



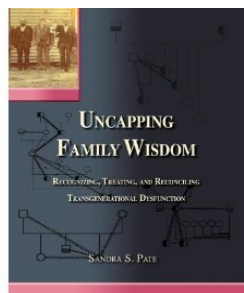
North American Association of Christians in Social Work
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PO Box 121
Botsford, CT 06404
www.nacsw.org
888.426.4712

**UNCAPPING FAMILY WISDOM III: LINGUISTIC LEGACIES AND
THEIR EFFECT ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

By: Sandra S. Pate

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*Uncapping Family Wisdom III:
Linguistic Legacies and Their Effect on Human Development*

Sandra S. Pate, PhD, LCSW, ACSW

Presented at the NACSW Convention

October 25, 2012

Uncapping Family Wisdom III: Linguistic Legacies and Their Effect on Human Development

A Program for Treating Transgenerational Dysfunction

Transgenerational dysfunction refers to configurations of dysfunction which limit the potential for human development and are passed down through verbal and non-verbal linguistic patterns. Transgenerational dysfunction is a growing phenomenon found in virtually every social strata in varying degrees, but is especially perceptible in alternative school settings, court-ordered counseling situations, substance abuse and mental health treatment centers, homeless shelters, and prisons. Most experienced mental health professionals can readily identify severe transgenerational dysfunction.

To understand what you will find in this book and how you will be equipped, let's get an understanding of the meanings behind certain terms found in the title, *Uncapping Family Wisdom: A Program for Recognizing, Treating, and Reconciling Transgenerational Dysfunction*. The program has a positive premise that latent wisdom resides in the family system. Three steps are necessary to uncapping the latent family wisdom:

1. **Recognizing transgenerational dysfunction:** A self-evaluation tool allows the parents to reveal the developmental level of their children and then the level of their own development. Another self-evaluative exercise focuses on the specific general semantics of conflict found in their family.
2. **Treating transgenerational dysfunction:** Conceptual information is transferred incrementally to family units in a community setting by the use of interactive educational presentations to the community, family self-assessments which assess and instruct, structured exercises which allow the family to apply what they learn immediately, and specific techniques for bypassing shame. As the family acquires information, they determine the desired change. The family learns in a safe community environment with healthy norms maintained by the therapist.
3. **Reconciling transgenerational dysfunction:** Filling in gaps in conceptual information occurs by providing educational steps in life skills in the structured exercises. In the midst of a protective nurturing community, the family members practice the educational steps and learn how the family fits into a community.

The simply-structured program is easy to follow. The difficult work of cross-disciplinary integration has been done for you and is now built into the program, simplifying the facilitation. Exposure to new information is a very important part of the program. The families use the assessments to better understand their strengths and define exactly where interventions need to occur. Then, through the carefully structured exercises, the families proceed in the integration of each concept and fill in gaps in their information base. Participation is self-rewarding due to the growing freedom from disquiet in thoughts and feelings as the family members receive important developmental permissions.

The information presented here is the part of the *Uncapping Family Wisdom Workbook*. This section is called *Communication Barriers*. By having families evaluate their speaking patterns, they can understand the reasons for conflict in their families, connect them later with developmental arrest, and use affirmations to heal the damage done by faulty family communication.

Historical Ideas on Language

Augustine

Augustine was a fourth-century scholar, a church official, and a prolific writer. He discussed the Hebrew language, which was the language of Abraham, the historical father of the Jewish people, and attempted to trace a history of the language that Abraham passed on to his descendants.

Ancient stories, including an ancient story in the Hebrew writings, spoke of the confusion of languages that, according to Jewish tradition, began at a place called Babel. In *The City of God* (1950, pp. 534-537), Augustine wrote that Hebrew was the “pure” language that existed before the confusion of the languages at Babel and that afterwards Hebrew was the only language not mingled with confusion. In his writing in the fourth century, Augustine believed that this language was passed down the ancestral line to the tribe of Heber, the grandson of Noah, from whom the language derived its name. Later, Abraham was born into the Hebrew language that preserved the ancient writings of the Old Testament.

Fabre d’Olivet

Writing during the time of the French Revolution (around 1789), Fabre d’Olivet (2002) was a linguistic historian who had an interesting idea. He introduced the concept of *La Langue*, as the common, unified, and creative core of purity found in all languages. He thought that all languages (langues) still had at their center a true, unadulterated, universal pure language. He thought a universal language had existed but was now scattered through all languages, affecting the purity of the universal language.

Albert Korzybski

Albert Korzybski’s wrote from the perspective of fluency in eight different languages. He looked at the peculiarities of the English language and pointed out some identifiable patterns of speaking which did not reflect true reality. These identifiable speech patterns served to accelerate the emotional level in conversations, which caused conflict in interaction with others. He pointed out that if a person were born into an English-speaking society, he or she might be exposed to seven different problem areas that, in turn, might lead to difficulty in communication.

Seven Recognized Semantic Barriers Built into Family System Speaking Patterns in the English Language

Polarization — A kind of communication that causes conflict because the communication implies that only two choices are available to the speakers.

“Intensional” Orientation — The coined word “intensional” refers to words that point inward toward the speaker’s views rather than outward toward the reality being discussed. The words — Inferences, opinions, and judgments, are types of communication which need tend to be statements of judgment rather than statements of fact.

Fact-Inference Confusion — Inferences, opinions, and judgments, are types of communication which need to be used responsibly.

Allness — This communication is simplistic and absolute. “Allness” communication comes from the perspective of a person who does not see the world as very complex. The person speaking in allness terms uses absolute statements, which are often not accurate and are spoken only from a personal point of view.

Static Evaluation — In the English language, a reference to time is included in almost all sentences. Many sentences contain some reference to past, present, or future, making circumstances appear static over time. As a person learns the process of time-binding, the ability allows him or her to have a separate past, present, or future and to focus, at will, on each of these segmented times, allowing dynamic evaluations. Time-binding is not possible in all languages and causes much difficulty in reality-testing in the English language. Static Evaluation is found in the language of those who often suffer from mental illness.

Indiscrimination —The English language contains common nouns such as teacher, student, and politician, focusing on similarity. Only looking at the similarity causes a prejudging or a prejudice toward classes or individual people. Using language in this way leads to stereotyping, which is a fixed mental picture of some group applied to each individual of the group without regard to his or her unique qualities.

Dead-Level Reckoning — A communication tendency that recycles to the same conclusion in response to all reasoning. In dead-level reckoning, there is an inability or an unwillingness to consider other information which might solve the problem. Flexibility in accessing different abstraction levels is needed to correctly reflect reality.

Missing Affirmations in the Language of Family Speaking Patterns

There are also noticeably missing semantic affirmative elements in some family speaking patterns. Clarke and Dawson (1998, p. 290) discuss developmental affirmations. They state, “When we offer developmental affirmations to children, we offer powerful support that strengthens their ability to accomplish their developmental tasks successfully.” Clarke and Dawson discovered unfinished business from any prior developmental period would demand to be addressed again until the child resolved the issue satisfactorily. The unfinished business would be resolved by receiving verbal or non-verbal permissions, making developmental

progress possible for each individual. Clarke and Dawson offered specific affirmations for developmental stage progression and suggested that affirmations from preceding stages be offered in family linguistics, along with currently-needed, age-appropriate affirmations. They suggested a comprehensive model of linguistic intervention for parents who realize they were raised in dysfunctional homes and realized they lack the necessary skills for parenting their own children. In this manner, they are helped to avoid the mistakes of their own parents. Clarke and Dawson believed that as adults, we were continually recycling previous developmental stage permissions from day to day, so all the suggested affirmations were appropriate for adults. The authors emphasized the importance of reading the affirmations, saying the affirmations, and listening to the affirmations in order for the parents to have the affirmations, as well as the children.

The following pages are copyrighted material from the *Uncapping Family Wisdom Workbook* and are used with permission for the workshop entitled *Uncapping Family Wisdom III: Linguistic Legacies and Their Effect on Human Development* presented at the NACSW Convention on October 25, 2012. . The affirmations that are needed for development gains are included by permission from J. Clarke and C. Dawson for educational purposes from their book, *Growing Up Again*.

Use Exercise 7-A to find linguistic legacies that can be found in the family system. Combine the legacies found in Exercise 8-B

Exercise 7-A

1. Polarization (Bumper Sticker Language): "You are either for me or against me."

Polarization – A kind of communication that causes conflict because the communication implies that only two choices are available to the speakers. Most bumper stickers are designed to get a rise of emotion out of people. We usually agree with what we read, or we don't. Bumper sticker language — Polarization — suggests that the statement is the only option available.

Exercise:

1. Do you have this speech pattern? _____

2. Can you give some examples of this speech pattern?

3. How could you change these statements to be more accurate?

2. "Intensional" Orientation: "Truman cannot be trusted!"

The coined word "intensional" refers to words that point inward toward the speaker's views rather than outward toward the reality being discussed. They tend to be statements of judgment rather than statements of fact. The use of "to be" verbs — is, was, are — signal a judgment statement. Judgments and beliefs are better received when used with responsible accompanying statements such as "It seems to me," "I think," and "I feel."

Exercise:

1. Do you have this speech pattern? _____

2. Can you give some examples of this speech pattern?

3. How could you change these statements to be more accurate?

3. Fact-Inference Confusion

Fact: "I have two children. The person I married made excellent grades in school.

Even though I did not work up to my potential in school, I still made good grades."

Inference: "Therefore, if my children work up to their potential, they will make excellent grades in school."

Opinion: "We all need to work to see that these children reach their full potential so they will make excellent grades in school."

Judgment: "After all, grades are a measure of intelligence. Grades separate winners from losers."

Inferences, opinions, and judgments are types of communication which need to be used responsibly. Common habits in communication that cause conflict are:

- stating a fact and moving to a opinion statement, or
- stating a fact and moving to a judgment statement.

In the conversation above, another person who is engaged in the conversation may want to restate the fact as the other person perceived the situation and add their inference, opinion, and judgment, saying "Since you married a person who made excellent grades in school and you made good grades, even though you did not work up to your potential, you believe that . . . I feel that . . ."

Fact: "I desire to be a good parent and do many nice things for my children. I spend much time and thought on how to do this. I think that I have very well-behaved children."

Inference: "Therefore, my children will notice what I do for them and want to help me around the house. They will naturally just assume some of the household responsibilities without even being told."

Opinion: "My children should want to help me."

Judgment: "It is not nice to skip household chores!"

In the examples above, we can see how two or more facts were taken (the first set of statements) and then an inference was made. The inference is a premise of logic, or a beginning

way of thinking, that may or may not turn out to be accurate. Information continues to become less factual when a person gives an opinion. Opinions are how individuals personally *feel* things should be. Judgments have to do with personal moral imperatives, the way individuals believe things must be. Opinions and judgments are sometimes stated as facts, which they may not be to the listeners. Speech becomes more responsible when we add expressions such as "It seems to me," or "I feel," to nonfactual statements (inferences, opinions, and judgments).

Remember, an inference means that we make evaluations on the basis of what we observe plus our own conclusions. This is not wrong in itself. Inferential statements, opinions, and judgments are helpful if we talk about what is meaningful to us. These statements are not helpful if we state our own inference, opinion, or judgment as absolute reality to those around us.

Exercise:

1. Do you have this speech pattern? _____

2. Can you give some examples of this speech pattern?

3. How could you change these statements to be more accurate?

4. Allness: "I've seen the textbook; the course is going to be really dull."

The above statement is an example of "allness." It does not take into consideration that the instructor may not be planning to teach directly from the text, or that the instructor may use creative teaching methods. The story of the six blind men and the elephant is an excellent example of allness orientation and its problems. The first blind man touched the elephant's side and concluded that the elephant was like a wall. The second felt the tusks and said the elephant must be like a spear, etc. Allness happens when we jump to conclusions that are based on an inadequate review of all the facts concerning a situation.

The world is very complex, and because of this, we can never say *all* about anything. We may think we know all there is to know about individuals or about why they behave as they do, yet clearly we cannot know all.

Exercise:

1. Do you have this speech pattern? _____
2. Can you give some examples of this speech pattern?

3. How could you change the statement to be more accurate?

5. Static Evaluation

“I knew Bob when he was in high school. He was always in trouble. Let's not consider his application.”

This statement does not take into consideration that Bob may have changed considerably since high school and may now be a responsible citizen. In the English language, a reference to time is included in almost all sentences. Many sentences contain some reference to past, present, or future. This is not true in all languages and our English language causes much difficulty in reality testing. When we form a word picture about a person or thing, that word picture has a tendency to remain unchanged, when in fact the object or person may have changed considerably.

Exercise:

- 1. Do you have this speech pattern? _____
- 2. Can you give some examples of this speech pattern?

- 3. How could you change the statement to be more accurate?

6. Indiscrimination: "Teachers are smart. They don't like people like me."

Our language has categories or labels like teacher, student, politician, which lead us to focus on similarity. Sometimes these categories or labels cause individuals to think that all people affected by these labels are very similar. This type of thinking, in turn, causes a prejudging or prejudice toward classes or individual people. And this, in turn, causes stereotyping, which is a fixed mental picture of some group that is applied to each individual of the group without regard to his or her unique qualities.

We need to put people in categories to classify them to order our thinking. Problems arise, not from using classification alone, but rather by applying evaluation to a classification label. Using an evaluation label as a definition for everyone in a particular group is not accurate.

1. Do you have this speech pattern? _____

2. Can you give some examples of this speech pattern?

3. How could you change the statement to be more accurate?

7. Dead-level Reckoning: "Because I said so. Because I said so. Because I said so."
--

In dead-level reckoning, a communication recycles to the same conclusion in response to all reasoning, and there is an inability or an unwillingness to see a different conclusion.

Flexibility in accessing different abstraction levels is needed to correctly reflect reality. A person can get stuck in his or her thinking and speaking, staying at the same level. In the example above, the person speaking on the judgment level cannot sense the value and relationship that could be possible with others.

Exercise:

1. Do you have this speech pattern? _____
2. Can you give some examples of this speech pattern?

3. How could you change the statement to be more accurate?

Chapter 7 – Summary Chart for determining Linguistic Legacy in family system

Instructions: Fill in the name and the date. The linguistic legacies are listed below in the shaded area. Delete all those legacies that do not pertain to the family system being evaluated.

Name _____

Date _____

Analysis of Linguistic Legacy on Human Development							
Stages of Development	* Period of Treatment						
	Beginning			End			
	Years	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Months						
Semantic Interventions	Polarization “Intensional” Orientation Fact-Inference Confusion Allness Static Evaluation Indiscrimination Dead-Level Reckoning						

Bridges to Communication

Exercise 7-B

“I Messages”

We have taken a careful look at the barriers to communication. Now, let's talk about how we can build bridges to communication. John Stewart in his book, *Bridges, Not Walls* (1973), states that the quality of each person's life is directly linked to the quality of the communication he or she experiences with others. Here are some simple ways that communication can be improved in your family.

“I Messages” - One of the important things that children need to learn is how their behavior affects other people. They do this by hearing parents and other adults take responsibility for their feelings while advising others how their behavior is impacting these feelings. When a person is constructing an "I message," he or she needs a feeling vocabulary. Dinkmeyer and McKay in *Parenting Teenagers* (1990) list words which can be used to build an "I message":

Words for *Unpleasant Feelings*

Afraid
 Angry
 Annoyed
 Bad
 Bored
 Confused
 Defeated
 Disappointed
 Discouraged
 Disgusted
 Embarrassed
 Frustrated
 Guilty
 Hurt
 Indifferent
 Insignificant
 Irritated
 Put Down
 Rejected
 Sad
 Shocked
 Uncertain
 Uncomfortable
 Unfairly Treated
 Unloved
 Used

Words for *Pleasant Feelings*

Accepted
 Appreciated
 Brave
 Capable
 Comfortable
 Compassionate
 Determined
 Encouraged
 Excited
 Glad
 Good
 Grateful
 Important
 Interested
 Loved
 Pleased
 Proud
 Relaxed
 Relieved
 Respected
 Satisfied
 Sure of Yourself
 Surprised
 Sympathetic
 Trusted
 Wonderful

There are two parts to "I messages." The first is naming the behavior. This means that one person draws attention to a particular behavior that another is doing, both nonverbal and verbal. Comment on the non-verbal gestures of an oppositional child, rather than waiting for the behavior to accelerate and become verbal. Remember, much is said without speaking a word in terms of eye rolling, shoulder shrugs, hand gestures, and so forth.

Below is an example of how to build an "I message" for non-verbal behavior.

***Example:* "When you do not stay to listen, I feel discouraged."**

Below is an example that can be used when addressing verbal behavior:

***Example:* "When you talk to me in that tone of voice, I feel put down."**

You can use "I messages" to address other types of irresponsibly. For instance,

***Example:* "When I have to pick up your socks from the floor, I feel used."**

"I messages" can also be used to express positive experiences. For instance,

***Example:* "When you came out to greet me, I felt important."**

***Example:* "When you believe me, I feel trusted."**

*Exercise 7-C***Reflective Listening**

Sometimes parents wonder what to do when children will not talk to them. One way to get a conversation started is by using a listening technique called “reflective listening.” The way to listen reflectively is to take the last portion of the sentence that you just heard and repeat the portion back to the person who is talking.

Example :

"The teacher didn't ask about my homework."

"She didn't ask about your homework?"

"No, I had it ready for the first time in a week, and she didn't even ask."

"And she didn't even ask?"

"No, she didn't even ask. I might as well not have done it."

"How did that make you feel?"

"I just felt irritated that she didn't even ask."

"I'm sorry your teacher didn't ask for your homework. I know you worked hard."

The listener used this conversation as an opportunity to provide encouragement for the child. Notice that the listener did not feel that it was necessary to give any advice or make any moral judgment. The listener was just letting the other person talk and was responding to what was said. The listener did not try to tell the other person what his feelings were, but gave the other person an opportunity to get in touch with their own feelings.

Feeling and Rational Messages

To understand how to answer messages that are meant to *convey feelings* and not necessarily just *give information* is very important. Look at these three examples of "Feeling and Rational Messages." There are unspoken feelings in the messages being given. See if you can guess the feelings:

Example - Feeling Message – Rational Response:

(Feeling Message) "Mom, when I go to visit Dad, I want to take my bear to sleep with."

(Rational Response) "I don't think there's room in the suitcase for your bear."

What do you think the child was feeling? Remember to ask questions when you think there might be a feeling message.

Example - Feeling Message - Feeling Response:

(Feeling Message) "Mom, I want to take my bear when I go to visit Dad."

(Feeling Response) "The suitcase is getting very crowded. Tell me why you want to take the bear." (Parent is requesting more information to check out feelings.)

Example - Rational Message - Feeling Response:

(Rational Message) "The suitcase is all full. Let's go to the car."

(Feeling Response) "I need my bear."

Just for fun, work together as a family to make:

1. One feeling message with a rational response. Share the message with the group.

2. One feeling message with a feeling response. Share the message with the group.

3. One rational message with a feeling response. Share the message with the group.

List three "I messages" that were used with your family this week.

Try the reflective listening exercise with one member of the family. Write down the feelings that you might have missed if you hadn't investigated.

Listen for the three types of feeling and rational responses that we discussed in this chapter. If you make a mistake and answer with a rational response to a feeling message, go back and correct the interchange with the family member.

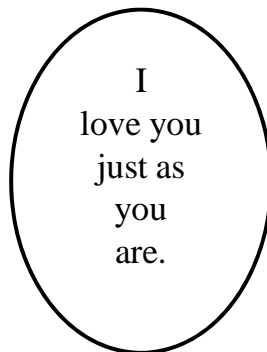
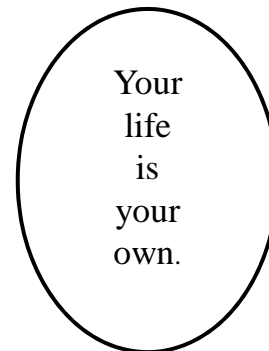
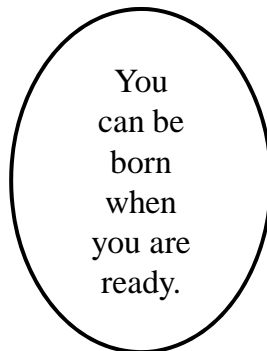
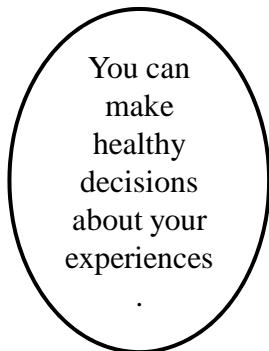
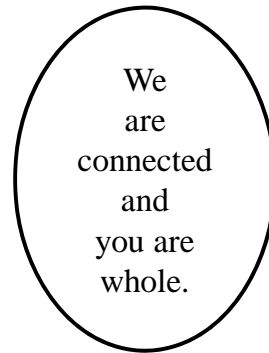
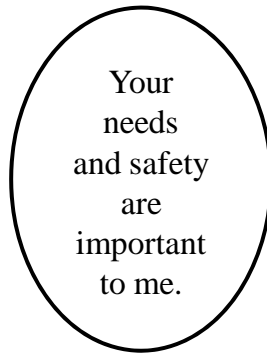
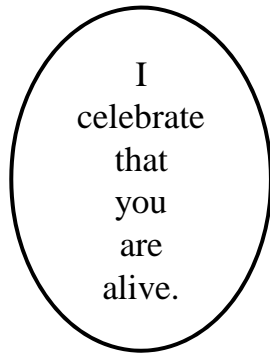
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Affirmation Ovals

The following pages contain the Affirmation Ovals for Clarke and Dawson's *Growing Up Again*. These exercises are recommended for everyone attending the *Uncapping Family Wisdom* program. Since most families have some transgenerational dysfunction, a good place to begin is to say the affirmations to your child; then, say the affirmations to yourself.

Prenatal Stage - Becoming Affirmations From Conception to Birth



Stage One - Being Affirmations

From Birth to 6 Months

I
am glad
that
you
are
alive.

You
belong
here.

What
you need
is
important
to me.

I
am glad
you
are
you.

You
can grow
at
your own
pace.

You
can feel
all of
your
feelings.

I
love you
and I
care for
you
willingly.

Stage Two - Doing Affirmations

From 6 to 18 Months

You
can explore
and
experiment
and I will
support
and protect
you.

You
can use
all of
your senses
when you
explore.

You
can do
things
as many
times
as you
need to.

You
can
know
what
you
know.

You
can be
interested
in
everything.

I like to
watch
you
initiate
and grow
and learn.

I
love you
when you
are active
and when
you are
quiet.

Stage Three - Thinking Affirmations

From 18 Months to 3 years

I'm glad
you are
starting
to think
for
yourself.

It's okay for
you to be
angry,
and I won't
let you
hurt yourself
or others.

You can
say no
and
push and test
limits
as much as
you need to.

You can
learn to
think for
yourself
and I will
think for
myself.

You
can
think
and feel
at the
same
time.

You can
know
what you
need
and
ask for
help.

You
can become
separate
from me
and I will
continue to
love you.

Fourth Stage – Identity and Power Affirmations

From 3 – 6 Years

You can
explore
who you are
and find out
who other
people
are.

You
can be
powerful
and ask for
help
at the
same time.

**You can
try out
different
roles
and ways
of being
powerful.**

You can
Learn
the
results
of your
behavior.

All of
your
feelings
are okay
with me.

You can
learn
what is
pretend
and what is
real.

I
love
who
you
are.

Fifth Stage – Structure Affirmations

From 6 – 12 Years

You can think
before you
say
yes or no
and
learn from
your
mistakes.

You can
trust
your intuition
to help you
decide
what
to do.

You can
find
a way of
doing
things
that works
for you.

You can
learn the
rules
that help
you
live with
others.

You can
learn
when and
how
to disagree.

You can
think for
yourself
and get help
instead of
staying in
distress.

I love you
even when
we differ;
I love
growing
with you.

Sixth Stage – Identity, Sexuality, and Separation Affirmations

From 12 – 19 Years

You can
know
who you are
and practice
skills for
independence.

You can learn
the difference
between sex
and nurturing
and be
responsible for
your needs,
feelings, and
behaviors.

You can
develop
your own
interests,
relationships
and
causes.

You can
learn
to use
old skills
in
new ways.

You can
grow
in your
maleness
or femaleness
and still be
dependent
at times.

I
Look
forward
to
knowing you
as an
adult.

My love
is always
with you.
I trust you
to ask
for my
support.

Seventh Stage – Interdependence Affirmations

Adults

Your
needs
are
important.

You can be
uniquely
yourself
and honor
the
uniqueness
of others.

You can be
independent
and
inter-
dependent.

You can expand
your
commitments
to your own
growth,
to your family,
your friends,
your community,
and to all
humankind.

You can build
and examine
your
commitments
to your values
and causes,
your roles,
and your tasks.

You can be
responsible
for your
contributions
to each of
your
commitments.

You can be
creative,
competent,
productive,
and joyful.

You
can
trust
your
inner
wisdom.

You can
Say your
hellos and
goodbyes
to people,
roles,
dreams, and
decisions.

Seventh Stage – Interdependence Affirmations, p. 2
Adults

You can
finish
each part
of your
journey
and
look forward
to the next.

Your
Love
Matures
And
Expands.

You
are
lovable
at every
age.

Eighth Stage - Integration Toward Death

You can
grow
your
whole life
through.

You can
look upon
the process
of dying
as a
natural
transition.

You can
make your
preparations
for leaving
and die
when you
are ready.

You can
celebrate the
gifts you
have
received
and the
gifts
you have
given.

You
deserve
the support
that you
need.

You can
share your
wisdom
in
your
way.

You are
lovable
just the way
you are.

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