

Erik Erikson

Stages of Psychosocial Development

1. Trust vs. Mistrust (Infants, age 0-1) *ages are approximate

- Infants are uncertain if world is safe or not, so they look to their primary caregiver for stability
- If the caregiver is responsive to the infant's needs, the infant develops a sense of trust
- If the caregiver is not responsive to the infant's needs, the infant develops feelings of mistrust & fear

2. Autonomy vs. Shame & Doubt (Toddlers, age 2-3)

- Toddlers become more independent, begin to decide what they want to eat, the toy they want to play with, etc.
- If toddler is supported by caregiver & learns new skills, the toddler will feel more confident
- If the toddler is criticized or not given the opportunity to establish independence, the toddler will doubt their own abilities
 - a. This can lead to low self-esteem & a sense of shame

3. Initiative vs. Guilt (Preschool, age 4-6)

- Pre-school aged children begin to assert control through their social interactions, specifically through play
- If the child is able to take initiative, plan activities, the child will feel secure in making decisions
- If child is criticized by caregiver for trying to exert control (or experiences disapproval), the child may feel a sense of guilt
 - a. The child may become a "follower" instead of a "leader"

4. Industry vs. Inferiority (Childhood, age 7-11)

- Children begin to compare themselves to their peers (i.e. classmates, friends)
- A child may either succeed (socially, academically) & have many accomplishments (i.e. sports, grades, popularity) or feel inadequate & inferior to others

5. Identity vs. Role Confusion (Adolescents, age 12-19)

- Adolescents search for their own personal identity, exploring their beliefs, values, etc.
 - a. They ask themselves, "Who am I?"
- In this stage, an adolescent either develops a strong sense of self or a weak sense of self
 - a. Those who develop a weak sense of self may struggle to transition to adulthood and are unsure of what they want to do in the future

6. Intimacy vs. Isolation (Young adults, age 20-34)

-Young adults begin to explore long-term relationships

-In this stage, a young adult enters into committed relationships or avoids intimacy and feels isolated

a. Erikson stressed that it is important to have a strong sense of self in order to form intimate relationships

b. Those who avoid intimacy may feel lonely, could lead to depression

7. Generativity vs. Stagnation (Middle adulthood, age 35-64)

-In middle adulthood, people focus on contributing to society (i.e. through their career, raising children, being involved in the community, etc.)

-Those who are unable to give back to society may feel unproductive, feel like they have meaningless lives or lack purpose

8. Ego Integrity vs. Despair (Late adulthood, age 65+)

-Seniors reflect on the lives that they've led

-Seniors may look back & feel like they've led fulfilling lives, others may feel the opposite & therefore feel a sense of despair

a. Those who are not proud of their accomplishments may feel like a failure, have regrets, experience depression

Discussion Questions

- 1. What were your experiences like in each stage of development?**
- 2. How did you deal with crises in each stage?**
- 3. How did your personality develop in each stage?**
- 4. In which stage did you struggle the most?**
- 5. In which stage did the most significant events of your lifetime occur?**
- 6. Which of Erikson's eight stages seems to be the most critical? Why?**