

## Seeking Healthy Relationships

By Tasha M. Jefferson, MAFM, MBA, BSBA

Humans grow and develop in stages. As we change, our associations and the nature of our relationships should also change. It is not fitting for adults to conduct themselves, nor interact with others, in the same ways that they did when they were children or adolescences. Here is a generalization of the types of people that we often encounter. As we evaluate others we have to evaluate ourselves as well. Additionally, we have to remember that people act differently in different situations. It is totally possible for 4th stage people to behave like 1st stagers in relationships because the mix is not right.

### Makes You Grow

#### Un-healthy

These people force you to grow-up because you have to shoulder their loads and deal with their shortcomings, deception, or abuse.

#### Healthy

These people facilitate your growth through good advice, behavior, standards, and insight that stretches and encourages you to set and accomplish positive goals.

### Keeps You Young

#### Un-healthy

These people delay your development based on their immaturity, bad influences on you, and tendencies to play too much.

#### Healthy

These people keep you youthful and vibrant based on their optimism and ability to live life fully and responsibly. They provide openness, understanding, acceptance, and promotion of you being yourself.

### 1st Stage

1st stage people keep you mentally young in unhealthy ways and force you to grow up in unhealthy ways. At one point in life it was tolerable or unavoidable to deal with these types of people and relationships, however when you get to a certain age or trajectory it is no longer tolerable. Purge 1st stage folks from your life if possible.

### 2nd Stage

2nd stage people keep you young in healthy ways but force you to grow up in unhealthy ways. Dealing with these types of people daily can lead to impulsive decision-making and trouble -- which will most likely leave you trying to beat undesirable consequences. Avoid issues by limiting encounters with these acquaintances, call them up every now to have a good time, but leave it at that.

### 3rd Stage

3rd stage people help you to grow up in healthy ways but keep you young in unhealthy ways. Dealing with these types of people can be confusing, frustrating, irritating, and draining. In reality this is the most common category that people in our lives fit into. These relationships are where the bulk of our growth occurs because in them we are faced with the most compelling situations to soul search, learn ourselves, and be honest about our wants and needs; as well as re-evaluate other people. In this stage we have to weed out people and go through transitions. We have to be honest, listen, compromise, be realistic, and rely on good decision-making and healthy coping skills.

### 4th Stage

4th stage people are ideal but unfortunately they are also rare. These people, and the resulting interactions, help you grow in healthy ways and help keep you youthful in healthy ways. In 4th stage relationships you are contributing to the other person in the healthiest ways possible as well. These are the types of interactions that help people thrive and reach their full potential. Seek to surround yourself and engage in as many 4th stage relationships as possible.

Thank you for this provocative conversation! Visit [ColumbusBlack.com](http://ColumbusBlack.com) to view my other professional development articles.