

Erikson's First 4 Stages of Development

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

This lesson is going to cover the first four stages of the theory of psychosocial development by looking at:

1. The Theory of Psychosocial Development
2. Trust vs. Mistrust
3. Autonomy vs. Shame or Doubt
4. Initiative vs. Guilt
5. Industry vs. Inferiority

1. The Theory of Psychosocial Development

The theory of psychosocial development was propounded by a man named Erik Erikson. He was a psychologist who was originally born in Germany but later fled to the U.S. after the Nazis took over. He continued his psychology studies there. Erikson is Neo-Freudian, meaning he follows the ideas of Sigmund Freud. The influence of the psychoanalytical approach and unconscious ideas can be seen in his theories.

Erikson's theory of psychosocial development states that our personality develops in stages throughout life, depending on our experiences. A person's personality or psychology develops as a result of social and external experiences. This theory looks at the entire course of a lifetime, whereas a lot of other theories might only focus on early development.

Erikson provided eight stages of psychosocial development. When discussing stages of life in this way, it is important to remember that there are no absolutes. Different people develop in different ways. If a person doesn't necessarily fall within an exact category, that doesn't necessarily mean that they're dysfunctional in any way.

Each one of these stages that Erikson developed has two different forces occurring:

- The first is what he called the psychosocial dilemma. This is a conflict that is occurring between multiple personal impulses and the social world around them; these conflicts lead to the development or lack thereof.
- The second force is a desire for mastery or to be competent in something.



TERM TO KNOW

Erickson's Theory of Psychosocial Development

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

2. Trust vs. Mistrust

The first stage in the theory of psychosocial development occurs within the first year of life, from 0 to 1 year of age. This is the **trust vs. mistrust** stage. During this stage, the child is very young and dependent on his or her caretakers and needs to receive reliable and sufficient care. Children at this stage need to be fed regularly enough, they need to be held, and they need to feel secure.

Lack of this security leads to mistrust, and this can have a later impact on people's lives. People that developed more of that mistrust in the conflict might develop feelings of insecurity or suspicion. In addition, they might have certain social or emotional problems with relating to others.



TERM TO KNOW

Trust vs. Mistrust (0-2 years)

Infants either gain trust in a predictable, loving, caring environment or mistrust from your parent/caregiver

3. Autonomy vs. Shame or Doubt

The second stage, from 1 to 3 years, is **autonomy vs. shame or doubt**. This is when a child is developing a sense of personal control, either over his or her body or environment. During this time, activities like toilet training are quite important, because it is when children are starting to understand the feeling of independence that they're developing.

Reactions by the parent towards the personal choices or control that the child has can have an adverse effect. When accidents like spilling or falling occur, or when children are making personal choices (e.g., selecting a toy), their parent's reactions can build autonomy or instill shame or doubt. Children that develop more autonomy during this stage generally develop feelings of confidence within themselves, whereas a child that feels more shame or doubt at this stage might develop feelings of shamefulness.



TERM TO KNOW

Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt (2-3 years)

Children must develop a sense of independence, explore their environment, and be able to have free choice. If this independence is not given, the child will feel shame or doubt (question their own independence).

4. Initiative vs. Guilt

The third stage, from 3 to 5 years of age, is the stage of **initiative vs. guilt**. This is when the child is becoming

more independent from the parents and starts to interact with others and explore his or her environment more. This is also when they start to play independently. It is important at this stage that a parent gives space to explore.

If the parent starts to overly criticize or reprimand the child for his or her choices, it can lead to feelings of guilt in the child. A child that takes more initiative at this stage generally, later in life, starts to feel more capable. They feel like they're able to do things better on their own. They are more imaginative, and they also develop more as leaders. The children that receive more guilt at this stage become more guilty people. They have more self-doubt and lack initiative. They don't do things on their own, necessarily.



TERM TO KNOW

Initiative vs. Guilt (3-5 years)

Child is more assertive, curious, and takes more initiative. Guilt is developed if the child is punished for initiative.

5. Industry vs. Inferiority

The next stage, from 6 to 12 years of age, is the **industry vs. inferiority** stage. This coincides with when the child first enters school and starts to develop new skills. They learn how to be productive and to do activities that are valued by their society. It's at this stage that children start to feel more of a sense of pride or accomplishment at the things that they're doing.

They can either receive encouragement to continue doing those things or criticism. When a child is encouraged at this period, they tend to feel more competent; they have more self-esteem and self-worth as a result. On the other hand, if they receive more criticism in regards to what they are doing, they might experience more self-doubt, or they might feel inadequate as a person.



TERM TO KNOW

Industry vs. Inferiority (6-12 years)

Kids deal with new school and social demands. Success leads to competence and failure leads to inferiority.



SUMMARY

The **theory of psychosocial development** was propounded by Erik Erikson. He stated that our personality develops over stages throughout our life. Each stage includes a psychosocial dilemma and a desire for mastery.

The first stage is **trust vs. mistrust**. It occurs during the first year of life. The outcome of this stage is dependent on how secure a child feels in his or her environment. The next stage is **autonomy vs. shame or doubt**, and occurs between 1 to 3 years of age. This is where a child develops a sense of personal control and a feeling of independence. **Initiative vs. guilt** is the third stage, and takes place from 3 to 5 years of age. This is when the child is becoming more independent and begins to explore his or her environment. The next stage is the **industry vs. inferiority** stage that occurs between 6 to 12 years of age. This is when a child enters school and can begin to develop a sense of competence.

Good luck!

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



TERMS TO KNOW

Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt (2-3 years)

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Erickson's Theory of Psychosocial Development

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

Industry vs. Inferiority (6-12 years)

Kids deal with new school and social demands. Success leads to competence and failure leads to inferiority.

Initiative vs. Guilt (3-5 years)

Child is more assertive, curious, and takes more initiative. Guilt is developed if the child is punished for initiative.

Trust vs. Mistrust (0-2 years)

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