Leader Development: Transforming Self-Concept

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In the live session of this course, we discussed some levels of crisis and how it works as part of leadership development. Within the course, the course element of development stage theory seemed to jump off the page! My current crisis or development process shapes around figuring out my own identity based on my vocational/theological journey. I have had a very conservative evangelical upbringing. However, my current role is as a pastor-theologian in a progressive mainline denomination. This experience has been one of the most formative developmental challenges of my adult life. This experience, characterized by identity dissonance and role ambiguity, has functioned not as a breakdown, but as a breakthrough—compelling me toward greater psychological, moral, and spiritual integration. From a psychological perspective, McAdams (2013) argues that adults construct meaning through narrative identity, which integrates “reconstructed past, perceived present, and anticipated future into a coherent story” (p. 14). My reconstructed past is a completely different direction than I ever thought would happen. This changes my thinking about my perceived present. However, I am hopeful for my perceived future, which brings slight insight into another core element concerning self-efficacy. The troublesome thinking that I run into is to discard that past. However, I am learning to reinterpret it as part of a larger redemptive narrative—one where growth does not negate roots but reframes them. I am having to utilize my foundational work and utilize those strengths but go in a different direction. Sadly, much of development stage theory is limited to certain aspects or timeframes of life (Sprouts,2017). However, these stages are too limiting. In fact, Berk (2018) writes: “Erikson’s stages, though useful, oversimplify development by assigning each psychosocial conflict to a single age period. In reality, people often revisit these issues across the lifespan” (p. 24). I have found that this process is on-going. In an age where scams and so much is present, the idea of addressing trust and mistrust seems to be an ongoing process. However, I am constantly finding myself reengaging even the most “primitive” stages of Erikson’s theory. McAdams (2013) suggests that “The self is an evolving life story, not a completed task. Identity formation is a process of ongoing narrative reconstruction across the lifespan” (p. 28). Part of my self-development journey is what led me here to OGS. I am a theologian; however, I desired to expand my thinking more toward sociological integration. This process involves creating life-long learning. This is likely why this course concept seemed to resonate with me. It is like I am having to live it out!

**Works Cited:**

Berk, L. E. (2018*). Development through the lifespan* (7th ed.). Pearson.

McAdams, D. P. (2013). *The redemptive self: Stories Americans live by (Rev. ed.)*. Oxford University Press.

Sprouts. (2017, April 23). 8 stages of development [Video file]. YouTube.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYCBdZLCDBQ [Time = 5:20]