12 Steps to Letting Everybody Around You Grow Up

Allowing other people around to grow up is the best gift that you can give yourself and others. Part of the work of self-differentiation is growing up while you let others grow up.
Most people will respond to you growing up.

1. Stay connected to others but do not do more than your part. This means knowing where you end and others begin. Our family of origin should have taught us this. If not, we can learn it now!
    a. Saying no while staying connected/setting boundaries while staying connected is not easy for those of us with an undeveloped self/those in recovery.
    b. The message is, I care about you. And no, I can not do that. Which is not doing more than I choose or want/can do.

2. Stop overfunctioning. Overfunctioners leave the underfunction-er with a buffer to life's realities/healthy functioning in relationships.
- If we attract underfunction-ers (narcissists, alcoholics, takers, dependents, the immature, the needy, the demanding, etc) then we will be in a relationship system that will push us to overfunction.
- We find ourselves doing 150 to 190% of the relationship or more!
- We give more than what we want/need to give.
- Carl Whitiker once said, "I only feed others not when they are crying that he or she is hungry, but only when I feel the milk overflowing from my own nipples." Thus, only give that in which you have to give!
- Overperforming/perfectionism is also a form of overfunctioning.

3. Stop figuring people out. We should not do this in our relationships. We try to figure people out because they do not want to do that work. And we try to figure them out to do that work. Most of the time, we do this to further the overfunctioning.
- Figuring people out is a form of enmeshment.

4. Stop over sympathizing/empathizing. Having or practicing too much empathy is not good for those that are not well defined.
- According to Edmond Freedmond, It is more important to be well defined before we practice a lot of empathy.
- Most people practice a lot of empathy before they are well defined. Thus, overfunction, codependency, and enabling.
- Most people from dysfunctional past lose their own boundaries and defeat self-regulation and self-differentiation.
- If you over sympathize, begin to practice feeling blocking. Meaning empathizes with the thinking process when relating to others. This keeps us from enmeshing and choosing

relationships that are similar in values to ours rather than similar to our family system's. Over sympathizing can essentially perpetuate your toxic role in family systems.
- This does not mean never feel your feelings. Of course not. Feel your feelings at an appropriate time. But not over feel when it is in the service of overfunctioning, enmeshing, enabling, etc. For instance, co-dependent people need to reel in their knee-jerk feelings system/anxiety and get into their prefrontal cortex. Folks don't know that it is okay to block your feelings.

5. Stop enabling. Doing for others what they can do themselves. Taking the consequences or life lessons for others when they should be experiencing them themselves.
- We often do this and it infantilizes the other.
- Don't buy into learned helplessness. It seems like we are initially helping the other. Albeit, we actually hurt them in the long run from growing up.

6. Focus on my own self-maturation/self-differentiation process.
- Look away from others and focus on yourself. Not in a selfish way, but maturely. Knowing thyself. Being aware of yourself.
- Don't be an expert on others. Be an expert on yourself!

7. Stop one-sided relationships.
- Not a taker and a giver. Mutuality.
- We tend to look for love and acceptance from others no matter what the cost to us.
- We chose relationships that fit our level of self-differentiation. Or low-self esteem. Or fear of abandonment.
- We want to get out of our family of origin role and into our authentic self.

8. Stop our illusions, naivety, and fantasy thinking and feeling.
- We believe we can change others (fantasy and naivety).
- We believe we can finally change our parents into who we want/need them to be. Or we will fantasize about it. Oh if only they will _____, then I'll be happy and complete. That is illusory/naivety.
- If I only work harder than good will come of that.
- If I only do better. If I only love more. If I become more perfect. If I become more Christian. Then I will inspire change in my friends, family, and others. No.
- Find out your illusion, naivety, and fantasies. This is a good way to begin to grow up.
- I continue to believe that I have self-worth when everything points out that I don't have self-worth, and then I refuse to work on it. *Illusion! distorted thought! Denial!*
- Our family origin issues make us naive and immature because that is the system that we grew up in and it remains inside of us. We need to do the work to get our system out of us so we can become our authentic self. Otherwise I am stuck with me and my family of origin acting itself out in an unconscious way.

9. Step down so that they can step up.
    - Use the underfunctioning lever so that they can step up. Intentionally become helpless and underfunctioning.
    - BE MEDIOCRE
    - This puts pressure and systems anxiety on the other to step up. Or not :-)
    - They may not. But at least the pressure is on them to grow up.
    - If they do not choose to, then you need to deal with your illusions about the other. They can change? Well, if they do not step up when you step down, that tells you something… And you may not want to know or hear that. *Fantasies*.

10. Get out of others' way.
    - If you are a fixer, overfunctioner, rescuer, caretaker then you are getting in the way of others' lives
    - The universe, God, or whatever is trying to speak to them to grow up and be more mature and stop underfunctioning. But we get in the way by stepping up too much.
    - Being nice can do a lot of damage to a lot of people. If I am being nice because I feel compelled to be nice, that is different than being nice by choice. Be nice as a choice, not as a compulsion.
    - Stop calling nice and over functioning love. It is not LOVE. It is a dysfunctional pattern learned growing up that we have not healed or resolved.
    - Letting someone grow up is the best loving gift you can give someone. Stop being God's voice to others. Be your voice to others. And let God speak to them how he wants to or needs to.
    - Stop saving others. Get off the cross, we need the wood.
    - The more we learn and heal ourselves, the more loving, caring, and connected we will be.

11. Stop defending yourself with others.
    - Defending yourself so others do not have to look at themselves is a big problem.
    - Whenever you defend, others do not have to look at themselves because you are filling up all the noise/relationship space with your defensiveness.
    - Your defensiveness only furthers their denial and keeps the focus on you not on them.
    - Self-defense will not bring about change in others. It only reinforces your low self-image and low self-esteem.
    - Defending yourself equals enmeshment. Work on that.
    - Do anything but defend yourself with those that do not want to grow up. Behave with boundaries maturely, say nothing that indicates self-doubt, don't over explain.
    - You may feel doubt and anxiety. But that does not mean you have to say anything to indicate that! Because more talking, more defensiveness, more explaining, more trying to make them understand will only stress you out more. And not accomplish your goal with the immature around you that do not want to grow up.
    - If you stop defending they have to stop defending they have to deal with you and their situation more.

12. Exit triangles.
    - Formed to keep the immature around us from growing up.
    - If you tell the other, time and time again something that you want them to know or understand and then you go to a third party to have them go and communicate these things to your other THEN we have a triangle. YEAH!
    - Classic triangle: Wife calls in for the alcoholic husband who does not want to go to work because he drank too much last night - that he is sick and won't be in for work. Wife-Boss-Alcoholic. Alcoholic does not have to feel the discomfort of lying to his boss.
    - Triangles are a function of de-selfing and overfunctioning.