

Activity 5: Reflect on your personal maturity.

This is an activity for people who would like to think about personality development beyond the P5 tool. Please read the following contribution on “Ego Development: a key aspect of personality development” and start asking yourself how this knowledge relates to you.

Ego Development: A Key Aspect of Personality Development

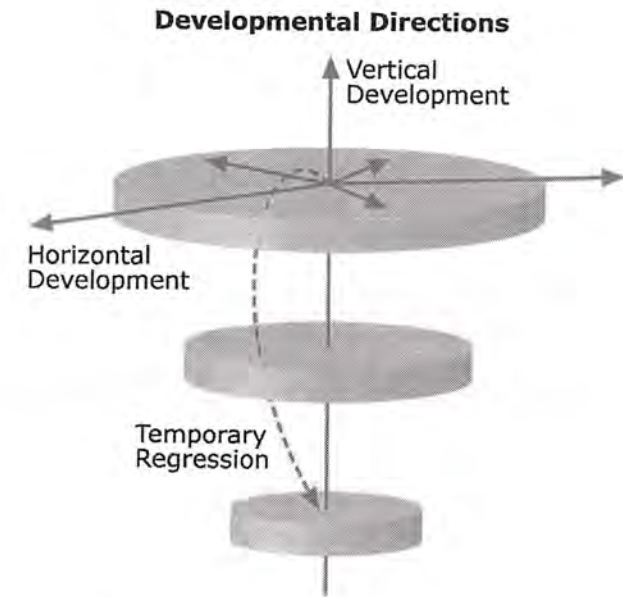
Have you ever experienced working with a manager for whom it seems easy to integrate differing perspectives, who is able to deal well with ambivalence without trying to wish it away, who is self-reflective and allows himself to be questioned, without feeling as if he is being personally attacked?

If so, then you have probably noticed a key dimension of personality development: maturity. This is an aspect of personality that psychologists also characterize as ego development, a subject that has been intensively researched over the last 50 years. The significant difference in this aspect is that it is not about stable dimensions on which people’s personality differs, but it is more about the development of the personality as a whole. The good news is that while most of the characteristics (for example, temperament, intelligence) are fixed, one can develop this aspect throughout one’s life. The following graphic shows how this type of development can be envisioned.

Often, what is described as development refers to the acquisition of knowledge, further competencies and new experiences. However, the basic way in which a person relates to and interacts with the world remains the same (horizontal development = learning).

In contrast, a more differentiated and integrative view of oneself and the world is associated with a qualitative shift (vertical development = ego development). With this shift, one becomes more able to effectively deal with complex contexts, different people and novel situations. In particularly stressful times, a temporary regression to earlier ego development stages may occur, and the person is likely to be able to reflect on this.

Personality maturity can be measured in more than 10 different stages of ego development. Vertical development through these stages shows a progressive movement towards greater self-reflection, increased awareness, and agility. Most managers are in the middle stages. They are therefore, far from the level at which they are able to effectively deal with complex and contradictory situations. To date,



numerous studies have demonstrated that a manager’s ego development stage has a significant influence on his success. Compared to stable personality traits, ego development stages are harder to see, yet their impact is unmistakable.

In this regard it can be extremely helpful to receive feedback on the stage one has reached, and, hence, to what degree this will influence one’s perceptions, self-definition, and actions. With this, one can better identify the associated possibilities and limitations, and can approach one’s development in a more focused and encompassing manner.

Source: Based on Thomas Binder & Jason Kay, systemic consulting group, Berlin, www.E-D-Profile.net.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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- Wikipedia (2011) – <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Personality>

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A Toolbox for the 21st Century Professional



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