

Developmental Tasks for College Students

The following is a list of the developmental tasks encountered by college students as identified by Dr. Arthur W. Chickering (commonly called the 7 Vectors).

Achieving Competence

This involves the development of intellectual and social abilities as well as physical and manual skills. The sense of competence is defined as the confidence individuals have in their ability to cope with what comes and to achieve successfully what they set out to do.

Managing Emotions

The young adult's initial task is to become aware of personal feelings and to recognize that they provide information relevant to contemplated behavior or to decisions about future plans. As a larger range of feelings is fully expressed, new and more useful patterns of expression and control can be achieved.

Becoming Autonomous

Mature autonomy requires both emotional independence - freedom from continual and pressing needs for reassurance and approval - and instrumental independence - the ability to carry on activities and cope with problems without seeking help from others and the ability to be mobile in relations to one's needs. Simultaneously, the individual must accept interdependence, recognizing that one cannot receive benefits from a social structure without contributing to it, that personal rights have a corollary social responsibility.

Establishing Identity

Identity is confidence in one's ability to maintain inner sameness and continuity; to reach this stage, one must understand one's physical needs, characteristics, and personal appearance and be sure of sexual identification and appropriate roles and behavior.

Freeing Interpersonal Relationships

As one matures, one should be able to express greater trust, independence and individuality in relationships, less anxiety and defensiveness and more friendliness, spontaneity, warmth and respectfulness. Developing tolerance for a wide range of persons is a significant aspect of this task.

Clarifying Purposes

To develop purpose, an individual must formulate plans and priorities that integrate a vocational and leisure-time interests, vocational plans, and life-style consideration.

Developing Integrity

This task involves making one's values both more personal and more human. One examines and selects a personally valid set of beliefs that have some internal consistency and provide a guide for behavior. At the same time, one drops a literal belief in the absoluteness of rules and adopts a more relative view. Then one must also develop congruence, that is, begin to act in accordance with these personal values.