

# **Navigating Our Many Worlds**

By Dr. Michael Obsatz - February 2021

We are amazingly adaptive and complex creatures. By the time we are old, we have navigated through many different worlds.

## **THE WORLD OF ME -- Who am I?**

We have personalities, temperaments, and ways of being. Every person is unique, and part of maturing is discovering who one is and what he or she needs. We also change our views, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors as we age.

## **THE FAMILY WORLD -- Where do I fit?**

We are born into a family. To survive and thrive in that family, we act in certain ways, trying to fit in and be safe. We are scripted into roles, and we play with them all of our lives.

Some roles we learn to play in our family might be:

- The smart one
- The quiet one
- The clown
- The rescuer of the family
- The mediator, go-between
- The one who messes up
- The passive one
- The good listener
- The therapist

## **THE SCHOOL/PEER WORLD -- How do I cope with others and organizational demands?**

We then join the peer world, the world of children and school. We learn to play the school game, fit in, and get along. We found our group, or niche, if we are lucky. We learn to play a part in that group. We learn the student role, and the friend role.

## **THE PARTNER WORLD -- How do I maintain my own integrity and still adapt to my partner?**

Eventually, we may find a romantic partner. We play the boyfriend or girlfriend role. This world changes as we age, and we adjust and adapt to expectations. And we learn to relate to our partner's family.

## **THE PARENT WORLD -- What skills are needed to raise this child?**

When we have children, we join the parent world. Making decisions daily that affect a smaller, helpless being.

## **THE GRANDPARENT WORLD -- How involved do I become?**

When our children grow up, and have children of their own, we learn to navigate the grandparent role. What are rules, boundaries, and limits?

## **THE WORK WORLD -- How can I be productive, make a living, and get along with others?**

We start working in young adulthood, and have to adjust to bosses, co-workers, workplace etiquette and rules. If we change careers and jobs, we must adjust to new roles and people. There are often new skills to learn.

## **THE ADULT FRIEND WORLD -- Who are my people?**

Who we befriend determines how we relate, connect, and act. We develop social groups, hobbies, and past times which often have guidelines and practices of their own. It is a time of discovery of what one loves to do in one's spare time.

## **THE COMMUNITY MEMBER WORLD -- What is my social and political responsibility?**

We can become socially and politically active in our communities. As a result, we are thrust into a variety of environments. We develop social values and live them out. We are part of a neighborhood. When we move geographically, we have to start over making new connections, and learning how to fit in.

## **THE SPIRITUAL WORLD -- What is my relationship to the Divine?**

We join religious groups and institutions, and develop our spiritual lives. We connect with different people from different backgrounds, races, ages and social classes. We develop spiritual practices which provide amounts of comfort and support. We explore questions like "What does my life mean?"

## **THE ELDER WORLD -- How do I grow old and still maintain my sense of identity and worth?**

As we age, we may retire from work. We grow older, and develop various health issues. We often become medical patients, and generally have to deal with changes in our bodies, hormone levels, and energy levels. Eventually, we decline, and finally die.

Many people do not give themselves enough credit for navigating all of these worlds, and adjusting to a wide variety of roles and expectations.