

ADULTHOOD

(PHYSICAL CHANGES)

The distinction between childhood and adulthood varies considerably among cultural and social groups. The personal and social significance of the passage of years is shaped by the cultural age system. All societies divide the lifespan into recognised stages. These life stages or periods are marked by certain physical, psychological and social milestones. The life stages are commonly identified as prenatal stage (from conception until birth), infancy (from birth to the end of second year of life), early childhood (ages three to six years), middle childhood (six years until puberty), adolescence (start of puberty to adulthood), young adulthood (ages twenty to forty), middle adulthood (ages forty to sixty-five) and later adulthood or old age (sixty-five and older). This unit will help you understand the physical changes of all the three stages of adulthood.

Early adulthood is the stage of our life between the ages of about 20-40 years old, who are typically vibrant, active and healthy, and are focused on friendship, romance, child bearing and careers. It is the first stage of adulthood in which the body physically changes and is one of the hardest times in our lives after teenage years. In this stage, a person may continue to add a bit of height and weight to her teenage frame. The body continues to undergo significant hormonal changes. In middle adulthood, an important challenge is to develop a genuine concern for the welfare of future generations and to contribute to the world through family and work. Midlife is also viewed as a period of creativity and significant contribution to society. It is found that the best works of scientists, writers and artists are produced during the late forties and early fifties. Middle adulthood is the second stage of adulthood in which one of the most noticeable change is loss of elasticity in the skin, especially in the face. This results in lines and wrinkles that are seen as one of the first signs of ageing.

Early adulthood is the stage of our life between the ages of about 20-40 years old, who are typically vibrant, active and healthy, and are focused on friendship, romance, child bearing and careers. It is the first stage of adulthood in which the body physically changes and is one of the hardest times in our lives after teenage years. One has to deal with so much in this time and it seems to be real time of self search as well as preparation. During this time in our life we find ourselves with a new sense of independence and for the first time in life we really feel free. However, along with that comes a lot of added personal responsibility to both ourselves and others and we really begin to learn more about ourselves as well as others through social interaction. During the period of young adulthood one sees himself or herself as an autonomous and independent adult. In this period the individual becomes financially less dependent on the parental family. A major development task is

during this period is the choice of a career. Young men and women tend to settle down in a career of their choice. In addition, a young adult tries to settle down and start a family life. They are also concerned about various social issues and forming close relationships with one's professional peers and members of community. The duties of a person demand two-fold responsibilities which are towards oneself as well as the society.

The stage of young adulthood is characterised by new tasks and challenges in life such as establishing financial and emotional independence and entering into marital relationship. Unemployment and marital discord are two typical crisis conditions during early adulthood. *According to Erickson*, this period is characterised by a crisis of intimacy versus isolation. The young adults must develop the ability to form deep intimate relationships with others particularly in marriage. Otherwise, they can become socially and emotionally isolated. Most young adults develop a dream of future accomplishments or a vision of what they want to achieve as a life goal. Such dreams motivate the young adults towards goal directed efforts. Occupational and marital choices and establishment of social and economic independence are some major tasks of early adulthood.

According to Sigmond Freud, adulthood is a time for work and love. Our lives centers around our careers and relationships, leaving less time for anything else.

Physical Changes

In this stage, a person may continue to add a bit of height and weight to her teenage frame. The body continues to undergo significant hormonal changes. These changes may make beards grow a bit thicker and the voice to become a slightly deeper and richer. This is the period in which women usually have children so it is the time in which women gain a little weight and finish their full breast development.

The Transition from Adolescence to Adulthood

The age period from 18 to 25 years has been labeled as "emerging adulthood" as individuals have often left dependency of childhood but have not yet assumed adult responsibilities. Females reach their adult heights by age 18, and, except for some males who continue to grow in their early 20s, most have reached their adult heights by the age of 21. However, muscles continue to gain mass- especially among males, and both genders continue to add body fat. Average weight gain for both men and women is about 15 pounds.

MIDDLE AGE/MIDDLEADULTHOOD

In middle adulthood, an important challenge is to develop a genuine concern for the welfare of future generations and to contribute to the world through family and work. This period is aged between 40-60 years of life. *Erik Erickson* refers to the problem posed at this stage as generativity versus self-absorption. He characterizes the middle adulthood as a phase of crisis. Unless a person makes this period of meaningful contribution, he or she may become preoccupied with selfish needs and desires. The midlife transition is also the period of turbulence of the forties. From the period of twenties and thirties, the individual arrives at middle age in the forties and fifties. Middle age is characterised by competence, maturity, responsibility and stability. This is the time when one wants to enjoy the success of job, satisfaction derived from the family and social life. People look forward to the success of their children. Attention gets more focused on health, the fate of children, ageing parents, the use of leisure time and plans of old age. Midlife is also viewed as a period of creativity and significant contribution to society. It is found that the best works of scientists, writers and artists are produced during the late forties and early fifties.

Physical Changes

Individuals vary in the rate at which the changes occur, all middle aged people notice signs of deterioration in some aspects of their physical functioning. Very often, during the early thirties individuals make a reappraisal of their choices and seek to make specific changes in their career choices as well as their social relations. These experiences are described as “age thirty transition”. In the 40s, for example, there is usually a decline in near vision a condition known as presbyopia. The lens of the eyes become less elastic and loses its ability to accommodate to objects at close range. Reading glasses or bifocal may be required for the first time. The individual may also notice increased sensitivity to glare on the windshield of the car, for example, or in brightly lit stores. In their 50s people often find that it takes their eyes longer to adapt to the change in illumination when they enter a darkened theater or when they go outside on a bright sunny day. Some degrees of hearing loss is also found in many people over 50.

Middle adulthood is the second stage of adulthood in which one of the most noticeable change is loss of elasticity in the skin, especially in the face. This results in lines and wrinkles that are seen as one of the first signs of ageing. Most individuals get a little shorter through the years. Hair starts graying, skin is wrinkling, bodies are sagging and teeth are yellowing. Some adults strive to make themselves look younger by having plastic surgery, dyeing their hairs, wearing wigs, joining exercise programs or taking heavy vitamin doses. Men usually gain weight in the abdominal region, while women gain weight in the hips and thighs. Strength and flexibility in both genders wane. Men

during this period show greater concern towards their health, strength, power and sexual potency. For women, menopause occurs between the ages of forty-five and fifty. Women usually experience hormonal changes during this period that result in the loss of the ability to reproduce, a process called menopause. Menopause is supposed to be accompanied by some distressing physical and psychological symptoms in women. Both genders may experience graying of the hair or hair may be thin.

COGNITIVE CHANGES

Young adulthood is a time when most of us finish school, find a career we enjoy, and create a family of our own. The cognitive stages during the early adulthood can be discussed as a period of realistic and pragmatic thinking; reflective and relativistic thinking. According to Piaget, he thought that young adults were quantitatively advanced in their thinking (they have more knowledge), however, they are qualitatively similar. He also believed that adults increase their knowledge in a specific area.

The three stages of adulthood and examine the physical, cognitive and other changes that come about. Particularly the focus will be on cognitive development.

EARLY ADULTHOOD

Young adulthood is a time when most of us finish school, find a career we enjoy, and create a family of our own. Physically, it is a time where we are our healthiest and will reach our peak performance. Cognitively, it is a time to grow up and make life decisions. Socioemotionally, it is a time to take on roles of independence, lifestyles, marriage, and family. According to Erik Erikson's eight stages of development, this is a time of intimacy vs. isolation. One either gets involved in an intimate relationship or isolates oneself. According to the literature, many areas of development are paramount during early adulthood. The cognitive stages during the early adulthood can be discussed as a period of realistic and pragmatic thinking; reflective and relativistic thinking. According to Piaget, he thought that young adults were quantitatively advanced in their thinking (they have more knowledge), however, they are qualitatively similar. He also believed that adults increase their knowledge in a specific area.

Between the ages of 35-60, we find vast changes in many areas of our lives. The most obvious changes related to our lifestyle include: physical development and health, career and finances, marriage, and leisure activities. For many, midlife is a time when they start to think about "how much time they have left". Individuals begin to reexamine their lives, their relationships, their work, and even to question the meaning of it all. This process has been referred to as a mid-life crisis. Clearly, middle adulthood is a time change and development. Middle adulthood is the period in which an

individual changes in their cognitive functioning as concerned to their intelligence: crystallized and fluid; information processing and memory; expertise; career, work and leisure; religion, health and coping; and meaning in life. While the adult years are generally a time of vitality and good health, there are health concerns. The main health problems of middle adulthood are cardiovascular disease, cancer, and menopause. Another major problem that affects health and behaviour is stress. Overall, this is a time of major change and development physically and mentally.

During the middle adult years there is a noticeable change in how adults view their **careers**. By this time most individuals have settled into their careers and between the ages of 40-45 have ceased to advance up the career ladder. In general, job satisfaction and commitment tend to be high and continue to increase into our sixties. It is also at this time that adults adjust their idealistic hopes to realistic possibilities. This adjustment to attainable goals is dependent on how much time is left before retirement, with retirement planning being a major area of financial concern. These reassessments may lead to stress and sadness over unaccomplished goals, which for a small few may lead to a midlife career change.

Crystallized intelligence improves through middle age and on. The ability to remember and use information acquired over a lifetime is increased, and also depends on education and culture of the individual. An individual is able to use stored information's and process automatically in their daily lives. Many psychologists believe that fluid intelligence was primarily genetic and that crystallized intelligence was primarily learned. This nature-nurture distinction is probably invalid, in part because the acquisition of crystallized intelligence is affected by the quality of fluid intelligence.

Another **financial adjustment** that tends to take place for many midadults is the planning for college and setting aside the necessary funds for their children. In response to these growing financial needs and greater free time, due to their children getting older, many women enter or reenter the workforce. In short, this tends to be a time of career and financial readjustment and planning for both men and women. **Leisure** holds an important place in helping adults to deal with life experiences. Not only does leisure enhance one's well-being it is also a buffer to the stresses of life.

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added personal responsibility to both ourselves and others and we really begin to learn more about ourselves as well as others through social interaction. Young adulthood is a time when most of us finish school, find a career we enjoy, and create a family of our own. Physically, it is a time where we are our healthiest and will reach our peak performance. Cognitively, it is a time to grow up and make life decisions.

Cognitive Changes

The cognitive stages during the early adulthood can be discussed as a period of realistic and pragmatic thinking; reflective and relativistic thinking. According to Piaget, he thought that young adults were quantitatively advanced in their thinking (they have more knowledge), however, they are qualitatively similar. He also believed that adults increase their knowledge in a specific area.

Realistic and Pragmatic Thinking

Realistic thinking means looking at all aspects of a situation (the positive, the negative, and the neutral) before making conclusions. In other words, realistic thinking means looking at yourself, others, and the world in a ***balanced and fair way***. Some experts argue that the idealism of Piaget's formal operational stage declines in young adulthood, replaced by more realistic, pragmatic thinking. Schaie argues that adults use information differently than adolescents.

According to K. Warner Schaie, adults progress beyond adolescents only in their use of intellect. We typically switch from actually acquiring knowledge to applying that knowledge in our everyday lives. To support his theory of development, he included the following two stages to describe the cognitive changes in adults:

- ***Achieving Stage***

Involves applying one's intelligence to situations that have profound consequences on achieving long term goals, such as those involving careers. This stage of development includes mastering the cognitive skills needed to monitor one's own behaviour. Young adults in this stage will also acquire a considerable amount of independence.

- ***Responsibility Stage***

This stage of development begins in early adulthood and extends into middle adulthood. This is the time when a family is established and attention is given to the needs of a spouse and children. Young adults incur social responsibilities, deal with starting a career, and must take on some level of responsibility for others at work and in the community.

According to Labouvie-Vief, there are many changes that take place in the thinking of young adults, including a new integration of thought. Young adults rely less on logical analysis when solving problems. Idealised logic is replaced with commitment, and youth focus their energy on finding their niche in the work place and society. During young adulthood, logical skills don't decline because cognitive abilities are strong.

- ***Reflective and Relativistic Thinking***

William Perry said that adolescents often engage in dualistic, absolute thinking, whereas adults are more likely to engage in reflective, relativistic thinking. The term dualistic thinking is used to describe an adolescents view of the world. Everything is seen in the polar terms or opposites. Examples for this are right/wrong or good/bad.

As youth mature, dualistic thinking is replaced by multiple thinking. They gradually become aware of the diversity of opinion in other people and realise that authority may not have all the answers. Young adults begin to create their own style of thinking, and believe that others are entitled to the opinion they hold and that one opinion is good as anyone's else's. This leads to the next form of thinking, relative subordinate thinking. Here, personal opinions begin to be challenged by others, and a logical evaluation of knowledge is actively pursued. This leads to the final form of thinking, which is full relativism. In this stage of thinking, young adults completely understand that truth is relative, and knowledge is constructed and not given, contextual and not absolute. Post formal thought is qualitatively different than Piaget's formal operational thought. It involves understanding that the correct answer to a problem requires reflective thinking, may vary from one situation to another, and that the search for truth is often an ongoing, never-ending process. Along with this is the belief that solutions to problems need to be realistic and that emotion and subjective factors can influence thinking.

MIDDLEADULTHOOD

Middle age is the period of age beyond young adulthood but before the onset of old age. Various attempts have been made to define this age, which is around the third quarter of the average life span of human beings. In middle adulthood, an important challenge is to develop a genuine concern for the welfare of future generations and to contribute to the world through family and work. This period is aged between 40-60 years of life. From the period of twenties and thirties, the individual arrives at middle age in the forties and fifties. Middle age is characterised by competence, maturity, responsibility and stability. This is the time when one wants to enjoy the success of job, satisfaction derived from the family and social life. People look forward to the success of their children. Attention gets more focused on health, the fate of children, ageing parents, the use of leisure time and

plans of old age.

Middle aged adults often show visible signs of ageing such as loss of skin elasticity and graying of hair. Physical fitness usually wanes, with a 5-10kg accumulation of body fat, reduction in aerobic performance and a decrease in maximal heart rate. Strength and flexibility also decrease throughout middle age. However, people age at different rates and there can be significant differences between individuals of the same age. Midlife is also viewed as a period of creativity and significant contribution to society. It is found that the best works of scientists, writers and artists are produced during the late forties and early fifties. The changes that occur from adolescence to young adulthood may be stressful at times, but between the ages of 19 and 30 we are at our prime physically, and our cognitive skills are becoming finalised. Sure, sometimes it seems like we're dealing with a million things all at once and that one of any number of things could change the rest of our lives, but that's the best part about it. Young adulthood is when (most of us) decide exactly what it is that we want to do with the rest of our lives whether it's raised a family, start a career, or both.

Cognitive Changes

Middle adulthood is the period in which an individual change in their cognitive functioning as concerned to their intelligence: crystallized and fluid; information processing and memory; expertise; career, work and leisure; religion, health and coping; and meaning in life.

Intelligence

Cognitive development is multidirectional. It gains in some area and losses in others. **Crosssectional measures** of intelligence show decreases with age. There may be cohort effect of better or more schooling. **Longitudinal measures** show increase, at least until the age of 50s. It may be inflated due to practice effects and attrition. Cognitive abilities are more likely to increase than decrease, with exception of arithmetic skills, which begin to shift slightly downwards by age 40.

Fluid intelligence refers to our ability to see relationships, use abstract reasoning, and analyse information. **Crystallized intelligence** refers to our ability to use knowledge, experience, vocabulary, and verbal memory (Horn & Hofer, 1992). Fluid intelligence declines with age, but crystallized intelligence continues to grow as we learn more during middle age.

- ***Fluid Intelligence***

Fluid intelligence is the flexible reasoning and is made up of the basic mental abilities such as inductive reasoning, abstract thinking and speed of thinking required for understanding any

subject. It is fast and abstract reasoning, in adults, there is a decline with age. It includes nonverbal abilities and nonverbal puzzle solving, novel logic problems; allows best works at age 20s and 30s by mathematicians, scientists and poets.

Fluid intelligence peaks during the early adulthood and then declines ability to apply mental powers to new problems, perceiving relationships, forming concepts and drawing inferences. It declines probably due to changes in brain. These differences might be due to cohort effects related to educational differences rather than to age.

- ***Crystallized Intelligence***

Crystallized intelligence is the verbal reasoning that holds across the lifespan which reflects accumulated knowledge and vocabulary. It allows best works at age of 40s, 50s, and older by historians, philosophers, prose writers. It refers to the accumulation of facts, information and knowledge that comes with education and experience within a particular culture. Crystallized intelligence improves through middle age and on. The ability to remember and use information acquired over a lifetime is increased, and also depends on education and culture of the individual. An individual is able to use stored information's and process automatically in their daily lives. Many psychologists believe that fluid intelligence was primarily genetic and that crystallized intelligence was primarily learned. This nature-nurture distinction is probably invalid, in part because the acquisition of crystallized intelligence is affected by the quality of fluid intelligence.

Fluid intelligence declines during adulthood, although this decline is temporarily masked by an increase in crystallized intelligence. IQ tests may lack ecological validity as the reaction time slows down with age and results may be due to physical changes and not cognitive changes.

Robert Sternberg proposed that intelligence is composed of three distinct parts:

- ***Analytic / Academic***

It consists of mental processes that foster efficient learning, remembering and thinking. Multiple choice tests, with one and only one right answer reward analytic intelligence. They tend to have an extensive, highly organised knowledge of a particular domain and increase in work satisfaction. There is a greater commitment towards the job. They have greatest physical and psychological well-being. The current middle-aged worker faces more challenges, and increased career challenges lead to career changes. The midlife career changes can be self-motivated or imposed by others.

- ***Creative***

Creativity is another important adult skill related to intelligence. Like intelligence, though, it is hard to agree what it is. We know that some kinds of creativity, like writing, peaks during middle adulthood. Creativity and practical intelligence often combine to create people we call experts in their fields, whether repairing cars, farming, writing, or designing a spacecraft. It involves the capacity to be flexible and innovative when dealing with new situations. Expertise increases in the middle adulthood years. They tend to use the accumulated experience of their life situations to solve problems. There is more creativity and flexibility in their domain than novices. They prefer to make their own decisions and plans. They prefer their own judgment to that of others and don't tend to back down in the face of criticism or disagreement. They are most resourceful when faced with unique circumstances or problems. They show an imaginative use of many different words. They show more flexibility in their approach to problems, are eager to try new avenues, and are not bound to rules or accepted ideas of the way things work. They show originality and do not often come up with off the shelf solutions.

- ***Practical***

It enables the person to adapt his/her abilities to contextual demands. They tend to have a pleasant time after work. They have more time and money to pursue activities and interests. There is decreased rate of heart disease and death due to vacations and leisure. During this time they are preparing themselves for retirement.

Information Processing and Memory

During the middle adulthood the speed of information processing, reaction time, and memory declines. The use of effective memory strategies can decrease the decline.

Religion, Health, Coping and Meaning in Life

Religion and spirituality is an important dimension of life during this stage. A significant increase in religiosity and spirituality is seen during middle age. There is an individual difference in religious interest, as the females show a stronger interest in religion than males do. Positive association of religious participation and longevity is noticed. Religion promotes physical and psychological health and positive functions of religious coping.

According to Victor Frankl, the examining of the finiteness of our existence leads to exploration of meaning in life. Many middle-aged individuals increasingly examine life's meaning.

Young adulthood is a time when most of us finish school, find a career we enjoy, and create a family of our own. Physically, it is a time where we are our healthiest and will reach our peak performance. Cognitively, it is a time to grow up and make life decisions. Socioemotionally, it is a time to take on roles

of independence, lifestyles, marriage, and family. Erik Erikson, a prominent theorist in the field of emotional development, assigns specific goals to different periods of life. Those in early adulthood are said to be struggling with intimacy as opposed to isolation. This refers to the desire for a stable long-term relationship. Those who have achieved intimacy are thought to host a range of positive attributes, such as confidence and acceptance. Alternatively, those in isolation are more likely to fear loneliness and abandonment. Intimacy requires an individual to sacrifice some of his independence for another person. After successfully traversing the struggle of isolation and intimacy, an individual will deal with generativity, which is the desire to improve society for future generations.

Between the ages of 35-60, we find vast changes in many areas of our lives. The most obvious changes related to our lifestyle include: physical development and health, career and finances, marriage, and leisure activities. For many, midlife is a time when they start to think about “how much time they have left”. Individuals begin to reexamine their lives, their relationships, their work, and even to question the meaning of it all. This process has been referred to as a mid-life crisis. Clearly, middle adulthood is a time change and development. One of the major aspects of middle adulthood are the physical and biological changes that occur in the body. Two of the most noticeable changes are seeing and hearing. Each of these begin to decline in the middle years. One of the physical changes that occur is in height. Most individuals get a little shorter through the years. Also, hair is graying, skin is wrinkling, bodies are sagging, and teeth are yellowing. Some adults strive to make themselves look younger by having plastic surgery, dying their hair, wearing wigs, joining exercise programs, or taking heavy vitamin doses.

While the adult years are generally a time of vitality and good health, there are health concerns. The main health problems of middle adulthood are cardiovascular disease, cancer, and menopause. Another major problem that affects health and behaviour is stress. Overall this is a time of major change and development physically and mentally. It is also at this time that adults adjust their idealistic hopes to realistic possibilities. This adjustment to attainable goals is dependent on how much time is left before retirement, with retirement planning being a major area of financial concern. These reassessments may lead to stress and sadness over unaccomplished goals, which for a small few may lead to a midlife career change.

Another financial adjustment that tends to take place for many mid adults is the planning for college and setting aside the necessary funds for their children. In response to these growing financial needs and greater free time, due to their children getting older, many women enter or reenter the workforce. In short, this tends to be a time of career and financial readjustment and planning for both men and

women. Adults demonstrate much variation in their intimate lifestyles. Nearly all of us are married at least some time during our adult lives. Many marriages either improve or deteriorate during middle age. If a couple form a relationship appropriate to this new period of life, their marriage will likely grow stronger. But if they cannot adapt to the new conditions of their lives, their marriage may develop problems. Regardless, intimacy, marriage, and family concerns are a priority during middle adulthood. Some specific issues include the empty nest syndrome, late parenting, divorce, sexuality, remarriage, and grand parenting.

PSYCHOSOCIAL CHANGES

The period of adulthood is marked by society's expectation of performing one's duty as an adult. Some special roles and relationships like family and career are the major milestones of adulthood. While discussing development during adult years stage theories will be put forward to explain the adult years. This will be seen in contrast to the contextual theories. This unit will discuss psychosocial changes during early and middle adulthood and the various changes that come about as one grows older.

DEVELOPMENT DURING ADULT YEARS

The spurt of growth during adolescence stabilises by adulthood and the individual looks forward to more concrete roles in the society. The capabilities and behaviours of the individuals continue to change as they grow older not only because of the biological growth process but also because of their understanding and the way they interact with their environment. In the Indian tradition the period of adulthood is referred to as Grihastha ashram. During this stage an individual enters the social life and accepts responsibilities of family, marriage and entering into one's career. The stages of adulthood have sub periods such as young adulthood, middle adulthood and late adulthood. Perhaps middle adulthood is best known for the midlife crisis. This is a time of reevaluation that leads to questioning long held beliefs and values. The midlife crisis may also result in a person divorcing his or her spouse, changing jobs, or moving from the city to the suburbs.

Typically beginning in the early or mid 40s, the crisis often occurs in response to a sense of mortality, as middle age persons realise that their youth is limited and that they have not accomplished all of their desired goals in life. Of course, not everyone experiences stress or upset during middle age, instead they may simply undergo a midlife transition, or change, rather than going through the emotional upheaval of a midlife crisis. Other middle age adults prefer to reframe their experience by thinking of themselves as being in the prime of their lives rather than in their declining years. The field of life-span development seems to be moving away from a normative crisis model to a timing of events model, so

as to explain such events as the midlife transition and the midlife crisis. The former model describes psychosocial tasks as occurring in a definite age related sequence, while the latter describes tasks as occurring in response to particular life events and their timing. In other words, whereas the normative crisis model defines the midlife transition as occurring exactly between ages 40 and 45, the timing of events model defines it as occurring when the persons begin the process of questioning their own life desires, values, goals, and accomplishments.

Stage Theories Versus the Contextual Approach

Stage Theories: Stage theories suggest that all human beings, no matter where or when they live, move through an orderly progression of stages in their development. The individual grows in a systematic process. According to Eric Erikson's eight stages of life, development proceeds through a series of distinct stages, each defined by a specific crisis. These crisis, in return results from the fact that as an individual grows older, they confront new combinations of biological drives and societal demands. The biological drives reflect the expectations and requirements of society for people at different ages.

During adulthood, every individual passes through three major crises. The first of these is the crises of integrity versus isolation. During late adolescence and early adulthood, individual must develop the ability to form deep, intimate relationships with others. This does not simply mean sexual intimacy, rather, it involves the ability to form strong emotional attachment to others. In other words, the first crisis of adult life centers in the capacity to love, to care deeply and consistently with others. People who fail to resolve it successfully will live in isolation, unable to form truly intimate, lasting relationships.

Erikson labeled the second crisis of adult life, that is the crisis of generativity versus absorption. The need for individuals to overcome selfish, self-centered concerns and to take an active interest in helping and guiding the next generation. For parents, such activities are focused on their children. After children have themselves grown up into adults, however, the tendency towards the generativity may involve serving as mentor or guide for members of younger generation, helping them in their careers and lives. People who do not become parents can express generativity by providing help and guidance to young people such as students, younger co-workers, nieces and nephews, and so on. Individuals who successfully resolve this crisis become absorbed in their own lives and gradually cut themselves off from an important source of growth and satisfaction.

Erikson termed the final crisis of adult development as integrity versus despair. Individuals in this stage reach the final decades of their life and look back and analyse themselves with questions like "Did my life have any meaning?" "Did my being here really matter?" If the individual is able to answer "yes"

for the questions, and to feel that they have reached many of their goals, they attain a sense of integrity. If, instead, they find their lives to be lacking on such dimensions, they may experience intense feelings of despair. Successful resolution of this final crisis can have important effects on how individuals come to terms with their own mortality, the inevitable fact of death, and on their psychological and physical health during the final years.

According to Erikson and others who view adult development in terms of discrete phases or stages, development during human adult years follows an orderly plan, reflecting the fact that at different times in people's lives, everyone experiences the same problems, events, challenges, or as mentioned crises. The way in which an individual deal with each of these turning points determines the course and nature of people's lives from that point on.

Contextual Approach: Contextual theories of development take careful account of many of the differences that exist in one's life and situations. The context and situation of each individual varies a great deal and these in fact account for the individuals to experience the crises in their life differently. Contextual theories of development hold that it is the context or environment under which a child grows, that is more important than inbuilt mechanisms. These theorists believe that infants and children develop and grow according to the environmental and contextual influences they are exposed to and that these contextual factors are what makes them fully functioning adults or disordered adults. Biological influences are seen as secondary if not completely ignored.

Two of the most important contextual theories were put forward by American psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner and Lev Vygotsky. According to Bronfenbrenner's theory development is influenced by experiences arising from broader social and cultural systems as well as a child's immediate surroundings. Ecological Systems Theory, also called "Development in Context" or "Human Ecology" theory, specifies four types of nested environmental systems, with bi-directional influences within and between the systems. This ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner presents the sociocultural view of development which focuses on the changing relations between individuals and the environments in which they live. It consists of five environmental systems ranging from the individual's direct interactions with social agents to the broad-based inputs of culture. The five systems in Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory are the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem.

The microsystem in ecological theory is the setting in which an individual lives (Bronfenbrenner 1979). This context includes the person's family, peers, school, neighbourhood, etc. is the immediate environment in which a person is operating. The individual directly interacts with

this environment and the latter has a direct impact on a child's biological and psychological development. The key concept is the "direct contact" between the child and the niche. The mesosystem in ecological theory involves linkages between Microsystems. Behaviourists like John Watson and B.F. Skinner defined environment as "any and all external focuses that shape the individual's environment". While environment is extremely important, there are others who are of the view that the individual in addition has an important role to play. That is, it is not just that he/she gets influenced by environment, but the developing individual is not all passive but actively influences also the environment in which he/she grows up.

PSYCHOSOCIAL CHANGES DURING EARLY ADULTHOOD

Early adulthood is the stage of our life between the ages of about 20-40 years old, who are typically vibrant, active and healthy, and are focused on friendship, romance, child bearing and careers. It is the first stage of adulthood in which the body physically changes and is one of the hardest times in our lives after teenage years. One has to deal with so much in this time and it seems to be the time for self search as well as preparation for the future coming years of old age.

During this time in one's life, people find themselves with a new sense of independence and for the first time in life they really feel free. However, along with that comes a lot of added personal responsibility to both individuals and others and the persons really start learning more about themselves as well as others through social interaction.

Eric Erikson's Theory

According to Erikson, the socialisation process consists of eight phases – the "eight stages of man." His eight stages of man were formulated, not through experimental work, but through wide - ranging experience in psychotherapy, including extensive experience with children and adolescents from low - as well as upper - and middle - social classes. Each stage is regarded by Erikson as a "psychosocial crisis," which arises and demands resolution before the next stage can be satisfactorily negotiated. These stages are conceived in an almost architectural sense: satisfactory learning and resolution of each crisis is necessary if the child is to manage the next and subsequent ones satisfactorily. It is like the foundation of a house which is essential to the first floor, which in turn must be structurally sound to support the second floor as it gets built up. Some of the important crises of the adulthood include the following:

Intimacy vs. Isolation

Intimacy requires that an independent persons give up some of their independence and redefine their

identity to include the interests of another person or others in their lives. The adult life is a conflict of intimacy vs. independence, and includes differing needs for connection, fears of abandonment or being overwhelmed, and it's a challenging work in progress.

People who have achieved intimacy are cooperative, tolerant, and accepting of differences. They can accept times of aloneness without fear of loneliness. If there is too great a sense of isolation, there will be fears of forming close ties, due to fears of loss of identity or freedom.

Such people are more competitive than cooperative. They get easily threatened if any person gets too close, and not accepting of another's differences. If there is successful resolution of this conflict, a person can go on to develop generativity, which means caring for the next generation and helping to improve society. In women, child bearing usually occurs in the 20s and 30s, while contributions to society may occur later. As children come into the picture, values and focus will shift with those demands.

Levinson's Seasons of Life Theory

Levinson sought to find a common path of change in adulthood. He believed that there were stages with tasks inherent to each one. He was of the view that each stage began with a transition, lasting about 5 years. Between transitions there are periods of 5–7 years that are stable, during which a person builds a life structure.

Life structure is the underlying design of a person's life, which involves relationships with significant others and occupations. This structure is designed to harmonize inner and outer demands to enhance quality of life. Early adulthood is the time of greatest energy, contradiction and stress. It is also a time of intense satisfaction, as a person charts his/her own course in love, sexuality, family, occupation, setting life goals, etc.

Dreams and mentors: In Levinson's theory, during the early adult transition (age 17–22) most people construct a dream, an image of themselves in the adult world that will guide their decision making. The more specific the dream, the more motivating it is. Men's dreams are said to be more individualistic and often entail success in business and career. On the other hand if they include women, their dreams are invariably related to their being supporters of their goals.

Age-30 transition serves as a time to reevaluate their life structure. If the person is still single, she/he will begin looking for a partner. Women who had immersed in marriage and child-bearing may begin to assert more individualistic goals. This period can be a real crisis if neither relationships nor

occupation is successful.

Settling down for Men means focusing on certain relationships and aspirations, and leaving others behind. They try to establish a niche in society consistent with their values: family, wealth, power, achievement.

Continued instability for Women occurs as women often get side-tracked from a professional focus by child-bearing and family responsibilities. Most women don't attain the stability that men achieve in the early 30s until middle age.

The Social clock is the age-graded expectations that we hold for life events, such as first job, getting married, having children, buying a house, retirement. Women who followed a feminine social clock (marriage and child bearing in the 20s) are considered to be responsible, self-controlled, tolerant, and caring, but do seem to feel their self-esteem decline, and are said to feel more vulnerable as they aged.

Women who followed a masculine social clock (early career development) became more dominant, sociable, independent, and intellectually effective. Women who had not followed a social clock are said to be suffering from self-doubt, feelings of incompetence, and loneliness.

Close relationships require finding a partner, building emotional bonds, and learning how to engage in true intimacy with another person.

Romantic Love entails finding a partner to share one's life and dreams with. It enhances self-concept and well-being.

Selecting a mate usually means finding someone of similar background, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and religion, in places where people like that congregate. It requires some physical proximity to develop a meaningful relationship.

Components of love: The triangular theory of love (Sternberg) suggests love has 3 components: intimacy, passion, and commitment. Intimacy has to do with emotions of tenderness, warmth, concern for others, desire for partner to reciprocate. Passion is the sexual component, as well as romance, which is the physical arousal component.

Passionate love is the stuff of the beginning of a relationship – the courting, sexual attraction. It declines as the partner becomes more known, less idealised. Few long-term relationships maintain this level of attraction. Companionate love is formed with intimacy and commitment, as partners develop warm, trusting affection and offer caregiving. Solid long-term relationships involve both types

of love at different stages. It requires this glue to hold a couple together as the newness of a relationship wears off. Commitment determines if a relationship will survive. Communication of commitment requires warmth, forgiveness, sensitivity, acceptance, and respect.

Attachment Patterns and Romantic Relationships

Early attachment patterns predict the quality of later intimate relationships. That early attachment bond sets up an internal working model, or expectations about love figures. It also relates to quality of parenting and attachments formed in those relationships. The attachment is itself of various types which are discussed below:

- I. Secure attachment** – those with secure attachments to a caregiver viewed themselves as likable, open to others, comfortable with intimacy, with few fears of abandonment or intimacy. They describe their love relationships as trusting, happy, and the partner as a friend. They were willing to turn to the partner for comfort, and they described satisfying sexual behaviour.
- II. Avoidant attachment** – those with an avoidant attachment history (demanding, disrespectful, critical parents) had internal models heavy on independence, mistrusting of partners, and anxious about people getting too close. They believe others dislike them and true love is hard to find or doesn't last. Their relationships are characterised by jealousy, emotional distance, little enjoyment of physical contact. They may become workaholics or engage in affairs to prove their theory that love can't be counted on.
- III. Resistant attachment** – this includes parents who were unpredictable or unfair. These people set up intense relationships characterised by fears of abandonment and smothering of the partner. They experienced extreme highs and lows in a relationship. They have poor boundaries with others, disclosing inappropriately to others too early in the relationship.

Characteristics of the partner also affect romantic relationships. Those partners who feel internal security about themselves fostered security in their partner. So, a healthy relationship can help a person from a troubled background overcome some of the deficits of their background.

Friendships are usually similar in background, age, interests and needs. Friends offer affirmation and acceptance, support during difficulty. Sharing deep feelings and needs may be more open in a friendship than a marriage, especially for women. Same-sex friendships are more intimate for women than men. Women enjoy just talking, while men choose to do some activity together, especially sports. Unfortunately, men feel competitive with other men, so they describe barriers to deep friendships

with other men, in the form of resistance to revealing any vulnerabilities or needs unmet.

Other-sex friendships occur less often and don't last as long as same-sex friendships. Men and women disclose more to women, but women can learn important things about male motivations and taking a more objective stance from a male friend. Siblings as friends – especially sisters become companions in adulthood. Rivalries from the past subside as sibs develop a different type of supportive relationship. Close sib relationships predict mental health.

THE FAMILY LIFE CYCLE

This is a sequence of phases in the development of most families. Early adulthood, people live on their own, then marry and bear children. In middle age children leave home, parenting responsibilities diminish and people spend more time and money on themselves if they don't have to care for an elderly parent, finally retiring, getting older, and loss of a spouse.

Leaving home happens more often at earlier ages now than in the past. People leave for school, military, and for jobs, so they leave at different ages. Youth in chaotic and disturbing homes leave home earlier to escape the tension. Most leave home to experience their independence, even though that may mean living with a number of roommates to be able to afford it. If there are financial setbacks, however, most people feel they can return home if they have to.

Joining of families in marriage – people are waiting longer to marry today: ages 25 and 27 (W). Marriage represents connection between 2 family systems, with all the traditions and expectations inherent. Marital roles encompass meals, time together and apart, leisure time decisions, sexual needs, financial decisions. Some of these things are not as emotionally charged as others, but the partners rarely know which topics are potential explosions until they face them. Without good communication and negotiation skills, the openness of the marriage will be compromised.

Traditional marriages involve a clear division of labour between husband and wife. Man's responsibilities include economic provision; woman's responsibilities have to do with making a home and providing for children.

Egalitarian marriages have spouses relating as equals, with power and authority being shared. Both partners try to balance devotion to work with family responsibilities. Better- educated women expect this sort of marriage. Even so, division of labour in the home may not be equal.

Marital satisfaction – Men relate being happier in marriage than women. Being married enhances men's health, due to feelings of attachment, belonging, social support. Women need a certain relationship quality to feel satisfied in a relationship. So women suffer more when the relationship is having

problems. Women also suffer under multiple role demands, feel overwhelmed by the needs of all the people in their circle. Women are more willing to work on the relationship through discussion, but men are more willing to withdraw from conflict, leading to frustration in the women.

Parenthood has become an active choice for couples, as birth control is available and effective today. There is less stigmatisation for couples who remain childless. The decision to have children is based on financial circumstances, religious values, health concerns. Women with more traditional identities usually choose to have children. Those with high status, demanding jobs choose less often to have children. Advantages of having children include warmth and affection, the fun that children offer, learning experiences, desire to pass on values, family name, feelings of accomplishment in raising successful children.

Disadvantages of having children include loss of freedom, burdens financially and in being tied down. The conflict between work responsibilities and family also is cited as a problem. Transition to parenthood occurs in all areas: loss of sleep, new tasks and responsibilities, less time for the couple, increased expenses. The roles become more traditional, even for egalitarian couples, so this can impose frustration on the couple. Loving, supportive marriages can usually manage the strain and will describe themselves as happy. Troubled marriages seem to become more distressed after a baby. Husband's negativity or out-of-control conflict predicts a drop in mother's satisfaction. The greater the difference in caregiving responsibilities, the greater the decline in marital satisfaction after childbirth. Interventions such as group experiences with other couples can get fathers more involved and enhance the father's appreciation of what caregiving entails, increasing affirmation of mother, and satisfaction.

Career development aids in establishing a satisfying identity- as adults with satisfying work develop skills, sense their accomplishments, make friends and feel more financially independent and secure.

Establishing a career: Men enter their careers earlier, as soon as they finish school, and they stay in the marketplace continuously. Promotion often seems to depend on job commitment and competitiveness in the worker. Very successful men emphasise their jobs over family responsibilities and leisure activities. Also, a sense of self-efficacy makes a difference in promotion. Those people with fears of failure will tend to set lower goals for themselves.

Combining work and family Dual-career marriage are challenging, particularly for women who carry so many role responsibilities- role overload. This links to stress, poorer marital relationships, poorer parenting, and child behaviour problems. It is particularly a problem for people in poorer paying jobs, with fewer options about child care, time off, etc. Career decisions are more flexible for

professional people, but moves are difficult, since both careers must be considered. Women are particularly afflicted with overload.

PSYCHOSOCIAL CHANGES DURING MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

Eric Erikson's Theory

Erikson stated that the primary psychosocial task of middle adulthood—ages 45 to 65—is to develop generativity, or the desire to expand one's influence and commitment to family, society, and future generations. In other words, the middle adult is concerned with forming and guiding the next generation. The middle adult who fails to develop generativity experiences stagnation, or self-absorption, with its associated self-indulgence and invalidism.

Generativity means reaching out to others in ways that give to and guide the next generation. In early adulthood it occurs as parents train children and develop a career. In midlife this extends beyond the nuclear family to a community or social group. Now people are trying to integrate their goals with the welfare of the larger world. Generativity includes all things people generate that can outlive them and improve society. Parenting is one way, but there are other ways, such as mentoring in the workplace, volunteering, community involvement, creative endeavors. People need to be needed and feel like their lives amount to something eternal.

There are certain social clock imperatives toward generativity, but there is also an optimistic "belief in the species" that we want to be part of. This means finding ways to be part of improving humanity. The alternative to finding a means to generativity is *stagnation*- becoming self-centered and narcissistic. These people place their own comfort/ security above challenges that include other people. There is a detachment even from their own children, a self-centered focus on what they can get from others, not what they can give, losing interest in being productive at work or developing their talents. Generative people are better adjusted, low in anxiety and depression and high in self-acceptance and life satisfaction. They are more open to others' differences in point of view, have leadership qualities, care about the welfare of others, and care more about their work than financial gain. Fatherhood seems to enhance generativity in men more than women.

Levinson's Seasons of life – middle adulthood begins with a transition (40-45), followed by a life structure (45-50). This structure is re-evaluated (50-55) and ends in a culminating life structure (55-60).

Midlife Transition occurs around age 40, when people evaluate their success in meeting their adult goals. They are realising there is more time behind them than ahead of them. In response to the valuation of time, they often make big changes in their lives- family, occupation. They may turn inward,

focusing on their own needs, instead of allowing themselves to be distracted by the people around them. They seem to re-evaluate everything.

Four Developmental Tasks of Middle Adulthood

Following are the developmental tasks of this stage of development:

- i) **Young-Old-seeking** :new ways of being young and old- giving up some youthful qualities that no longer seem appropriate, and transforming others, finding positive meaning in changes.
- ii) **Destruction-Creation**: They re-evaluate past hurtful acts- there may be attempts to apologise and make amends, or general attempts to be kinder, more creative, other-focused.
- iii) **Masculinity- Femininity**: Middle-aged people must find a way to recognise and integrate the masculine and feminine aspects of their personality- men become more empathic/ caring; women becoming more autonomous/ assertive
- iv) **Engagement- Separateness**: Middle-aged people are trying to find a better balance between engagement with the outside world and their interior needs. Men often pull back from occupational ambition and achievement focus; women may shift their interests from family to job or community and accomplishment.

Modifying the Life Structure

Gender similarities and differences are seen as people try to find a balance between youth and age. They may face life-threatening illnesses, or have to cope with ageing parents' needs. Women often fear the ageing process, as our society places so much emphasis on women's youth and looks as their value. Women will tend to perceive themselves as younger than they are – that gap increases with age. The more people integrate their masculine and feminine characteristics, the more androgynous they become, which is an adaptive approach to life.

Life Structure in Social Context is enabled through supports in the environment- poverty, unemployment and lack of personal value subverts this process. Even high- powered careers and great financial success can sabotage self-development, as the focus is on material concerns, not self development.

Midlife Crisis was cited by Levinson as people moved to middle adulthood. This is the idea that adults get to a certain point and question their life choices, resulting in a restructuring of the personality. The changes seen were slow and steady. Changes for men may occur around the early forties, but for women may occur in the late 40s and 50s, as they are freer from child responsibilities.

Stage vs. Life Events approach

There is controversy about whether midlife is actually a stage of development, like Erikson described. Many theorists just seen midlife transitions as adaptations to life events- children moving out or having to move back in, parents ageing concerns, retirement. There certainly is no specific age when changes will occur. Most midlife people describe troubling moments that prompt new goals and internal changes.

Stability and Change in Self-Concept and Personality

Possible Selves are all the ideas a person has about what one can become or what one fears becoming. Possible selves generated in the 20s are varied, positive and idealistic. As people age, possible selves become more realistic, fewer in number and more modest, related to competence in the areas already selected. The future no longer seems to hold endless opportunities, so people adjust to cope.

Self-Acceptance, Autonomy, and Environmental Mastery.

People become more introspective as they enter the second half of life. They have often made choices to change their lifestyle to suit their needs.

Coping strategies. These include finding the “silver lining” in a difficult situation, planning better ways to handle problems, evaluate alternatives to manage situations, and use humor to express themselves more effectively.

Gender Identity shifts in response to shifting proportions of sex hormones

Women adopt more masculine traits of assertiveness and self-confidence, and men often become more sensitive, caring, and considerate. People become more androgynous. Men may turn to their relationships as they seen they have fewer opportunities to develop influence at work. Women may have taken steps out of a bad marriage and have chosen to be more autonomous and assertive to survive.

Individual Differences in Personality Traits

Some people maintain consistent traits over the lifetime, while others adjust in some ways in response to life.

Relationships at Midlife

This period of the family life cycle is called “launching children and moving on.” In the past it was

known as the “empty nest,” but it is no longer seen in such a negative light, even for women. This period may last as long as 20 years before retirement. It also relates to establishing different relationships with children and finding new relationships with in-laws and grandchildren. They also must cope with elderly parents and their needs.

Marriage and Divorce

Households at this stage are well off economically compared to other age groups. Adults between 45 and 54 have the highest annual income. This can allow for expansion of opportunities to learn, travel, etc. If the marital relationship is shaky, many people choose this time to divorce and start over. At midlife, divorce seems to be more manageable emotionally.

Feminisation of poverty

This is a trend in which women who support themselves or their families have become the majority of the adult poverty population, regardless of age and ethnic group.

Causes of divorce

Women who cite poor communication, husband’s substance abuse, husband’s physical or verbal abuse, or their desire for autonomy will adjust better, since it indicates a remnant of self-esteem in spite of the failure. Women who do survive divorce successfully tend to be more tolerant, comfortable with uncertainty, nonconforming, and self-reliant.

Changing Parent-child Relationships

This adjustment is more positive when parents have interesting activities of their own, beyond parenting and focus on children. Parents who relinquish authority over their adult children will have more positive relationships with them after they move out. The authoritative parenting style links to better contact after the child leaves home, and better life satisfaction for the parents.

Grandparenthood is such a stage in this age, as it is a relationship with fewer responsibilities and mostly fun. Meanings of Grandparenthood are more significant than people think until they face that transition. The gratifications include:

- Valued elder
- Immortality through descendants
- Reinvolved with personal past

- Indulgence

Grandparent-Grandchild relationships are somewhat dependent on the age of the child. As the child grows older, the grandparents shift from play to warmth, support, information and advice-giving. The closer the families live geographically, the better chance the children can relate more closely to the grandparents, especially the grandma. Siblings report declining contact in midlife, but this increases as one or more experience life events. Families gather for weddings, and support one another when a child divorces, or has a baby. Siblings reconnect as their children leave home and they rediscover it's fun to do things together. They often reconnect in response to the parents' illnesses or needs. Sister relationships are usually closer than brother relationships. If only one sibling holds the responsibility for elder care, there can be enormous resentment build up against the other sibs.

Friendships still cleave across genders – men are more likely to bond with men, and women with women. Women seem to have more close friends and offer and get more emotional support than men report. Numbers of friends decline with age, since people get more selective about friendships. If it is a close friendship, though, people will try to maintain it with care. Friendships are sources of emotional support, pleasure and enhance well-being.

Career Development

Job Training is less available to older workers, but if a person wants to upgrade his/her job, training is important. Unfortunately older worker have less supportive supervisors who tend to believe the ageing stereotypes and expect less of older workers.

Gender and Ethnicity

The Glass Ceiling is the unspoken, invisible barrier to advancement to women and ethnic minorities. Women managers are just as effective as male managers – they tend to be more inspiring and considerate than male managers. The current emphasis on team building is perfect for female skills in consensus-building.

Career Change at Midlife – usually they entail leaving one line of work for a related one. Some people find another line of work to find more stimulating work, others to more relaxing, less rigid or demanding work. Drastic job shifts usually signal personal crisis. Unemployment has been a serious problem in the past 2 years as the technology industry cratered and many jobs went with it. Highly trained and well-paid workers were suddenly on unemployment lines. Middle-aged workers are more affected by unemployment, as they recognise they won't be the most employable, or they won't command the same salary they had before. This can seriously affect a worker's sense of self worth at this point.

Planning for Retirement

This is not always adequate, as people tend to believe they will work as long as they want, but illness or family crisis will sometimes short-circuit this plan. The other aspect of planning has to do with how one wants to spend their time. If people don't develop hobbies, community interests, etc., boredom can trigger depression and hopelessness. Even the idea of relocation requires much thought, since moving to be with children may impact that relationship very negatively.

During the period of young adulthood one sees himself or herself as an autonomous and independent adult. In this period the individual becomes financially less dependent on the parental family. A major developmental task during this period is the choice of career. Young men and women tend to settle down in a career of their choice. In addition a young adult tries to settle down and start the family life. They are also concerned about various social issues and forming close relationships with one's professional peers and members of community. The duties of a person demand two fold responsibilities which are towards oneself as well as the society.

Perhaps middle adulthood is best known for its infamous midlife crisis: a time of reevaluation that leads to questioning long-held beliefs and values. The midlife crisis may also result in a person divorcing his or her spouse, changing jobs, or moving from the city to the suburbs. Typically beginning in the early- or mid-40s, the crisis often occurs in response to a sense of mortality, as middle adults realise that their youth is limited and that they have not accomplished all of their desired goals in life. Of course, not everyone experiences stress or upset during middle age; instead they may simply undergo a midlife transition, or change, rather than the emotional upheaval of a midlife crisis. Other middle adults prefer to reframe their experience by thinking of themselves as being in the prime of their lives rather than in their declining years.

During the male midlife crisis, men may try to reassert their masculinity by engaging in more youthful male behaviours, such as dressing in trendy clothes, taking up activities like scuba diving, motorcycling, or skydiving. During the female midlife crisis, women may try to reassert their femininity by dressing in youthful styles, having cosmetic surgery, or becoming more socially active. Some middle adult women try to look as young as their young adult children by dyeing their hair and wearing more youthful clothing. Such actions may be a response to feelings of isolation, loneliness, inferiority, uselessness, nonassertion, or unattractiveness.

The field of life-span development seems to be moving away from a normative-crisis model to a timing-of-events model to explain such events as the midlife transition and the midlife crisis. The

former model describes psychosocial tasks as occurring in a definite age-related sequence, while the latter describes tasks as occurring in response to particular life events and their timing. In other words, whereas the normative-crisis model defines the midlife transition as occurring exactly between ages 40 and 45, the timing-of-events model defines it as occurring when the person begins the process of questioning life desires, values, goals, and accomplishments.

AGEING ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN EARLY ADULTHOOD

Early adulthood is the stage of our life between the ages of about 20-40 years old, who are typically vibrant, active and healthy, and are focused on friendship, romance, child bearing and careers. It is the first stage of adulthood in which the body physically changes and is one of the hardest times in our lives after teenage years. Neither intimacy nor individual development can exist alone. The birth of a child initiates a human being into a life-long process of mutual adaptation between the child, his or her intimate relationship partners and the broader social environment. Intimate interactions and relationships affect adaptations to the changing needs and stresses that evolve with each stage of development throughout one's lifetime. Intimate interactions from early life serve as the basis upon which relationships later in life are formed. Environmental contingencies to which individuals must adapt are rooted in these relationships. In an attempt to adapt to other people's styles of relating, one must adjust his or her own behaviours.

Maturity

Children entering adolescence must begin to adapt to the adult world and its institutions while coming to terms with emerging parts of themselves. They discover themselves as having new emotional and sexual needs. As they make these discoveries, adolescents begin to realise the limitations of their parents. Taking responsibility for aspects of their own character requires distancing from authoritative.

Friendships

Over the course of social development, the role of friends and parents changes significantly. As an adolescent undergoes physical and emotional changes, he or she seeks out relationships that enhance efforts to adapt to new needs and stresses. Adolescents seek to share their thoughts and feelings with those who are experiencing similar changes. Intimate interactions increase between friends during this stage in life because they provide teens with opportunities for self-clarification. Through the formation of co-constructive dialogues between friends, teens can participate together in exploring and constructing selves.

Multiple Selves

During late adolescence, one must first confront the problem of multiple selves. For the first time, an adolescent realises that his or her personality changes from one situation to the next. This is the stage of life during which one looks to craft a narrative of the self that provides a sense of sameness and continuity. The importance of intimate friendship and romance formed during early adulthood stems from the valuable and adaptive contribution dialogues made with friends during adolescence. Personality differences can be identified by capacities to form intimate relationships characterised by commitment, depth, and partner individuation based on interactions of early life.

AGEING ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN MIDDLEADULTHOOD

Middle adulthood refers to the people whom are experiencing changes and development in their central lives. It is basically about the midlife transition or the period of life beyond young adulthood but before the commencement of old age.

Physical Appearance

The changes in physical appearance are some of the most notable parts for many people as they experience middle adulthood physical development. Hair begins turning gray or white as teeth fade from white to yellow. More wrinkles appear, especially on the face, and skin begins to sag.

Hearing and Vision

The ability to hear high-pitched noises disappears during middle adulthood as most people begin recognising hearing loss around 40. Men experience twice as much hearing loss as women during this life stage. Vision also decreases for both sexes as their ability to focus declines, and they need brighter lights to see.

Health

This stage of development generally refers to the diseases experienced by the individuals and the diseases are few infectious yet more chronic. Heart diseases and cancer are the two most common sicknesses for people in midlife period. The experience of health decline is different for men and women. Men are more prone to heart disease, cancer and stroke especially on the incidence that men had experience or are experiencing divorce. For women, non-fatal illnesses like goiter, gout or arthritis and lung and breast cancer. Though death is fewer for females than in males, diabetic cases are inclined on the female's part more than the males. The gain or lost in this domain generally depends on how people take care of themselves while they are still young and capable to do so.

Strength and Coordination

As adults pass through middle adulthood their strength begins to diminish as some of their muscle is replaced with fat. Flexibility also decreases, and the reaction time of individuals in middle adulthood decreases as well.

Sexuality

The start of middle adulthood often signifies the end of a woman's ability to bear children. They proceed to go through menopause during this middle-age stage in their life. Men still possess the ability to reproduce although their fertility decreases in middle adulthood as they age.

Disease

Diabetes, heart disease and cancer are just a few of the common diseases discovered during middle adulthood. While chances are these diseases have been building up in an individual throughout their life, the discovery and treatment of them often occurs when people are in middle age.

Relationships during Middle Adulthood

During middle adulthood, the two primary long-term relationships characteristic are cohabitation and marriage. Cohabitors are unmarried people living together in a sexual relationship, often state their reason for cohabiting as either a trial for marriage or an alternative to marriage. By middle age, most of the adults are married. Marital satisfaction is often described in terms of a U-curve: People generally affirm that their marriages are happiest during the early years, but not as happy during the middle years. Marital satisfaction then increases again in the later years, once finances have stabilised and parenting responsibilities have ended.

Divorce

Middle adults are not immune to problems in relationships. The reasons for dissolving a relationship are many and varied, just as relationships themselves differ in their make-up and dynamics. In some cases, the couple cannot handle an extended crisis. In other cases, the spouses change and grow in different directions. In still others, the spouses are completely incompatible from the very start. However, long-term relationships rarely end because of difficulties with just one of the partners. Both parties are usually responsible for the factors that may lead to a relationship's end, such as conflicts, problems, growing out of love, or empty-nest issues that arise after the last child leaves his or her parent's home.

Love changes over time, and such changes may become evident by middle adulthood. The ideal form of love in adulthood involves three components: passion, intimacy, and commitment—termed consummate love, or complete love. This variety of love is unselfish, devoted, and is most often

associated with romantic relationships. Getting started is easy; sticking to it is much harder.

For many middle-aged couples, passion fades as intimacy and commitment build. In other words, many middle adults find themselves in a marriage typified by companionate love, which is both committed and intimate, but not passionate. Yet a relationship that has lost its sexual nature need not remain this way, nor do such changes necessitate the end of a long-term relationship. In fact, many middle adult couples find effective ways of improving their ability to communicate, increasing emotional intimacy, rekindling the fires of passion, and growing together. The understanding that evolves between two people over time can be striking.

Relationships that last

Long-term relationships share several factors, including both partners regarding the relationship as a long-term commitment; both verbally and physically expressing appreciation, admiration, and love; both offering emotional support to each other; and both considering the other as a best friend. Essential to preserving a quality relationship is the couple's decision to practice effective communication. Communication is the means by which intimacy is established and nurtured within a relationship; it helps partners better relate to and understand each other. Communication helps them feel close, connected, and loved.

Friends

Friends offer support, direction, guidance, and a change of pace from usual routines. During this period, life responsibilities are at an all-time high, so having extra time for socialising is usually rare. For this reason, middle adults may have less friends than their newlywed and retired counterparts. Yet where quantity of friendships may be lacking, quality predominates. Some of the closest ties between friends are formed and nourished during middle adulthood.

Children

As adults wait later to marry and start families, more and more middle adults find themselves rearing small children. Middle adults and their adolescent children are both prone to emotional crises, which may occur at the same time. For adolescents, the crisis involves the search for identity; for middle adults, the search is for generativity. These two crises are not always compatible, as parents try to deal with their own issues as well as those of their adolescents. Parents respond to their children's adolescence in different ways. Some middle adults attempt to live out their own youthful fantasies—sexual and otherwise—through their children. They may try to make their teenage children into improved versions of themselves. For example, some parents may force their teenagers to take music

lessons or make them join a sports team, while other parents may insist that their children attend a certain college or enter the family business. Witnessing their children on the verge of becoming adults can also trigger a midlife crisis for some middle adults. The adolescent journey into young adulthood is a reminder to middle-aged parents of their own ageing processes and inescapable settling into middle and later adulthood.

Middle-aged parents typically maintain close relationships with their grown up children who have left home. Many parents report feeling as if they continue to give more than receive from relationships with their children, including helping with their finances or watching their pets when they are out of town. Still, most middle adults and their grown children tend to value their time together, even as their respective roles continue to change.

Parents

Most middle adults characterise the relationship with their parents as affectionate. Indeed, a strong bond is often present between related middle and older adults. Although the majority of middle adults do not live with their parents, contacts are usually frequent and positive. And perhaps for the first time, middle adults are able to see their parents as the fallible human beings that they are. One issue facing middle adults is that of caring for their ageing parents. In some cases, adults, who expected to spend their middle-age years traveling and enjoying their own children and grandchildren, instead find themselves taking care of their ailing parents. Some parents are completely independent of their adult children's support, while others are partially independent of their children; and still others are completely dependent. Children of dependent parents may assist them financially (paying their bills), physically (bringing them into their homes and caring for them), and emotionally (as a source of human contact as the parents' social circle diminishes). Daughters and daughters-in-law are the most common caretakers of ageing parents and in-laws.

Even though the death of a parent is never welcome, some long-term adult caretakers express ambivalent feelings about the event. The grown children of parents dying of a lingering illness, for example, usually do not want to see their loved ones suffer—even if alleviation means death. These children may find themselves hoping simultaneously for a cure and for a peaceful release from the pain that their parent is experiencing.

Conclusion

Early adulthood is the stage of our life between the ages of about 20-40 years old, who are typically vibrant, active and healthy, and are focused on friendship, romance, child bearing and careers. Intimate

interactions and relationships affect adaptations to the changing needs and stresses that evolve with each stage of development throughout one's lifetime. Intimate interactions from early life serve as the basis upon which relationships later in life are formed. By middle age, most of the adults are married. Marital satisfaction is often described in terms of a U-curve: People generally affirm that their marriages are happiest during the early years, but not as happy during the middle years. Marital satisfaction then increases again in the later years, once finances have stabilised and parenting responsibilities have ended as we get older, we become physically less like our peers. That's because we are the sum of our life experiences. At age six, not too much has happened to our bodies to make us radically different from our peers. But by middle and old age, we've had decades to develop and maintain habits that have an impact on our health, both negatively and positively.