

Getting to interdependence

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We are all born into this world with a dependency on others. As new born babes, we need someone to feed and nurture us. Without this care, we could only live for a few days at most. Moving from this stage takes time, growth, and development. As we move through the maturity continuum, we all progress through several stages. The three major stages of maturity are dependence, independence, and interdependence, with the highest stage being interdependence.

The first stage on the maturity continuum is dependency. Dependence is the state of being influenced, determined by, or subject to another. One of the characteristics of a dependent person is that they will use the "you" statement. "You did not get it for me" or "It's your fault that I am this way". Dependency is the lowest level of maturity and requires others to provide physical, mental, emotional, and financial support. Each of these dimensions reaches maturity at different points so a person that is physically independent may still be financially dependent on someone else. When growth and development is done properly, the individual will move from dependence to independence in all dimensions of their life.

The second stage on the maturity continuum is independency. Independence means to be self-governed. You are no longer dependent or subject to the control of others. Unfortunately, some people never make this transition. They remain physically, emotionally, or financially dependent on others. The person that is independent will use the "I" statements. "I have my own car," or "I can pay my own way," or "I take responsibility for myself." Moving from dependence to independence is a major milestone in life. It defines the transition into complete adulthood where the person is emotionally and financially responsible for self and has developed mentally where they can carry their own weight. This stage must be completed. Only an independent person can move to interdependence.

The final stage on the maturity continuum is interdependency. Interdependence is a reciprocal relationship that involves two or more people. It requires the greatest amount of maturity because getting along with others is more demanding than getting along with self. Interdependence can only be achieved between two independent people. If one person is dependent, the other will only serve as an enabler. The person that is interdependent uses the "we" statement. "We can do it," or "we will work it out together." This is necessary to build families and communities. Two people working collectively will always achieve more than they ever could on their own.

Getting to interdependence is a necessary part of human development. As we work collectively, we are able to build. No one can ever accomplish true greatness working alone. Each one of us must move on the maturity continuum from you, to I, to we. Each of us must move from dependence, to independence, to interdependence. As we mature in these stages, we mature in life. Three of the greatest things in life are God, family, and community, and these all require interdependence.

Timothy Houston is an author, minister, and motivational speaker who is committed to guiding positive life changes in families and communities. To get copies of his book, schedule a speaking engagement, or for questions, comments or more information, go to www.tlouston.com