

# The Seven Stages of Psychological Development

By Richard Barrett, Chairman and Founder of Barrett Values Centre

## INTRODUCTION

There are two aspects to the Seven Levels Model: the Stages of Psychological Development model and the Levels of Consciousness model. We grow in stages (of psychological development) and we operate at levels (of consciousness).

I developed the Seven Levels of Consciousness model in 1996 as a tool for mapping the consciousness of individuals and human group structures—teams, organisations, communities and nations. Once the model had been developed, I quickly realised that specific values could be associated with each level of consciousness, and consequently, if you could ascertain the values of an individual, a group, an organisation, a community or a nation, you could identify what levels of consciousness they were operating from. I also realised that it is more important to identify values than beliefs. Values are the energetic drivers of our aspirations and intentions; they are concepts that transcend contexts. Beliefs on the other hand are contextual. Thus, although the value of *respect* is common to all cultures, the beliefs and corresponding behaviours around *respect* are quite different depending on which culture you belong to.

The measuring system I developed became known as the Cultural Transformation Tools (CTT). In 1997, I formed a company, the Barrett Values Centre (BVC), and began to use the seven levels model to map the consciousness of leaders, organisations and communities all over the world. An overview of the use of the model for measuring consciousness can be found in my book *The Metrics of Human Consciousness*<sup>1</sup> and a more detailed account of its application in business can be found in *The Values-driven Organisation: Unleashing Human Potential for Performance and Profit*.<sup>2</sup>

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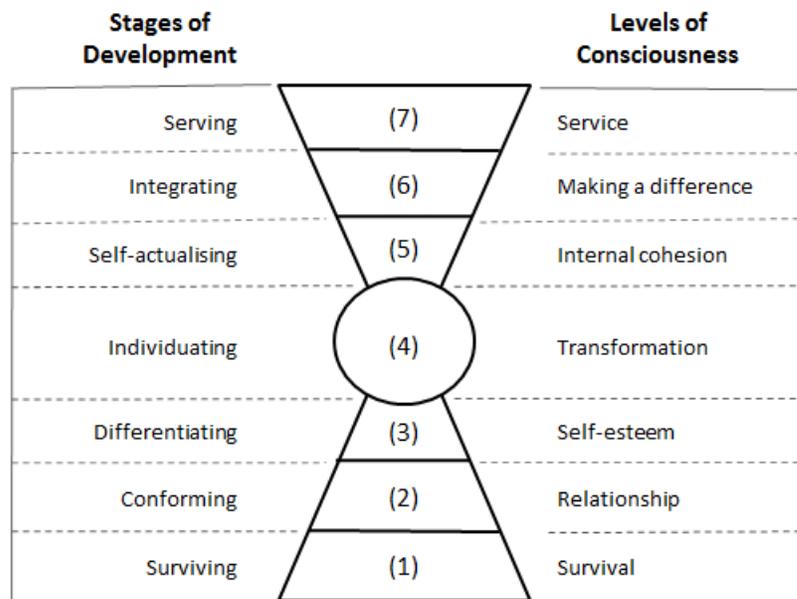
<sup>1</sup> Richard Barrett, *The Metrics of Human Consciousness* (London: Fulfilling Books), 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Barret, *The Values-driven Organisation: Unleashing Human Potential for Performance and Profit* (London: Fulfilling Books), 2014.

Over the subsequent years, based on feedback from users, we fine-tuned the measuring system, improving its reliability and validity. Now, more than sixteen years later, we have a well-established and globally-recognised set of tools for mapping the values and measuring the consciousness of individuals and human group structures. To date (Spring 2015), the CTT have been used to measure the consciousness of more than 6,000 organisations, 4,500 leaders and 24 nations.<sup>3</sup>

In recent years, I began to recognise that in addition to levels of consciousness, the Seven Levels Model could also be used as a framework for mapping the stages of psychological development. Figure 1 shows the correspondence between the Seven Stages of Psychological Development and the Seven Levels of Consciousness.

Figure 1: Stages of psychological development and levels of consciousness.



Up to the point in time where we reach physical maturity, around 20 years-of-age; we all follow the same natural path of psychological development—surviving, conforming and differentiating. During these stages of psychological development, we learn to satisfy what Abraham Maslow referred to as our basic or “deficiency” needs: We get anxious if these needs are not met, but once they are met, we no longer pay any attention to them.

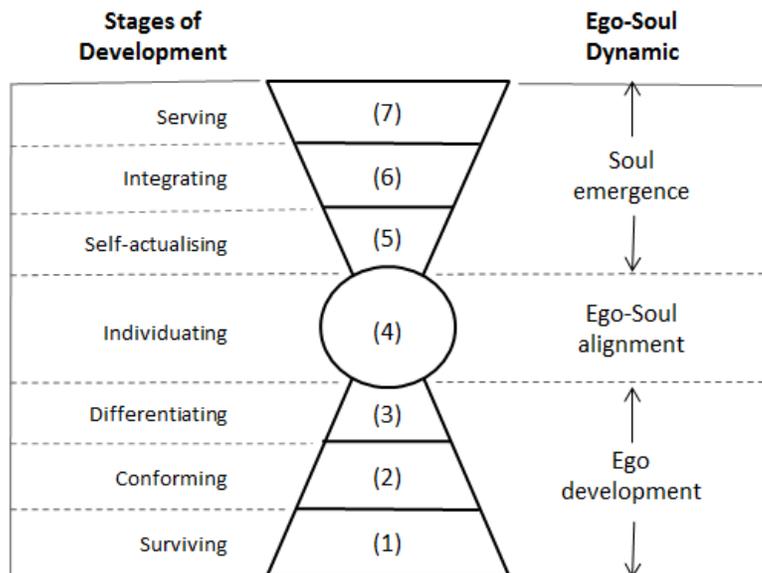
<sup>3</sup> For information on the Barrett Values Centre please visit [www.valuescentre.com](http://www.valuescentre.com).

From the mid-twenties onwards, we move into the adult stages of psychological development—individuating, self-actualising, integrating and serving. During these stages of psychological development, we learn to satisfy what Abraham Maslow referred to as our “growth” needs. Once we experience the meaning and joy that mastering our growth needs brings, we want to experience them more.

### THE EGO-SOUL EVOLUTIONARY DYNAMIC

There are many models of psychological development, each of them describe the process of human evolution in slightly different ways.<sup>4, 5</sup> The Seven Levels Model (also known as the Barrett Model), differs from almost all these models in one important way: It looks at psychological development through the lens of the *ego-soul evolutionary dynamic*: the development of the ego-mind, the gradual shift in decision-making from ego-mind to the soul-mind, and the emergence of the soul-mind. The seven stages of psychological development and the three stages of the ego-soul evolutionary dynamic are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The three evolutionary stages of the ego-soul dynamic.



<sup>4</sup> For a list of development models, see Ken Wilber, *Integral Psychology: Consciousness, Spirit, Psychology, Therapy* (Boston: Shambhala Publications), 2000, and Dr. Alan Watkins, *Coherence: The Secret Science of Brilliant Leadership* (London: Kogan Page), 2014.

<sup>5</sup> You can also find a discussion of six models of maturation in, *Triumphs of Experience*, pp. 114-189, by George Vaillant,



### **Ego development**

There are three stages of psychological development involved in ego development. Between the moment we are born and the time we reach physical and mental maturity, around 20-25 years of age, we all pass through these stages—surviving, conforming and differentiating. What you are learning during these stages of development is how to become a viable independent adult. These are the stages of development where you learn to satisfy your “deficiency” needs in your cultural framework of existence. When you are able to satisfy these needs, you feel a sense of happiness or contentment. If, for any reason, you are unable to satisfy these needs, you feel anxious and fearful.

How well you master the first three stages of development will, to a large extent, depend on the degree and nature (positive and negative) of the parental programming and cultural conditioning you experienced during your infant, childhood and teenage years. If you grew up without too many negative experiences—without forming any significant conscious or subconscious fear-based beliefs about being able to meet your deficiency needs—you will naturally feel a pull towards the individuation stage of development when you reach your mid-twenties or early thirties.

### **Ego-Soul alignment**

There are two stages of psychological development that you have to pass through to achieve ego-soul alignment. The first is the individuating stage; the second is the self-actualising stage. What you are learning during these two stages of development is: a) how to lead a values-driven life by accessing your own deeply held values and living with integrity; and b) how to lead a purpose-driven life by accessing your natural gifts and talents and following your calling.

Unlike the ego stages of development, the individuating and self-actualising stages of development are not thrust on us by the biological and societal exigencies of growing up they naturally emerge from within. They are driven by your soul’s desire to fully express itself in your life. Whether you choose to accept the challenges that these stages of psychological development bring will depend to a large extent on how successful you have been in satisfying the needs of your ego.

The individuating stage of psychological development involves seeking your authentic voice and becoming responsible and accountable for the decisions you take. This requires you to let go of the aspects of your parental programming and cultural conditioning that do not reflect who you truly are—the values and beliefs that you learned in your formative years that no longer serve you: The values and beliefs that keep you locked into the surviving, conforming and differentiating stages of development.



The self-actualising stage of psychological development requires you to let go of the aspects of your job, career or profession that do not allow you to express your true calling, so you can fully embrace your natural gifts and talents and thereby access your full creativity.

If you are fortunate enough to have been brought up by self-actualised parents, to have lived in a community or culture where freedom and independence are celebrated, where higher education is easily available, where men and women are treated equally, and where you are encouraged from a young age to express and think for yourself, the transition from the differentiating to the individuating stage and then to the self-actualising stage of development will be relatively easy.

However, if the contrary is true, the transition from the differentiating stage to the individuating stage and then to the self-actualising stage can be full of challenges and difficulties which bring up deep-seated fears. It requires great courage when you are living in an authoritarian parental, cultural or political environment to embrace your authentic voice and explore your creative potential. In many political regimes you can be put in prison for expressing what you believe, standing up for your rights and fully expressing your unique character.

### **Soul emergence**

The last two stages of psychological development are evolutionary in nature. These are the stages where you experience the full emergence of your soul. The first of these stages is the integrating stage; the second is the serving stage. What you are learning during these two stages of development is: a) how to maximise the use of your talents by cooperating or collaborating with like-minded people to make a positive and larger difference in the world than you could on your own; and b) how to lead a life of self-less service using your accumulated experience and wisdom, as well as your access to soul consciousness, to serve the needs of others and humanity in general.

The hard work in overcoming your fears, understanding who you are, and following your calling, is now past. You now have other challenges to face—learning to work and collaborate with others who share your sense of calling, and learning to embrace your connectedness to all humanity. This will require developing your empathy skills—to see the world through the eyes of others and feel their emotions; and, your compassion skills—to feel the desire to help those who are suffering, disadvantaged or are less well off than yourself. At the integrating stage you make use of your empathy to work with and alongside others. At the serving stage you use your compassion to work with those who need guidance or support. These are the stages where you express your generativity—manifesting care for the development of those younger than yourself.

## STAGES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

The motivations associated with each stage of psychological development are shown in column 4 of Table 1. The lower three stages of development represent our ego motivations, and the upper three stages represent our soul motivations. The individuating stage of consciousness is the bridge we must cross to successfully align the motivations of the ego with the motivations of the soul.

Table 1: Motivations and value priorities at each stage of psychological development.

| Stages of Physiological Development | Normal age range   | Overview of task/needs  | Motivation                                | Value priority |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|---|---|----------------|
| Serving                             | 60+ years          | Alleviating suffering by caring for the well-being of humanity and the planet.        | Self-less service                         | Social justice |
| Integrating                         | 50-59 years        | Cooperating with others who share the same values and purpose.                        | Making a difference                       | Contribution   |
| Self-actualising                    | 40 to 49 years     | Becoming more fully yourself by finding and expressing your gifts and talents.        | Meaning and purpose                       | Integrity      |
| Individuating                       | 25 to 39 years     | Becoming more fully yourself by finding and expressing your own values and beliefs.   | Freedom and autonomy                      | Independence   |
| Differentiating                     | Eight to 24 years  | Looking good or displaying your skills and talents so you can become part of a group. | Respect and recognition                   | Security       |
| Conforming                          | Two to eight years | Staying close to your kin and community so you feel safe and protected.               | Love, acceptance and belonging            | Safety         |
| Surviving                           | Birth to two years | Getting your physiological needs met by staying alive and healthy.                    | Physical well-being and nutritional needs | Survival       |

Column two of Table 1 indicates the approximate age range when each stage of psychological development occurs. It is possible to accelerate your development to a certain degree, but for most people these age ranges are relatively precise.

Column three of Table 1 describes the developmental task or needs associated with each stage of development, and, column five lists the value priority at each stage of development. At any moment in time, our values are a reflection of our motivations which are a reflection of our needs. Consequently, as we grow and develop, our values change in accordance with our changing needs.

### **Millennials**

A question I frequently get asked is, "How does the consciousness of the millennials fit into this schema?" These are the children who were born in or after 1982. In so far as the U.S. is concerned:

*Millennials are unlike any other generation in living memory. They are more numerous, more affluent, better educated, and more ethnically diverse... They are beginning to manifest a wide array of positive social habits that older Americans no longer associate with youth, including a new focus on teamwork, achievement, modesty and good conduct.<sup>6</sup>*

They are optimists: They are happy, content and positive. They are cooperative team players. They accept authority: They trust and feel close to their parents. They are the most watched over generation in memory. They are smarter than most people think. They believe in the future and see themselves as its cutting edge.

In my mind, the millennials display all the characteristics that I would associate with being brought up by self-actualised parents in a liberal democracy. They have been loved and cherished, treated fairly and generously, and have been encouraged from an early age to express who they are. In other words, they feel secure in themselves: To a large extent, they have mastered the first three stages of psychological development.

Despite the early onset of the individuation stage of development among this group of people, we cannot yet draw the conclusion that the other stages of development will also appear early. It would indeed be fortunate if this were the case, because it would advance the evolution of human consciousness significantly. Let us also not forget that the so-called millennials are most noticeable among affluent nations that have been relatively stable politically for a several decades. In other words, among nation states that supported their populations in meeting their deficiency needs and encouraged freedom of thought.

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<sup>6</sup> Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (New York: Vintage Books), 2000, p. 4.



### **Importance of early stages**

It is important to note that there is a significant difference between the first three stages and the following stages: The first three stages occur during a period when our brains are growing and our minds are trying to make sense of the physical, cultural and social world in which we live. Consequently, the first three stages primarily apply to infant/child/teenager development whereas the latter four stages are about adult development.

There is a large amount of research showing that our ability to master the first three stages of development significantly affects our ability to master the later stages. In other words, you infant/child/teenager experiences significantly affect your ability to find happiness in adult life.

### **Surviving**

The quest for survival starts as soon as a human baby is born. The infant child instinctively knows, through its DNA programming, how to regulate its body's internal functioning, how to suckle, and how to signal to its parents that it has unmet physiological needs.

At this stage, the infant is completely dependent on its parents or care givers to meet its survival and security needs. When we are born, we have no idea how to manage the world around us. It is all extremely foreign. Everything that happens is a learning experience. The key to accomplishing the task of the infant at this stage of development is learning how to survive by attempting to exercise control over its physical and social environment so that it can get its needs met. If the infant finds this task challenging or difficult, because its parents are not vigilant enough to its needs, abused or left alone or abandoned for long periods of time, the infant child will form subconscious fear-based beliefs that it is living in a hostile environment and cannot depend on others to meet its survival and security needs. When this child reaches adulthood it will be subconsciously looking for the security it failed to find as an infant.

If on the other hand, the infant's parents are attentive to its needs, care for the infant and are watchful and responsive for signs of distress, then the infant child will grow up with a sense of physical security and a belief that others can be trusted. Surviving and feeling physically secure are our most important human needs.

Towards the end of this stage, once we have begun to learn how to walk and talk, we have our first significant experiences of suppression. We want to express ourselves but get frustrated by the fact that we don't have the vocabulary or the motor skills to say or do what we want.



At the same time, we begin to realise that we are expected to follow certain rules of behaviour and our parents may make adherence to these rules conditional on getting our needs met. We learn we cannot always do what we want when we want it nor have everything we want. This is the start of the socialisation process and the point at which we enter the conforming stage.

### **Conforming**

Having learned how to survive, the task at the second stage of development is for the child to learn how to feel safe in its parental/family/social environment. It learns how to conform and fit in. It also learns how to recognise danger signals—potential threats to its safety.

The child quickly learns that life is more pleasant and less threatening if it lives in harmony with its parents and family. The child wants to experience pleasure and avoid pain.

Staying loyal to kin and community, adhering to rules, and participating in rituals and traditions are important at this stage of development because they contribute to the child's feeling of belonging and thereby enhance the child's sense of safety in his or her community. The child wants to live in an environment where it feels protected.

If for any reason (poor parenting, lack of attention, etc.) the child grows up feeling unloved, unimportant, not accepted or that it does not belong, the child may develop subconscious beliefs that it lives in an uncaring world. When this child reaches adulthood it will be subconsciously searching for the love, safety and protection it was denied when it was young.

If on the other hand, the child is raised in a caring, loving environment, where it feels safe and protected, then the child will grow up feeling comfortable with others, open to strangers and willing to form committed relationships. Feeling safe, loved and a sense of belonging are our second most important human needs.

### **Differentiating**

During the differentiation stage of psychological development, the child/teenager expands his or her operational horizons. Whereas parental relations were of significant importance during the surviving and conforming stages, peer relationships and external controlling authorities such as schools and teachers now take on more importance in the child/teenager's life.

We must now learn how to find a sense of security and safety in this wider group. This can be more challenging than learning how to feel safe in our parental framework of existence. To feel safe in this larger world, we realise we need to be respected and recognised by our peer group and/or by the significant authority figures in our lives.



We want to be noticed—acknowledged for who we are—not just by our parents and family, but also by our friends, peers, gang members and teachers. At this stage of psychological development you will be seeking validation from those around you that you are worthy of being a member of their community. You want to belong, but you also want to stand out and be acknowledged. Being in a group, rather than out of a group, is vitally important at this stage of life because you are attempting to establish your sense of identity in the world.

Consequently, at this stage of development self-expression is of significant importance. The task at this stage of development is to make the most of your appearance or hone your gifts and talents so you can: a) be accepted; b) belong; and c) recognised as a respected member of a family, gang, group or community with which you want to identify. This may involve proving yourself through participating in rites of passage and making physical changes to your appearance or clothing as a symbol of membership. Peer pressure, especially within a group, is high at this stage of development.

Fitting in at home in your parental environment and fitting in outside home in your peer environment may now create conflicts in your life, because you may be caught between two different value systems; the value system of your parents and the value system of your peers. If this situation is not handled with sensitivity by your parents, the teenager will seek to rebel by developing an independent “primary” identity outside of the home. From a parental perspective, guiding rather than controlling, allowing rather than preventing, and trusting rather than doubting, gives teenagers the space to explore their preferences and align more fully with who they are without severing family connections. On the one hand, we need to accept that boundaries to our self-expression are necessary in order to stay safe and secure, and on the other hand, we may grow to resent these dependencies.

Parents are instrumental at this stage of development for providing positive feedback. If you fail to get this feedback, you will grow up with the subconscious belief that you are not important or not good enough. Your sense of self-worth will suffer. Later on in life you will feel driven to prove yourself. You may seek out groups where your skills and talents are recognised—where you feel accepted. The belief that you are not good enough may cause you to become a seeker of perfection or highly competitive, wanting status, power or authority so you can be acknowledged as someone important or someone to be feared.

If you are able to successfully transition through these first three stages of psychological development, without experiencing significant trauma and without developing too many subconscious fears about your ability to meet your deficiency needs (survival and security, love and belonging, respect and recognition), then you will find it relatively easy to establish yourself as a viable adult in the cultural framework of your existence as long as you can find opportunities to earn a living



that allows you to find independence. If you cannot find such opportunities, you will not only feel demoralised or dispirited, your sense of self-worth will be challenged.

### **Individuating**

The task at the individuating stage of development is to find your True Self—discover who you are beyond your parental programming, beyond the peer group pressures that influenced your behaviour when you were a teenager, and beyond your cultural conditioning. You are done with being dependent—seeking the validation of others to feel good about who you are. You want freedom. You want to be responsible and accountable for every aspect of your life. You want to embrace your own values. You want to find answers to the question, “Who am I?”

The individuating stage of development begins in earnest when you become financially independent, set up your own home, find a partner to share your life with and become a fully contributing member of your society. You have to become proficient at satisfying your survival and safety needs and reasonably proficient at satisfying your love and belonging, and respect and recognition needs before you can fully enter into the individuating stage.

If you have not learned how to master all your deficiency needs, and at that stage of our lives most of us have not, we make mistakes by letting our ego-needs dominate our decision-making. In order to make progress with our individuation, we must learn from these mistakes. Differentiating yourself from others may still be important at this stage of development, but not for the purpose of respect and recognition, but for the purpose achievement.

This shift from dependence to independence can be one of the most difficult stages of human development to master because it brings us face to face with our fears. Some people never make it; others take a long-time over it. Some find it difficult to extract themselves from the obligations they feel towards their parents, and others live in repressive regimes where self-expression and speaking your truth are not just frowned upon, by are actively discouraged. In such regimes you can be locked up or lose your life for being an “intellectual,” speaking your mind or simply being gay.

The progress you make at the individuating stage of development will influence how soon you are able to move into the next stage of psychological development.



### **Self-Actualising**

Having begun to explore the question “Who am I?” at the individuating stage and get in touch with your True Self, you now begin to explore the question “Why am I here?” and get in touch with your Unique Self. You search for the meaning and purpose in your life: What stirs your passion in life—the reason why your soul incarnated as you.

For most people, finding their vocation or calling usually begins with a feeling of unease or boredom with their job or chosen career—with the work they thought would provide them with safety and security—bring them wealth, status, power or recognition in their lives. Uncovering your unique gifts and talents and making them available to the world will not only bring vitality back into your life, it will also spark your creativity. You will become more intuitive and spend more time in a state of flow; being totally present to what you are doing, lost in your work.

This can be a challenging transition, especially if the activities that now interest you are less remunerative and offer less secure employment than your job, profession or chosen career. You may feel scared or uncomfortable embarking on something new, which may bring meaning to your life, but may not pay the rent or pay for your children’s education.

Some people find their vocation early in their lives; others discover it much later; some spend their whole lives searching. Embracing your True Self by living your values, and finding meaning and purpose by embracing your Unique Self, are the steps you must take to fulfil your soul’s desires. Once you have aligned with your True Self and explored your Unique Self, you are now on pathway to flourishing and fulfilment.

### **Integrating**

The integrating stage of development is all about actualising your sense of purpose—using your unique gifts and talents, along with your creativity to make a difference in the world. This is where you bring together the connection part of your Self-expression with the contribution part of your Self-expression.

As you make progress with your integrating, you soon realise that the contribution you can make and the impact you can have in the world is significantly enhanced by connecting and cooperating with others who share your values and purpose—people you deeply resonate with who are part of your soul family: People that operate at the same frequency of vibration. This requires a high level of maturity. You must be able to recognise your limitations, assume a larger sense of identity and shift from being independent to being interdependent.



In order to cooperate with others on joint projects, you must learn how to master your emotions (emotional intelligence) and read the emotions of others (social intelligence). These are important for building your empathy and compassion.

Some people get so wrapped up in themselves and their work at this stage of development that they are unable to make this shift. They get lost in their own creativity, focusing only on their passion rather than the larger contribution they could make if they aligned with others who share the same vocation. There is nothing wrong with following this path, if this is your calling. However, learning to work with others in service to the common good is more likely to bring a sense of fulfilment to your life than working on your own. What is fundamentally important at this stage of development is to fully develop and express your gifts and talents so you can make a contribution to the whole.

### **Serving**

During the last stage of development you will feel drawn to a life of self-less service, especially if you have become financially independent, have a pension or no longer depend on the income from your work for your survival. At this stage of development, you want to give back to the world and leave a legacy. You will find yourself being drawn to supporting people in your community, helping to alleviate their suffering, caring for the disadvantaged, building a better society or helping people with their development. At the same time, you will also become more introspective, looking for ways to deepen your sense of connection to your soul. You will find yourself becoming a keeper of wisdom, an elder or the person that younger people turn to for guidance and mentoring.

As with every other developmental shift, moving from a focus on making a difference to a life of self-less service will affect your attitudes, your behaviours, and your values. You will uncover new levels of compassion as you become more closely involved in serving the needs of others. You will feel a sense of humility and gratitude as you recognise the impact your service can bring to your community or society. You will also find yourself re-examining your priorities as you search to live a more modest and balanced life.

One of the subtle shifts that takes place during this stage of development is that you become more focused on working on interiors, your own and others, rather than working on exteriors. You become more focused on being than doing and letting the doing flow through the being. Deep down, you will begin to understand that we are all energetically connected, and that by serving others you are serving your larger Self. You will find your deepest levels of fulfilment and well-being at this stage of your psychological development.

## NOTES ON PERSONAL EVOLUTION

I think it is important at this stage to make some additional comments about the seven stages of psychological development.

### Ordering of stages

The seven stages of psychological development occur in consecutive order. Each stage of development is a necessary foundation for the subsequent stage. You cannot jump stages, but you can begin to explore the next stage of development before you have fully mastered the previous stage. It takes a full lifetime to pass through the seven stages of development, because each stage is linked to the aging process—to the needs we have during the different seasons of our lives. If you successfully complete the journey, you will experience a sense of joy and fulfilment in the latter years of your life.

If you fail to fully master a stage, it becomes a potential weakness that can undermine your progress later in life. Our news media are full of such stories—people in authority (often politicians) or celebrities (people in the public's awareness) who have been discovered cheating, lying, stealing or having inappropriate sexual relationships. Their reputations and their lives are often ruined when such stories are made public. Without exception, their demise is the result of their subconscious or conscious attempts to satisfy an unmet need deficiency need from an earlier stage of their development.

Until you are able to satisfy or come to terms with the needs that eluded you as an infant/child/teenager, you will find yourself leading a dependent life, constantly searching to satisfy the needs you found elusive in your formative years.

### Primary and secondary motivations

At any moment in time, your primary motivation and value priorities will be those of the stage of psychological development you have reached. If you still have unmet needs from the earlier stages of psychological development these will be your secondary motivations.

When situations arise that consciously or subconsciously remind you of your unmet needs from earlier stages of psychological development—when you are holding onto fears about being able to meet your deficiency needs—your secondary motivations will take precedence over your primary motivation.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> For details on identifying people's primary and secondary motivations please consult: Richard Barrett, *Evolutionary Coaching: A Values-based Approach for Unleashing Human Potential* (London: Fulfilling Books), 2014.

Most people have no concept of where their motivations come from; they don't understand why they are doing what they are doing; what stage of psychological development they are at; what stages of development they have passed through, or what stages they still have to master to find fulfilment in their lives. The only criteria they have for choosing and making decisions is what makes them feel happy.

This is why it is extremely useful if you are in the caring or coaching professions to understand the seven levels of psychological development. Using this model you can reach a deeper understanding of what is important for people by identifying their primary and secondary motivations. My book, *Evolutionary Coaching*, provides exercises and tools to help people clarify their primary motivation—what stage of psychological development they are at, and their secondary motivations—what unmet needs may be hindering or blocking their development.<sup>8</sup> I have also recorded a series of twenty-five one hour dialogues about this topic for those who require a deeper understanding of the stages of psychological development.<sup>9</sup>

### Value priorities

Each stage of development has its own tasks and needs, and therefore its own values. Roberto Assagioli, the founder of the Psychosynthesis movement makes the following observation about the link between values and stages of development:

*The existence of different levels of being having different values is an evident and undeniable manifestation of the great law of evolution, as it progresses from simple and crude stages to more refined and highly organised ones.*<sup>10</sup>

What we think we need or what is important to us in our lives is what we value. Consequently, what we value at one stage of development can change or shift priority when we move to the next stage of development.

Figures 3 and 4 provide examples of how our value priorities change as we grow older. Figure 3 shows the proportion of people in the UK, in different age ranges that chose friendship as one of their top ten value priorities.

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Barrett, *Evolutionary Coaching: A Values-Based Approach to Unleashing Human Potential* (London: Fulfilling Books), 2014.

<sup>9</sup> To access the broadcasts go to <http://evolutionarycoaching.podbean.com/> and click on the broadcast tab.

<sup>10</sup> Roberto Assagioli, *The Act of Will* (New York: Penguin Books), 1973, p. 98.



Figure 3: Proportion of people in the UK, in different age ranges, choosing the value of friendship as one of their top ten value priorities.

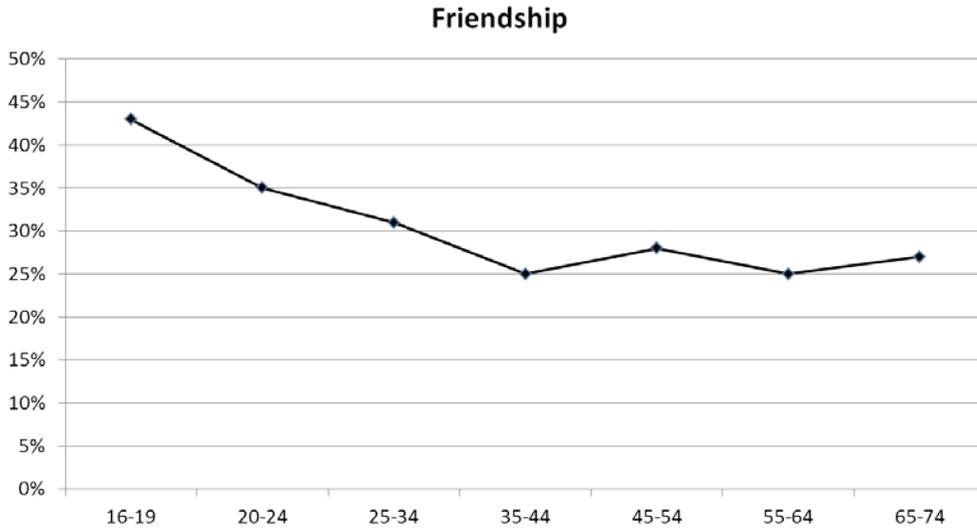
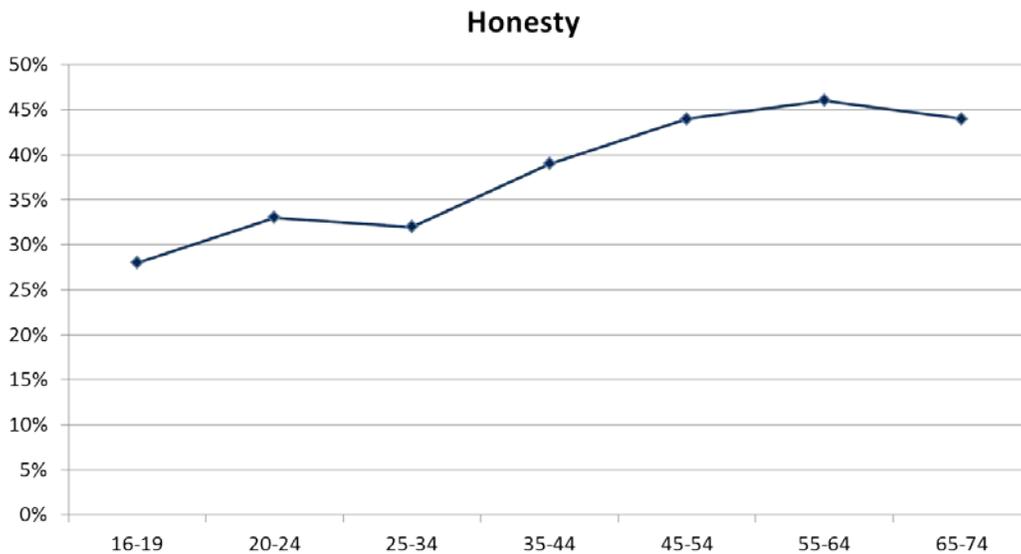


Figure 4 shows the proportion of people in the UK, in different age ranges that chose honesty as one of their top ten value priorities.

Figure 4: Proportion of people in the UK, in different age ranges, choosing the value of honesty as one of their top ten value priorities.



What we observe from these two figures is that friendship decreases as a value priority as people age, whereas honesty increases as a value priority.

The value shifts that occur as we grow older reflect what is important to us at each stage of our development. If you map your values over your lifetime you will see a movement from the lower to the higher levels of consciousness. This means that someone at a later stage of development can understand the challenges, thought processes and values of someone at an earlier stage, but someone at an earlier stage cannot understand the challenges, thought process and values of someone at a later stage of development. This means that:

*If you want to take people on a journey to a place they have never been to before, it is important that you find out as much as possible about the territory before you depart. It helps immensely if you have already explored the territory yourself. You will need to be thorough in your exploration, because everyone you take on this journey will be starting from a different place.<sup>11</sup>*

Some commentators on psychological development make the mistake of believing that the process of growth is totally driven by the individual's interaction with their environment and therefore believe that if someone feels comfortable in their environment there is no reason for them to pursue their psychological growth.

In my opinion, this is only partially true. Our passage through the earlier stages of psychological development is driven by our physiology *and* our environment—our need to meet the needs of our maturing body, and our need to master living in increasingly complex frameworks of existence—home, school, university and work.

Once we have established ourselves as part of a community by finding work and settling down to bring up a family, our passage through the later stages of psychological development is not driven by our environment, nor by our physiology; it is driven by the pull we feel towards self-actualisation or in other words by the soul's impulse for self-expression.

I believe we all experience this pull at some time in our lives. Whether we choose to respond or not, depends on how comfortable we feel about facing up to the challenges involved. If we do not respond to the pull towards Self-expression, we will, at some future time, feel a sense of unease or depression. We will regret what might have been—what we might have become if we'd had the courage to overcome our fears and taken the opportunities that were presented to us. In other words, there are consequences for not heeding the impulses you feel to exploring your soul's potential.

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<sup>11</sup> Richard Barrett, *Evolutionary Coaching: A Values-Based Approach to Unleashing Human Potential* (London: Fulfilling Books), 2014, p. xxi.

For a more detailed account and instructions on how to listen to and communicate with your soul, may I suggest you read *What My Soul Told Me: A Practical Guide to Soul Activation*.<sup>12</sup> I have also recorded a series of twenty-four one hour dialogues, about this topic for those who require a deeper understanding of ego-soul alignment and soul emergence.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Richard Barrett, *What My Soul Told Me: A Practical Guide to Soul Activation* (Bath: Fulfilling Books), 2013.

<sup>13</sup> To access the broadcast go to <http://fourthdimensionaldialogue.podbean.com/> and click on the broadcast tab.