

# Emerging Adulthood

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## WHAT'S COVERED

This lesson is going to cover the stage of life between adolescence and adulthood. Our discussion breaks down as follows:

1. Young Adulthood
2. Emerging Adulthood

## 1. Young Adulthood

**Adulthood** is characterized as the phase of life when a person is fully developed, both physically and psychologically. They have the cognitive capabilities to be able to do what a grown person is able to do.

Early adult period, or the **young adult** period, is between 20 and 40 years old, according to Erik Erikson and his theory of psychosocial development. This is characterized by a period of time when an adult is looking for intimacy and trying to create relationships. It is preceded by the period of time, according to Erikson, when the person is trying to establish an identity and figure out who they are as a person. This is during adolescence, which comes right before this time.

Young adulthood is the period during which a person is in the prime of their life. A person is physically and mentally at their peak. The concept of adulthood is very relative, both culturally and historically. Looking from culture to culture or place to place, what adults are expected or not expected to do, or even when adulthood is achieved, is very different.



## TERMS TO KNOW

### Adulthood

Phase of life in which full physical and psychological development has occurred

### Young Adult

Period between 20 and 40 years old, according to Erikson

## 2. Emerging Adulthood

When looking at certain areas of the world, an adult might actually be someone that is considered a teen here in the U.S. In modern-day U.S., a lot of changes have occurred in society, and the idea of adulthood has adjusted as a result of these changes. It's important to realize our lesson is more focused on the U.S. and the West in particular.

In 2000, an American psychologist named Jeffrey Arnett developed a new category of life, which he called **emerging adulthood**. Emerging adulthood is considered the period of time between 18 and 25 years of age. He said this period of time is characterized as an extension on the experimentation of adolescence when individuals are trying to search for an identity. Just as Erikson is saying, this is when we're trying to "find ourselves."

Arnett says this period of time expands on that further. Emerging adulthood is characterized by the increase in independence in people and an exploration of life's possibilities. It's also a period of time where people are generally very unstable. There's instability in their lives from place to place. People are also generally more self-centered during this time. Major events tend to occur during this period.

🔗 **EXAMPLE** For example, major events such as going to college or moving to other places occur during this period.

The causes for this emerging adulthood period of time in society today are linked to the economy. People are earning a bit more money right now and they have more money to spend or to use. There are also increases in medicine and technology which have, in turn, increased the lifespan of people. There is more time to settle down and look at life to figure out what they want to do and figure out who they are.

Next, as a person moves into their 30s, is a period of time when people start to settle down more. They have increased investments physically--such as houses and property--as well as psychologically. They start to form lasting relationships.

This is also the period of time when people may get married and have children. The 30s transition into midlife, which encompasses the 40s, all the way up to when a person is about 65, according to Erikson.



#### TERM TO KNOW

### Emerging Adulthood

Period of time between 18 and 25 when young adults in industrialized countries explore their options for adult life, prior to accepting the full responsibilities of adulthood



#### SUMMARY

**Young adulthood** is the period of time after adolescence when a person is in the prime of their life, between the ages of 20 to 40 years old. **Emerging adulthood** is a new period identified by Jeffrey Arnett. This is when a person is between 18 to 25 years old. Many life changes are happening at this point, and the exploration of self and purpose continue from adolescence.

Good luck!



## TERMS TO KNOW

**Adulthood**

Phase of life in which full physical and psychological development has occurred.

**Emerging Adulthood**

Period of time between 18 and 25 that young adults in industrialized countries explore their options for adult life, prior to accepting the full responsibilities of adulthood.

**Young Adult**

Period between 20 and 40 years old, according to Erikson.