

An INVENTORY of EMOTIONAL MATURITY

(Borrowed primarily from two articles written by Fr. Gerald Kelly, SJ
on emotional maturity in *Review for Religious*, January and March editions, 1948)

Emotional maturity is the attainment of a sweet reasonableness and an unflappable character; it means a well integrated personality; it means the possession of certain qualities that enable one to preserve peace within himself and to live and work harmoniously with others. Some of these "certain qualities" are decisive thinking, unselfishness, a sense of personal responsibility for the common good, temperate emotional reactions, a well-balanced attitude regarding sex, ability to profit from criticism, and ability to face reality.

Do I indulge in angry outbursts, nurse grudges, dwell on what I consider injustices?

Am I hesitant in making decisions?

Do I dodge responsibility?

Do I explain failures by giving alibis?

Am I unable to face reality?

Do I act mainly for personal pleasure and for some immediate good?

Am I unable to make reasonable compromises, unwilling to make an effort to see the point of view of those who disagree with me?

Am I one who wants much but gives little?

Do I think I am always misunderstood, yet never misunderstand others?

Do I react vehemently, even explosively, to ordinary emotional stimuli?

Am I overly dependent on others, much given to fear, and to daydreaming?

Do I shrink from and avoid self-sacrifice?

Am I impatient of distressing situations?

Do I have a "hospitable mind" that is willing to consider different points of view on non-essential matters? Or do I quickly decide matters based on my own likes and dislikes?

Am I sincerely grateful to those who point out my faults to me?

Do I profit by healthy criticisms or do I say things like "why don't you tell this other person that, he needs it more than me"?

Am I hostile to correction, giving way to sullen silence, angry outbursts, or mind-your-business response? Do I realize that those who might correct me to my face will instead more likely to point out my faults to others because of this hostility?

Do I "play close to the line" or take "little chances" in regard the virtue of chastity, whether in reading, viewing or my speech with others?

Unselfishness

Selfishness is a form of childishness that is not easily laid aside. It can disguise itself in many forms and actually appear as various virtues: for example, as necessary care of health, as the protection of one's rights, as kindness to a friend, and so forth. It can change colors like the chameleon; it can wedge into the holiest of exercises.

Do I take the best food at table, or do I leave it for others?

Do I dominate conversation, or show an interest in what others have to say?

Am I companionable, willing to listen and engage in conversation with people I may not always like or find agreeable?

Do I make it a point to note what pleases others, and am I willing to do that even at the expense of my own whims?

Do I say “I told you so” and “you should have listened to me” after something bad happens?

Am I grateful for humiliations or blame others for them?

Do I put down others as a sort of punishment or to make myself seem superior?

Do I fail to provide consistent empathy, kindness, or loving care and yet regularly demand it from others?

Responsibility for the Common Good

The mature person is aware of his responsibility to promote the common good. In the ancient Rule of St. Augustine, we read: “the common good is to be preferred to our own selfish interests, and not our own interests to the common good. Judge, therefore, your progress by this rule whether or not you more and more prefer the welfare of the community to your own private interests...”

Do I speak well of my family, my parish, my friends, my employer?

Do I act always in such a way that I give no grounds for thinking ill of my family, my parish, the Church as a whole or my employer?

Am I able to appreciate the consequences of how my statements or behavior may affect others, including my own family members or society?

Do I observe the rules of proper conduct for my family, my parish, my employer?

Do I consider the greater good of these communities over my own private good, or do I want the spotlight even at their expense?

Do I monopolize common property and equipment?

Do I return common property such as books and in a timely manner?

Do I turn off lights and use other utilities moderately to help keep down costs?

Do I participate in keeping common areas clean and orderly or do I leave this to others?

Temperate Emotional Reactions

True maturity consists in responding properly and temperately to emotional stimuli. To show no emotion is inhuman; to react with undue vehemence is immature.

Do I easily become fretful or noticeably disturbed?

Am I impatient to carry out my impulses?

Do I have a “short fuse”, exploding over little offenses, displaying anger and outbursts disproportionate to the circumstances or event at hand?

Am I a victim of moods – up today and down tomorrow?

Do I get so angry that I will hit someone or throw something at them?

Do those around me routinely have to check to see what is my current mood before approaching me with something reasonable?

Have I been told I make people feel like they must walk on eggshells when around me?

Do I nurse injured feelings and sensibilities for a long time? Do arguments that should last a few minutes may go on for hours or days with no effort to ameliorate or end them?

Am I frequently disturbed by haunting fears? Unable to relax?

Do I indulge in serious weeping spells?

Do I sulk in my room?

Do I look upon myself as a martyr or the victim of misunderstanding and injustice?

Do I think of how sorry my fellows would be if I died today?

Do I easily grow hilarious, lacking poise and balance?

Facing Reality

Failure and disappointments are among the hard realities of life. The mature person is expected to face them with composure when they threaten and to adjust himself quietly to them when they occur.

- When I am given a job or assignment of which I am afraid of or dislike, do I try to wiggle out of it either openly or by excuses that I know are not valid?
- Do I get upset or go to pieces when faced with a new situation that will force me out of my normal routine?
- Am I given to daydreaming?
- When I fail, do I justify myself by lame excuses or do I admit failure and try again?
- Do I find that I am wasting more and more time, finding many useless things to do, before I settle down to the real work of the day?
- Do I dread responsibility and try to evade it?
- Do I neglect the present by thinking and talking in terms of my glorious past or by boasting of my glorious future?

Interpersonal Relations

Harmonious relationships require harmony and balance. The mature person is able to view themselves objectively in the course of their relationships so that they may always be ready to act from a place of humility, charity and patience when dealing with others.

- Am I excessively self-centered to the point of alienating others by being "I" or "me" oriented?
- Do I "take hostages" instead of making friends, imposing unrealistic expectations, and attempting to dictate what they do and think?
- Do I have the need to control others, demanding total loyalty and becoming indignant when others fail to show absolute loyalty?
- Do I talk at people rather than with them?
- Do I create little incidents to test another's love for me?
- Do I require excessive admiration from others?
- Do I go fishing for compliments or desired responses?
- Do I ask inappropriate questions or demand explanations without observing proper boundaries?
- Do I expect to be treated as someone special or always given priority?
- Do I ask for things in a timely manner, keeping in mind the saying, "a lack of planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part"?
- Am I hyper vigilant in my relationships, looking for signs that I will be abandoned?
- Do I see my problems as unique or more acute than everyone else's?
- Do I take NO for an answer?
- Am I easily led?
- Do I regularly consider myself and conduct an exception to the rule?
- Do I make judgments too quickly, not patiently waiting for the needed information to make them correctly or not at all?
- Do I find myself driven to explain my position and feelings over and over with more and more detail?
- Do I need to be the center of attention?