



## Features: THE POWER OF THE HUMAN MIND

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When I was growing up, my father used to say to me: “My son, the mind makes a man.” My mother made me believe that malice and jealousy are obstacles to growth and the development of the human mind. As an adult, I came to understand why my parents debriefed me of some things that could have destroyed my peace of mind. Life experiences have given me a deeper meaning of these biblical counsels: “Do not let your heart be troubled” (John 14:1). “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And **the** peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4: 6-7). “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things” (Colossians 3:2). Given that what makes a human person different from other animals is intellectual capacity and reasoning faculty, we need to examine the power of the human mind. The aim is to examine how the mind is formed to build authentic character in human development. This may help us in our various relationships and learn to coexist with a person with abnormal personality. This is important because human beings do not grow with equal opportunities. This also explains why you need to love even those who do not wish you well and those who hate you.

In **Neuropsychology**, the brain controls the mind, which has no independent existence outside of the chemical

reactions and patterns which constantly fire inside our brains. Neuro-biologists have long held that the brain exclusively drives the mind, and that the mind serves only the individual self (<https://www.bing.com/search>). The power of the mind depends on the development of the brain at different stages of growth. Nancy Guberti classifies the brain development into five stages. The first stage is from pregnancy to the age of two. At this stage the neurons and connections are growing. The pregnant woman is therefore advised to stay away from stress as much as possible. Nancy recommends that the pregnant woman could take folic acid, B6 and B12 to stimulate the young developing brain with sounds and sensations. At this stage mothers should avoid toxins, cigarettes, heavy metals, alcohol, drugs and anger. This time also calls for the tender loving care of the husband and the people around the pregnant mother.

The second stage is from the age of two to six years. This is the development of voluntary movement, reasoning, perception, frontal lobes active in development of emotions, attachments, planning, working memory, and perception. A sense of self is developing and life experiences shape the emotional wellbeing. By the age six, the brain is ninety-five percent its adult weight and peak of energy consumption. The need for a nurturing environment and daily individualized communication is indispensable for the proper development of the brain. Negative or harsh treatment may come with emotional consequences in the future. Parents have a lot to do at this stage. In ancient Africa, this is the time to tell children stories of brave ancestors, wise sages who have made great contributions to the community. Children must not be left alone at this stage. They need practical lessons on different ethics of life. Parents should not leave their children for the whims and caprices of house maids, and nursery / primary school teachers.

The third stage is from the age of seven to twenty-two years. At this stage, the neural connections or 'grey' matter is

still pruning, wiring of brain still in progress, the fatty tissues surrounding neurons or 'white' matter increase and assist with speeding up electrical impulses and stabilize connections. The prefrontal cortex is the last to mature and it involves the control of impulses and decision-making. This is why teenagers need to learn to control reckless, irrational and irritable behavior. Avoiding drugs, alcohol and unprotected sex at this stage would save the society from kidnapping, terrorism and other criminal activities. This is the age where teachers in higher schools need to handle the students in a way and manner that transcends mere knowledge to real formation that can inspire wisdom. Efficient training gives value to life and the dignity of the human person.

The fourth stage is from the age of twenty-three to sixty-five years. This is the stage when the brain reaches its peak power. The last to mature and the first to go are the brain functionality of executive control occurring in the prefrontal and temporal cortices. Memory for recalling episodes start to decline, processing speed slows and working memory is storing less information. At this stage, the best approach is to stay mentally active, learn new things, stay physically active and eat a very healthy diet. At this stage it is important to avoid toxins, cigarettes, alcohol and mind-altering drugs. The fifth stage is above sixty-five years. This is when the brain cells are lost in the critical areas such as the hippocampus responsible for processing memories. Here it is necessary to learn new skills, practice meditation to promote neutral emotions, exercise to improve abstract reasoning and concentration. Those at this stage need to avoid stress or incorporate stress reducing meditation and exercises. It is important to eat a healthy diet with foods to nourish one's level of dopamine at this stage of life (<https://nancyguberti.com/5-stages-of-human-brain-development/>)

Looking at the above stages of growth, we may be able to identify the stage some of the criminals in our society deviated from authentic life in the process of growth. We can also discover the point of our awareness or the stages

we made mistakes in life. Among the comments on my article "THE MAMMAL AND THE HUMAN ANIMAL" that was published on Sunday, June 16, 2019 by Daily Trust and other print media was that of my friend, Imoudu Adodo. He agreed that humans have unique characteristics and a number of similarities with other mammals. The special attachment to instinctively care and nurture extends to a sense of security and feeling of biological connection. He sees in human beings love put into action. That means being really present and available. He emphasized a firm foundation for human capacity that must begin with child formation with the expression: "Feed the young with the milk of life, the type that will not depart from the mouth even at old age." Bring up your children and family in such a way that the values, vision and principles of life will continually be their guard and guide.

Given the importance of developing the mind, we must examine in our world today the quality of socialization especially in African nations. Do we value our unique gifts and appreciate the gifts of others? Is it not the case that instead of developing our minds, we waste our energies on trying to bring down those we think are doing better than us? What are we doing about the failing family institution and falling standard of education? We ought to be living the good life in thought and action, selfless devotion to the world and humanity. The Church of today must make available the milk of life because we are dwarfed by the semblance of organized hypocrisy. We have been pulled apart from one another and from our communities. Everyone is just off doing their own thing. We seem to be in a strange and contradictory moment in history. The brain does not function in a vacuum. It is what one puts in that one gets out. May our secular and religious institutions appreciate the audacity of the mind such that merit, proficiency and efficiency will be considered in accordance with individual capacity and competence in assigning duties and positions. "You are your mind" so we must use the power of our minds to build and not to destroy.

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