

"fear" and flight," they cite the case of a store manager who arrived at work on a Monday morning to discover that his failure to adjust the refrigeration at Saturday's closing had caused the spoilage of frozen foods. His reaction? He simply relocked the store and fled, not to be found until that afternoon. Meanwhile an assistant arrived at work and solved the problem.

In another case studied, an executive would blow up on the job and fly into temper tantrums. For several days afterward he would sneak into his own office by a private entrance, seeing only his secretary. And in still another case of personal immaturity—one which might be termed the "fight" method of reacting—a machine shop foreman would throw things and shout obscenities at a workman who had made a mistake.

These cases could be multiplied by thousands, and they all add up to a heavy toll in personal wear-and-tear on the individuals involved as well as considerable financial cost to business.

Of course these victims of immaturity usually lead troubled lives and, in actual practice, have far less freedom to control their affairs than do emotionally stable people. The immature person's way of life, the authors of the paper say, is the way of the slave

and the automaton. It is the way of failure, disappointment, misery, and strife.

What to do about it? The answer, of course, lies in the direction of self-improvement, of achieving personal growth and maturity. The paper does not outline a route or offer an easy short cut to such growth. It does, however, suggest several qualities of character which seem to be present in mature persons. The individual's job is to face himself as he really is and to seek more of these qualities in himself, thus becoming mature or "growing up."

Principles to Grow By

Not surprisingly, one condition for growth seems to be the development of definite principles as well as purpose. The paper says, "Whatever one calls it, a balanced life calls for goals, beliefs, and baselines which act as a guide for the thought and action of an individual. He can think through the what and why before he moves to the how of his conduct."

Such a person "responds" to situations, he doesn't react to them. An insult does not throw him into rage, mistakes or threats do not cause him to lose control. He remains in charge of himself. "Why should I let this other person decide what my conduct should be?" replied a man, when asked

why he hadn't struck back at an insult.

A second characteristic of the mature person is flexibility, the ability to "roll with the punch." This is not indifference or resignation. The authors insist that the individual must keep at his best. But he should have the capacity to yield gracefully and with no great sense of personal loss when the occasion calls for it. The mature man recognizes the need for change and for accommodating himself at times to the views and wishes of others. He does not waste his time and energy in a rigid defensive effort to have his own way all the time.

Self-acceptance seems to be the third quality of mature personality. The grown-up person has learned to accept himself as he is and does not lose himself in vain fantasy or a futile yearning for perfection. He knows that he is a creature of mistakes and he lives with that reality.

At the same time, however, he perceives his own possibility for improvement and growth. He may never become perfect, but if he continues to try, he will get better. That knowledge alone is enough to lift today's efforts and problems to a higher plane in his attitude toward them.

The last quality named is courage, indispensable in the freedom

of maturity. Without courage, no person could face himself in the first place, or go through the enormous personal effort and heartache that usually accompany growth. But it is courage that gives the individual his forward motion.

Courage sometimes has a dramatic sound, as if it's something that is exercised only on the battlefield or in time of great danger. But the best examples of courage are constantly unfolding all around us. The person who faces a problem in himself and overcomes it has demonstrated courage. So has the individual who tries something new and daring—a business venture, a different line of work, a change of viewpoint. And it takes considerable courage for a person to admit that he's been wrong.

But the individual who finds the courage to face problems arrives at his goal; he becomes mature by facing problems—the seeking becomes its own reward. He also discovers that many problems can be solved before they ever occur if they're faced realistically. In any case, he begins to live as he learns to face and to affirm life. And learning to control himself, he gains a certain degree of control over his life. He has found the freedom that comes with emotional maturity. ♦