

## 5. The Stages of Living

That life progresses through distinctive periods is a common theme. Mine has traversed stages of thirteen years or so into this, the seventh. Two sources inform this view: Shakespeare and Eric Hoffer. In *As You Like It*, the Bard lists seven “ages”: Childhood, Schoolboy, Lover, Soldier, Justice, Retiree, Second Childishness “Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.” Hoffer saw life evolving in stages of thirteen years. Combining these, then testing them against mine revealed a surprising correlation:

- S1: Childhood (0-13): A period of biological maturation.
- S2: Adolescence (13-26): Mental maturity. Growing up.
- S3: Individuation (26-39): Forming a self-identity.
- S4: Focusing (39-50): Narrowing my success pursuit.
- S5: Mastery (50-63): Participating as a specialist.
- S6: Elderhood (65-78): Retiring to personal pursuits.
- S7: Advocacy (78-on): Reaching a philosophical plateau.

Those are mine. What are yours? Although I do not propose them as formulaic, the first three may align for most, albeit with various durations. This developmental sequence (biological, cognitive, self-realization) seems natural with what follows beyond stage three varying for each original. We are similar, not identical.

For many of the successful a metamorphosis occurs near forty: Abraham Lincoln was elected to Congress, Mother Teresa began her missionary work, Bill Gates formed the Gates Foundation and I moved from the surface of technology into its depths leading to stage five at fifty as an explainer of Internet technology through seminars before retiring into stage six as I set aside technology to pursue personal interests for which I had little time earlier.

Success in every stage seems driven by a desire to live as an original. Joseph Campbell spoke of Arthurian knights going on a “grail quest” by entering the forest at different places, then following their most authentic path. It’s an analogy that works for me. What have been your stages of living? There’s more to come.

## 2. The Success Fundamentals

Whatever we want to achieve, greater success may be realized when we apply the basics. While achieving objective goals is well known and documented for many objective goals, successful living as an original means navigating uncharted waters. We are required to create and maintain a personal playbook as we weren’t born with one, although there is evidence that some, maybe much of it, is encrypted in our DNA. While every person’s success essentials will be unique, they may include some or all of the following:

- ✓ Desire: Wanting to achieve a particular goal.
- ✓ Motivation: The reason(s) for pursuing it.
- ✓ Commitment: Investing the necessary time, focused.
- ✓ Competence: Achieving excellence, then maintaining it.
- ✓ Persistence: Staying the course, no... matter... what...

My significant accomplishments can be characterized in this sentence: “I have been successful when I identified a specific objective, had compelling reasons to do so, committed the time, focus and resources to attain the desired result... no matter what.”

As have so many, my most fulfilling successes have followed what seemed failures at the time, a seemingly common feature among so many of the successful I have known. For instance, in high school I wanted to become a math and science teacher. It didn’t happen. I failed at college then joined the Air Force where, trained as a radar technician I did so well in tech school I was assigned as an instructor. Returning to college I completed a degree in electrical engineering launching a professional journey which became a forty year serendipitous excursion in computer and network technology through sales, product management leading to technical seminar development and delivery until I retired in 2001 ready to participate in what I had set aside before.

Suggestion: Considering your past achievements, identify your personal success essentials then complete this sentence stem to identify your success nature, “I am most successful when I ...”