**MIDDLE ADULTHOOD**

The Nature of Middle Adulthood

* Begins at approximately 40 years until 60-65 years of age
* For many, it is a time of declining physical skills and expanding responsibility
* Increased consciousness of young – old polarity and shrinking of time
* Point when they seek to transmit something meaningful to the next generation
* Time of maintaining career satisfaction

1. Physical Domain
   1. Physical development

* Physical changes
  + Visible changes: Appearance (thinning of hair, sagging of skin, etc.)
  + Height and weight: Loss in height and gain in weight
  + Strength, joints, and bones: Muscle loss, decline in functioning of joints, bone density decreases
  + Vision and hearing: With much difficulty
  + Cardiovascular system: Increased blood pressure and cholesterol level due to accumulation of fats in the linings of blood vessels
  + Lungs: At age 55, proteins in lung tissue became less elastic; stiffening of a chest wall
  + Sleep: Wakeful periods increase
* Mortality rates
* As infectious disease rates decline and more individuals live through middle age, chronic disorders increase and are now the main cause of death
* Sexuality
  + Climacteric: Fertility declines
  + Menopause and hormonal changes

1. Cognitive Domain
   1. Cognitive development

* Intelligence
* Increase in crystallized intelligence and decrease in fluid intelligence
* Information processing
  + Speed: Perceptual speed begins to decline
  + Memory: Capacity to learn new things slows down due to changes in working memory (where information is manipulated and assembled)
  + Expertise: Shows up more in middle adulthood

- Involves having extensive, highly organized knowledge and understanding of a particular domain

- Being an “expert” in a field is a result of many years of experiences, learning and effort

* + Practical problem solving: Remains stable in early to middle adulthood but declines in late adulthood
  + Metacognition: “Knowing about knowing” helps them combat decline in memory skills

- may peak in middle adulthood

* 1. Careers, work, & leisure
* Work
* Peak in position and earnings
* Career
* Challenges in terms of globalization, downsizing of organization, early retirement
* Leisure
* They may have more free time
* More income means more tips, vacations, etc.

1. Socioemotional Domain
   1. Personality Theories & Development

* Stages of Adulthood
  + Erikson’s Generativity vs. Stagnation stage: Desire to leave legacies to next generation vs. self-absorption

- Through generativity, adults promote and guide the next generation by parenting, teaching, leading, and doing things that benefit the society

* Life-events approach
* Contemporary life-events approach emphasizes that now life events influence the individual’s development depends not only on the life event itself but also on mediating factors such as:
* Physical condition / health, family support, etc.
* Individual’s adaptation to the life event (threat, appraisal, coping strategy)
* Life-stage context
* Socio-historical context
* Stress in midlife
* There is conclusive evidence that midlife is not a time when a majority of adults experience a tumultuous crisis, but when they do, it is often linked to stressful life events
* Most frequent daily stressor is interpersonal tension (Almeida & Horn, 2004)
  1. Close relationship
* Love and marriage
* Fires of romantic love are strong in early adulthood
* Companionate / affectionate love increases in middle adulthood
  + - Some marriages that were rocky in early adulthood become more solid in middle age
* Positive view of marriage if they engage in mutual activities
* Empty nest and its refilling
  + Empty nest: Decline in marital satisfaction after children leave the home (when parents live vicariously through their children)
* For most parents, however, marital satisfaction increases after children leave or child rearing
  + - Due to uncertain economic climate, nest is refilled – children move back home for economic reasons
* Sibling relationships and friendships
* Sibling relationships persist over the entire life span of most adulthood and friendships continue to be important
* It takes time to develop intimate relationships
  + - So friendships that have endured over the adult years are often deeper than those that have just been formed in middle adulthood
* Grandparenting
  + Satisfaction with grandparenting: Easier than parenting

- Opportunities to observe their grandchildren’s development; and

- Sharing their activities were said to be the best features of grandparenting

* + Grandparenting roles & styles: Support for parents and grandchildren
    - Formal
    - Fun-seeking
    - Distant roles