

Civic Engagement in Late Life

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What is Late Life?

Later adulthood is the last major segment of life. The age of 65 has usually been cited as the dividing line between middle age and old age. This group is extremely diverse, because it spans an age range of more than 30 years.

Because of the major age-related differences in late-life adults, gerontologists have divided later adulthood into two groups: *young-old* (65-74 years) and *old-old* (ages 75 and above).

Aging is an individual process that occurs at different rates in different people.

(Santrock, 2013)

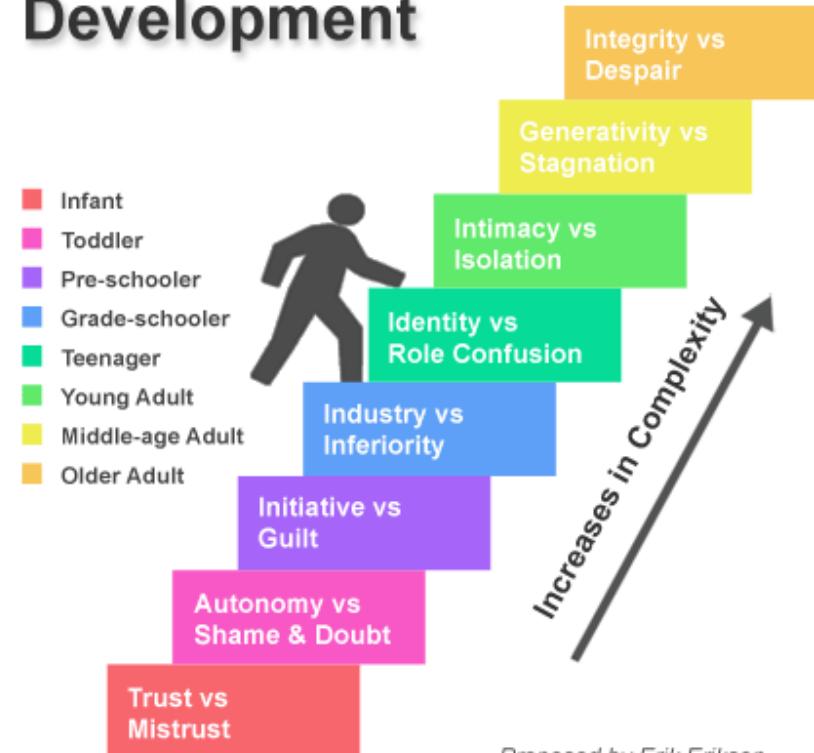
Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development

Integrity versus Despair

The final stage of life involves the psychological crisis of *integrity versus despair*. The attainment of integrity comes only after considerable reflection about the meaning of one's life. Integrity refers to an ability to accept the facts of one's life and to face death without great fear. Despair is characterized by a feeling of regret about one's past. Those who despair view their lives as incomplete and unfulfilled.

• (Erikson, 1963)

Stages of Psychosocial Development



Proposed by Erik Erikson

Activity Theory of Successful Aging

The more physically and mentally active people are, the more successfully they will age. There is considerable evidence that being physically and mentally active helps to maintain the physiological, psychological, and intellectual functions of older people.

Older adults who do not feel useful to others are more likely to experience increased disabilities and to have a shorter life expectancy.

- (Papalia et al., 2012) (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2015)



Developmental Tasks of Late Life

- Retirement and lower income transition
- Affiliating with individuals of one's own age group
- Maintaining interest in friends and family ties
- Continuing social and civic responsibilities
- Coping with illness and the loss of a spouse and/or friends
- Adjusting to physical changes

(Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2015)

What is Civic Engagement?

Definition

Civic engagement or civic participation, according to the American Psychological Association, is "individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern".

It can be defined as citizens working together to make a change or difference in the community. Civic engagement includes communities working together in both political and non-political actions. The goal of civic engagement is to address public concerns and promote the quality of the community.

Examples

- Active membership in a group or association
- Fund-raising for Charity
- Run for political office
- Regular voting
- Persuading others to vote
- Contacting officials
- Contacting the print media

Continuing Social and Civic Responsibilities

Douglas serves as a volunteer night watchman for the county fair that is held for four days during the summer. After they retired, Douglas and his wife, Norma, became more active in attending their church and participating in church activities; Doug became a church elder and Norma became more active in the ladies' aid society.



Civic Engagement in Nursing Homes

My Project:

- Contacted all nursing homes in our district
- Inquired about their current practices of voting options in the facility

Results:

- All of the facilities I spoke with had some form of voting program available
- Many indicated that it was not widely popular with the residents

What You Can Do To Help

- Speak with the residents about their interest in participating in civic responsibilities, such as voting.
- Ask them if they are aware of voter, and other civic, programs occurring in the facility
 - Are they aware/interested? Why or Why not?
 - What would make them more interested in participating?
 - Contact Ashley or myself with any useful information or ideas you have based on what you find out.

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