

How Your Family Model Growing Up is Your Foundation

Working out a Healthy Model is Key for All
Stuckness and Growth

by [Robert Hartzell](#)



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Introduction – What is Growth?

We all want growth. With growth you feel fulfilled, without it you feel frustrated and stuck. What exactly *is* growth and how do you define it?

I define growth as the ability to work through the problems in life that arise and learn something from having gone through them.

Growing means you consistently live as an overcomer. But what does this look like? We need a clear picture of a goal to move toward it effectively.

Let's break overcoming down a little and see its distinctions.

Spiritual Health

Picture a man/woman who walks with God. They have deep and meaningful devotions resulting in a spiritual depth that is noticed by others.

Physical Health

This person takes good care of themselves physically and presents themselves well around others.

Relationship Health

They have good relationship skills, evidenced by an emotionally healthy family. Their marriage is healthy and their kids are passing through the growth stages of life as well.

These life skills are also seen in how this person relates with other people on their job, at their church, and in their community. With both friends and strangers alike.

Destiny

At the end of their lives, many people would speak at their funeral saying that this person's love, kindness, and mentoring changed their life.

What Makes the Overcomer Different?

This overcomer faces the challenges of life like everyone else. They have setbacks, relationships that sometimes disappoint and hurt, and challenges in working out their growth on a personal level.

The difference is they don't get stuck in these difficult places. They are able to sustain the vulnerability of being in a learning relationship with life and with God. Mistakes and learning curves do not shut them down. They face obstacles as growth points in life.

God desires this maturity for all His children.

When I start coaching a new client in problem solving through emotional intelligence, I explain that problem solving is what we were intended to learn in our family of origin.

Problem solving is what we were intended to learn in our family of origin

God's best is that the life skills of overcoming were modeled for us by our parents, but unfortunately, this is not always the case.

If we didn't get these lessons in our families when we were young, it has to be learned later in life. We don't get a free pass if we want to move into maturity.

What Does it Mean to be Stuck?

Problem solving in your personal life can and should be intuitive and simple.

However, when you have problems in your life you just can't get past, it can feel debilitating.

"Quick fixes" presented in books and infomercials abound with solutions.

- You can pulverize vegetables in your blender, drink it and experience every disease disappear.

- You can listen to a CD from Dr. Psychobabble and your teenager will now obey you always and work hard in school.
- You can master a foreign language in 10 days that will greatly expand your horizons and income potential.

Diving into these “quick fix” programs is like trying to find answers before really understanding the questions.

Yet we *do* need answers because we really *do* have obstacles in our lives we need to get past.

Everyone faces problems in their lives.

- Relationships challenges with spouses, family members, or co-workers can hit major roadblocks and represent the biggest area we get stuck in.
- Stuckness in changing personal habits of health or finances are often difficult.
- Many of us get stuck finding fulfillment through our gifts and talents, causing us to never quite reach our destiny.

Have you ever struggled in these ways? I certainly have. It can make you feel frustrated and hopeless.

Countless people have searched for answers. They’ve tried reading all the various books on diet, love, self-help, and relationships, but after banging their head against the wall enough times, they just gave up. And now they just try to live with the stuckness somehow.

*Yet what if I told you that healing and issue resolution can be simple,
intuitive, and natural?*

Understanding the Design Principle

God has designed certain principles for how problem solving is to work just as He designed certain principles that allow an airplane to fly.

The key is discovering these principles.

The skills for facing and resolving problems – ideally – were modeled for us in our families of origin.

This was God's design.

Some of you may be protesting, "But I didn't grow up in that type of a family." That's okay. If you can understand the design, you can find a way forward.

In this ebook we will cover:

- God's Original Model of Family - explaining each component as it relates to your growth.
- How you can apply and use this knowledge to help you overcome the challenges in your own life.

How Family the Model Answers All Problems

Family is God's system to bring us to Himself. **All the answers lie there.**

The family experiences you undergo growing up are supposed to teach you God's model for how to live life and have healthy relationships.

Understanding this puts powerful tools into your hands for growth and freedom. It's like God gave us a blueprint of what to build and how to build it, except the "house" we are building is an organic living thing - a family.

Ephesians 3:15 - (Amplified Bible).. the Father from which all fatherhood and family derives its name.

In the Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown commentary on this verse it says: "Father is the great prototype of the paternal relation wherever found."

In other words, family – or the family model – was patterned after God. Why is this important? Because God designed the world to work off of principles.

When man understood the principles of aerodynamics, he could fly. So when you understand God's principles of what makes a family work (and the results of not adhering to those principles) you too will fly!

You will fly right through your problems into growth and freedom! Your starting place is to understand that families operate in a system of interaction.

Understanding Family Systems

Relationship interactions occur in a system. No one lives in a vacuum. The behavior of each person in a family affects the other members for good or for bad.

For example, this is expressed in the old saying, “In an alcoholic family, everyone gets sick.”

Alcoholics invariably cross boundaries. This behavior is either confronted or abuse is permitted to occur. Accordingly, the emotional health and life skills of the family either grow or decline.

This applies to all families, alcoholic or not. Even in the best of families healthy life skills are not always applied.

Let’s consider what these skills are.

STAFF

Understanding the life skills of a healthy family give us a set of metrics to discern where and how breakdown is occurring.

In my [*Shame and Sonship audio series*](#) we use STAFF to explain this.

STAFF is an acronym to quickly remember these metrics:

S = Secure

T = Teachable

A = Accountable

F = Freedom

F = Future

Secure

A healthy family is first of all safe and secure. Judgment isn’t the order of the day. It’s okay for someone to make a mistake or have a problem. The identity of the person is not based in either being right or wrong. Love is unconditional.

Do some of you remember Archie Bunker from the TV series *All in the Family*? He was a conservative reactionary. In his bigotry he had a racial slur for the British, the Germans,

the Irish, the Japanese and so on. He continuously clashed with his liberal son-in-law, Mike.

Archie and Mike clearly had different values. However, the way Archie expressed those values was anything but safe.

He didn't give you a picture of a loving father, mentoring the next generation in good problem-solving skills, emotional connection and pointing them towards their destinies.

If you're too young to remember Archie, check him out on Youtube.

When safety in the family unit is chronically compromised, we develop the classic "survivor" behavior of abuse: don't talk, don't trust and don't feel.

Because talking, trusting and feeling lead to getting hurt through being shamed and rejected.

If you didn't feel safe emotionally and physically in your family growing up, the learning process of life shuts off.

If you didn't feel safe emotionally and physically in your family growing up, it shuts the learning process of life off. When it is not safe to make mistakes (which is always a part of learning something) you fear trying.

Teachable

When people in a family unit feel safe, they don't need secrecy and denial to protect their hearts.

People in these "safe" families share openly about their challenges. There's dialogue (communication), emotional support and physical support.

Loving acceptance in a family system is the foundation for being teachable.

Michael E. Gerber, in his book *The E-Myth*, says the main reason so many small businesses fail is not for lack of knowledge. Knowledge is easy enough to find. But they fail because “they spend their time and energy defending what they think they know.”

In other words, they are not teachable. They become defensive when presented with new ways of doing things.

It is important to not just view this as a character flaw as much as a result of not feeling secure.

When people feel secure enough and can thus hold their hearts open in vulnerability to be teachable, they can live by accountability.

Accountability

If someone is emotionally healthy they have no desire to live by secrets. They don't try to hide their struggles from others nor their level of performance.

Emotionally healthy people feel safe. They have no fear of failure or fear to try. And because of this, they seek out accountability relationships.

Freedom and Future

People that can apply the first 3 skills of being *secure*, *teachable*, and *accountable*, are regularly experiencing growth in their lives.

This growth leads to living in “contributing community.” They are giving back to others out of the deep learning they've experienced in their own lives. The freedom they walk in is used to help others walk towards *their* freedom.

Freedom is found when life's valleys bring life lessons rather than breakdowns. Learning causes growth, and growth brings freedom. And in the process of experiencing these life lessons, core values are developed and instilled deep within their being.

This giving back from our life's learning leads to our Future and its development. We then move into our Destiny.

How You Can Practically Apply the Family Model to Your Challenges and Growth

Step One - define the challenge you are having.

It takes vulnerability, or enough pain, to acknowledge we are having a challenge.

What's your challenge?

- Are you in an argument with your spouse that never resolves?
- Do you find yourself taken advantage of repeatedly on your job?
- Do you give up on every diet and exercise plan you begin?
- Is there some other relationship or personal growth issue?

Step Two - see where the family model applies to your situation. Is there security, dialogue and accountability?

Do you feel powerless or condemned over the challenge you face? This could be a security issue, for example.

We are all facilitating right now some system based on what we learned about relating to life from our families, and by how much we've grown in emotional health. This means either we are able to be vulnerable and have dialogue in accountability relationships, or we find ourselves moving more toward judgements and fight or flight.

All health and all problems have a system foundation supporting them. **Change the system, resolve the problem.**

"The family we grew up in is the first, most powerful, longest lasting, training we get for how to be part of a group and to function within it." - Ronald Richardson

A Picture of the Family Model in Action

Resolving an Emotionally Triggering Event

An Example:

A week ago Jeanine walked over to the break room at her office late one morning. Several coworkers were laughing but abruptly stopped as she walked in.

Jeanine had been hired as a replacement for a beloved secretary that had left due to a heartbreaking illness. The other employees were slow to offer acceptance of Jeanine and allow her to fit in, causing her to battle feelings of rejection and worthlessness.

There are clear ways from the healthy family model for Jeanine to work through the pain of this experience last week.

- She can forgive her coworkers.
- She can affirm her worth as being in Christ and not being in how other people treat her.
- She can seek empathy toward the loss the other employees are feeling and give them some time.

By forgiving others and affirming her identity, Jeanine is dealing with the security component of emotional health.

Sometimes these steps are more involved.

It's possible that Jeanine may have experienced a pattern of these types of rejection events through her life.

If that's the case, she will have to consider past times when similar types of circumstances occurred that were unresolved. That means the times in the past where she did not apply security and teachability.

If Jeanine experienced this office rejection in her 20s and is now in her 50s but never resolved this event, it remains unresolved.

Similar events throughout her life will reactivate this unresolved rejection.

The same is true for Sally, who, at 8-years-old, comes home from school each day in pain from being bullied.

This situation has either been resolved in her heart or it hasn't, whether she is 8 or 80. In a nutshell, this is emotional intelligence lived out.

It is simply making peace with unresolved events.

The Family Model of Prayer Ministry

Family is God's design to teach us about Himself. When the family functions as God intended, it expresses love and understanding.

So if Sally comes home in pain from being bullied and if her dad is emotionally safe, available and loving, even though she's hurting, she trusts her dad's love enough to share the pain with him.

Her dad then comforts her and lets her know she is loved regardless of the treatment from the girls at school. And not only does dad love, but he also supports her in finding a solution to the bullying.

If Sally's family truly walked in love, understanding and dialogue, she will not go forward in life with an unresolved event. She will live freer to grow into her destiny and not have baggage from previous life events.

A Do-Over

[Emotional Intelligence Coaching](#) is simply a do-over from what should have happened in the original event.

When your dad was not like Sally's, you do not get a free pass from the painful event.

You still have to work out these unresolved areas of pain, otherwise, it will follow you the rest of your lives.

That means you will now have to find security in God's love and healthy people you can trust. Then you will have to dialogue the problem and take any necessary steps for healing. Then you can move into accountability relationships, freedom and your future.

Conclusion

The family model gives you God's design for emotional health and issue resolution. This understanding puts a wonderful tool in your hands.

Tools

We have numerous tools to help you with these steps.

- The [Narrative Ebooks in our Members section](#) of our website will help you heal your family model.
- Our [Discover Prayer Ministry audio series](#) gives the specific steps to work out past unresolved events.
- Our book [The Sonship Empowered Life](#). Covers the STAFF in much more depth than in this Ebook.
- Finally, we offer [coaching](#) to help you directly work through your stuck places.

Please [contact us](#) with any question or comments you may have. Email support is free to all members.