

1. Which of Erikson's eight stages seems most important? Why?
2. What aspects of Erikson's theory are most important for educators to understand?
3. What aspects of Erikson's theory are most important for parents to understand?
4. What are some of the most crucial differences between Freud's theory and Erikson's theory?
5. Which developmental theory do you prefer, Freud's or Erikson's? Why?

Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Stages

1. Trust vs. Mistrust (Birth to One)

Warmth, affection, and consistency of care lead to a positive, secure attachment with the primary caregiver (usually the mother). Inadequate care results in fear and mistrust. Since this first relationship is the prototype for all others, those with a primarily negative resolution to this stage may struggle with forming close relationships for the rest of their lives. Extremely inadequate care may result in significant developmental problems.

2. Autonomy vs. Doubt and Shame (one to two or three)

If a child is permitted and encouraged to do things for himself/herself (with some adult guidance), a sense of independence or autonomy develops. Self-doubt and dependence characterize the negative outcome for this stage.

3. Initiative vs. Guilt (three to five or six)

Curiosity, physical exploration, and high energy (not to mention the endless stream of questions typical of this age!) are typical of preschoolers. Parental responses to these behaviors lead to a sense of initiative and inquisitiveness or a sense of guilt and lack of initiative.

4. Industry vs. Inferiority (five or six to eleven or twelve)

Corresponding to the elementary school years, this stage is crucial in the development of competence or self-confidence. Success in meeting the demands of school and society lead to a sense of "industry" or self-confidence. Repeated failures lead to feelings of inferiority and an unwillingness to try new tasks.

5. Identity vs. Role Confusion (adolescence)

The critical issue for the adolescent is the development of a consistent identity or sense of self. The positive outcome involves the ability to answer the questions: "Who am I? What will I become? In contemporary society, this stage often extends well into young adulthood as a person typically experiments with many behaviors, roles, and identities before achieving a lasting and satisfying one.

6. Intimacy vs. Isolation (early adulthood)

The successful young adult, for the first time, can experience true intimacy, the sort of intimacy that makes possible good marriage or a genuine and enduring friendship. The unsuccessful outcome is

isolation and despair. Prior achievement of a consistent sense of self (identity) is crucial to a successful resolution of this stage.

7. Generativity vs. Self-Absorption (middle adulthood)

Generativity, the ability to give of oneself, in the sense of marriage and parenthood as well as work, is the positive outcome of this stage. Self-absorption, the inability to give of oneself, is the negative outcome.

8. Integrity vs. Despair (later adulthood)

If the previous seven psychosocial crises have been successfully resolved, mature adults develop a sense of integrity. They see their lives as successful and worthwhile. They are proud of their work, their families, and they reap the benefits of a fulfilling life. The unsuccessful resolution is despair: a negative appraisal of one's life and the realization that it is too late to start over.

Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Stages Activity

Each of the situations below represents a **negative outcome** of one of Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Stages. Determine which psychosocial stage resulted in each set of behaviors described below; speculate as to what circumstances may have resulted in the negative outcome; and describe what behaviors would be indicative of a positive outcome of that same stage.

1) Jason is a 14-year-old seventh grader who moved to Saint Cloud this summer from another state. He has recently been referred to the school psychologist because of concerns about both his academic performance and school behavior. A review of his school records shows that Jason repeated kindergarten and third grade. His elementary school grades were primarily S's ("Satisfactory") and N's ("Needs Improvement"). His current teachers state that they are unsure of Jason's academic skills because he typically does not turn in assignments and appears to "clown around" and not take exams and assignments seriously.

2) Brenda is a 5th-year undergraduate student. She began her post-secondary education as a nursing major at a private college, but decided she wanted to pursue a career in special education, so she transferred to a state university with a large education program. After a year, she discovered that special education was not for her, so she transferred back to the college where she had first enrolled and registered for courses in the psychology major sequence. She is now a liberal studies major and will graduate in May. Brenda has thought about applying to law schools, but recently decided she really didn't want a career in law. At this point she has no firm career plans. Rather, she had decided to work as a waitress for at least a year, and after that, who knows?

3) Carrie is a 36-year-old woman who is currently being seen for counseling at the community mental health center. Her second marriage recently ended in divorce, and she has sought counseling so that she might "find" herself and get her life "back on track." Carrie married for the first time at age 18, but she and her husband grew increasingly apart and found they had little in common, other than their two children! She remarried shortly after her first divorce as she felt "empty" being alone and thought both she and her children needed a man in the house, but that

marriage also proved unsuccessful. She is now thinking of attending college, and is trying to figure out what to do "with the rest of her life."

4) Eric's kindergarten teacher is very concerned about him. He is hesitant to get involved in group activities, and though he seems bright verbally, he tells his teacher he "can't" do the work and will not start assignments unless the teacher is there to help and reassure him. Additionally, he always waits for the teacher to help him put on his coat and boots, even though she has encouraged him to do so himself.

5) Anna is currently enrolled in the "Special Needs Program for Children with Severe and Profound Developmental Delays." She is four years old and has been diagnosed as suffering from a "Pervasive Developmental Disorder." Her behavior is often "autistic-like" as she avoids eye contact, makes repetitive and bizarre hand movements, and her speech is often echolalic. A review of her developmental history shows that her development was apparently "normal" for the first six months of her life. It was at that time Anna's mother developed severe depression and spent a year in a mental institution. During that year, Anna was left in the care of an aunt, who reportedly abused her both physically and psychologically. It was after her mother was released from the hospital that Anna was first seen at the mental health center and diagnosed as developmentally delayed.

6) Joe is a college junior with a mediocre academic record. Though he is very intelligent, his teachers often describe him as lacking in initiative and creativity. He does well in lecture classes, but is hesitant to participate in group discussions and has difficulty coming up with ideas for independent learning projects. He is hesitant to take chances and try new things, though he often would like to try them.

7) Karl is a 78-year-old widower who lives in a senior-citizens apartment complex. Though he is reasonably healthy, both physically and mentally, Karl rarely gets out and typically does not take part in activities offered through the local senior citizens center. Rather, he mostly sits at home and broods. He rarely interacts with his neighbors in the apartment complex, and even his children and grandchildren avoid visiting him because all he does is complain about how bad his life has been.

8) John is a 36-year-old divorced man whose ex-wife has custody of their three children. Though John has visitation rights, he rarely exercises them. Even when the family lived together, he was only minimally involved with his children as he was always "too busy." His job often required long hours and extended travel, but even when he was not working, John found little time for his kids. However, he always seemed to find the time for golf outings, poker night, and hunting and fishing trips with his buddies.