


Fowler's Stages, A Practical View


- Since the 1950's more and more psychologists have begun studying the effects and implications that a person's faith has on one's life.
- Key figures in psychology such as Jung (1958), Allport (1950), Piaget (1954), Kohlberg (1963) and Lownsdale 1997 have all done various amounts of research on faith development.

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- In 1981 James Fowler presented a six-stage theory of faith development presented in his book, *Stages of Faith*.
 - This work has become the most popular and commonly accepted theory of faith development.
 - Fowler's faith development theory has been integrated into many adult research studies including the disciplines of psychology, theology, and even medical research.


Fowler's Theory

- According to Fowler, "human beings are genetically potentiated, -(gifted at birth)- with readiness to develop faith.
- The various stages of faith are neither achievements, nor progressive steps to salvation, but simply degrees that one's faith goes through as it develops.
- The earlier stages, one through three, generally follow normal progressive development.
- The adult stages in Fowler's theory typically include stages four through six.

- **Stage 0** (or the pre-stage)– "*Primal or Undifferentiated*" faith (birth to 2 years), is characterized by an early learning of the safety of their environment (ie: warm, safe and secure vs. hurt, neglect and abuse).
- **Stage 1** – "*Intuitive-Projective*" faith (ages of three to seven), is characterized by the psyche's unprotected exposure to the unconscious.
- **Stage 2** – "*Mythic-Literal*" faith (mostly in school children), stage two persons have a strong belief in the justice and reciprocity of the universe, and their deities are almost always anthropomorphic.
- **Stage 3** – "*Synthetic-Conventional*" faith (arising in adolescence) characterized by conformity.
- **Stage 4** – "*Individuative-Reflective*" faith (usually mid-twenties to late thirties) a stage of angst and struggle. The individual takes personal responsibility for their beliefs and feelings.
- **Stage 5** – "*Conjunctive*" faith (mid-life crisis) acknowledges paradox and transcendence relating reality behind the symbols of inherited systems
- **Stage 6** – "*Universalizing*" faith, or what some might call "enlightenment".



**What does any of this
have to do with
addiction treatment
and why do I need to
know it????????**



**To be able to effectively
communicate and relate to our
client's and/or other people, we
must first understand
something about what they
believe, what they value.**

Body-Mind-Emotion and “SPIRIT” (spirituality)

A Dilemma For Counselors/Therapists

A study done in 1989 found that therapists are not as religiously oriented or informed as their clients. In one survey, 90% of the United States population believed in a divine being, and for one third of this population, their belief was a strong conviction. In many cases, these differences in religious beliefs cause a separation between the therapist and the client.

The Remedy

- Especially in these types of situations, it is beneficial for therapists and counselors to have an understanding of Fowler's theory of faith stages.
- Comprehending what stage a person is at in their faith development will give a therapist/counselor increased awareness and allow them to draw upon the very resources of a person's life to help them resolve problems commonly encountered in spiritual and psychological growth.

Benefits

- Knowing what a person's faith means to him or her related to the stage they are at will allow a much deeper level of understanding between two people.
- When a person understands these stages of development, he or she will have a whole new level at which they will be able to relate to others.
- The integration of faith and psychology would be all around beneficial to understanding and compatibility among adults.
- From knowing the faith development theory, one can gain insights from others by observing how their faith is structured.

Stage 4 (mid-20's late-30's)

Individuative- Reflective Faith


- There is a relocation of authority within the self, along with a critical reflection of one's beliefs. Faith becomes uniquely one's own. In addition, there is usually a struggle to grow and understand.
- The individual takes personal responsibility for their beliefs and feelings.
- Also as an individual, one's **individual world view** changes, becoming distinct from views held by others.
- For most this change comes with the natural occurrence of leaving one's childhood home and forming one's first adult life structures.

Stage 5 Conjunctive Faith

- Individuals realize the paradoxes in faith, and learn to live with their faith and their questions. This stage involves a dynamic, trusting relationship with God.
- A stage 5 person is so comfortable with their place in the grand scheme of things that they are more interested in what is true than what they believe, understanding that the two might be dissimilar.
- They let reality speak for itself regardless of its impact on them.
- This person trusts that the "known" is out there and takes the initiative to discover it.
- Someone in stage 5 is willing to be converted by other ways of thinking, knowing that "reality" cannot be held entirely in one tradition and spills over into many traditions.

Stage 6 Universalizing Faith

- This stage is defined by feeling at one with God. People here invest their lives in a larger cause without being concerned by the personal cost.
- They wear out their lives in this pursuit through action. These are people who are often martyred by the people they hope to help.
- The rare persons who may be described by this stage have a special grace that makes them seem more lucid, more simple, and yet somehow more fully human than the rest of us.
- Such persons are ready for fellowship with persons at any of the other stages and from any other faith tradition.
- Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Mother Teresa are some that had visions to which they committed their total beings.
- Some people refer to this stage as the stage of enlightenment.

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- Our goal as helping professionals is to understand where someone is at in their stage of development, be it physical, emotional, mental or spiritual.
 - Our goal as human beings is to travel our own path and find our own truths.

ENJOY THE JOURNEY