



Balanced Growth

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP

An MBA student in one of my classes made a strange comment a while ago that caught my imagination. He said, "Some people never grow up; they only grow down, like a carrot." We are all aware that nature actually works in a balanced way because all plants grow up and down simultaneously, yet the student had a point that for some growing things, the part that is growing down has more utility to us.

In some plants, we are more interested in the root than the vegetation above ground. The leaves of the carrot help us when carrying a bunch, but we are usually only too happy to toss them into the disposal in the kitchen.

Trees appear to grow up, and most of us ignore the working half going on underground. The vegetation provides needed shade and oxygen to make our planet more habitable, and the fruit or nuts provide a means of nourishment as well as a means to procreate the species. It is vital to understand and appreciate the role of the roots as well, because without the natural balanced approach, the whole tree would die. I began to ideate how the contrast would work in humans.

The metaphor works for people as well as plants. When we grow up, we mature in a way that is constructive when dealing with people or problems. Helping other people is the equivalent of providing shade and oxygen to them in their time of need. If we use Emotional Intelligence, we can practice growing up toward the warm sun rather than down into the cold damp earth. In reality we are doing both in a balanced way, just like a tree.

Growing up means learning to share and look for win-win solutions to problems. It means sacrificing some of what we have so others can live better too. It means not resorting to tantrums or bully-like behaviors to get what we want. And it means caring for others in ways that are tangible and recognizable.

When we grow up, we seek to give people credit rather than assign blame. We look for and usually find the good in others. It is the old "glass half full versus half empty"

argument that allows a more cheery disposition in most circumstances. Growing up is only possible if we are grounded and have a well-developed root system. Growing up in addition to growing down to our roots allows us to squeeze more life and pleasure from our everyday activities. Try to grow up, like a tree, and enjoy better relationships with other people. In addition, be well grounded and support your roots.

Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of: *Trust in Transition: Navigating Organizational Change*, *The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals*, *Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online*, and *Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind*. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations. For more information, or to bring Bob in to speak at your next event, **contact him at** www.Leadergrow.com, bwhipple@leadergrow.com or 585.392.7763

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