourself to explore the breadth of emotions and behaviors commonly known to both men and women. It means exploring this continuum to find how you best express yourself in the world on all levels—physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially—without downplaying or taming any of your talents or urges. When people bring this strength to their relationships, you get a blend of qualities that enrich the relationship, shake you out of rigid role models, and make for lively interchange of ideas and creativity.

DEVELOPING YOUR ABILITY TO EMPATHIZE AND EXPRESS COMPASSION FOR OTHERS

This characteristic refers to what is commonly called emotional intelligence. It enables you to move out of your personal realm and into the realm of the interpersonal. Empathy is the ability to know or imagine what another person is feeling or experiencing, to step outside your personal experience and see or hear or imagine how another must feel.

Compassion takes empathy one step further. It is the ability to respond to another person's feelings or experience appropriately. This means sharing their joy, success, laughter, and glee. Compassion means caring for others when they are down, hurting, or in pain. It means sharing with another the struggle of change or growth when life circumstances are challenging.

It may seem obvious that empathy and compassion benefit not only you but everyone around you, especially in your partnering and family life. Empathy and compassion are not about what you imagine, need, or want. They are about what the other person feels, needs, and wants. Empathy is knowing that another person has a birthday and loves to celebrate. Compassion is choosing and offering just the right gift—one that you know the other person would love or cherish.

Although some people are innately better at empathizing and being compassionate, these are worthwhile attributes to develop for you and everyone around you, both at home and at work. You might practice putting yourself in another person's shoes a few minutes each day. Practice listening to what they say they are feeling. If they don't say feeling words, observe their body language and tone of voice, and listen to what they need. (More suggestions for developing such emotional intelligence are found in the links at the end of this guide.)

ENJOYING CLOSE AND SATISFYING RELATIONSHIPS

One of the most important requirements for life satisfaction is the development of your capacity to have close, intimate relationships. In general, in work or personal life, women tend to develop strong, interconnected webs of friendship and support, while men tend to create networks of collaborators through professional connections and activities. Friendships are deeply important. On the personal front, approximately 86 percent of all people are married at least once in their lifetime. Of those who divorce or break up, a great number go on to either live together or marry again. Since most of us have an inner drive to seek a partner, learning to stay connected and to develop intimacy with another person is nearly a guarantee of contentment, satisfaction, and happiness in one's life.

It makes sense that developing our capacity for human connection sustains our life and makes us happier both at work and at home. Doing our part to learn how to be close and stay joyfully connected is crucial.

DEVELOPING A DEEPER MEANING IN YOUR LIFE

Finally, people who do best in life, who report the greatest involvement, who are the most engaged and engaging, have some way of expressing their life's purpose or meaning. Their values and beliefs are aligned with their life choices, and thus their activities and interactions are infused with meaning. For many, this higher purpose or deeper meaning is grounded in a spiritual or religious practice. Each of us discovers our own sense of purpose and meaning in life. What seems universally apparent, however, is the need to explore this part of our life. There are numerous religious, spiritual, and philosophical traditions that can offer guidance. Personal contemplation, introspection, and journal writing; music, literature, dance, or creative pursuits; and the study of the natural world can also inspire you to find the connections that give a higher purpose and a deeper meaning to your everyday life, beyond work. It will enrich you and bring greater creativity and meaning to your work life and work relationships.

Part 2: Strengthen Your Grown Up Self

HOW DO YOU STRENGTHEN THE HEALTHY ASPECTS OF YOUR ADULT SELF?

In the previous section I highlighted those characteristics and pursuits that define a healthy, mature adult self. Let's look at how we go about strengthening the muscles of this self.

A helpful way of teaching professionals and partners to distinguish their healthy adult behaviors from unhealthy interactions comes out of Transactional Analysis. TA is a school of psychological thinking, out of which comes the concept of the Parent/Adult/Child selves within each of us. This simple approach to the human personality will:

- Provide you with an understanding of the responses and reactions that help or hinder your relationships
- Empower you with options to change negative responses to your partner and respond in ways that are appropriate to the situation

Once you can distinguish your healthy adult behaviors from unhealthy interactions, your skills in communicating and interacting will quickly expand. What made you feel stuck before will change when you have a repertoire of healthy behavioral choices. I think of expanding this repertoire of adult behaviors as muscle building; sometimes we all need a personal trainer to teach us new strategies and keep us on track. The parent/adult/child model is an integral part of your training.

Your ability to recognize and quickly change or rectify your verbal and behavioral responses in any communication creates solid, clear relationships.

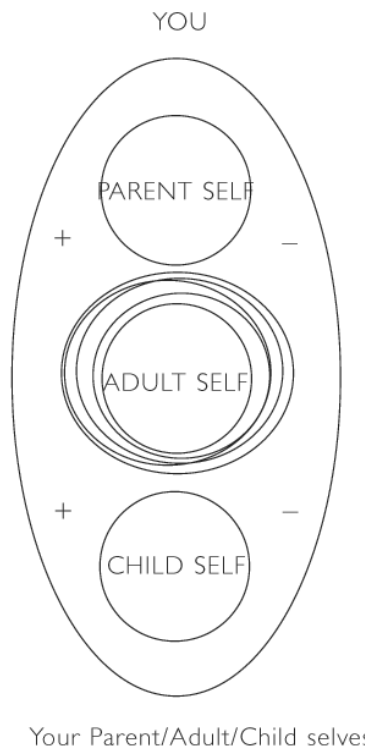
THE PARENT - ADULT - CHILD MODEL

Take a look at this diagram. This view of the human personality shows that at any one time, we experience one of three basic selves: the parent, the adult, and the child. In addition, the parent and child selves each have a positive and an unhealthy or wounded aspect that will be further described. Remember, becoming aware of these selves that reside within you, and developing a strong adult self, are the ultimate goals. When you achieve them, you develop the emotional flexibility that is important in the business world.

The more resilient your personality becomes:

- The more flexible you will be in navigating between these selves
- The more options you will have in your communications
- The more you will be able to partner in a healthy way

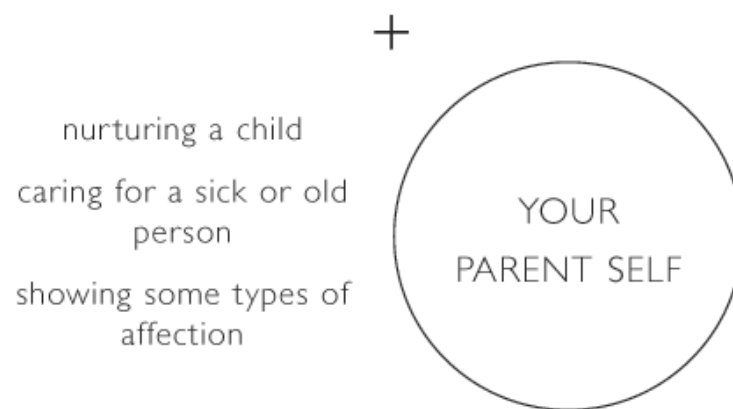
Let me describe the parent, adult, and child selves to you in greater detail.



THE PARENT SELF

The parent self has two aspects—one has positive responses and the other has negative or unhealthy responses. You developed these positive and unhealthy behaviors and attitudes through observation of parent role models when you were a child. For all of us, this is learned through interaction with parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, teachers, and other adults in our childhood. As we grow older, the behaviors and attitudes of the parent figures around us are unconsciously internalized, until they seem like “a part of us.”

If you look at the diagram of the parent self, the positive aspects of this state are nurturing and caring. These are the way we care for a child, a pet, the very sick, or the very old.



Some positive parent aspects

In personal relationships, problems arise when we try to parent our partner. In the work environment it is unprofessional to be parental toward coworkers, team members or those you manage no matter what level you are within a company or in your own business. In both personal and professional relationships it is condescending to behave parentally toward another adult. When we do nurture another adult out of the parental state, it typically feels like being treated as a child.



Some negative or critical parent aspects

The negative or unhealthy aspect of the parent self is called the Critical Parent. The critical parent embodies the characteristics you have internalized that are not only critical, but also shaming, blaming, judging, self-righteous, or angry. It may be spoken criticism or a silent judgmental vibe. Sometimes this is demonstrated by giving someone the cold shoulder, showing a look of disgust, rolling the eyes in utter dismay, or even shunning a person for a time. You may recognize this as pointing an angry finger at others, or even pointing it at yourself. Bob is a director at an international manufacturing company whose experiences provide an example. He and his wife Carole, a free-lance event coordinator managing a small core team and many contractors and vendors under tight timelines, have explored the Parent/Adult/Child learning together and practice strengthening their adult muscles both at home and at work. Discussing what they've learned is safe and comes naturally in their home. They are role models and naturally coach people on their teams at work. Together they work to stay aligned with their core values and balance busy professional and personal lives complete with twin sons.

In talking about her husband, Carole said:

Bob is sometimes his own worst enemy. He's a wonderful man, and—he's a perfectionist. I can tell when he's let himself down. He'll become quiet and sullen. Once in a while he'll pick on me, or become critical of the twins. It's not usually like him. But it does remind me of how his dad always snaps at his wife—Bob's mom—and talks down about anyone who doesn't follow the old man's rules for how to live life. Once you've crossed Grandpa, it takes a long time to get back in his good graces. He sure knows how to make a person feel worthless! I think that's why Bob has become so loving

in his own life—not wanting to be like his father in that way. Yet, it comes out when he doesn't live up to his own expectations. I'll find out later that he overlooked someone at the office, or someone he supervises made a mistake and Bob feels he handled it poorly. He can get himself coming and going.

Many people are their own worst critical parent— they need no one else to blame them or point a shaming finger at them. They do it to themselves, silently and internally. It is best to spend no time in the critical parent state, because it is demeaning, detrimental to self-esteem, and harmful to any relationship. Instead, I will show you the benefits and behaviors of developing a strong adult self.

As you reflect on the parent self and complete the exercises at the end of this chapter, consider: What behaviors and attitudes did I learn from adults around me as a child, and how do I use them in negative ways with my partner, friends or coworkers now?

THE CHILD SELF

When Bob comes home from work, many evenings he and Carole get down on the living room floor to wrestle and play with their twin boys, who squeal with delight at this physical contact. Carole and Bob delight in the affectionate tussle, laughing and making silly noises right along with their boys. Then they end this little pre-dinner ritual by sprawling out in a circle end to end with each one's head on another one's belly—for belly laughing and giggling until they wind down. Bob says:

It is such a great way to reconnect and switch gears at the end of a long workday. The boys calm down. My head is no longer at work. Carole and I have touched and hugged, and we've all connected once again. No matter what our days have been like, we are all there together, and it feels great.

The child self is frequently referred to as the Inner Child. The positive characteristics of an adult's inner child are the playful, joyful, generously loving, sometimes mischievous ways we can be when we feel safe and secure with another person or group of people. Maybe we enter this childlike, innocent, playful state with our children. Sometimes we may get silly or mischievous with our mate, or with our friends when we are goofing around. It is wonderful to be playfully childlike when we feel safe and secure with those around us.



Some positive child aspects

At the office, some ways people play together are by:

- Arranging happy hours, birthday parties and other celebrations
- Spontaneous lunch times heading out to the food truck and for a walk
- Biking or carpooling to work together with an agreement that no work be discussed on the way
- Having a ping-pong table or basketball hoop with time to goof-off encouraged to increase energy and stimulate creativity
- And so on

The negative experience of the child self that we carry inside, even in adulthood—is sometimes called the Wounded Child. It is not really bad; rather, it is the part of yourself that got hurt as a child. It reflects how you responded to being hurt by those you loved. If we investigate the feelings and behaviors of our wounded child, we find a direct reproduction of what we felt, what we thought, and how we behaved when we were hurt in our childhood.

Bob talks about how his father's behavior influenced him as a child.

My dad was a heavy drinker when we were growing up. He was a loving man, but then he could turn on you when he had too much to drink. Because we boys were supposed to be little men, when he yelled at me, I'd try not to show it, but I'd feel like dying on the inside! I never was sure I pleased him, and I always wanted him to be proud of me.

Now, I know I'm hard on myself, and others, sometimes. And when one of the other directors is upset with a decision I've made or even if Carole hurts my feelings—once in a while I have to work hard not to shut down and withdraw inside. It's a challenge because neither of them are really like my dad, but I find myself doing the same old behaviors sometimes. I'm working on it.

Carole's childhood experience and adult responses are very different than Bob's. Listen to how she summarizes her reaction under similar circumstance:

I, on the other hand, if my parents, sisters, or school friends hurt me as a child, the tears just flowed. Inside, I was always trying to figure out what happened; it always seemed so unfair, and I wanted to make it right—to make sense out of it. Then I'd have to talk it over with the person who had hurt me until we got reconnected. At home I still have to do that now! When Bob hurts me, I still feel badly and want to reconcile immediately!

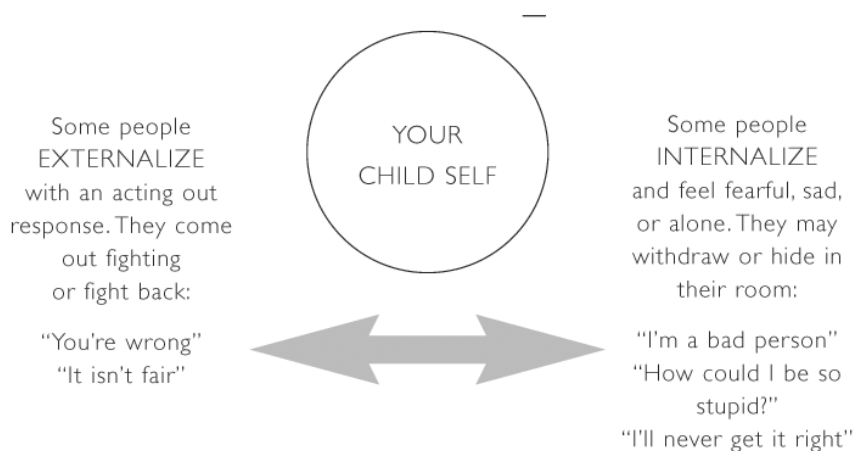
Notice how these individual responses interact in the safe home environment, as Bob adds:

Boy does she ever! In our relationship it's a good thing though, because my instinct is to withdraw, and Carole won't let me— she's got to talk it out. She never lets us go to bed angry or disconnected.

Carole laughs and goes on to describe the difference of her response at home and at the office:

Oh my gosh, that's just not possible at the office! It used to be so frustrating if there were tense, unresolved feelings with anyone! But there I'm heading up a core team and need to stay professional so they can then manage their sub-contractors. They can't always help me with my hurt feelings. I've had to find safe and appropriate ways to, slow down and reflect so I can calm my personal feelings and set them aside until I understand them and think through the best actions to take. That way I can remain professional. Once I privately figure it out, sometimes with Bob, but more often with my coach or a colleague from another company, I can then let it go or I've developed ways to diplomatically talk it over with the other person.

When we think of the possible responses to being hurt as a child, there is a whole continuum of options. If you have children, observe their behaviors when they are hurt by playmates, siblings, teachers, or even by you as a parent.



A continuum of some wounded child responses you may experience.

Some children feel very sad or defeated when their feelings get hurt by their parents. They shut down and run to their rooms and hide in the closet, or may pull the covers over their heads. They may cry. They may have thoughts about how bad they are, how alone they feel. Often children whose feelings are hurt may come out kicking, screaming, and hollering. To be hurt makes them mad, and they want to lash out. These children don’t feel sad—they feel angry! They may think the other person is “unfair” or wrong or bad. Still other children simply don’t move when their feelings are hurt. They shut down and “go away” inside while their body stays “present.” They may be feeling sadness or defeat—or they may think how wrong or stupid the other person is and how unfairly life is treating them at the moment.

Sometimes people will describe the one way they responded to being hurt in childhood. Other people describe two major ways they responded. One way of responding may have occurred frequently with a particular parent or sibling; the other may have happened with schoolmates or other people outside the home. Sometimes people describe responding with sadness as a young child, and then lashing out angrily as they entered adolescence.

As you reflect on the child self in the exercises at the end of this chapter answer the question: “How did I respond— in my behaviors— when I was hurt as a young child—and how do I react similarly in my thoughts, feelings, and behaviors when I am hurt by my partner, family, friends or coworkers now?”

THE ADULT SELF

Imagine the diagram below as a large sphere called Your Adult Self—the healthy space or state that you, as an adult, get to interact from. When describing the adult self, I often hold my arms in the air as though I were gently embracing a large, three-dimensional orb. The diameter and inner space connote the spaciousness of the adult self; the circumference suggests limits beyond which thoughts, actions, words, and experiences become too extreme or are too out-of-the-adult bounds.



The muscles of your adult self evolve and strengthen over time. These “muscles” make you feel resilient and ready to handle life’s joys and challenges.

Some people react negatively when they think of becoming “adult” or “mature.” They want to cling to the vestiges of childhood and maybe even childish behaviors. They misunderstand true adulthood, which is not limiting or stifling. In fact, it is freeing because it encompasses so much of one’s life experience and learning. Most mature adults are far less self-conscious, self-doubting, or concerned with petty things than they were while growing up or in their early adult years. Maturity can bring a lightness of heart and the beginnings of wisdom, so imagine that the adult self is spacious! There is room for a great breadth of feelings and behaviors.

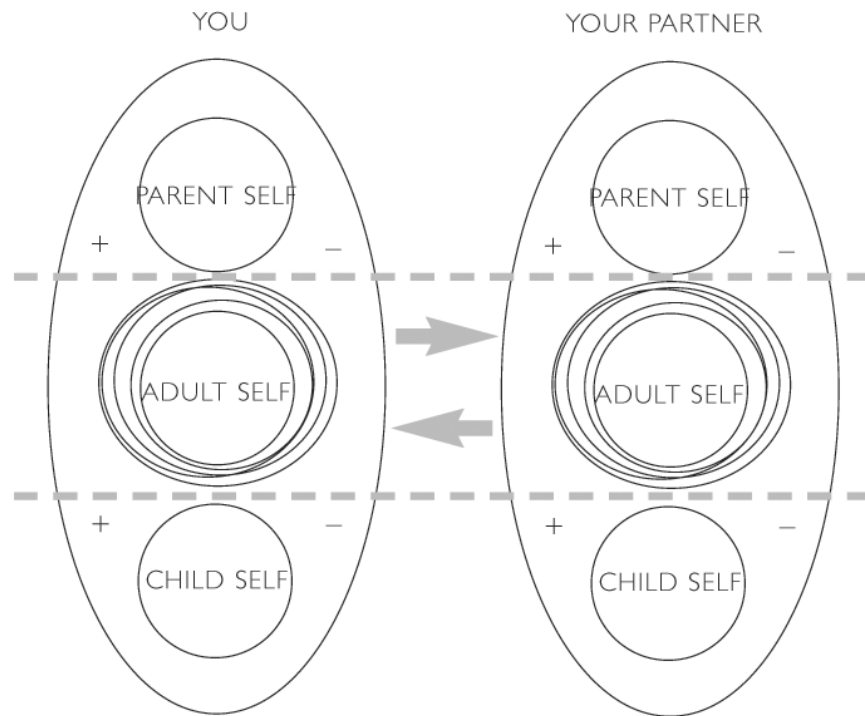
The edges of your adult self help you determine what is healthy or unhealthy. Going beyond these edges lets you know you are too manic or too “in the pits” with depression, too arrogant or too

humble, too micro-managing or too laissez-faire.

As a healthy adult, you know when you are too full of rage or too silent and withdrawn. Within the spaciousness of adulthood, you know and accept your strengths and weaknesses, you discriminate what you like and don't like. As a healthy adult, you know what you know, you know what you don't know, and you know where and when to look outside for information, help, or advice. As a healthy adult, you are not too humble, and you are not too arrogant. You are willing to learn, to grow, and to accept this process as a part of being human. You want to succeed; you know that perfection does not exist. It is that feeling you have when you walk down the street and you feel all right with the world.

The diagram that follows puts all these selves together.

As we mature, the healthy adult self is the state we should strive to be in most of the time when we interact with all other adults. The only exceptions are when both adults are feeling playful, young, and safe with one another, or when one is in a nurturing parent self and interacting with a child, the elderly, someone who is ill, or an animal.



Your Parent/Adult/Child selves
As two strong, resilient adult selves connect and communicate,
their creativity, intimacy, and satisfaction are enhanced.

In learning to think, feel, and behave as your adult self, there are two strategies to become aware of:

- Avoid bouncing back and forth between your child self and parent self, so you don't bypass your adult self.
- Allow your adult self to care for your child self, so that you don't look to your partner (and others) to do so.

HOW TO AVOID BYPASSING YOUR ADULT SELF

Once we become aware of the three selves within us, we feel best when we're being our adult self. We realize that we've been there, done that with regard to the hurtful parts of childhood, so why continue to revisit them by choice? And the critical parent self just isn't very nice to be around.

As you do the exercises at the end of this chapter and become more aware of your internal selves, you may notice just how much time you actually spend being the critical parent or the wounded child. When I ask people to nonjudgmentally observe their parent/adult/child selves for a week or two, many of them are astounded to discover how much time they spend as the wounded child and how often they bounce back and forth between the wounded child and the critical parent, feeling hurt and sad, then beating themselves up, then feeling bad once again!

Bob talks about his experience with this pattern—and how Carole and his friends help him overcome it.

It seems that no matter how high you rise up in a company, how many degrees or how much experience you have, these old responses are there sometimes. Darn! It sure would be nice to get "perfect" but I am more accepting that that's not the answer these days.

Sometimes I'll do something I'm ashamed of, then withdraw like I did when I was little and Dad yelled at me. Right there will be that critical Dad voice rubbing it in, telling me how stupid I am. I've learned to get back to my more reasonable adult self as I've worked on changing this pattern. It sure feels better. I spent eighteen years listening to Dad berate us all from time to time—I don't want to do that to myself for the rest of my life!

Now I try to forgive myself for screwing up and talk myself through what I know is the truth—that everyone makes mistakes. I have a couple of guy friends I can talk things over with, especially when it's work related. We are serious for a bit and then we joke around and kid each other. Of course they'll kid me about it later, but I feel very accepted by them. It's a guy thing.

Carole's good at helping me put things in perspective, too. We stay on track together. We're good for one another in that way. I know I help her when she does things she's not proud of as well. We keep our conversations about work to a time limit so that way we can rely on one another but not bore one another to death! Then we go back to having fun with our family.

Like Bob, as you reflect on your day-to-day interactions, you may also have a pattern of bypassing your adult self at times and reverting to your critical parent—or your wounded child. Or you may find that when you do become your adult self, your repertoire of behaviors and verbal responses is small and unused—like muscles that are unused.

Every adult I have worked with has at least some adult-self repertoire. You may easily slip into your repertoire around colleagues, coworkers, friends, or new acquaintances. The exception is in a work environment that is toxic or dysfunctional, or where people work together much like a family with poor role definition and boundaries. We all use our best adult behavior in public; it is in our private, most personal relationships—with romantic partners and family—and in our day-to-day professional interactions at the office that all of our childhood and critical parent buttons get pushed and we forget to stay adult.

It is the task of maturing to grow your adult self and to spend almost all of your time interacting from within it. If you discover you have weak adult “muscles,” start by identifying the muscles that you have.

Then look around for positive adult role modeling. How do other adults behave, interact, and communicate when they are at their best? A key phrase I like to offer people is to always behave with “grace and dignity.” Everyone immediately understands grace, dignity, and respect. These concepts summarize and encompass the essence of the adult self.

In addition, I recommend rereading the basic requirements for developing a healthy adult self at the beginning of this chapter. Talk to friends. No matter where you are on your career path or professional life, find a mentor, coach or guide. Observe and interact with other people you admire. Read biographies and autobiographies about people you admire for their grace, their dignity, and the respect they inspire. Participate in your church or community. Give to others who are less fortunate. Gravitate to people and activities that challenge your thinking and your emotional and spiritual growth. All of these activities exercise the muscles of healthy adulthood.

SOMETIMES IT'S HARD TO BE AN ADULT

Sometimes our adult self may need something as silly as a refresher in table manners or social graces to feel competent in the larger world, or new ways to talk to an employee or your boss or a coworker. The work world is demanding and often high-stress. We need to stay adult in heated discussions, when receiving critique or a review, or when giving feedback to another. When working on a stressful project, under deadline, budget or scrutiny of team members—trying to resolve stressful grown-up matters in the workplace—can bring up feelings that are critical, defensive or even childish.

Let's look at how to handle emotions from within the adult self.

HANDLING EMOTIONS AS AN ADULT

According to TA, our parent, adult, and child selves always exist. We carry each within us forever. They do not grow up or go away. Even if you successfully strengthen your adult muscles, in stressful or trigger situations you may still revert to the behaviors of a wounded child or the critical parent. The adult emotions are appropriate and effective. The wounded child emotions are valid as well; they are just not very effective in getting you what you want and need in your adult life. The critical parent should be avoided altogether.

In one-on-one relationships and discussions, if one or both individuals try to get their needs met when in a wounded child state, this can be damaging and frustrating. First, both people run the risk of being hurt and wounded, or getting defensive and angry. Second, if one person flips into the critical parent role, there will be a power imbalance and more hurt or defensiveness will ensue from being criticized, shamed, blamed, or judged. If both people are feeling little, then neither one gets comforted or has their needs met. Here are some examples from the personal lives of professional people when they've first been introduced to this concept:

Ivan, a successful sales trainer, married four years to Marlene, talks about how the child and parent selves play out in their home relationship at times.

I have a high-stress professional life, traveling around the country doing training sessions for 3-4 days at a time to new groups. There is no time to slow down or let down. It's especially hard because I can't totally let down at home either.

When I'm feeling vulnerable, I sure can't show it around Marlene. She expects me always to be strong and comes on with a lecture in a very stern voice about all the ways I could improve my lot. I end up feeling like she's

trying to be my mother. I know she doesn't want this either, but it leaves me feeling unmanly, and extremely angry with her in the long run. She says she feels trapped by my behavior when I'm needy like that and doesn't know how to respond in a positive way.

She tries, but we both lose out.

Penny, an entertainment project manager, has been living with Mike for nine months. Experiencing this new lifestyle challenge, she says the two of them are also grappling with the parent/child predicament:

Moving in together is more stressful than I could have imagined. I feel so out of sorts these days and I don't think Mike knows what to do, so he just goes silent on me. It makes me think about just staying at the office. At least there I feel competent but I can't fully share what's going on at home with my coworkers. When we go to office parties or functions I don't want them to have a prearranged notion of who Mike is. I've got to find someone I can talk to during this transition.

When George and Les, who have been committed partners for six years, have more than the usual stress at work, they often come home wanting the other person to listen and give advice or consolation. Les talks about how the child self creeps in to both their personalities during those stressful times.

It is really messy when we both are under stress at the same time. Then we usually end up fighting about trivial things that don't really matter. I pout and George will stomp off. It's like kindergarten around here at those times. We're learning to take turns talking about our days—and staying adult really helps.

Jerome and Julia have come up with their own strategies for staying adult. Says Julia:

It's taken a few years, but now when one of us is feeling down, or hurt, or little, the other one tries to stay adult and just listens until the feelings subside.

Jerome adds to this thought:

I think we are also both better at nurturing our own wounds, talking to our friends, or going for a walk or run when we are initially hurt. Then we come

back and talk later when we feel able to talk more calmly. Sometimes, by then, the feelings have gone away. If not, we quickly clear the air.

As you can see from these professional couples, the wounded child state is not safe for either person at home unless one of you stays adult.

As already pointed out, it is also difficult in the work environment to share this specific language unless you have a culture that promotes such trainings, learning or personal development. Gaining support from a knowledgeable mentor or a specialized coach is most often the answer. Such guidance both increases your learning curve and speeds up the process. In addition it is a safe place in which you do not have to be perfect!

So what do we do with these hurt, old, wounded child feelings when you do not have many places to share your challenges?

According to TA, we need to become our own best caregiver.

You are the adult who now needs to nurture your own inner child. Unconsciously looking to any other adult for “parenting” will lead to inequality and imbalance in your relationship. It will leave you feeling vulnerable.

Our adult self needs to take responsibility for our child self. We need to let the adult part listen to this child, or take our self out to play and give it attention when our feelings have been wounded and the hurt is not resolved. If your adult self does not protect and care for the little child inside you, it is like having a two-year-old in your care and walking away when she is hurting. Or, it's like whopping the little two-year-old guy upside the head with a two-by-four, if you let the critical parent take over! It is important that you learn to care for your inner child from a loving adult place so you don't inappropriately lay this burden on other adults in your life. For example:

- Your adult self knows the old pitfalls you may fall back into when you visit the family you grew up in. The adult self can visit your extended family and leave your child self at home—safe and protected.
- The adult self knows how to get through a difficult or heated discussion with a coworker, client or vendor when your child self feels afraid or acquiesces out of fear or uncertainty.
- The adult self knows how to stand up for you in an assertive way when someone is bullying or ignoring you.
- While your child self may not know how to say “no,” your adult self can do so when appropriate.
- Your adult self can take your child self out for ice cream or comfort you when you need a good cry.
- Your adult self can remind your child self that making mistakes is part of learning, that there's nothing to be ashamed of, and that you'll be able to do better next time. This is extremely important in the work world where making mistakes without recrimination increases creativity and risk taking.

Such tasks are much too big for a three- or four-year-old. But they are not too big for an adult.

Part 3: Exercises

In the following exercises you will begin to identify your parent, child, and adult selves. Use a notebook or the companion workbook to write and reflect on the questions.

Many of the questions will ask you to reflect on your responses in your professional life, your personal life or with friends and acquaintances. Noticing the differences will help you develop appropriate strategies for different situations. Becoming acquainted with your responses will help you to stay positive and strengthen the adult/adult interactions with anyone in your personal or professional life. Take your time and do these exercises thoroughly on your own.

Remember that each of these selves may be outwardly expressed in your actions, or they may be attitudes or feelings that another person senses, even if you do nothing outwardly. If any of these selves or your responses to them are not readily apparent to you, simply allow the concepts in this guide to accompany you as you go through your week. You will gradually begin to recognize these selves in your interactions and internal responses.

Once you become fully aware of your three selves, change will come more easily. The main task is to ask yourself, “Am I using these selves wisely? Do I revert to the critical parent or the wounded child when I am under stress? How does this affect my interactions, and especially my partnership and my relationships at work? Does my adult self need some muscle building? Which characteristics of my adult self do I need to work on?”

Since you will be identifying both positive and negative characteristics in yourself and possibly in others, try to remain nonjudgmental, yet truthful.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PARENT SELVES

These exercises will help you identify the times in your life when you think or behave as the positive or negative parent—or when you feel your partner, coworkers or others, are behaving in this way.

Draw a “parent circle” with a plus and minus sign representing both the nurturing and critical aspects of parenting. First make a list of the times when you find yourself being the positive, or nurturing, parent self. Make a list of the actions and characteristics that let you know you are being your positive parent self. Identify times you experience this with your partner. Ask yourself if you are expressing the positive parent self appropriately. When might it be inappropriate to express this self with your partner—and how does this impact your relationship?

Identify what you say and do when you are your negative parent self. When do you revert to the negative parent self, and how does this impact your relationships at work and at home? How do other people respond when you are being a critical parent? Ask yourself, “When I’ve used critical parent words and actions, what dynamic does it produce? Is this the result I want?”

Now look at times when someone else has pointed a critical parent finger at you, either verbally or nonverbally. When does this typically happen in your relationships? How does this make you feel? How do you respond? Do you remain calm? Do you feel little and sad? Do you get angry and rebellious? How does this impact your relationships?

Sometimes we are our own worst critical parent. Explore when you are critical, shaming, blaming, angry, or judging with yourself. Ask yourself, “How do I feel when I am being the critical parent and pointing a finger at myself?”

Take some time to identify all the triggers or stressors that seemingly cause you to revert to either inward or outward shaming, blaming, angry, or critical behavior toward your partner. Again, ask yourself, “Is this the result I want?”

JOYFUL AND WOUNDED CHILD SELVES

These exercises will help you identify the times in your life when you think or act like the joyful or wounded child—or when you feel your partner, or others, are acting this way.

Draw a “child circle” with a plus and minus sign representing the joyful and wounded aspects of childhood. Focus first on your joyful child experience. Ask yourself, “How does my joyful child self act when I feel safe? How do I play, and express humor, laughter, mischievousness, and joy? How often do my partner and I interact and play as child selves? Is this often enough? In which other relationships in my life does it feel good to be in my playful child?”

Now, focusing on the wounded child, ask yourself, “How did I react when I was hurt as a child (before the age of eight or nine years)?” Think about your initial response. You may have had a secondary response within minutes, but it is the first response that is most important. Explore what you did “on the outside.” Did you kick, scream, cry, look blank or impassive, run to your room, cry, or hide?

Next, consider what you were thinking and feeling “on the inside.” You may have felt sad, hurt and confused, angry, or even enraged. In either case, what were you telling yourself? Was it, “I’m such an awful stupid person!” or “It’s so unfair. They are wrong or stupid to treat me this way!”

As you contemplate your childhood responses, think about how you might subtly replicate them today when you feel hurt, shamed, blamed, or punished, or when someone is angry or misunderstanding you. You’ll probably discover your wounded child responses hiding out in adult clothing. Write about how these responses impact your relationships. When you act from your wounded child self, do you get the results you want with your partner, coworkers or others?

YOUR ADULT SELF

These exercises are meant to help you identify your current adult strengths and to explore ways to expand on them, so you interact from your adult self, most of the time.

First, take a blank page and write these words at the top: “What I notice about my adult self.” Then slowly think over all of your relationships. Think about how you behave with your coworkers, friends, parents, siblings, and your partner. Make a list of six of these people, including your partner, at least one colleague and a friend. Choose some you find easy to relate to and others where the relationship feels more challenging. Under each person’s name, identify the adult qualities you show around this person by listing these qualities under each name.

Then, stop and reflect on these six lists. When is it most difficult to stay adult around each of these people? Make another list of an additional three adult characteristics or qualities you would like to increase in each of these relationships. Notice if the lists for your partner are similar or different than those of the other people in your life. Ask yourself: “Am I bringing my adult self equally to all my relationships? Which relationships are most challenging?”

Also ask yourself, “Do I bypass my adult self and instead become the critical parent? Do I then beat myself up, become the wounded child, feel hurt or angry, and then beat myself up again? When do I do this? Under what circumstances do I bypass my adult self?” The pattern might seem a little like a boomerang.

As a way of expanding your adult behavioral repertoire, think about the people around you. Who consistently acts in ways you admire and want to emulate? Look for a variety of people at work, among your friends, your neighborhood or faith community, and among celebrities. You may even think back to positive role models you had as a youngster, in high school, or in college.

In addition, you may list all the current professionals—advisors, coaches, teachers, and mentors—who could help you develop adult “muscles.”

Again, taking a blank page and contemplating everything you have learned about your parent, child, and adult selves, answer the following question:

What do I need to do to strengthen my adult self at work? And in my personal life?

Then, highlight four or five things you can do to help yourself to stay adult or expand your adult repertoire. Make specific notes and agreements with yourself about what you intend to do to strengthen your adult self in the coming weeks. If your work and personal needs are different, choose specific small steps to take in each area or concentrate on one aspect of your life at a time. The capabilities will transfer to all aspects of your life as you practice in one or two relationships to begin.

LETTING YOUR ADULT SELF CARE FOR YOUR JOYFUL AND WOUNDED CHILD

As your adult self becomes strong and confident, it will be easier to care for the hurt child inside, so the child feels nurtured and is not sabotaging the relationships important to you. The task is to become aware of how you treat yourself when you are feeling joyful or hurt, and then be able to give to yourself appropriately. Most of our child self's needs are small and doable—to be held, rocked, played with, given attention, given praise, not made to do scary things, and so on.

Ask yourself the following questions:

Do I, and how do I nurture myself?

Now write down five or six ways you can nurture yourself when you feel a little down. Forms of nurturance might include a round of golf on a weekday afternoon; a long, hot, relaxing bath; a well-prepared and delicious meal; sucking the juice out of oranges while sitting in the middle of your garden; time to read; listening to music; or a conversation with a close friend.

How do I fulfill my need to play?

This could be a romp in the yard with your dog, a jog around the lake, a pillow fight with your older sister, a trip to the movies, or creating a piece of art. Some people enjoy making ice cream or playing tennis. What would satisfy your child self's needs? As part of your self-care this week, identify what your inner child might like to do for fun or relaxation. Then, provided it is not harmful, impossible, illegal, or prohibitively expensive, do it. Care for this part of yourself by giving yourself enough time for play, rest, or creative pursuits.

Make a list of all the things you can do to care for your inner child when your feelings get hurt. What do you most need and want when you are feeling bad? How can you give this to yourself? Taking care of yourself in this way is very important, because if you don't, you will expect the people closest to you, those at work and home, to take care of your wounded child.

Most people find that their inner child is not very demanding. Children have very basic needs: to be cuddled, loved, listened to, held, and sometimes played with. See if your inner child and your adult self can create a strong relationship. You will feel more cared for and nurtured because you are directly in control of providing this for yourself, and can do so at any time. In addition, your adult self will be available to relate to coworkers and your partner more often, without interferences of hurt feelings coming into play.

TALKING WITH YOUR PARTNER OR OTHER SAFE PERSON ABOUT YOUR PARENT, CHILD, AND ADULT SELVES

If you have a mate or other safe person to practice with you might do these exercises together. If not, simply do them as best you can on your own imagining scenarios in your life.

Once the two of you have done this private reflecting and have thought of ways to strengthen your adult self, come together to share your reflections. Take turns talking and listening to one another as you describe what you are learning about your own ability to stay adult, and about what stressors trigger you to revert to the critical parent and/or wounded child.

Share what you have discovered about your own childhood responses to being hurt.

Talk about how you see yourself reverting to these patterns in your relationship.

Describe one or two things you plan to do to stay adult.

Your task in this exercise is mainly to listen nonjudgmentally. You may wish to make a pact to help one another remain in your adult selves. One way to do this is to agree that anytime you catch yourself acting from a critical parent or wounded child place, you quickly say, “Oops, there I go again (being critical or being mokey). Let me stop and start over.”

NOTES AND AGREEMENTS ON EXPANDING YOUR ADULT SELF

Once a day for the next few weeks, spend ten minutes visualizing yourself acting and responding in these new ways. Then begin to put these behaviors into practice with your partner and others, especially at work. This is a life-long learning so return to your notes and agreements whenever necessary.

MEET DR. JAN HOISTAD



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Resources

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