

# Maturity

**Introduction:** Chronological age does not denote maturity. There are several areas that are generally considered in determining if a person is mature; the most common are physical development, intellectual development, emotional development, social development, spiritual development and sexual development.

Maturity  
m a t u r i t y

- **Physical development** is characterized by a commitment to maintaining a healthy body through nutritional choices, physical exercise, and medical self-management which results in prevention or early detection of illness, and use of appropriate medical treatment.
- **Intellectual development** is characterized by involvement in creative and stimulating mental activities. It includes the ability to gradually understand and solve complex problems. A person's intellectual development should generally correspond to the person's chronological age. A maturing individual takes advantage of involvement in creative and stimulating mental activities, including education and training.
- **Emotional development** is characterized by an awareness and acceptance of one's feelings. It includes an enthusiasm for life, an ability to control and manage feelings and resulting behavior, an ability to express emotions appropriately, and an ability to cope with stress. Emotional maturity, including self-esteem, is a key requirement to becoming a "mature" adult. Emotional maturity includes the ability to control anger and settle differences without violence or destruction, be patient, persevere, make informed decisions and stand by them, face reality and deal with it, give and receive love, accept and deal with frustration, learn from and relate positively to life experiences.
- **Social development** is a recognition of the relationship of individuals with others, society and nature. It includes the ability to maintain satisfying relationships, recognize, accept and appreciate diverse lifestyles and differences. Social maturity includes a sensitivity to social problems and ways to alleviate them. Socially mature persons savor human relationships but not being dependent on always having company.
- **Spiritual development** is characterized by a continuing search for meaning and purpose in life. It includes the development of a personal belief system based upon a set of values and ethical standards. A mature person has clarified his/her personal and societal values and developed a personal code of ethics.
- **Sexual development** is characterized by the physical changes that occur at pubescence which are responsible for the appearance of a person's sexuality.

We do not all mature at the same rate nor do we as individuals mature in each area at the same rate. We have no control over our chronological age, but we can direct our lives to mature in a more positive way in areas of human growth and development.

As a teenager approaching adulthood, independence looms as a heady prospect, a long-awaited goal. Maturity is generally defined as the time when individuals begin to function independently of their parents. We have no control over one aspect of maturity, which is chronological age. We do, however, have control over several other areas of growth and development. As a teenager, you are still maturing. Take the following self-assessment to see if you are where you want to be or where you think you should be at this time in your life.