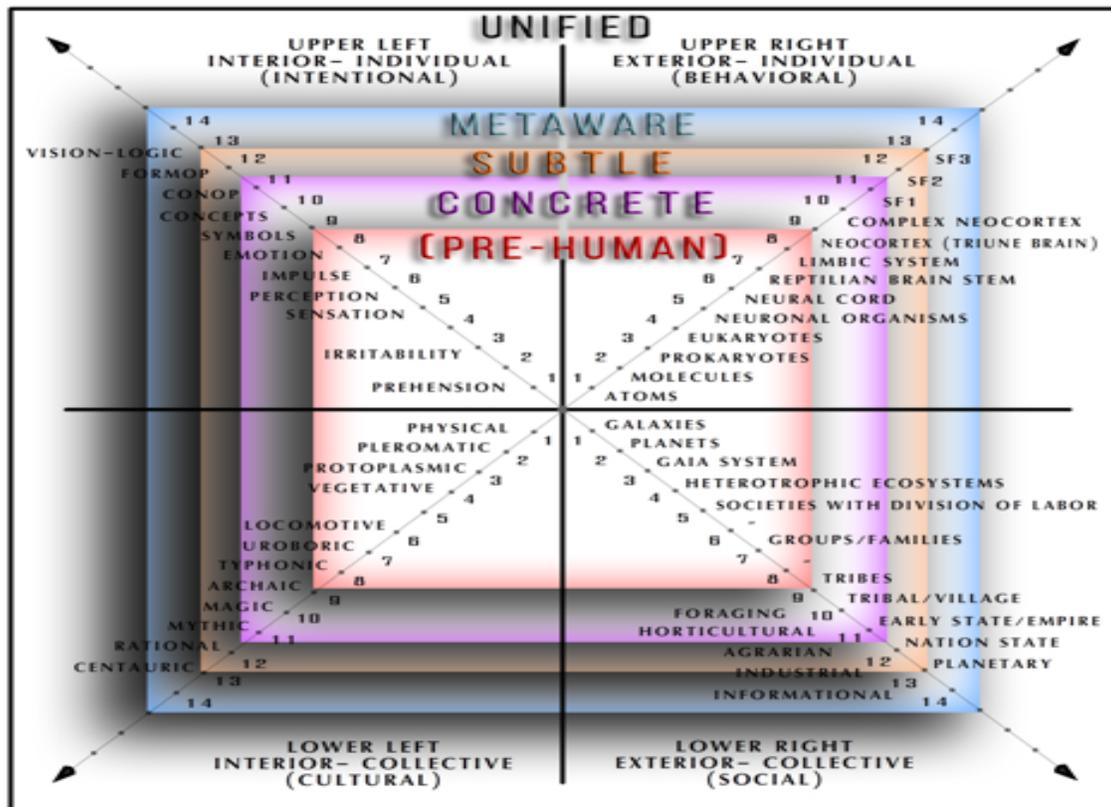


Overview of the STAGES Model

By Terri O'Fallon PhD



STAGES is a new theory and assessment methodology, which builds extensively on modern research into human development. STAGES was developed by Terri O'Fallon, with support from the research team of Venita Ramirez, Geoff Fitch and John Kesler, and has been further defined in practical grounded approaches by Kim Barta. This developmental model evolved from two previous generations of developmental research, first in the 1970's by Jane Loevinger, then into the late 1990's by Susanne Cook-Greuter. It integrates this lineage with an integral framework inspired by Ken Wilber's AQAL model. The STAGES Matrix incorporates new theoretical insights into human development and is grounded in statistically validated research.

Like all theories of development, STAGES articulates several stages of development through which people move as they grow. Beyond this, there are several distinguishing features of the STAGES developmental framework and assessment that make it unique.

The STAGES framework

- Describes both stages of development and iterative patterns of development, helping us see how we can progress through life and the complex, repeating cycles of experience that support us in our growth.
- Shows specifically how states of consciousness and their complementary neurobiological structures coincide with and support stage development. This shows how “growing up is waking up is growing up”.
- Advances our understanding of the later stages of development, articulating and validating three new late stages of development in a third Metaware tier for-grounding awareness of awareness, and predicts four stages in a Unified tier of development for which research validation does not yet exist.
- Applies to both our center of gravity or core stage of development, the range of stages that are typically navigated by an individual, as well as our transient, contextual actions. While the STAGES assessment applies the model to our core stage of development, there are many other applications of the framework and the underlying assessment methodology beyond personal stage assessments for it is built upon the AQAL Quadratic spaces of the Integral Frame which can hold many kinds of objects within it.

The STAGES Matrix describes 12 stages of human development and their early and late sub-stages, and predicts a later Unified tier with four additional stages that are yet unsubstantiated statistically. However because STAGES identifies repeating patterns through three tiers that do have some statistical substantiation, it points to the predictability of these patterns repeating yet a fourth time in this latest tier. The resulting spectrum of development covers for the first time the earliest stages of childhood development to the heights of known human development.

The stages are numbered 1.0, 1.5, 2.0, 2.5 and so on. This approach is based on one of the fundamental aspects of a stage as defined by this model – the person perspective, which is indicated by the first number. The person perspective represents a fundamental perspective-taking capacity available in each stage. For example, we say the 3.0 stage has the capacity to take up to a third-person perspective. In the STAGES model there are two stages for each of these person perspectives, so they are named accordingly; that is, early third person perspective stage is named 3.0. The second, later stage in the third person perspective, then, is 3.5. There is much more to a stage than their person perspective, which is outlined in each of the stage descriptions; however this numbering system will help you keep track of where you are in the trajectory.

Concrete, Subtle, and Metaware Tiers

The Concrete Tier

In the Concrete Tier, people focus on concrete objects, such as what they do, see, hear, and touch, and concrete objects that they have or want, such as toys, food, car, family, marriage, and so on. At the earliest of the concrete stages these objects can be touched, tasted,

smelled, seen and heard. In later concrete stages these concrete objects can be remembered in visualizations, internal sounds and feelings. These stages begin in infancy and can continue through adulthood.

The concrete tier is comprised of four developmental levels of 1.0 (early first person perspective); 1.5 (late first person perspective); 2.0 (early second person perspective); 2.5 (late second person perspective). The first two concrete stages (1.0 and 1.5) are individual-focused (more about me), where the person is aware of and focuses on their own concrete self and needs. In the later concrete stages (2.0 and 2.5) one becomes aware of and focuses on others and the groups they are in, rules, and conventions.

Transitioning to the next tier

Something profound begins to happen when an individual begins to see that there is an idea coming to them that is different from everyone else's rule or ideas and that this idea might have merit despite their peers not seeing its value. Using their internal senses to receive a subtle object (such as an idea) is a very large leap of consciousness for an individual—it is the leap from the concrete tier of learning to internally sense concrete objects, to a subtle tier where they learn to internally sense subtle objects.

The Subtle Tier

In the Subtle Tier, people focus on what we call subtle objects, such as what they think, feel, focus on, plan, the future, and their goals. At the earliest of these stages these subtle objects can be individually felt, visualized, and thought about linearly, with an emphasis on focusing their attention on these subtle interior objects (thoughts, emotions, and so on). In later stages these subtle objects can be brought to one's awareness. People typically enter the Subtle Tier in their 20's but can enter as early as the mid teen age years.

The first two subtle stages (3.0 and 3.5) are individually focused (its about *me*). In the third-person perspective stages, the focus is on the subtle individual – one's interior self, one's thinking feeling, judgments, and one's sense of the interior physical body functioning, and so on. In the later subtle stages (4.0 and 4.5) one becomes aware of and focuses on the subtle collective, which includes inner and outer contexts, assumptions, cultural conditioning, and systems. Much of the modern education system focuses on third-person stage capacities and this is where the majority of the population resides in populations with significant participation in post-secondary education, although a significant portion of these populations exist in the fourth-person perspective stages.

Transitioning to the next tier

Multiple objects are always entering our consciousness but generally we aren't aware of them all. A major shift begins to happen when an individual is visited by the state of awareness of being aware in the moment; a flood of ideas come all at once, which one is fully aware of, even as they are speaking.

Witnessing one's awareness brings a leap from the subtle tier with subtle objects, to a Metaware tier where they learn to shift their awareness from concrete and subtle objects to awareness of awareness.

As the person backs into the Metaware tier, the subtle is gradually being backgrounded, as the witness begins to see its own awareness, and begins to settle in as the new identity. The nature of a tier change is to experience time and space in a fundamentally different way.

This transition is particularly significant because it is not only a stage change, but also a tier transformation, and on the other side of that line there are very few others who have landed there, so it is sometimes difficult to find a community of peers who can see this person, support and help.

The Metaware Tier

The Metaware self and its witnessing awareness that emerges as ordinary experience in this tier, gives rise to awareness of awareness, including more fluid, integral, and subtle perceptions and conceptions of one's concrete and subtle experience, as well as the underlying structures of mind that give rise to that experience, through language and distinction making, and awareness itself.

The Metaware Tier is comprised of four developmental levels of 5.0 (early fifth person perspective); 5.5 (late fifth person perspective); 6.0 (early sixth person perspective); 6.5 (late sixth person perspective). As with the earlier tiers, the first two stages are focused on the Individual but the 'I' here is the Metaware self, or Awareness itself, the individual sense of a universal 'I'. Stage 5.0 is receptive and Stage 5.5 is active.

The second two stages are collective stages (about we), but in the causal tier the collective is beyond and includes all human concrete groups or subtle systems. It is all manifestation, including the worlds of matter, life and Mind. Stage 6.0 is reciprocal and stage 6.5 is interpenetrative.

In summary, the STAGES Matrix provides a developmental state and stage scoring system based on Wilber's AQAL model which measures the spaces provided by the Integral quadratic frame and provides the parameters that define the objects that fit within those spaces. Thus, while there is a STAGES inventory that is scored using these parameters, many other objects can also be placed in these spaces that may or may not relate to a developmental scale for humans.

Practical Application

While there are many applications for the STAGES model and there are two practical approaches that can be very useful in a variety of areas. The first is to take a STAGES inventory. This is a sentence completion test that is scored by placing the words of each sentence in one of the Concrete, Subtle, or Metaware tier quadratic spaces. The results will share with you a picture of the range of levels you responded within over the 36 contexts. It

will also give you a general score that you generally use day to day. It can also tell you what quadrants you may be robust in and also the ones you might be a bit anemic in. Thus this inventory can help you design for yourself practices that will target specifically the quadratic areas that you may need to strengthen so that you can live in balance and joy.

The second approach is to use this scoring system in-the-moment as you work with your clients, children, your business colleagues and your self. To do this you can learn three scoring questions to ask yourself as you are moving through your day. When you learn to observe through these three questions, you can get a very good idea where you, or another person you are observing, are coming from developmentally in that moment. This can be very helpful in many fields and particularly in the following ones.

Parenting: As a parent you can observe yourself through the three questions and get a good idea where you are coming from. Then you can observe your child through the three questions and determine where the child is. Is your preferred parenting approach appropriate for where your child is activated developmentally? A good parent learns to be a different kind of parent with every change of development in their child, who needs a different style of parenting for each stage. STAGES can help a parent with this adaptability with precision and consistency.

Psychology: You can also do these kinds of developmental observations with your clients by asking the three questions. As you adapt to the varying levels of your client you may find your client may fall into a shadow crash at some point. You will be able to determine what level s/he crashes to and apply an intervention that is appropriate for that level, for more effectiveness.

Coaches can use this approach in a very similar way, noting where their client is strong and weak and offering practices and insights that can support their growth.

Business: As a business person, you can look at your organization through the three questions, your co-workers through the three questions. This can support your knowing about the gap between the developmental skills the workers need and what the developmental level of the business is and notice the strengths and challenges. This can help you design appropriate training for your staff. You can also use the written inventories in total, to get a snap-shot of your organization, and whether there are quadratic practices that would help your business be more balanced.

These are just a few practical applications of the STAGES model. We already have general, psychological, parenting, spiritual and organizational specialty inventories developed or in a prototyping period, so that we can offer even more developmental particulars to serve our human community.

While it takes some practice to learn these three kinds of developmental observations, like all things that are worthwhile, ultimately, you will likely find that STAGES is a highly adaptable, and practical approach that takes wholes (quadrants, levels, lines, states and types) into account, in its view of growing up and waking up.