



# The Evolving Self (Problem and Process in Human Development)

*Robert KEGAN*

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*The Evolving Self* focuses upon the most basic and universal of psychological problems--the individual's effort to make sense of experience, to make meaning of life. According to Robert Kegan, meaning-making is a lifelong activity that begins in earliest infancy and continues to evolve through a series of stages encompassing childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. The Evolving Self describes this process of evolution in rich and human detail, concentrating especially on the internal experience of growth and transition, its costs and disruptions as well as its triumphs.

At the heart of our meaning-making activity, the book suggests, is the drawing and redrawing of the distinction between *self* and *other*. Using Piagetian theory in a creative new way to make sense of how we make sense of ourselves, Kegan shows that each meaning-making stage is a new solution to the lifelong tension between the universal human yearning to be connected, attached, and included, on the one hand, and to be distinct, independent, and autonomous on the other. *The Evolving Self* is the story of our continuing negotiation of this tension. It is a book that is theoretically daring enough to propose a reinterpretation of the Oedipus complex and clinically concerned enough to suggest a variety of fresh new ways to treat those psychological complaints that commonly arise in the course of development.

Kegan is an irrepressible storyteller, an impassioned opponent of the health-and-illness approach to psychological distress, and a sturdy builder of psychological theory. His is an original and distinctive new voice in the growing discussion of human development across the life span.



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