

Erikson's Final 4 Stages of Development

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

This lesson is going to cover the last four stages of the theory of psychological development by examining:

1. Identity vs. Role Confusion
2. Intimacy vs. Isolation
3. Generativity vs. Stagnation
4. Ego Integrity vs. Despair

1. Identity vs. Role Confusion

Erik Erikson was a psychologist who studied the different levels or stages of development in people, looking at how social development can influence us cognitively. **Erikson's theory of psychological development** focuses on the entire course of a person's life, and divides it into eight distinct stages.

The fifth stage is the adolescent stage, and is identified by **identity vs. role confusion**. This stage occurs during the teenage years from 12 to 18 years old. This is a time of great physical, mental, and emotional changes within a person. It is at this time that a person needs to develop a certain sense of self in relation to his or her abilities, values, family, relationships, and the greater culture around them.

Teenagers are experimenting during this stage to try and figure out their likes and dislikes. If the person is able to develop that sense of self at this point, they will have a strong personal identity and ability to stay true to themselves; they will have a very solid core both cognitively and socially. If, however, there's any role confusion, then the person might develop an uncertainty of who they are, and what they're doing in life.



TERMS TO KNOW

Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development

Individuals face psychosocial dilemmas throughout the lifetime as one manages internal and external demands

Identity vs. Role Confusion (12 - 18 years)

Teens develop a sense of self and figure out their identity. Success is staying true to yourself. Failure results in confusion.

2. Intimacy vs. Isolation

The next stage is known as the young adulthood stage and is the time from approximately ages 19 to 40. This stage is characterized by **intimacy vs. isolation**. As a young adult, individuals are trying to explore personal relationships and develop a strong bond between different people in their lives. This is a bit different from the adolescent stage, which is very internally focused. This stage is very externally focused.

While this formation of intimacy can include marriage, it doesn't have to. Intimacy might also refer to close friendships or meaningful love in other sorts of ways. It can also mean a reconnection with our families and reestablishing those bonds.

In developing intimacy, the effect on a person psychologically is that they have a strong sense of connection and personal identity. These relationships have an effect on a person's sense of self and self-esteem. On the other hand, if one fails to develop these kinds of relationships, it could lead to a certain emotional isolation in a person, or a feeling of loneliness or depression as a result of not having people close to them.



TERM TO KNOW

Intimacy vs. Isolation (19-40 years)

Success leads to healthy, secure, and loving relationships. Failure to develop intimacy can lead to promiscuity or exclusion.

3. Generativity vs. Stagnation

The next stage of psychological development is the middle adulthood stage, which occurs between 40 to 65 years of age. This is characterized by **generativity vs. stagnation**. A person during this stage is concerned with the contributions that they're making to work, community, or the wider world. The person wants to be engaged in productive and creative work, and they are focused on that effect that they're having. They're also very interested in guiding the next generation and might want to take on different teaching or coaching jobs within the community.

If a person falls into stagnation, on the other hand, that person becomes more self-involved during this time. They become concerned with their own needs and comforts, as opposed to the needs and concerns of those around them.

A person that develops a sense of generativity will have feelings of productivity and accomplishment. This positively affects their self-image and their feelings of self-worth. If a person is more internally focused or selfish, they might feel unproductive or uninvolved. This can lead to feelings of bitterness or being trapped in the world around them.



TERM TO KNOW

Generativity vs. Stagnation (40 - 65 years)

An adult must find a way to support his/her next generation by living a productive life as a contributing member of society. If the adult does not feel a sense of worth or success in what they have done, they may feel unworthy or rejected.

4. Ego Integrity vs. Despair

Ego integrity vs. despair is the final stage of life, according to Erikson. This is the late adulthood or elderly stage and takes place from age 65 to death. It's during this time when a person starts to reflect on their entire life. They want to have a sense of fulfillment and acceptance of the things that they've done throughout their life. However, they might have feelings of regret about things that they've done in the past, and feel like their life has been wasted up to that point.

Feelings of success in life can help a person to feel satisfaction and self-respect at this stage. They can feel like they're facing aging and death with dignity, whereas if despair is felt by a person, then they may experience feelings of failure or develop a fear of death.



TERM TO KNOW

Ego Integrity vs. Despair (65+)

Adults need to look back on accomplishment and feel a sense of fulfillment and completeness. Success in this stage leads to fulfillment and failure leads to bitterness, missed opportunity and regret.



SUMMARY

Today's lesson has been a brief overview of Erikson's final four stages of development. The fifth stage of development that Erikson described is **identity vs. role confusion**. This is the adolescent stage, between ages 12 to 18. At this point a person will develop a strong sense of self, or will be unsure of their place in life. The next stage is **intimacy vs. isolation** and is considered the young adult stage between 19 and 40 years old, and is when a person is either developing meaningful bonds or feeling isolated.

The seventh stage is **generativity vs. stagnation**. This occurs between ages 40 to 65 where a person will either begin to be concerned with their contribution to the world or they may become more preoccupied with their own needs. The final stage is from 65 years old until death, and is characterized by **integrity vs. despair**. This is the point when a person begins to reflect on their life. They will develop a sense of dignity if they feel the choices they have made in life were good, and feel accomplished in the other stages of life. If not, a person may develop despair and a fear of death.

Good luck!

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia author Erick Taggart.



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Identity vs. Role Confusion (12 - 18 years)

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