

Breaking Down the Model: Part I – History of the Model and The Nature of the Child

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The Model of the Developmental Immaturity was developed by Pia Mellody. In the 1970s, Pia was working at The Meadows, a trauma and addiction Inpatient Treatment Facility. Pia found that she was encountering an increasing number of patients who identified less than nurturing, abusive family systems in their childhood - leading to adulthood behaviours of co-dependency. The co-dependency patterns translated into addictions, mood disorders and physical illness. Pia's continued work with patients led to the conclusion that people with co-dependency wind up in despair and die from the effects of co-dependency. Thus, the model was "born" to help patients understand the Family of Origin issues that brought them to the symptoms of their addictions, mood disorders and relationship struggles.

The Model of Developmental Immaturity

NATURE OF THE CHILD	CORE ISSUES	SECONDARY SYMPTOMS	RELATIONAL PROBLEMS
Valuable	Self-esteem Issues	Control	Relational Esteem
Vulnerable	Boundary Issues	Resentment	Enmeshment Avoidance
Imperfect	Reality Issues	Spirituality	Dishonesty
Dependent	Dependency Issues	Addiction Depression	Interdependence
Spontaneous	Moderation	Intimacy	Intensity

The Model of Developmental Immaturity is incorporated into every facet of treatment at The Meadows, from the week-long workshops to the intensive inpatient program. At each level, patients receive education on The Model and learn how to identify the childhood roots of their adult behaviours. Therapists at The Meadows lead patients through understanding how their core issues, secondary symptoms and relational problems were set up in childhood, leading to co-dependency in adulthood. The biggest understanding that we want patients to leave treatment with is the belief in the Nature of the Child - which is the Nature of the Functional Adult; that we are inherently valuable and perfectly imperfect. We will further explore The Model in stages, beginning with understanding the primary symptoms of co-dependency and understanding The Nature of the Child.

The Model of Developmental Immaturity is a model that has to do with co-dependency. Co-dependency is defined as a disorder of immaturity caused by relational problems. Understanding co-dependency is imperative to understanding The Model. There are five primary symptoms of co-dependency. These are:

1. We have trouble esteeming ourselves from the idea of inherent worth.
2. We have trouble protecting and nurturing ourselves.
3. We have trouble being real.
4. We have trouble attending to our needs and wants.
5. We have trouble living life with an attitude of moderation in all things.

The Model of Developmental Immaturity Issues is a model used at The Meadows to treat the effects of childhood trauma and issues of developmental immaturity. Childhood trauma and developmental immaturity can lead to addiction issues, mood disorders and physical issues.

To further understand the model, we will examine each column. The first column is the Nature of the Child. The Nature of the Child is the Precious Child Ego State. Our precious child is the reality of who we are:

- We are precious and valuable just as we are.
- We are vulnerable and can expect protection.
- We are human and make mistakes. We are perfectly imperfect.
- We are dependent on others for our needs and wants.
- We are spontaneous and open.

As children, we get relationally traumatized by enmeshment, neglect, or abandonment in the "Nature of the Child" areas. Let's explore each of these terms:

- Enmeshment is the inappropriate closeness of family members. In an enmeshed and overinvolved relationship, individuals get lost in the relationship. There is a lack of clear boundaries, thus everyone has difficulty having a clear sense of self. Examples of phrases that demonstrate enmeshment are, "You're my everything," "Without you, my life would not be worth living," or "You complete me."
- Neglect happens when a child's basic dependency needs were not met. Dependency needs are our basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, safety, and medical attention. Either the parent did not know how to meet these needs, or the parent did not meet these needs well enough. Neglect in childhood may lead to depression, anxiety, eating disorders, anger issues, or alcohol and drug abuse in adulthood.
- Abandonment happens when the loss of one both parents occur physically or emotionally. If the parent was not present in the child's life or the parent withheld affection or nurturing, the child was abandoned. Abandonment in childhood can result in adulthood difficulties with expressing and managing emotions, trust issues or a need to be in control.

Any behaviour exacted upon us as children that was less than nurturing is defined as trauma in this model. Childhood trauma causes immaturity in the Core Issues (Column II of the model).

We will examine the Core Issues in Part II of "Breaking Down the Model."

Joyce Willis is a Licensed Professional Counsellor and is currently a therapist at The Meadows. She earned her Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Akron. After teaching for several years, Joyce earned a master's degree in counselling from the University of Phoenix. She has been in the counselling profession since 1996 and in that time has worked extensively in the addictions field. Her specialties include treatment for addictions, bereavement, trauma, depression, and anxiety. Joyce has a special interest in mindfulness and helping people connect their emotional, spiritual, mindful, and physiological selves with compassion and respect