



Maturity:

Having reached the most advanced stage in a process.

Neuroscience

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Robert Sapolsky writes about the Pre-frontal Cortex (PFC) which, he says, is the “most human part of the brain.” It is the most recently evolved part of the brain and “makes you do the harder thing, when it’s the right thing to do. It makes you do what is difficult, when that is what you should be doing.”

The PFC is responsible for logical thinking, long-term planning, controlling impulses and emotional regulation. What is the PFC regulating? That would be the amygdala.

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So, if the voice of reason, and therefore mature reasonable emotions and behaviour are reliant on a quiet amygdala and a fully functioning PFC - and if the PFC is developed through external experiences – what are those experiences, and where exactly, are those experiences to be found?

It turns out there are two places we can find those experiences, the first is through play, and the second is through perspective-taking.

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Something suddenly dawned on me.

It was the first time I actually realised what was happening with our students whilst engaging with the TPP’s. I knew the projects proved an excellent way to develop their characters, to help them think critically, to look at situations and people in a different light. I knew the play element, with the Disrupters, challenged them and enhanced their ability to emotionally cope with unexpected and stressful situations. But I didn’t know if this was a temporary response.

This was when it hit me how these experiences were literally strengthening neural connections in the PFC and restraining fear-based messages from the amygdala. These changes would forever shape the structure of their brain and therefore their attitudes, behaviours and maturation development.

This is probably the most important finding I have written about in this book: Straight from Sapolsky, one of the most brilliant minds of our time, from his words, to me, to this page - in order to evolve into a fully functioning mature adult, you have to practice perspective-taking.

And, there is also something else to consider. For maximum effectiveness, perspective taking has to be done as the young person reaches adolescence, and definitely before adolescence is over (P. 264).

Character Development - Perspectives

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there is no “right” perspective in any situation, that you need to move into positions of perspective to gain a complete picture. This is achieved through the Three Positioning Perspectives:

- *First position* – this is your own reality, your own view of the situation. Personal mastery comes from a strong first position. You need to know yourself and your values to be an effective role model and influence others by example.
- *Second position* – this is taking a creative leap of your imagination to understand the world from another person’s perspective. It is the basis of empathy and rapport in an emotional capacity; and the basis of understanding ideas and opinions in an intellectual capacity. It gives us the ability to read another person’s map.
- *Third position* – this is a step outside first and second view and a move towards a detached perspective to see the bigger picture.

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The authors also saw that the dynamic networks caused a growth in friendships and a higher growth in acquaintance connections. These ties and openness and inclusivity, became stronger, or “denser” with each succeeding game:

Such social capital would benefit students within a class where strong acquaintance networks, in addition to friendship networks, provide them with intellectual challenge, thereby broadening their **perspectives** and guarding against groupthink.

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“The probability of perspective-taking increases when one has endured the same slings and arrows as the target person.”

(*More on Perspectives in ‘Critical Thinking Skills’*)

Ethics

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There are three branches of ethics generally studied by philosophers: Meta-Ethics, Normative-Ethics and Applied-Ethics.

Meta-ethics (meta meaning after) is concerned with a philosophical look at situations in their entirety.

To take everything into account, all attitudes and judgments and to look at the big picture.

It is third perspective thinking.

Normative-ethics looks at how you decide to act in a certain situation. What is the right and the wrong thing to do? What are the options? What are the two sides of the story?

It is second perspective thinking.

Applied-ethics focuses on the practical application of those decisions. It is developing criteria and understanding the consequences of those singular actions.

It is first perspective thinking

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One of the main objectives of TPP's is to establish a charged situation. Then to use meta-ethics, to absorb the external ethical dilemmas.

The next step is aligned with normative-ethics, to internalise and figure out personal opinions, the opinions of others and the rightness and wrongness of those views.

The final step, applied-ethics, is to decide upon a course of action, applying it, and playing out what will happen, the consequences, the cause and effect of that decision.

This is not an easy process, for the students or the teachers. But it is dynamic and mentally stimulating. It agitates, confuses and frustrates. It also causes the student to mature, grow and become more empathetic in front of your eyes.

The Big 5 Personality Traits

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'The Five-Factor Model' (FFM) is also known as 'The Big Five Personality Traits.' Over the last twenty years, this model has been the most consistently used by personality psychologists. The five categories have been found to contain most known personality traits: Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, Openness and Extraversion (CANOE).

These personality factors open up to character traits:

1. *Conscientiousness*: Organised, diligent, self-disciplined, prefers planned rather than spontaneous situations, focused, reliable. Can be: stubborn and inflexible.
2. *Agreeableness*: Friendly, compassionate, cooperative, trusting. Can be: naive or submissive.
3. *Neuroticism*: Sensitive, emotional, excitable, dynamic, vulnerable, insecure, victim mentality. Can be: psychologically anxious, emotionally unstable, prone to anger, have low impulse control.
4. *Openness*: Adventurous, likes novelty and variety over routine, has appreciation for art and emotion. Can be: unpredictable, lacking in focus, a risk taker.
5. *Extraversion*: Outgoing, enthusiastic, sociable, likes to talk, energetic, assertive. Can be: attention-seeking, can overwhelm and dominate other people.

The TPP's help student examine where their characters personality, and ultimately their own personality, sits within the Big 5 character descriptions. This provides an opportunity to balance the extreme traits.

I don't believe the development of the big 5 personality traits can come through self-reports, teacher evaluations or student's written responses to moral dilemmas. I believe it can only come through experience. In the words of David Kolb: "the transformation of experience."

Kolb, an American educational theorist wrote his book, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, in 1983. He said: "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" He believed effective learning happens when a person progresses through a cycle of four stages:

1. Having a concrete experience
2. Observation of and reflection on that experience
3. The formation and analysis of abstract concepts
4. Use of this analysis testing a hypothesis in future situations, resulting in new experiences.

If those concrete experiences are created, what type of character traits should we be looking to encourage? What about magnanimous traits? (P. 162)

Intrinsic Motivation - Rewards

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Alfie Kohn is an American author and lecturer in the areas of education, parenting, and human behavior. He has written extensively about extrinsic rewards and intrinsic motivation. He says:

Research and logic suggest that punishment and rewards are not really opposites, but two sides of the same coin. Both strategies amount to ways of trying to manipulate someone's behavior - in one case, prompting the question, "What do they want me to do, and what happens to me if I don't do it?" And in the other instance, leading a child to ask, "What do they want me to do, and what do I get for doing it?" Neither strategy helps children to grapple with the question, "What kind of person do I want to be?"

Leadership

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As with character education, much has been written and talked about training young people in the art of leadership. The conclusive and tangible nuts and bolts of leadership training, as with character education, has no common language nor general agreement of how successful leadership can be taught, or even explored in schools and colleges.

We could shine some light on the subject of leadership if we go back to basics and ask what is effective leadership and what are the leaders of flagship companies of today doing?

Professor Carnes points to a 2014 article in *The New York Times*, an interview with Laszlo Bock, the senior vice president of people operations at Google. Bock said that after basic knowledge in technical subjects, the initial most important quality in an employee is not I.Q., it is "general cognitive ability," which is the ability to learn quickly and to pull together and process different and often incongruous information.

The second most important quality, according to Bock, is leadership: "In particular, emergent leadership as opposed to traditional leadership." He explains emergent leadership as the ability to step in and lead when your skills are required and then step back and allow others to bring their expertise when their skills are more suited to the task. "You have to be willing to relinquish power," he says.

Bock goes on to stipulate that this requires ownership and intellectual humility, the ability to learn from failure, which is often absent in many graduates from "hotshot business schools."

He says the most successful employees at Google are passionate and fiercely argue their point of view, but they are also open to new information, allowing it to change their opinion, "You need a big ego and a small ego in the same person at the same time."

Contempt

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A 2015 study from the University of Amsterdam is entitled, 'Contempt: Derogating Others While Keeping Calm.' The researchers reviewed findings about contempt and the emotions which are most closely related - anger and disgust. They present arguments which claim that contempt differs from hate, anger or disgust.

They say that disgust tends to be "directed at events or objects more than other people," and if someone feels disgusted by another person, then it has "more of a dehumanizing quality."

Narcissism**P. 222**

A strong sense of self is a vital requirement for a life well-lived. Self-efficacy is what we all want for our young people, however when that moves from feeling worthy and capable to feeling superior, it can lead to narcissistic tendencies.

In their book, *The Narcissism Epidemic*, authors Jean Twenge and Keith Campbell write about parents and how many have forgotten a simple rule, "Kids should not always get what they want." And, that higher narcissism of college students is the result of parents who are indulgent.

Narcissistic traits – P. 223

Humility**P. 225**

Humility is one quality that people feel conflicted about. However, humility is seen as a valuable asset in the business world.

A Forbes article from author and former Navy SEAL Jeff Boss tells us:

Humble people can receive a bad rap. Humility is frequently associated with being too passive, submissive or insecure, but this couldn't be any further from the truth.

Instead, humble people are quite the opposite - confident and competent.

Humble people are still self-efficacious; they just don't feel the impetus to boast about themselves but instead, let their actions speak for their ideals. To be humble is not to think less of oneself, but to think of oneself less.

Solzhenitsyn had this to say:

It's a universal law - intolerance is the first sign of an inadequate education. An ill-educated person behaves with arrogant impatience, whereas truly profound education breeds humility.