

Erikson's 8 Stages of Psychosocial Development

Erikson's psychosocial stages of development focus on the resolution of different crises to become a successful, complete person.

KEY POINTS

- Erik Erikson (1902–1994) was a stage theorist who took Freud's controversial **psychosexual theory** and modified it into an eight-stage **psychosocial** theory of development.
- During each of Erikson's eight development stages, two conflicting ideas must be resolved successfully in order for a person to become a confident, contributing member of society. Failure to **master** these tasks leads to feelings of inadequacy.
- Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development include trust vs. mistrust, **autonomy** vs. shame/doubt, initiative vs. guilt, industry vs. inferiority, identity vs. role confusion, **intimacy** vs. isolation, **generativity** vs. stagnation, and integrity vs. despair.
- Erikson also expanded upon Freud's stages by discussing the cultural implications of development; certain **cultures** may need to resolve the stages in different ways based upon their cultural and survival needs.

PIVOT TERMS USED

- **autonomy**: Self-government; freedom to act or function independently.
- **psychosocial**: Having both psychological and social aspects.

Erikson's Theory

Erik Erikson (1902–1994) was a stage theorist who took Freud's controversial theory of psychosexual development and modified it as a psychosocial theory. Erikson emphasized that the ego makes positive contributions to development by mastering **attitudes**, ideas, and skills at each stage of development. This **mastery** helps children grow into successful, contributing members of society. During each of Erikson's eight stages, there is a psychological conflict that must be successfully overcome in order for a child to develop into a healthy, well-adjusted adult.

Erikson developed his eight stages of psychosocial development based on Freud's psychosexual theory.

Stages Of Psychosocial Development

Erikson's stages of psychosocial development are based on Freud's psychosexual theory. Erikson proposed that we are motivated by the need to achieve competence in certain areas

of our lives. According to psychosocial theory, we experience eight stages of development over our lifespan, from infancy through late adulthood. At each stage there is a crisis or task that we need to resolve. Successful completion of each developmental task results in a sense of competence and a healthy **personality**. Failure to master these tasks leads to feelings of inadequacy.

Erikson also added to Freud's stages by discussing the cultural implications of development; certain cultures may need to resolve the stages in different ways based upon their cultural and survival needs.

Trust vs. Mistrust

From birth to 12 months of age, infants must learn that adults can be trusted. This occurs when adults meet a child's basic needs for survival. Infants are dependent upon their caregivers, so caregivers who are responsive and sensitive to their infant's needs help their baby to develop a sense of trust; their baby will see the world as a safe, predictable place. Unresponsive caregivers who do not meet their baby's needs can inject feelings of **anxiety**, fear, and mistrust; their baby may see the world as unpredictable. If infants are treated cruelly or their needs are not met appropriately, they will likely grow up with a sense of mistrust for people in the world.

Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt

As toddlers (ages 1–3 years) begin to explore their world, they learn that they can control their actions and act on their environment to get results. They begin to show clear preferences for certain elements of the environment, such as food, toys, and clothing. A toddler's main task is to resolve the issue of *autonomy vs. shame and doubt* by working to establish independence. This is the "me do it" stage. For example, we might observe a budding sense of autonomy in a 2-year-old

child who wants to choose her clothes and dress herself. Although her outfits might not be appropriate for the situation, her input in such basic decisions has an effect on her sense of independence. If denied the opportunity to act on her environment, she may begin to doubt her abilities, which could lead to low **self-esteem** and feelings of shame.

Initiative vs. Guilt

Once children reach the preschool stage (ages 3–6 years), they are capable of initiating activities and asserting control over their world through social interactions and play. According to Erikson, preschool children must resolve the task of *initiative vs. guilt*. By learning to plan and achieve goals while interacting with others, preschool children can master this task. Initiative, a sense of ambition and responsibility, occurs when parents allow

a child to explore within limits and then support the child's choice. These children will develop self-confidence and feel a sense of purpose. Those who are unsuccessful at this stage—with their initiative misfiring or stifled by over-controlling parents—may develop feelings of guilt.

Industry vs. Inferiority

During the elementary school stage (ages 6–12), children face the task of *industry vs. inferiority*. Children begin to compare themselves with their peers to see how they measure up. They either develop a sense of pride and accomplishment in their schoolwork, sports, social activities, and family life, or they feel inferior and inadequate because they feel that they don't measure up. If children do not learn to get along with others or have negative experiences at home or with peers, an inferiority complex might develop into **adolescence** and adulthood.

Identity vs. Role Confusion

In adolescence (ages 12–18), children face the task of *identity vs. role confusion*. According to Erikson, an adolescent's main task is developing a sense of self. Adolescents struggle with questions such as "Who am I?" and "What do I want to do with my life?" Along the way, most adolescents try on many different selves to see which ones fit; they explore various roles and ideas, **set** goals, and attempt to discover their "adult" selves. Adolescents who are successful at this stage have a strong sense of identity and are able to remain true to their beliefs and values in the face of **problems** and other people's perspectives. When adolescents are apathetic, do not make a conscious search for identity, or are pressured to conform to their parents' ideas for the future, they may develop a weak sense of self and experience role confusion. They will be unsure of their identity and confused about the future. Teenagers who struggle to adopt a positive role will likely struggle to "find" themselves as adults.

Intimacy vs. Isolation

People in early adulthood (20s through early 40s) are concerned with *intimacy vs. isolation*. After we have developed a sense of self in adolescence, we are ready to share our life with others. However, if other stages have not been successfully resolved, young adults may have trouble developing and maintaining successful relationships with others. Erikson said that we must have a strong sense of self before we can develop successful intimate relationships. Adults who do not develop a positive **self-concept** in adolescence may experience feelings of loneliness and emotional isolation.

Generativity vs. Stagnation

When people reach their 40s, they enter the time known as middle adulthood, which extends to the mid-60s. The social task of middle adulthood is *generativity vs. stagnation*. Generativity involves finding your life's work and contributing to the development of others through activities such as volunteering, mentoring, and raising children. During this stage, middle-aged adults begin contributing to the next generation, often through childbirth and caring for others; they also engage in meaningful and productive work which contributes positively to society. Those who do not master this task may

experience stagnation and feel as though they are not leaving a mark on the world in a meaningful way; they may have little connection with others and little interest in productivity and self-improvement.

Integrity vs. Despair

From the mid-60s to the end of life, we are in the period of development known as late adulthood. Erikson's task at this stage is called *integrity vs. despair*. He said that people in late adulthood reflect on their lives and feel either a sense of satisfaction or a sense of failure. People who feel proud of their accomplishments feel a sense of integrity, and they can look back on their lives with few regrets. However, people who are not successful at this stage may feel as if their life has been wasted. They focus on what "would have," "should have," and "could have" been. They face the end of their lives with feelings of bitterness, depression, and despair.

The merits of Erikson's theory are:

- **Stage hypothesis – improvement occurred in stages**
- **Self-image recognize – development of personality character directly from birth**
- **Emergency – each individual needs to experience emergency in his/her life**

The shortcomings of Erikson's hypothesis are:

- **Concentrate on the contending powers as opposed to enthusiastic improvement of people**
- **Hard to tried logically. It beyond the realm of imagination to expect to quantify a portion of the ideas. whereupon the hypothesis is based.**
- **Neglects to indicate the impact of disappointment in one phase impacts which different stages**

Different instructive ramifications of Erikson's hypothesis conceivable relying on the age gathering of the student. the assignments they required to perform.

SUMMARY OF STAGES OF PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Stage 1 Trust vs. mistrust (Infancy: Birth to 18 months) • Babies must learn to trust their parents care and affection • If not done the babies could develop a distrust and view the world as inconsistent and unpredictable

**Stage 2 Autonomy vs. shame and doubt (Toddlerhood:18 months to 3 years)
Child learns to feed themselves and do things on their own. Or they could start feeling ashamed and doubt their abilities**

Stage 3 Initiative vs. guilt (Preschooler: 3 to 5 years) Using initiative in planning or carrying out plans. → Or develop a sense of guilt over misbehaviour regarding parent's limits

Stage 4 Industry vs. inferiority (Elementary school age:6 to 12) Learn to follow the rules imposed by schools or home. Or the child can start believing they are inferior to others

Stage 5 Identity vs. role confusion (adolescence:12 to 18 years) 1. Acquire a sense of identity Or can become confused about one's role in life

Stage 6 Intimacy vs. isolation (early adulthood:18 to 35 years) Develop a relationship and joint identity with a partner. Or can become isolated and stay away from meaningful relationships

Stage 7 Generativity vs. stagnation (Middle age 35 to 60 years) Making use of time and having a concern with helping others and guiding the next generation. → Or can become self centred, and stagnant.

Stage 8 Integrity vs. despair (Later life:60+) Understanding and accept the meaning of temporary life .

Or complains about regrets, not having enough time, and not finding a meaning throughout life

Educational implications of Erikson's Theory

- **Encourage initiative in young children. Children in preschool and early childhood education programs should be given a great deal of freedom to explore their world.**
- **Promote industry in elementary school children. Teacher should provide an atmosphere in which children become passionate about learning.**
- **Stimulate identity exploration in adolescents. Recognize that the student's identity is multidimensional.**