

## Mahler- Stages of Development

### **Mahler's Stages of Development:**

#### **-Autism (birth-2 months):**

- task/goal is to achieve a state of equilibrium, meet basic needs (survival, comfort)
- infant is focused on his/her own needs (sleep, hunger), lacks awareness of others

#### **-Symbiosis (2-5 months):**

- baby more aware of mother but sees them as "fused" (he/she and mother are one)
- critical for mother to meet their needs (feed when hungry, cuddle, give attention, change diapers promptly) for trust

#### **-Differentiation/Separation-Individuation (5-10 months):**

- baby starts to separate himself/herself from mother, starts to see mother as an individual
- baby starts to become more interested in the "outside world"

#### **-Practicing (10-18 months):**

- baby continues to separate himself/herself from mother
- baby begins to walk, explores environment freely... but still looks to mother for reassurance, comfort (needs mother to sooth him/her if environment seems scary)
  - a. baby okay to play independently but wants mother close by!

#### **-Integration/Rapprochement (18-24 months):**

- toddler is aware that they are separate from mother
- a frustrating, confusing time for both toddler & mother... one minute the toddler wants independence, the next minute it wants mother close by (may fear abandonment)
  - a. can lead to temper tantrums!

#### **-Object Consistency (2-5 years):**

- child more comfortable separating from mother, feels less anxiety when they are not together
- child views mother as reliable