

The Ferris wheel - Alternative metaphor for the Maypole By Luke Webb

Draw or show a photo of a Ferris wheel, something like the London Eye.



The Ferris wheel was in existence in England in 1728, it was hand turned and was known then as 'ups and downs' – perfectly fitting for family life!

The wheel of the device is the first thing you notice; it's aerodynamic characteristics ensure it keeps moving, and it's the size of the wheel that determines how many people that can be accommodated on the ride.

Let's think of the young person as the frame of the wheel itself, and the people in the seats as their 'influencers' (i.e., peers, social media, school, family members etc). There is no standard design for seats on a Ferris wheel – each will be different, just as each family circumstance is different. During the ride the seats can pick up and drop off people as the wheel continues round, depending on their ride time.

The chassis is the body of the Ferris wheel and its primary function is to offer long lasting support to the wheel, whether in motion or not. If the chassis suffers risks, the entire machine becomes useless. Regular maintenance is essential to ensure business runs as usual. The operator ensures all is well with the chassis. Think of the parent(s) as the operator or maintenance manager of the chassis.

Without the operator the chassis, whilst strong, cannot offer support to the wheel, leaving those chairs or cages suspended with nowhere to go.

In the perfect world ... the wheel would turn steadily with all the seats/cages filled with appropriately behaved people ... and riders would all be balanced and going at the same speed.

In the perfect world ... the parent would feel confident that those influencing their young person are appropriately behaved people ... all giving the young person balanced messages at the same time.

However, the real world is not like this. Often when the Ferris wheel is in motion some people wait in line and are patient and as the chairs or cage, they arrive they climb aboard. Meanwhile others may jump the queue and hitch a free ride causing upset in the network. Some people refuse to get off.... Others scream throughout the ride, whilst others sit quietly, and others may try to rock the chairs/cage.

There is limited control on who gets on the Ferris wheel, if the operator/maintenance manager of the Ferris wheel spent all their time trying to manage and control all the people in the cages..... they would have limited time for maintenance. The hub of the wheel could then weaken, the wheel could become unbalanced, get stuck, lose momentum, and potentially creak to a grinding halt.

However, if the operator/maintenance manager of the Ferris wheel maintains their focus on ensuring the hub of the wheel is well oiled, with strong component parts the wheel can continue to turn and maintain momentum.

The operator/maintenance manager may use their influence to save seats for people who are positive influence i.e., neighbours, partners, and mental wellbeing/health professionals. Being in this unique position gives the operator the opportunity to ensure the wheel (their young person) has a balanced everchanging network that can be valuable/supportive to their continued momentum and balance.

This metaphor is a way of explaining that, in parenting it is the same thing, not all the influences the young person is exposed to are giving the same messages as the parent, others will undermine the parent, the parent cannot control all the riders in the chairs/cages, BUT they can control the maintenance of the wheel - their relationship with their young person and that is the strongest part.