

Developing a Mature Personality Instead of Psychological Separation

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The article examines an alternative to psychological separation: the development of a Mature Personality. Using a real family situation as an example, it shows how the focus on “maternal control” can replace an important task: strengthening a person’s ability to think independently, withstand pressure, say “no,” distinguish their own wishes from outside influence, and take responsibility for their choices. The author shows that a close bond with a parent is not always pathological enmeshment. In some circumstances, it can be an important source of support, safety, and development. Destroying such a bond under the name of growing up may not lead to freedom; on the contrary, it may leave a person without support and increase their dependence on others. The main idea of the article is that we should try to preserve important bonds. First, a person should be helped to become internally mature. Then they will be able to decide for themselves how to relate to their parents, partner, and other significant people.

Keywords: Mature personality; Psychological separation; Autonomy; Parental bond; Family relationships; Maternal support; Emotional resilience; Critical thinking; Personal boundaries; Coercive control; Family systems; Self-determination.

Introduction**1. The problem**

In contemporary psychological practice, the subject of growing up is often reduced to separation from parents. If an adult has a close relationship with their mother or father, that relationship is quickly viewed as dependency, enmeshment, control, or an inability to let go.

But this is where a dangerous substitution takes place.

Growing up does not necessarily begin with rupture or distance. True growing up begins with the formation of a Mature Personality - a person who is able to think, choose, withstand pressure, say “no,” take responsibility, and rely on their own values.

And such a Mature Personality can then decide for herself how to relate to her mother, father, partner, and other people. Neither a psychologist, nor a husband, nor relatives, nor the ideology of separation should decide how much and in what way a person should communicate with a parent. That should be decided by the person herself. But for that, she needs to become internally mature. And in this, she may need the help of a psychologist.

2. What is a mature personality?

By a Mature Personality I mean a person who has developed the basic skills of independent life.

Emotional stability - the ability not to fall apart under pressure, to withstand tension, and not to make decisions out of panic.

Critical thinking - the ability not to take other people’s words on faith, to check logic, to separate facts from manipulation, and to rely on reality.

Personal values and views - an inner compass: a person knows what matters to them and can choose, even if that choice is unpopular.

The ability to say “no” - respect for one’s own boundaries: not agreeing out of fear, guilt, or the desire to please.

Responsibility for one’s words and actions - the ability not to hide behind “I was told,” not to look for someone to blame, and to be ready to face the consequences of one’s choice.

Healthy self-esteem - reliance on one’s own assessment of one’s

actions, without a constant need for external validation.

Ability to change - readiness to try new paths when old ones no longer work.

Financial safety - not wealth and not necessarily a separate budget, but access to money, documents, information, and at least a minimal ability to act independently, so that a person does not become hostage to housing, money, or someone else's will.

To develop these qualities, there is no need to focus on relationships with parents. It is much more important to work with what is happening to the person now: how she thinks, chooses, withstands pressure, says "no," and takes responsibility for her decisions. Moreover, separation from parents in itself may not help, but may harm, if instead of developing the personality it destroys an important human support.

Let us consider this through a real example.

3. Parent-child relationships as a support

When a mother raises a daughter alone, without stable external support, especially in a situation of instability - moves, uncertainty, the collapse of the familiar world - a special space of closeness inevitably forms between them. Sometimes this is a way of survival, when two people do not have a broad system of support and are forced to become support for one another.

In such a situation, the mother is not only a parent. She becomes the supporting figure of this small family universe - the one who holds its balance, takes responsibility for decisions, safety, and the general direction of life. The daughter, in turn, does not merely "depend." She participates in this bond, responds to it, and develops within it. Such closeness can be very intense.¹

Specialists in parent-child relationships often define such bonds as enmeshment and begin looking for unhealthy elements in them. But in reality, this may be a harmonious coexistence that arose in difficult circumstances.

Of course, such a bond could have developed in different ways. With a different character, the daughter might have resisted, pulled away, or fought for autonomy. But in this case, it happened differently. The daughter grew up soft, compliant, and home-oriented. The mother was a person of action - a fighter in life, a problem-solver. These two different personalities did not destroy one another; in many ways, they balanced and complemented one another.

This is why the bond between mother and daughter became not an obstacle to growing up, but an important resource. It gave the daughter a sense of safety from which she could gradually move into adult life. On this foundation, the daughter could have calmly built her own family - not by breaking with her mother, but through the natural expansion of her life.²

But here a vulnerability appeared.

The soft, suggestible daughter, accustomed to close support, chose a partner who also looked soft and safe on the outside. He was a "home" type of person, an obedient son of a hyper-protective mother, the light of her life. On the surface, this could seem like a related type of closeness. It seemed that they would grow up and develop together, gradually growing out of their relationships with their parents and building their own family.

But behind the external softness, another side later appeared. In the face of the problems of independent family life, this softness unexpectedly turned into a desire for control. Perhaps he grabbed onto power out of confusion in the face of life's difficulties. Perhaps he acted under the influence of the familiar model created by his hyper-protective mother. Perhaps his mother continued to instruct her son. I do not have a final answer to this question.³

But the result was obvious: instead of partnership, a system of pressure emerged, in which the daughter's closeness with her mother was declared a threat.

4. The mother's psychologist: focusing on maternal control instead of analyzing the situation

The first alarming signal was the husband's ultimatum:

"If your mother comes, I will kick you out of the house."

This phrase was not spoken in an equal situation. By that time, the husband had finished college first, obtained a job and housing in another city, and invited the daughter to join him as his wife. In fact, she found herself in a new environment, without her former support, dependent on his housing, his decisions, and his rules.

For the mother, this was a shock, perhaps no less than for the daughter. She did not immediately intervene by force. On the contrary, she suggested coming to stay in a hotel and calmly clarifying the situation. But it quickly became clear that the husband did not intend to discuss anything. His position was not an invitation to conversation, but a demand for submission.⁴

At that moment, the situation went beyond an ordinary family misunderstanding. It was no longer simply a conflict between young spouses and the mother; it involved pressure, dependency, and threats. The mother felt that this was too serious to act impulsively and only at her own discretion.

That is why she turned to a psychologist for help.

The psychologist's reaction was no less unexpected than the husband's ultimatum. Instead of examining the whole situation - the daughter's complete dependence on her husband, his pressure, threats, and refusal to talk - the specialist shifted the focus to the mother, using standard ideas of psychological separation.

The mother was described as a person with an excessive need for control and an inability to let an adult child go into independent life. She was advised to work on herself.

But this assessment missed the central question: was the daughter truly entering independent life at that moment or, while losing the only support she knew, was she moving into dependence on rigid and demanding relationships?

This was the use of the wife's dependent position in order to impose his own rules on her through threats and establish control over her life. And before teaching the mother to "let go," it was necessary to understand whether the daughter had real freedom of choice.

This is where the danger of the separation approach became visible: instead of helping the mother support her daughter in an extremely unfavorable situation, the mother was advised to "let go" of the daughter into a place where the previous support had already been knocked out from under her, a new internal support

had not yet been created, and external circumstances intensified dependence and pressure.

In such situations, it is often automatically assumed that if an adult person lacks stable internal support, then the parent failed to form it. But that is too simplified a conclusion.

Internal support is not mechanically created by one parent as a finished structure. It forms gradually out of a person's character, life circumstances, level of safety, experience of relationships, mistakes, crises, and independent decisions.

5. What help could have looked like

If the psychologist had not used a ready-made separation scheme, he could have acted differently.

First of all, he would not have defined the mother as the main problem. He should have seen the entire situation: a young woman found herself in a new city, dependent on her husband because she had not yet found a job or her own support, while the husband had already issued an ultimatum and demonstrated an alarming pattern of behavior.

In such a situation, the first question should have been different:

Does the daughter have real freedom of choice?

Can she decide for herself whether she wants to see her mother?
Can she say "no" to her husband? Can she withstand his dissatisfaction? Can she distinguish her own desire from pressure?
Can she preserve her connection with her mother not as a childish dependency, but as an important human support?

In other words, the psychologist should have worked not on destroying the connection with the mother, but on strengthening the daughter's personality.

He could have said to the mother:

I understand your concern. Right now, our task is to help your daughter learn to make her own decisions and withstand pressure.

He could have shown the mother how to use the crisis for the daughter's growing up: to support the daughter's ability to see the situation, ask questions, return to the facts, and help her speak in her own name.

This situation could have become an important stage in the daughter's growing up. The husband's ultimatum gave an opportunity to ask her the main questions:

What do you yourself want?
Are you choosing this freely or under threat?
Can you speak about your decision in your own name?

For the mother, it was important to help the daughter understand that the situation was not hopeless. She had somewhere to go, she had housing, she had support in her mother, and therefore she was not obliged to accept someone else's terms as the only possible ones. Her voice mattered, and she had the right to take part in determining the rules of her life.

This is where real work on forming a Mature Personality could have begun. Not through a rupture with the mother, but through developing the ability to decide for herself how to relate to her

mother, her husband, and her own life.

Then the question of the relationship with the mother would not have been decided from outside, not by instruction, and not under the husband's pressure. It would have been decided by the daughter herself as an adult, strengthened, more mature person.

This is the fundamental difference.

The separation approach assumes in advance: the problem is in the connection with the mother, so the connection must be weakened or destroyed.

The approach of forming a Mature Personality assumes something different: first the person must be strengthened, and then she herself will decide what connections she needs, what boundaries to set, and what distance to choose.

6. The daughter's psychologist: instead of maturity - a break in the bond

Unfortunately, for reasons that go beyond the scope of this article, the mother submitted to the psychologist's recommendation and distanced herself. As a result, the daughter was left alone in an extremely unfavorable situation that she was not yet able to resist: without new internal support, under pressure, dependent on someone else's rules. The result was years of hardship for both mother and daughter. Tension grew, the family was falling apart, there was already a small child, and eventually the daughter had a nervous breakdown.

After that, the mother tried to help again. Wanting the daughter to restore her family and finally become an independent person, she sent her to a psychologist. This time the task seemed clear: to learn to be independent, defend her own interests, understand her own desires, and not submit to pressure.

But the opposite happened.⁵

The psychologist, taking advantage of the fact that the daughter was temporarily staying with her mother, again shifted the focus to the mother. Instead of working on the daughter's maturity, he began showing her that the mother was a controlling, manipulative person who could not let an adult child go.

The daughter was taught to "build boundaries" primarily with her mother. This intensified conflicts and inner tension. At some point, the daughter could no longer withstand this double burden: on one side, a family that was falling apart; on the other, a new psychological picture in which the mother became the main threat to her peace.

In the end, the psychologist recommended ending the relationship with the mother for the sake of the daughter's well-being. At the same time, he showed the daughter the positive sides of her husband and found explanations for his dishonest actions.

Thus, without becoming an independent person, the daughter moved into an even more complete dependence on her husband, already perceiving her mother as a threat to her happiness and health.

This is where it becomes especially clear how work on maturity was replaced by work on breaking the bond.

The mother wanted to help her daughter live in the family as an independent person in a union of two individuals, not as part

of a merged model of marriage in which the husband's will automatically become the wife's will.

She wanted the daughter to preserve her own voice, her own connections, and her own right to choose. But this attempt was again interpreted against the mother.

The psychologist perceived it not as an attempt to return the daughter to independence, but as yet another proof of maternal control. The very fact that the mother tried to understand what was happening in the psychologist's work with the daughter was presented as an intrusion into the "client-psychologist" relationship.

Thus, the mother's attempt to protect the original task - the development of the daughter as an independent person - became a new point of accusation. Her desire to help the daughter acquire her own center was entered into the category of toxicity, control, and inability to let go.

The circle closed: everything the mother did to preserve the daughter's choice was again used as proof that the mother herself was the main problem.

7. What another direction of work could have been

If the daughter's psychologist had not been focused in advance on parental toxicity and the need for separation, he could have seen another, more important problem: the daughter was suggestible and needed her own personality to be strengthened.

He could have noticed that the mother was not trying to destroy the daughter's family. On the contrary, she wanted to participate in helping her daughter and support her independence. In this situation, the mother could have become an important resource.

The psychologist could have used the situation itself as material for developing the daughter's maturity. The mother could have helped the daughter see facts, distinguish pressure from her own desire, learn to speak in her own name, preserve her right to choose, and regulate the difficulties inside her family.

Then the work would have gone in a different direction. Instead of breaking the bond with the mother, the daughter would have received support that helped her become an independent person.⁶

She could have learned to live in marriage not as part of a fused whole, where the husband's will automatically become her will, but as a separate person in a union of two individuals.

In such a version, the mother would have been a beneficial support for the daughter. And the daughter would have had a chance not to lose one support for the sake of another, but gradually to grow her own internal support.

8. The result of psychological separation

The result of this separation is best seen in the daughter's own words.

First, she describes the break as a severe inner catastrophe: After I broke off all relations with my mother, I entered a terrible state. It felt as if something very large and serious had torn inside my head. I cried for days; I could not calm down; it seemed to me that my heart would soon burst from emotional pain.

Later, the pain took another form. The word "mother" itself became a source of suffering for her:

Then I went through many years when the word MOM, in any form, spoken or printed, caused unbearable pain inside me. Mentions of mom in conversations, songs, or poems — all of it echoed as a painful scream in my soul. For many years I worked with a therapist on my painful perception of my mother.

Yet in another passage, the daughter herself admits that the relationship with her mother could have been useful and alive:

I know that these relationships benefit both me and my mother. We can support each other, share ideas, and help each other in difficult situations. We have a lot in common, and over time I become more and more convinced that in many ways I am my mother's daughter. So, we can have good mother-daughter relationships. I would like my mother to have good relationships with her grandchildren.

These three passages show the main point: the bond was not empty, meaningless, or inherently harmful to the daughter. It contained benefit, support, closeness, and the possibility of normal development.

But other people decided this question for her, depriving a person of a connection important for life.

Instead of restructuring the bond, a rupture occurred. And the result was not mature freedom, but pain in which the very word "mother" became a wound.

Such an outcome is difficult to call successful growing up. Rather, it shows where psychological separation can lead when it replaces the natural development of a Mature Personality.

Conclusion

Of course, there are difficult, painful, and destructive relationships with parents. There are situations in which distance is necessary and sometimes even saving. But that is a different problem, and it should be addressed accordingly: through analysis of the concrete reality, facts, behavior, degree of harm, and possible ways of protection.

Such situations must be approached carefully and thoughtfully. Before drawing conclusions, it is important, where possible, to understand the real picture, hear different sides, and carefully consider options for regulating or restoring the relationship if such a possibility exists.

The danger begins when even non-conflictual and beneficial close relationships with parents are viewed in advance through the same template of psychological separation: control, dependency, enmeshment, parental domination.

Then completely different situations fall under one scheme. Truly destructive relationships are mixed together with living, useful, supportive bonds.

This is how substitution occurs.

Instead of understanding what is actually happening between people, the bond is treated as an illness. Instead of strengthening the personality, the person is asked to prove adulthood through distance. Instead of helping a person decide for herself what relationships she needs, someone decides in advance that closeness

with parents is suspicious.

Such an approach can cause serious harm to important and close bonds.

Especially since there are safer and more practical ways to work: developing emotional stability, critical thinking, the ability to say “no,” the ability to see pressure, distinguish one’s own desire from someone else’s influence, and take responsibility for one’s own choice.

Then a person does not become hostage to parents, a partner, or a psychological scheme. She gradually becomes a Mature Personality. And a Mature Personality is already able to decide for herself how to relate to people, including parents: to preserve closeness, change the format of communication, build boundaries, or, if truly necessary, distance herself. But this will be her own

decision, not the result of a preset idea of psychological separation.

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