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The conflict of Erikson’s first stage is Trust vs. Mistrust. During my first year of life, my mother told me that I was very clingy and dependent upon her. I was the youngest of two children, so she had the chance to redeem herself of the mistakes she made with her first child. My mother was at my side every second of the day; there wasn’t a moment when my needs weren’t met instantly upon request. My mother and father both put emphasis on the fact that I was very spoiled as a baby. My requests carried out by cries and outbursts were always fulfilled without hesitation. Developing trust was not a problem for me. My parents were never inconsistent nor emotionally unavailable. According to them, I would only trust you if I received what I wanted in return. If I cried for toys or attention and I didn’t receive it, then my cries would not stop until demands were met. If I was dropped off to the nanny and she didn’t spoil me, then I would cry until my mother came to pick me up. Sad, but true. They told me they regretted allowing me to become so spoiled at that age. Currently, I see how I have still applied this principle in certain ways. All my life I have been spoiled, whether it be from my parents or romantic partners. Whenever I was upset after things wouldn’t go as planned, I would always receive some sort of gift to uplift my spirits. I’ve trained myself to look at people and tell myself “If you can’t do anything for me then I can’t trust you nor deal with you.” Why would I waste my time being around you if you can’t do anything for me whenever I may be in need? I see that my ways of being spoiled hasn’t gone away, it may never will.

The second conflict stage is Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt. This is the stage where children figure out if they can do things themselves or if they are reliant upon the help of others. They are trying to gain more independence and control over the world around them. From what I recall, my father told me that I was very stubborn. I always wanted to master tasks quickly and on my own. Potty training and dressing myself was no exception. They told me that once I started to realize that a clean pull-up was far less irritating than a soiled was when I became eager to potty train. The feeling of self-control is a big part of my life today; however, I’m not quite sure if that is positive or negative. I often tend to not ask for any help and get frustrated when people step in to assist me. It’s not that I hate when help is offered, I just know that I like things done a certain way. There is a saying that goes “If you want something done right, do it yourself.” I hate having to be reliant upon others, especially when I know they aren’t going to help me get the results I need if I just go ahead and do it myself.

The third stage of conflict is Initiative vs. Guilt. At this point, children are encouraged to explore and to help them make appropriate choices. Play time is important at this stage, for it helps children begin to plan activities, make up their own games, and initiate activities with others. If this is properly achieved, they will develop a sense of initiative and feel secure enough to lead others. On the contrary, if initiative isn’t achieved, whether due to criticism or control, they will feel like a nuisance to other people and most often remain a follower. My mother always encouraged me to make new friends and to play with other children. I remember one day at the park she saw children playing and kept pushing me to initiate a conversation with them. I wasn’t fortunate enough to conquer the conflict of initiative. This was in no part due to my mother, but rather the other children and students who never took a liking to me. They always made me feel I was a nuisance and shouldn’t be around. The consequences of this still show today. I’m twenty-nine years old and people still make me feel that I am a burden to them. The guilt from this stage that has accumulated over the years makes me slow to interact with others to this day.

The fourth stage of conflict is Industry vs. Inferiority. This stage allows a child’s peers to have some significant influence on their self-esteem by feeling the need to win approval by excelling at different skills. Skills that society deem important won’t be developed if the caregiver or teacher makes them feel inferior from lack of encouragement. This causes doubt and hinders them to reach their full potential. During my interview with my parents, they told me my skills were highly prized. I was an excellent runner, excelled in sports, and I was extremely artistic. They were witnesses on my failure of the previous stage conflict of initiative and they saw how it affected me. My mother said she remembered the days where I would go straight to my room and cry for hours from hearing children tell me I was annoying whenever I tried to make friends. She told me that was part of the reason why she pushed me to manifest my hidden skills to the world. She saw the potential in me that I didn’t even know I had. Slowly, I started feeling competent and was accepted by my peers. As an adult, I feel that this conflict can be fifty-fifty. I have my moments where I feel competent and confident to lead. Other days I find me questioning myself and feel inadequate for not being able to do things that my sisters or other people can do.

The fifth stage of conflict is Identity vs. Role Confusion. This is the stage where one searches for self and personal identity. At this point we are trying to figure out exactly who we are. I couldn’t properly tackle this conflict. Deep down, I was always concerned with how others viewed me and wasn’t mentally strong enough to create my own identity not based off the approval of others. I was always unsure about myself during this stage. An example of this was that I had difficulty forming and maintaining relationships. My mother recalled how she realized I was always hanging with a new crowd of people, crowds that she knew I had no business being around. She realized I was very impulsive and unpredictable, all signs that I was struggling with identity. My mother wanted to control me during this stage, but she figured it was best to let me find my own way. She feared that it would cause rebellion and I would just go further astray. It wasn’t until my junior year of high school that I learned to accept myself and develop a sense of individuality. I had gotten into a fight defending a group of people I wanted to fit in with. I found myself sticking up for one of the girls in the group. I ended up getting attacked and this same individual did nothing to help me. At that point, I saw how important it was to not worry about other people and to develop your own identity. That day I learned the importance of having self-worth. I still apply this thought process. Whenever I am becoming acquainted with new people I always remind myself to never lose my own personality and to always remain self- confident. I’m human, naturally I have my moments of doubt. But I no longer let it consume me or throw me off track the way it used to when I first encountered this conflict.

The sixth and current stage for me is Intimacy vs. Isolation. This stage focuses on forming intimate and long-lasting relationships. Successfully, results will produce long, happy relationships with a sense of commitment and care. Unsuccessfully, results will produce isolation and loneliness. Considering that I have been in the same romantic relationship my partner for twelve years, I can attest that I have conquered this conflict with success. My partner and I started courting each other two days before I turned seventeen. This relationship has also encouraged me to maintain deep, healthy relationships with my family as well.

Looking back on my journey and hearing my parent’s testimonies of my development and growth, my behaviors go hand in hand with Erikson’s theories. After taking this class, I’m now able to see why my current actions and behaviors correlate with how I developed as a child. His theory is helpful to developmental psychology because it can be used as a foundation for society to better teach and guide the generations behind us on what to prepare for. It can help parents raise their infants, toddlers and young adolescents better if we knew what they needed psychologically to flourish. It’s also helpful for teachers because they are considered our parents away from home. How they interact with their students by either providing or depriving encouragement can change the course of how we develop and handle life’s obstacles.

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During my first year of life, I was very dependent and clingy, according to my mother. As the youngest of two children, my mother had the chance to redeem herself from the mistakes she made with her first child. My mother and father always ensured my needs were met instantly upon request. Though this made me feel secure and develop trust easily, they regretted allowing me to become so spoiled at that age.

As I grew older, I entered Erikson’s second conflict stage, Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt. My father described me as very stubborn, always eager to master tasks quickly and on my own. While this sense of self-control has played a big part in my life, I often find myself hesitant to ask for help and frustrated when others step in to assist me. I like things done a certain way, and the saying “If you want something done right, do it yourself” resonates with me.

In Erikson’s third stage of conflict, Initiative vs. Guilt, I struggled to initiate activities with others. My mother encouraged me to make new friends and play with other children, but I felt like a nuisance to them. The guilt from this stage still lingers today, making me slow to interact with others.

The fourth stage of conflict, Industry vs. Inferiority, allowed my peers to significantly influence my self-esteem. While I excelled in sports and art, I struggled with feeling inferior due to lack of encouragement from caregivers and teachers. My mother saw my potential and pushed me to manifest my hidden skills, which helped me feel competent and accepted by my peers.

Finally, in the fifth stage of conflict, Identity vs. Role Confusion, I began searching for my personal identity. It has been a journey of self-discovery and growth, with moments of feeling confident and competent as well as questioning myself and feeling inadequate.

Looking back at these stages of my life, I realize how they have shaped me as a person. While some of my traits and tendencies were formed during childhood, I have also had the power to reflect on and change them. I am grateful for the opportunities to learn and grow, and I strive to continue developing my sense of self and finding my place in the world.