The Journey of Adulthood

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Chapter 12

The Successful Journey

Themes of Adult Development

Domains of Adult Functioning:
- Physical change
- Cognitive change
- Family and gender roles
- Relationships
- Work roles
- Personality and meaning
- Major tasks
Simultaneously Occurring Patterns

Emerging adulthood (Age 18 to 24)
Young adulthood (Age 25 to 39)
Middle adulthood (Age 40 to 64)
Older adulthood (Age 65 to 74)
Late adulthood (Age 75 and older)

Emerging Adulthood (Age 18 to 24)

Major Tasks:
- Identity exploration
- Positive instability
- Focus on self
- Feeling in-between
- Imaging possibilities

Peak physical condition; complete neuronal development; different rates of development.

Young adulthood (Age 25 to 39)

Period of most change in adult life
- Move into more major roles
- Start at the “bottom rung” in job
- Form romantic partnership
- Become parents

Neurological speed at maximum; network of social relationships develop; influenced by rules of conformity and social clock.
Middle adulthood (Age 40 to 64)

- Biological clock becomes audible as first signs of physical aging appear. (e.g., vision, skin, diminished reproduction capacity).
- Higher risk for major disease.
- Less social clock pressure; detribalization.
- World view more individualistic and sense of choice becomes important.
- Midlife crisis more myth than fact for most.

Older adulthood (Age 65 to 74)

- Small physical changes or declines continue to accumulate (e.g., hearing loss; arthritis; feeling bit slow).
- Rapid drop in role demands that accompany retirement.
- Similar decline/change in other roles.

Late adulthood (Age 75 and older)

- Processes of physical and mental aging begin to accelerate as functional reserves of physical systems likely fall below level required for independent living.
- Disengagement: social life space shrinks; roles become more individualized and rule governed; set of changes anticipated and accepted.
- Solitude comfortable for many.
Reserve Capacity and Adapting to Limitations
Selective optimization with compensation
Life review and resolution of unresolved conflicts

Variations in Successful Development
Individual differences in quality of life

Individual Differences in Quality of Life
Health and SES
Age
Gender
Race and ethnicity
Activities
Psychosocial factors
Social comparisons
Cultural differences
Other Measures of Life Success

Psychological health
Psychosocial adjustment
Berkeley and Grant studies (influence until late adulthood)
- Warm, supportive, intellectually stimulating family of origin
- Open-minded, intellectually competent parents with good marriage

Which statement makes the most sense to YOU?

Each era in adult life simply calls for different skills and qualities, so that what predicts success or healthy adjustment at one age is simply not the same as what predicts it at another age.

Successful adult life is created from the resources and opportunities available over the decades.

Model of Adult Growth and Development: Trajectories and Pathways

Proposition 1
There are shared, basic sequential physical and psychological developments occurring during adulthood, roughly (but not precisely) age-linked.
Model of Adult Growth and Development: Trajectories and Pathways

Proposition 2
Each adult’s development occurs primarily within a specific pathway or trajectory, strongly influenced by the starting conditions of education, family background, ethnicity, intelligence, and personality.

Proposition 3
Each pathway is made up of a series of alternating episodes of stable life structure and disequilibrium.

Proposition 4
The outcome of periods of disequilibrium may be either positive (psychological growth, maturity, improved health), neutral, or negative (regression or immaturity; ill health).
Chapter Review

1. ____ is the time of peak physical and cognitive abilities.

2. This is a newly identified stage of adulthood defined by identity ____ , positive instability, focusing on the self, feeling in-between, and imagining possibilities.

Chapter Review

3. Young adulthood is the time of peak ____ and ____ abilities. Some decline begins as early as 30, but it is not noticeable except for top-performing athletes.

4. ____ is the time in which the biological clock begins to tick noticeably. The first signs of physical aging appear, and the first signs of cognitive decline, though it is slight.

Chapter Review

5. Although middle adulthood is known as a time of crisis, this myth does not stand up to empirical research. True or false?

6. The hallmark of older adulthood is _____. There is little biological difference between this group and those in middle adulthood, but the social differences can be significant if retirement is considered.
Chapter Review

7. Late adulthood is the _____ age group in the United States and in all developed countries.

8. The slow decline in physical and cognitive abilities that began back in early adulthood _____ in late adulthood.

9. Most people in late adulthood enjoy_____ but _____relationships.

10. Late adulthood is a time for_____ one’s life and perhaps coming to grips with one’s eventual death.

11. Although this book emphasizes the_____ pathways through adulthood, there are many variations that can lead to success and well-being.

12. Quality of life for adulthood in the United States depends highly on_____ and ____. These two factors explain many of the more distal predictors, such as race and gender.
Chapter Review

13. Despite the _____ in adult development, most of us have similarities in our journeys of adulthood, and these journeys are strongly influenced by our education, family background, intelligence, and personality.

14. The developmental pathways we travel along are made up of alternating _____ times and times of _____.

_______________
_______________
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