

Stage Four “Identity and Power” from about 3 to 6 Years

The tasks of this stage focus on learning and activities that help the person establish an individual identity, learn skills, and figure out role and power relationships with others.

Helpful parent behaviors:

- Affirm children for doing developmental tasks
- Continues to offer love, safety, and protection
- Is supportive as child continues to explore the world of things, people, ideas, feelings
- Encourages the child to enjoy being a boy, or a girl; teaches that both sexes are okay
- Expects child to express feelings and to connect feelings and thinking
- Provides information about child’s environment and corrects misinformation
- Gives answers to questions
- Provides appropriate positive or negative consequences for actions
- Uses language that is clear about who is responsible for what
- Encourages child’s fantasies and his separation of fantasy and reality
- Compliments appropriate behavior
- Maintains contact with supportive people who help parent nurture self
- Responds matter of factly and accurately to child’s curiosity about the human body and the differences between boys and girls
- Resolves their own identity problems that surface

Unhelpful parent behaviors:

- Teasing
- Inconsistency
- Not expecting child to think for self
- Unwillingness to answer questions
- Ridicule for role playing for fantasies
- Respond to child’s fantasies as if real
- Use of fantasy to frighten or confuse child
- Discounting

Job of the child:

- To assert an identity separate from others
- To acquire information about the world, their person, their bodies, their sex roles
- To learn that behaviors have consequences
- To discover their effect on others and their place in groups
- To learn to exert power to affect relationships
- To practice socially appropriate behavior
- To separate fantasy from reality
- To learn what he has power over and what he does not have power over
- To continue learning additional developmental tasks