

One, Two, Three, Grow

by Mary Bast

*I was in the “City of Power Politics” with vested interests and terrified people intent on maintaining the status quo. Though I could do a cost-benefit analysis and was pretty good at organization, I had absolutely no idea what was really going on, why, or how to change it. This was crazy, and I didn’t have the foggiest idea of how to deal with crazy. For sheer survival, if no other reason, I concluded I needed to understand crazy (Ed Morler, Preface, *Finally Growing Up: Living an Authentic Empowered Life*).*

My day brightened considerably when I read those words. In a world of thieving investment bankers, human trafficking, and strategically planned warfare, I applaud Morler’s conclusion that the ultimate causal factor in human behavior is *integrity*, or the lack of it. *Growing Up*, which integrates the Enneagram with his Six Levels of Emotional Maturity, is about “consciously choosing to be responsible, and in that process, doing our best to discover and live our noble potential.” The author recognizes increasing self-awareness as the path to greater emotional maturity:

Integration is the result of a willingness to face and go through our fear. It is an exponential expansion of our willingness to be responsible and behave proactively, which broadens and deepens our sense of empowerment. It often tends to manifest as a dramatic, positive shift in our awareness of our being, doing and having. It is thus a major letting go of the compulsive, limiting aspects of personality (p. 216).

Morler proposes “six fairly distinct ways, or levels, of perceiving and responding or reacting to life’s situations. Each level is composed of a number of discrete emotions. Each level has its own different set of filters. Individuals perceive things differently at different emotional levels” (p. 98) – Level 1: Victim, Level 2: Manipulator, Level 3: Opposer, Level 4: Coper, Level 5: Doer, Level 6: Leader.

His tables further define these six levels in 26 categories including Chronic Patterns, Emotions/Attitudes, Learning Capacity, Willingness to Confront, Sense of Self-Esteem and Self-Worth, Handling of Power, Source of Motivation (and 19 more). Along the path, he suggests, our questions change from “Am I getting enough?” to “Am I good enough?” to “Am I learning, growing, being enough?” to the secure realization, “I am enough.”

In this article I’ll illustrate the growing up of “Jake,” an Enneagram Six. I’m using Jake’s story as an example of how Morler’s categories are grounded in real life. I do this in part because I learn best by trying things out, which – by the way – places me in Morler’s category of Learning Capacity somewhere between Level 6 (“...quick study”) and Level 5 (“Open to concepts supported by experience...”). So for today, I feel emotionally mature. [Sometimes, when confronted with highly theoretical abstractions, I dip to “rejecting new concepts as threatening” (Level 3) or even “It’s impossible, why bother?” (Level 1).]

Because Jake’s self-realization in this particular aspect of his life centered on his willingness to confront, the following outline will provide a frame of reference for his progress. Here are Morler’s six levels of emotional maturity in the category of Chronic Patterns, as well as descriptions of each level in Willingness to Confront, and Enneagram-specific descriptions for the Six:

Level 6 – LEADER Chronic Patterns: “High integrity. Comfortable presence. Clear focus. Big picture. Considerate of real needs. Positive action and results. Appreciates and enjoys life. Life is an adventure. Humor.”

Willingness to confront: “Will confront whatever needs to be dealt with. Observational abilities finely tuned. Willingness to explore other beliefs and reassess one’s own. Great presence.”

Enneagram Six at Level 6: “Creator of security in and for others. Dynamic interdependence. Open. Perspective. Committed. Engaging. Playful. Integrates primarily to positive 9 and also to positive 3.

Level 5 – DOER Chronic Patterns: “Conscientious. Positive, provided claims are substantiated. Pleasant. Proactive devil’s advocate.”

Willingness to confront: “Selectively confronts. Fair to good observational abilities. Cautious progress.”

Enneagram Six at Level 5: “Highly practical. Organizationally effective. Analyses. Tenacious. Troubleshooter. Constructive critic. Devil’s advocate.”

Level 4 – COPER Chronic Patterns: “More an observer than a participant. Casual, mellow. Takes the path of least resistance. Careless.”

Willingness to confront: “Minimally confronts. Observational skills minimal. Difficult situations are avoided or ignored.”

Enneagram Six at Level 4: “Dutiful. Cautious. Security oriented. Skeptic. Ambivalent. Indecisive. Evasive.”

Level 3 – OPPOSER Chronic Patterns: “Sees world as hostile, threatening. Narrow emotional range. Best defense is an offense. Angry person. The debater.”

Willingness to confront: “Attacks others to avoid confronting own irresponsibility. Tends to back down quickly when threats do not work.”

Enneagram Six at Level 3: “Phobic – Anxious. Pessimistic. Defensive. Looks to authority figure. OR Counter-Phobic – Daredevil. Cynic. Blamer. Rebel. Antagonistic.”

Level 2 – MANIPULATOR Chronic Patterns: “World is so threatening that must hide own fear, hostile intentions and behaviors. Highly self-absorbed. The con man. The gossip. The martyr. The two-face.”

Willingness to confront: “Covertly manipulates and misdirects to avoid confronting and owning any responsibility.”

Enneagram Six at Level 2: “High anxiety. Immediately discounting of anything positive. Everything is a crisis. Self-disparagement. Denial.”

Level 1 – VICTIM Chronic Patterns: “Cry-baby. Complainer. Whiner or just numbed out. Poor me. Yes man. The victim.”

Willingness to confront: “Avoids almost all issues. Too inwardly focused to observe much at all.”

Enneagram Six at Level 1: “Whiner. ‘Continual unsolvable problems.’ Masochistic. Persecuted persecutor. Projection. Disintegrates primarily to negative 3 and also to negative 9.”

When Jake first sought coaching, he was new to the Enneagram. As he identified with the Six’s driving force of fear, he reported times in earlier years when he’d accepted others’ negative attributions of him, endured several emotional crises, and suffered high anxiety, sometimes to the point of depression, all more characteristic of levels 2-4 of the Six’s emotional maturity. Subsequently, through his own tenacity and desire to outgrow his fears, Jake had developed many Level 5 qualities, celebrating outstanding

successes as an expert in his field. In addition, he's extremely bright and self-aware and his life experiences had created great readiness to learn more about himself and to develop his full potential.

Primarily a phobic Six, Jake explored his behavioral patterns in the context of the Enneagram, particularly some ambivalence about his career choices – which had opened up the possibility of much greater responsibility based on his past successes. As he learned how to be more present, he had many moments of facing and moving through his fears.

On the strength of that foundation, Jake embraced the opportunity to take an executive position in a turn-around situation, and entered that job at a level of self-awareness that placed him solidly in the 5th level of emotional maturity, with some signs of level 6, particularly in his desire to be a manager of others instead of a lone troubleshooter. We'd supported this vision and anticipated his new level of responsibility by exploring, rehearsing, and reinforcing the attributes and responsibilities of leadership.

During the first six months of Jake's new job, however, the organizational dynamics threatened to trap him in the City of Power Politics described by Morler. The following comments capture Jake's description of his shift into empowerment during his first six months on the job, as he continues to deepen his self-awareness and broaden his perspective.

"I realized I was very scared around people at higher levels in the company," Jake began (illustrating his self-observation that he'd been selectively confronting at Level 5). "There are several very, very angry, insistent senior VPs in the company, and some of them I've known for ten years or more. But now that they're at the top, I found myself saying "Yes, sir!"

Jake was not the only one reacting to the organization's top-down culture: "I got to the root of why the company is messed up – when they see something dysfunctional they ask the person reporting to them to find out what's wrong and how to fix it. That results in many hours to prepare a summary, then the VP casts off what they've brought and says "You have to do twice as much." People reporting to VPs say "Yes sir," and then go flog the troops."

Jake related what he observed to "child abuse" and we talked about how he was beginning to think systemically (Level 6's "finely tuned observational abilities"). We identified what Peter Senge¹ would call the organization's *archetype* as most likely a version of "Fixes that Fail." In this archetype,² managers aim their responses at the symptoms rather than spending time identifying the underlying, systemic problem; with the unintended consequence that the quick fix exacerbates the initial problem symptom.

Having analyzed the organization's dysfunctional pattern, Jake found the courage to confront the VP: "If we look back at the insecurities I had, they were coming from all those people asking me to do things my gut told me not to do. So this week I'd been silently sitting there, taking a beating, when I finally decided the worst thing he could do was fire me. And I stood up to the VP, with my boss in the room. I acknowledged the company's needs and the urgency, then said, 'Here's the reality of the organization you have today...' I told him what we *can* do, which is focus on things with the broadest appeal and realize it may not be perfect immediately. The room was silent. The VP then turned his attention to someone else and started yelling at him!"

Note that the VP – at best – was operating from Level 3, The Opposer, in Morler's lexicon of emotional maturity ("Best defense is an offense...Tends to back down quickly when threats do not work").

¹ Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 1990.

² William Braun, *The System Archetypes*, 2002.

As Jake's story continues, you can see him gaining firmer ground in Level 6 ("Will confront whatever needs to be dealt with..."): "I stood up to the VP," he said, "because it was the right thing to do. And it worked! So I started doing it with everybody. My boss asked me for some calculations, which had left no time to do my job. So I told him 'I'll be glad to keep you posted, but from now on, I'm going to spend my time doing what you hired me to do.'"

I asked Jake how he came to respond with such integrity. "There were a whole bunch of things I did," he acknowledged, "but one sea change – I said what I believed to be true instead of holding back out of fear."

As we move from emotional naïveté and immaturity toward being more emotionally intelligent and mature, behaviors manifest that are correspondingly less self-centered, more secure, present, honest, authentic, responsible, productive and happy more of the time. From that foundation, knowing what's right and acting on it becomes an effortless, natural occurrence (p.96).

Jake then planned a five-day teambuilding agenda. He would bring his whole team in from around the world to be face-to-face, some of them for the first time. We agreed he would facilitate the session instead of bringing me in, to support his role as *coach*, not *boss*. He would embody empowerment and model a change from the historically hierarchical culture to one of collaborative interdependence. After exploring several concepts of teambuilding, he adopted the Drexler Sibtet team performance model, addressing the first five stages during their week together: (1) Orientation (*WHY am I here?*), (2) Trust Building (*WHO are you?*), (3) Goal Clarification (*WHAT are we doing?*), (4) Commitment (*HOW will we do it?*), (5) Implementation (*WHO does WHAT, WHEN, WHERE?*), (6) High Performance (*WOW!*), (7) Renewal (*WHY continue?*).

After the team's week together, Jake's e-mail to schedule a meeting with me was short and sweet: "The week went tremendously! Very interesting culture. Will you have time to talk this week?" From the moment I picked up the phone it was evident that he was enjoying Level 6 qualities ("High integrity. Comfortable presence. Clear focus. Big picture. Considerate of real needs. Positive action and results. Appreciates and enjoys life. Life is an adventure. Humor").

He started our conversation by joking, "I think they were afraid I was going to come in with Velcro suits and foam bats, so it was a little scary on Monday morning, but I used a simple, get-acquainted exercise where they interviewed each other in twos, then reported out about the person they've been talking to." During Monday afternoon and all day and evening Tuesday, Jake brought in the company Vice Presidents to "to say directly why my team's mission matters." (He had been smart enough to give each of the VPs 30 minutes and talking points in advance; the rest of their time was to be for discussion.) "That turned things around," he said, "to see that I had the VPs' trust and that the VPs took the time to talk and answer any questions from team members."

"I told my team the goal was for each person to have ownership in the results," he continued, "and by the end of the week to have an entire plan with everyone knowing what they own and how they're going to do it. Then they all sat at attention waiting for me to tell them what to do!"

"I acknowledged that empowerment had not been the culture here," Jake continued, "and said we had to completely let go of the way we'd been doing business: 'You've been told we have to do these things by these dates. I'm turning the meeting over to you now to solve these problems and decide how you want to be set up as an organization in order to do it.' And it worked! I didn't realize until the middle of the week how important it was to them to be treated like professionals. I kept in mind to model empowerment and, when they saw me not taking over, it would reinforce what I said. So I intentionally stepped out of the meeting more and more as the week wore on."

You can see evidence in the following comments of Jake's moving back and forth between Level 5 (Doer) and Level 6 (Leader): "I did find I had to keep monitoring myself. I kept wanting to solve problems that were on the table, but I think I did OK on that. At the beginning of the week I found myself diving in too much. Then as a gauge, I knew when I was feeling frustrated it was time to step back."

Describing the week's outcomes, Jake summarized: "We had two difficult things we needed to get done: to determine how long it would take to meet our goals, and how much it would cost. In the beginning, everyone on the team said we could not accomplish what we were expected to do in the given timeframe, but by the end of the week they'd figured out how to do it! We're still on a scary precipice, but as long as the family is tight and they know where they stand on things, we'll be able to accomplish what we need to do."

Jake also coached his team on how to do what he had done to interrupt the old pattern of top-down blaming and time lost preparing reams of reports. "I believe I've taught them how to respond when upper management starts getting on our backs again: 'If you're not proactive, they'll keep doing it more.'"

In order to achieve its potential, any true team-building effort must strive to develop both cooperation (involvement with the other to enhance the self) and collaboration (involvement that considers the other's enhancement). Optimum synergy is attained only when collaboration exists and that only occurs when communication is not repressed (p. 106).

So far, there's every indication the collaborative change Jake encourages and models is holding. "When I came back to work the following week," he reported, "everyone was working and invigorated. I'd been wondering how to present to upper management what we'd done, and when I walked into my office found a presentation on my desk from one of my team members!" "My biggest challenge," he concluded, "is to change this culture, and to do it by example, as if I've walked into a black and white company and I'm able to pour color all over it."

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Edward Morler, MBA, PhD, is CEO of Morler International (www.morler.com). In addition to Finally Growing Up: Leading an Authentic Empowered Life, Dr. Morler is author of the award-winning The Leadership Integrity Challenge: Assessing and Facilitating Emotional Maturity.