

Erik erikson's view of the cognitive changes occurring in the middle and late sta...

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Psychoanalyst Erik Erikson suggested that middle adulthood encompasses a period he characterizes as the generativity-versus-stagnation stage. Middle adulthood is spent in either generativity, making contributions to family and society as a whole, or stagnation. Generative people strive to be involved with others as well as playing a role in guiding future generations. However, lack of psychological growth during this period can result in a person becoming stagnant. Some individuals flourish when they have found a career that fulfills their needs, while people who become stagnant become frustrated and bored with the situation.

When elderly people move into the last of life's eight stages of psychosocial development, they enter the ego-integrity-versus-despair stage. This process is defined by looking back over someone's life, evaluating it, then accepting it. People who become successful in this stage feel a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment. Erikson refers to this acceptance as integrity. This differs from generativity because one is accepting the end of their life, instead of accepting where their life will start in a sense of career and self. However, if one is to look back on their life with dissatisfaction, they may feel they have been cheated or missed opportunities. Such individuals will mostly be depressed or angry about the way life turned out and the direction it is heading, this is referred to as despair. Much like stagnation, the person can become frustrated and upset over how life is or how it has been. This is mainly when circumstances are not in ones favor. One way to overcome these feelings is to come to terms with death. They must understand death is inevitable and probably not that far away, that they have made

contributions to society in their life. This is referred to as ego-transcendence versus ego-preoccupation.

As we get older we must not just come to terms with death, we need to accept the changes that are happening physically and cognitively. In the body-transcendence versus body-preoccupation stage, one must be able to learn and accept physical changes that happen as we get older, we refer to this as transcendence. If someone is unable to do so, they become preoccupied with the physical deterioration, to the detriment of their personality development. Although the physical capabilities are not the same in the elderly as when they were young, many older people stay regularly fit considering their age. The changes that began in middle adulthood are becoming more unmistakable by the time one finds themselves in late adulthood. The two distinct types of aging are primary aging and secondary aging. Primary aging involves the irreversible changes that occur as people get older due to genetic programming. Secondary aging refers to the changes that are brought on by illnesses and diseases, not increased by age itself. Late adulthood is a very interesting period of life. Since people are now living longer than ever before, late adulthood is increasing in length.

Whether we say it starts at 65 or 70 years, the amount of people included in this stage is larger than ever before, due to medicine and technological advances. One of the most obvious signs someone is in late adulthood would be a person's hair. Most people's hair become distinctly gray and eventually white, which may thin overall. The face as well as other parts of the body start to wrinkle as the skin loses elasticity and collagen, then the protein that forms body tissue is lost. Physical changes in late adulthood are very easy to

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see. Some signs of aging, you may not be able to see as well are happening internally. Significant changes happen cognitively, for instance, the brain becomes smaller and even lighter due to increasing age. As the brain starts to shrink, it eventually begins to pull away from the skull and the space left between the skull and the brain can double throughout the life span. Neurons and brain cells are reduced throughout the brain, but not as many as were once thought. The number of cells in the brain's cortex may not even change at all. Now the brain is aging, as well as the heart, it is receiving less blood flow. Additionally, some hormones are produced at a lower level due to increasing age. One prevalent problem that occur cognitively as we age is major depression. This feeling of hopelessness, is the most likely the loss of spouses and friends that have already passed away. A person may also fell hopelessness due to the loss of independence and declining physical capabilities. It is also not uncommon for the elderly to suffer from psychological disorders as a result from medications that they may be taking. The most common disorder would be dementia, which is very broad disorder, characterized by serious memory loss and other declining cognitive functions.