Success depends upon maturity!

*by*STEPHEN*on MAY 17, 2012 ·*[33 COMMENTS](http://academictips.org/blogs/success-depends-upon-maturity/#comments)

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Maturity is many things. It is the ability to base a judgment on the big picture, the long haul.

It means being able to resist the urge for immediate gratification and opt for the course of action that will pay off later.

One of the characteristics of the young is “I want it now.”

Grown-up people can wait.

Maturity is perseverance–the ability to sweat out a project or a situation, in spite of heavy opposition and discouraging setbacks, and stick with it until it is finished.

The adult who is constantly changing friends and changing mates is immature. He/she cannot stick it out because he/she has not grown up.

Maturity is the ability to control anger and settle differences without violence or destruction. The mature person can face unpleasantness, frustration, discomfort and defeat without collapsing or complaining. He/she knows he cannot have everything his/her own way every time. He/she is able to defer to circumstances, to other people-and to time. He/she knows when to compromise and is not too proud to do so.

Maturity is humility. It is being big enough to say, “I was wrong.” And, when he/she is right, the mature person need not experience the satisfaction of saying, “I told you so.”

Maturity is the ability to live up to your responsibilities, and this means being dependable. It means keeping your word. Dependability is the hallmark of integrity. Do you mean what you say-and do you say what you mean? Unfortunately, the world is filled with people who cannot be counted on. When you need them most, they are among the missing. They never seem to come through in the clutches. They break promises and substitute alibis for performance. They show up late or not at all. They are confused and disorganized. Their lives are a chaotic maze of broken promises, former friends, unfinished business and good intentions that somehow never materialize. They are always a day late and a dollar short.

Maturity is the ability to make a decision and stand by it. Immature people spend their lives exploring endless possibilities and then doing nothing. Action requires courage. Without courage, little is accomplished.

Maturity is the ability to harness your abilities and your energies and do more than is expected. The mature person refuses to settle for mediocrity. He/she would rather aim high and miss the mark than low-and make it.

Maturity is the art of living in peace with that which cannot be changed, the courage to change that which should be changed, no matter what it takes, and the wisdom to know the difference.

**Attention Must Be Paid!**

There is no doubt that “diminished attention” is a correct diagnosis of the intellectual temperament of our age. I see it to a greater degree each year even in the students I teach, who are among the very best that our high schools have to offer.

Yes, there is no point in publishing a long article if no one will read it to the end. The question is, what does it take to get people to read things to the end?

If we cater to short attention spans by offering materials that can be managed with short attention spans, the skill will not develop. The “attention muscle” will not be exercised and strengthened. It is as if you complain to a personal trainer about your weak biceps and the trainer tells you not to lift heavy things. Just as we don’t expect people to develop their biceps by lifting two-pound weights, we can’t expect them to develop their attention by reading 140-character tweets, 200-word blog posts, or 300-word newspaper articles.

In other words, the “short-attention” phenomenon is something of a self-fulfilling prophecy. First, we tell ourselves that people can’t maintain attention. Second, we do nothing to nurture their ability to maintain attention. And sure enough, we “discover” that people can’t maintain attention.

Must we accept the short attention span generation as a fait accompli and cater to it, or can we reverse a powerful and I think destructive trend?

There is also evidence, some of it collected by Duckworth and colleagues, that giving kids not only task goals, but detailed plans for achieving those goals improves sustained attention.

Research on training attention may one day produce a magic bullet. For now, I’d be satisfied if we nurtured sustained attention in the same way your personal trainer builds up your biceps—by gradually demanding more and more of students’ attention muscles in the classroom.

The world is complex, and it isn’t going to get any simpler. Unless we can create a population that is capable of thinking about complexity in complex ways, it is highly unlikely that the problems of global warming; economic inequality; access to affordable, high-quality health care; or any of the other challenges the U.S. and the rest of the world face will get adequate solutions. Good solutions to any of these problems will be complex, and they will not win support from a population that demands simplicity. Teachers have a responsibility to train complex minds that are suited to a complex world. This is at least as important as teaching young people mathematics, biology, or literature. For teachers, at all levels, attention must be paid to teaching that attention must be paid.

There was once an elephant who wanted to be a photographer. How his friends would laugh when they heard him talk about it!

- "How silly," said some, "there aren't any cameras for elephants!"  
- "What a waste of time," others would say,**"there's nothing to photograph here anyway**..."

But the elephant kept following his dream, and, piece by piece,**he managed to cobble together some old bits of junk and some spare parts**, and ended up with a camera of sorts. With this camera, the elephant had to design practically everything himself, from a button he pressed with the end of his trunk,**to a lens made to fit an elephant's eye**, to a load of wrought iron used to make a frame so the elephant could attach the camera to his head.

When it was all finished, he could finally get to taking his first photos. However, the elephant camera was so enormous and strange-**looking that it seemed like some huge ridiculous mask**. So many people laughed as he went by that the elephant began to think of abandoning his dream... Even worse,**it was beginning to look like those who had said there was nothing to photograph there had been right**...

**But things worked out differently. The sight of the elephant walking about with the camera on his head was so funny that no one could help but laugh when they saw him. And, using a great deal of good humour, the elephant managed to take some really amusing, incredible pictures of all the animals. In his photos they always looked joyful; even the moody rhino! So the elephant managed to become the official savannah photographer, and animals would come from every direction to have some nice photos taken for their passport to the zoo.**