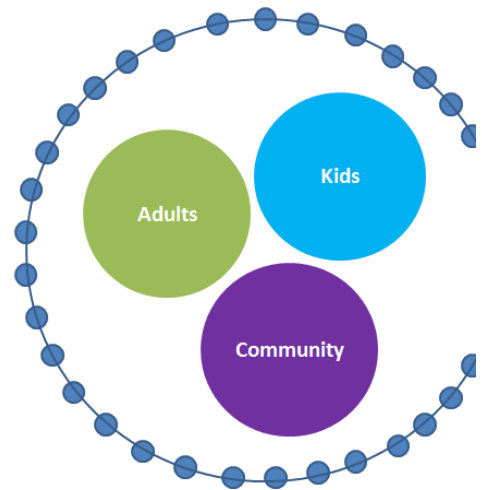


Generative Change Levers: Healthy Development in Kids, Adults & Communities

Give me a lever and a place to stand ...
and I will change the world.

Archimedes



How can the world change if people don't?

Change-makers often report that it's difficult for people to change their habits and behaviors. This is true even when such a change would not only be good for the individual, but would benefit their family, their organization, their community. Now, a growing body of research in human development gives change-makers some helpful tools, even while expanding our perspectives on change.

Everyone knows that children progress through stages of development; while each child is unique, his or her growing capacities emerge in predictable patterns. But ample research shows that adults also have the potential to continue developing throughout their lives, in similarly predictable patterns. Each growth spurt reveals a new mindstage—an increasingly complex way of knowing, feeling, valuing and making sense of life and the world around us. Each emerging mindstage reveals new perspectives, new insights, new solutions and new resources.

Robert Kegan, a respected developmental researcher at Harvard University, calls this the “hidden curriculum of adult life.”¹ In fact, there is much evidence that adults not only have the potential to develop, but that our very health and well-being depend on it. In adults, as in children, the failure to develop is the failure to thrive.

Adult development: A promising new frontier for change leaders

An important catalyst of change is actually a dynamic inherent in our own development. From this perspective, generativity is not merely a by-product of our actions, but of our developing minds. And the maturity of our actions is closely correlated with the maturity of our minds ... our values, beliefs, assumptions, our capacity for care, concern, and empathy.

So, here's a proposition to consider: human development is the new frontier of change-making ... in every family, in every organization and in every community.

¹ Kegan, R. (1994).

Give me a lever and a place to stand

Working together to generate a preferred future, here's a practical place to stand:

- A healthier future is possible, for our kids and ourselves, for our organizations and our communities;
- Healthy development, in kids and adults, is the work of communities;
- Healthy development in kids depends on healthy development in adults;
- Thriving kids need thriving adults *and* thriving communities.

And here are two generative change levers for co-designing that preferred future:

- Connecting the dots between healthy child & youth development, adult development and social development;
- Taking action to generate the life conditions that foster thriving in kids, in adults and in communities.

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