

**Developmental Analysis Paper: A Deeper Look into the Key Developmental Times in My
Life**

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Abstract

Development over the course of one's lifespan is multi-faceted and impacted by a myriad of factors. In this essay I am going to discuss my personal development thus far in my life. The key aspects I am going to cover are emotional, mental, physical, social, and spiritual development as they pertain to my own personal life. I am going to break this essay into four parts and each part will cover these key aspects, including personal accounts of growth and development as well as empirical research. I will be covering my infancy and toddlerhood, early and middle childhood, adolescence, and finally my early adulthood thus far. I will be discussing multiple theories as well as they pertain to specific sections of these stages of my lifespan and developmental stages.



■ To begin, I am going to dive into my stage of infancy and toddlerhood. I compiled this information from accounts of both my mother and father. To start from the beginning of it all, I was born without my stomach and intestines fully developed. I came out jaundice and had a lot of gastrointestinal issues as a baby. I had extreme acid reflux and discomfort, often leading to projectile vomiting. So, I was a very needy baby because of how awful I felt most of the time. I was very dependent on constant reassurance from my mom, always needing to be touched whether it was being held or worn by my mom. She said that she couldn't get a whole lot done for the first several months of my life because of how fussy of a baby I was. I mention this story because I feel as though this had an impact on the development of my secure attachment. ■ Up ■ until I was about six months, I had a bit of an insecure-ambivalent/resistant attachment as an infant. I was extremely attached to my mother and would refuse to explore my environment and would become very distressed when my mom left me. I would have extreme emotional reactions and go right back to being overly clingy when my mom would return. I believe that this specific experience is supported by Freud's Psychoanalytic theory that explains how early childhood experiences have a longitudinal impact on development. His theory states that an individual's psychological responses to different life experiences are reflections of biological ■ instincts. ■ (Wong, Hall, & Hernandez, 2020). I think that this is true throughout my infancy because it became my biological instinct to look to my mother for comfort when I was always feeling ill because of how it made me feel safe and calm. It wasn't until I was able to begin forming a secure attachment until doctors finally diagnosed me with severe acid reflux and got me on prescription medication, I became a much happier infant and I started to develop more independence and autonomy outside of my mother. ■ Now, as a more securely attached infant at about six months of age, I started to explore the environment around me, my personality began to

really blossom, and I was able to start forming connections with others outside of my primary caregivers. During this point I would say I was within the sensorimotor stage of cognitive development, according to Piaget. (Wong et al., 2020). I began to develop on track, emotionally. Moving right into my toddlerhood, a study done on typical physical milestones of toddlers showed that I was developing in step with where I should be. I began walking at eleven months old, unassisted. (Worobe, J. (2014). My social development was on par with Erikson's stages of Psychosocial development theory. According to Erikson, during the stage of toddlerhood the child goes through the dilemma of overcoming shame and doubt and moving into a place of autonomy. (Wong et al., 2020). There is a story from my childhood that is my dad's personal favorite and I believe it highlights this idea of overcoming shame and doubt and achieving autonomy quite nicely. I was about sixteen months old, and my dad was finishing up changing my diaper, when he said, "alright you're all done, boo boos!" which was his nickname for me. I replied by standing up on the changing table, pointing to myself and stating, "I'm Taryn now!". This is a hilarious but clear picture of how I as a toddler really embraced this stage of autonomy and that I wished to start becoming my own individual, starting with being referred to only by my name. ▀

Now, I am going to look at my early and middle childhood. During my early childhood, my parents described me as a very sociable and curious child. One of my most prominent memories from ages seven to ten was how I was bullied at school. Research shows that persistent bullying can cause mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. (Moore, Norman, Suetani, Thomas, Sly, & Scott, 2017). This bullying experience directly impacted my mental health, my self-esteem dropped, and I felt anxious and self-conscious a lot of the time. ▀ According to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory on mesosystems, I believe that at this time I also

had a hard time connecting with my family because of the rejection from my peers. (Wong et al., 2020). I experienced continued bullying until the age of about thirteen. The main reason for being bullied was always because of my size, my being too little and skinny. When I hit the age of twelve and didn't develop the ways in which my peers around me did, I was ridiculed for looking like a "little boy". This slow physical maturation and development made me feel like something was wrong with me and it had a great impact on my self-esteem. During late childhood, my parents also went through a divorce. When I was eleven my parent's ended things between them, and it caused a major shift in my family dynamics. I had to learn how to live in a split parent household and adjust to a new normal. I think that in some ways this stunted my emotional development. According to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, my chronosystem was greatly impacted by this major life event of my parent's divorce. The theory suggests that the negative impacts of divorce peak in the following year after the divorce, so my induction into early adolescence began with emotional turmoil. (Wong et al., 2020). Studies show that experiencing divorce in childhood is associated with a decrease in overall well-being in adulthood. (Larson, & Halfon, 2012). My social development began to really take a turn towards valuing peer validation over parental validation. I began to form close relationships with friends and found a lot of my self-worth and identity in what others around me thought. According to Bronfenbrenner's theory of development, having both a naturalistic and contextual point of view is crucial in understanding an individual. He stated that individuals are highly influenced by their immediate relationships, those that they spend the most time with. (Lamb, & Bornstein, 2011). At this point, I really began to develop my spirituality. I think that the combination of internal and external conflicts mixed with my desire for friendship and community really lead me to seek a spiritual community. I began attending a youth group at age

eleven and was a part of a group of kids my age that were all searching for purpose and meaning. I first accepted Christ when I was eleven and my spiritual journey took off from there. Studies show that spiritual development can be a powerful resource for positive development in an individual. (Paloutzian, & Park, 2015).

Next, I am going to cover my adolescence. From ages twelve to nineteen a lot of events occurred that had a direct impact on all aspects of my development. To begin, at age twelve I went through a rough patch when my best friend since kindergarten moved to another state without saying goodbye. While I was already feeling lonely due to my family situation and the occasional bullying at school, my best friend moving away really hit me hard. Soon after, my older brother began experimenting with drugs, which would eventually lead to his going to rehab several times and causing a lot of strife within my family structure. My mother went through a bout of depression that deeply affected me. I felt scared to leave for school for fear that she might hurt herself. Overall, from age twelve until fourteen was a very dark and depressing time for me. All the while, I was moving between two households every other weekend for visitation time with my father, which made friendships difficult for me since I missed out on a lot of sleepovers and other events. I was under a tremendous amount of stress and anxiety was an ever-present feeling. One study suggests that exposure to persistent stress in childhood and adolescence can lead to permanent dysregulation of cortisol levels in adults. (Harris, Cox, Brett, Deary, & MacLulich, 2017). My adolescence was plagued with feelings of loneliness, hopelessness, and depression. And this directly impacted my mental and emotional health. I had a difficult time academically throughout middle school, junior high and even into high school. I had a hard time focusing and feeling motivated to do schoolwork due to feeling overwhelmed with a lot of aspects of my personal life. Studies show that depression and anxiety can lead to

both social and educational deficits. (Beirão, Monte, Amaral, Longras, Matos, & Villas-Boas, 2020). By the time I entered eighth grade I was caught up in terms of physical maturation and was no longer bullied for this. I became accepted with the “popular” kids and my social life began to flourish. Now, while my mental and emotional development were affected by my life circumstances, I felt motivated to elevate my social life. I found a lot of my happiness from peer acceptance and desired to be both accepted and appreciated by my peers more than anything. I joined different clubs in high school. I joined the cheer team. I began partying and looking for ways to take my mind off sad things in my private life. At age fifteen I really began to enter what Kohlberg refers to as the stage of social contract. I found a lot of my value and had emotional dependence on friendships and whether those friendships were reciprocal in benefiting me. (Wong et al., 2020). With this period of a lot of emotional and physical change, I still had my spiritual development in the back of my mind when things would get tough. In terms of my spiritual development at this time, whenever I would feel overwhelmed or depressed, I would find comfort in Jesus. However, I stopped attending youth group at age fifteen and my relationship with Jesus was very touch and go, only addressing Him when I needed something from Him. At eighteen I graduated and moved away to California to pursue a career in modeling/acting. While I was there, I experienced little to no success in these pursuits and I felt extreme loneliness and a lack of purpose. My desire for community and a larger purpose than myself lead me to head back to Washington and attend Central Washington University. While there, I got involved with an on-campus college student-oriented church community. I re-surrendered my life to Christ and became heavily involved in the church. My self-esteem grew and my feelings of depression lessened as I gained more perspective on my purpose in life and grew closer to Jesus. Studies show that the role of religion and spirituality play a positive role in

adolescent development. (Miller, 2014). By the age of nineteen, I had decided to move to Monmouth Oregon to help plant this college ministry at Western Oregon University. ♥

From the age of nineteen to now twenty-five, I have changed and developed tremendously. I would say the largest areas of development for this stage of early adulthood have been spiritually and mentally/emotionally. From the ages of nineteen to twenty-two I was heavily involved with my on-campus ministry and focused on my academic pursuits. I graduated from my undergrad in 2020 with a bachelor's in Psychology. College was the place in which I truly enjoyed and thrived in school for the first time in my life. I think that I was able to thrive in academics during this time because I was unburdened by stress and anxiety, because I knew I had a strong and healthy relationship with Jesus. This relationship was my top priority and because of this deepening of our relationship, I finally felt confident and happy and fulfilled in my life thus leading to greater mental and emotional health. At this point, I would say I really began to enter Kohlberg's sixth and final stage of moral development. My principles were solid and founded on Christ and I knew the positive effects of orienting my life this way would have on those around me. I met my husband while attending Central Washington University. During our freshman year, we planted Resonate Church together and became very close friends. We started dating in the winter of 2019 and were married in June of 2020. Being married has really solidified my individual development of my morals, emotional and mental health, but most importantly my spiritual health. Studies show that independent relationship with God has a directly positive effect on the marriage partnerships level of satisfaction and communication between partners. (David, & Stafford, 2013). I look forward to my continual development as I move throughout my lifespan. ♥

As I reflect on my experiences over my lifespan thus far, I can see the clear link between life events and the implications it had for development in multiple areas. I think some key developmental times in my life were those of late childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood. The influencing factors in my life during those stages were going through my parents' divorce, dealing with my brother falling into addiction, going through my spiritual journey, and being married. I believe all these situations have led me to who I am today, because without the hardships and trials I wouldn't have the solid relationship that I do now with Jesus. And without that relationship, I wouldn't have my husband, I wouldn't have the outlook I have on the world, and I wouldn't have a purpose in life. I take my spiritual development very seriously and it is something that I work on each day, to continue working on and strengthening. I find that my spiritual wellness really propels my mental and emotional health in a beneficial direction. Moving into the future, I look forward to the different experiences that will unfold and how they will impact my different aspects of development. I do not fear it, because I know Jesus will be with me every step of the way. Because of my genetics I have a propensity to become depressed and my anxiety can overtake my thought patterns. The lifestyle behavior that will best benefit me in the aging process will be to prioritize my spiritual health. This will greatly help my mental and emotional development. This will positively impact my aging process, and there is a study that supports this. It states that focusing one's attention on spirituality can improve an individual's later life health. (Zimmer, Jagger, Chiu, Ofstedal, Rojo, & Saito, 2016). I think that some suggestions of future study in this area of spiritual development would be to look at the entire lifespan of someone who devotes their life to Christ and compare it to one that is an atheist. I think it would be fascinating to look at lifestyle choices based on the individual's spirituality and see how that directly impacts their aging process.



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