

# Cheat Sheet: Lifespan Development

## Essential Concepts

### Theories of Development

- Lifespan development explores how we change and grow from conception to death. This field of psychology is studied by developmental psychologists. They view development as a lifelong process that can be studied scientifically across three developmental domains: physical, cognitive development, and psychosocial.
- There are several theories of development that focus on the following issues: whether development is continuous or discontinuous, whether development follows one course or many, and the relative influence of nature versus nurture on development.
- There are many theories regarding how babies and children grow and develop into happy, healthy adults.
  - Sigmund Freud suggested that we pass through a series of psychosexual stages in which our energy is focused on certain erogenous zones on the body.
  - Eric Erikson modified Freud's ideas and suggested a theory of psychosocial development. Erikson said that our social interactions and successful completion of social tasks shape our sense of self.
  - Jean Piaget proposed a theory of cognitive development that explains how children think and reason as they move through various stages.
  - Lawrence Kohlberg focused on moral development. He said that we pass through three levels of moral thinking that build on our cognitive development.

### Child Development

- At conception, the egg and sperm unite to form a zygote. This cell begins to divide rapidly, marking this start of the germinal stage (0-2 weeks).

- Then the zygote implants in the uterus lining, initiating the embryonic stage (2-8 weeks). In this stage, the embryo begins to develop body and organ structures, and the neural tube forms, which will later become the brain and spinal cord.
- The fetal stage (9 weeks-birth) is marked by the rapid growth of body, brain, and organs.
- Prenatal care is crucial throughout pregnancy for the health of the parent and baby.
- Newborns typically weigh 7.5 pounds. Doctors check newborn reflexes like sucking, rooting, and Moro.
- Skills evolve from infancy to late adulthood across physical, cognitive, and psychosocial domains. Motor development has sequential milestones indicating potential delays.
- Sensorimotor stage (birth-2 years) in Piaget's theory:
  - Exploration through senses and motor behaviors.
  - Development of object permanence and stranger anxiety.
  - Infants might understand objects without direct experiences.
- Preschool (preoperational stage) in Piaget's theory:
  - Symbolic play, language use, and egocentrism are evident.
  - Development of a theory of mind, understanding that others have different thoughts and beliefs, enables them to engage in teasing, persuasion, and empathy.
- Concrete operational stage (7-11 years) in Piaget's theory:
  - Logical thinking about real events, memory strategies, and math operations.
  - Understanding of concepts such as conservation and reversibility.
- There are alternative perspectives, such as the postformal stage, suggesting that cognitive development continues into adulthood and is influenced by neural brain development and interactions with the environment.

## Attachment and Parenting

- Attachment is a crucial aspect of psychosocial development, with infants forming bonds with caregivers based on feelings of comfort and security.

- Ainsworth's research identified different attachment styles including secure, avoidant, resistant, and disorganized, which can be influenced by caregiver responsiveness and cultural factors.
- Self-concept is the understanding of who we are, which develops through milestones such as self-recognition, establishing autonomy and confidence in abilities, and forming a sense of identity based on group memberships and personal traits, ultimately influencing our confidence, independence, and willingness to try new activities.
- Parenting styles, such as authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved, play a crucial role in shaping a child's socioemotional growth.
- Authoritative parenting is associated with positive outcomes like high self-esteem and social skills, while permissive and uninvolved parenting styles can lead to negative consequences such as lack of self-discipline and emotional withdrawal.

## **Adolescent Development and Moral Reasoning**

- Adolescence is a period of development that begins at puberty and ends in the mid- to late 20s, characterized by physical changes, cognitive development, and psychosocial milestones, with the frontal lobes of the brain still maturing and undergoing neural growth and pruning processes.
- Adolescence is a period of cognitive development characterized by increased abstract thinking, multiple perspective-taking, and the development of cognitive empathy, while psychosocially, adolescents focus on forming their identities through exploration and commitments, with different identity statuses reflecting the level of exploration and commitment achieved.
- Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development suggests that individuals progress through stages of moral reasoning, from pre-conventional to conventional and, in some cases, post-conventional morality, with the highest stage valuing human life over greed.
- Carol Gilligan criticized Kohlberg's theory, arguing that women reason differently, focusing more on interpersonal relationships and the importance of staying connected.
- Recent research suggests that infants have more complex moral reasoning than previously believed, showing preferences for good behavior, aversion to bad behavior, and judgments based on similarities and differences, challenging earlier notions of moral development in young children and highlighting the need for further exploration and understanding in the field.

## **Adult Development**

- Emerging adulthood is a distinct developmental stage from 18 to the mid-20s, characterized by extended exploration and delay in traditional adult milestones such as career, marriage, and starting a family, influenced by cultural shifts and changing expectations.
- Adulthood is divided into three stages: early, middle, and late, each presenting unique challenges and rewards.
  - In terms of physical development, early adulthood is characterized by peak physical abilities, while middle adulthood brings gradual physical decline, and late adulthood marks the last stage of physical change with a further decline in various abilities.
  - Cognitive development in adulthood involves both losses and gains, with declines in certain cognitive tasks but the potential for compensatory expertise and knowledge, and engaging in mentally and physically stimulating activities can help delay cognitive decline.
  - Psychosocial development in adulthood involves finding meaning through work and family in early and middle adulthood, while later stages involve reviewing life events and establishing a sense of integrity versus despair, with positive relationships and social connectedness playing important roles in overall well-being.
- Death marks the endpoint of our lifespan. There are many ways that we might react when facing death. Kübler-Ross developed a five-stage model of grief as a way to explain this process.

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## Glossary

### **accommodation**

adjustment of a schema by changing a scheme to accommodate new information different from what was already known

### **adolescence**

period of development that begins at puberty and ends at early adulthood

### **adrenarche**

maturing of the adrenal glands

**assimilation**

adjustment of a schema by adding information similar to what is already known

**attachment**

long-standing connection or bond with others

**authoritarian parenting style**

parents place a high value on conformity and obedience, are often rigid, and express little warmth to the child

**avoidant attachment**

characterized by child's unresponsiveness to parent, does not use the parent as a secure base, and does not care if parent leaves

**cognitive development**

domain of lifespan development that examines learning, attention, memory, language, thinking, reasoning, and creativity

**conception**

when a sperm fertilizes an egg and forms a zygote

**concrete operational stage**

third stage in Piaget's theory of cognitive development; from about 7 to 11 years old, children can think logically about real (concrete) events

**conservation**

idea that even if you change the appearance of something, it is still equal in size, volume, or number as long as nothing is added or removed

**continuous development**

view that development is a cumulative process: gradually improving on existing skills

**critical (sensitive) period**

time during fetal growth when specific parts or organs develop

**crystallized intelligence**

intelligence that draws upon experience and knowledge. Measures include vocabulary tests, solving number problems, and understanding texts

**developmental milestone**

approximate ages at which children reach specific normative events

**discontinuous development**

view that development takes place in unique stages, which happen at specific times or ages

**disorganized attachment**

characterized by the child's odd behavior when faced with the parent; type of attachment seen most often with kids that are abused

**egocentrism**

preoperational child's difficulty in taking the perspective of others

**embryo**

multi-cellular organism in its early stages of development

**emerging adulthood**

newly defined period of lifespan development from 18 years old to the mid-20s; young people are taking longer to complete college, get a job, get married, and start a family

**fine motor skills**

use of muscles in fingers, toes, and eyes to coordinate small actions

**five stages of grief**

denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance

**fluid intelligence**

information processing abilities, such as logical reasoning, remembering lists, spatial ability, and reaction time

**foreclosure**

when an individual commits to an identity without exploring options

**formal operational stage**

final stage in Piaget's theory of cognitive development; from age 11 and up, children are able to deal with abstract ideas and hypothetical situations

**gonadarche**

maturing of the sex glands

**grasping reflex**

Newborn's automatic grasping of objects that touch their palms

**gross motor skills**

use of large muscle groups to control arms and legs for large body movements

**hospice**

service that provides a death with dignity; pain management in a humane and comfortable environment; usually outside of a hospital setting

**identity achievement**

when individuals have explored different options and then made identity commitments

**identity diffusion**

when adolescents neither explore nor commit to any identities

**menarche**

beginning of menstrual period; around 12–13 years old

**mitosis**

process of cell division

**moratorium**

a state in which adolescents are actively exploring options but have not yet made commitments

**Moro reflex**

Newborn's response to a falling sensation, characterized by spreading arms, pulling them back, and often crying

**motor skills**

ability to move our body and manipulate objects

**nature**

genes and biology

**newborn reflexes**

inborn automatic response to a particular form of stimulation that all healthy babies are born with

**normative approach**

study of development using norms, or average ages, when most children reach specific developmental milestones

**nurture**

environment and culture

**object permanence**

idea that even if something is out of sight, it still exists

**permissive parenting style**

parents make few demands and rarely use punishment

**physical development**

domain of lifespan development that examines growth and changes in the body and brain, the senses, motor skills, and health and wellness

**placenta**

structure connected to the uterus that provides nourishment and oxygen to the developing baby

**prenatal care**

medical care during pregnancy that monitors the health of both the mother and the fetus

**preoperational stage**

second stage in Piaget's theory of cognitive development; from ages 2 to 7, children learn to use symbols and language but do not understand mental operations and often think illogically

**primary sexual characteristics**

organs specifically needed for reproduction

**psychosexual development**

process proposed by Freud in which pleasure-seeking urges focus on different erogenous zones of the body as humans move through five stages of life

**psychosocial development**

domain of lifespan development that examines emotions, personality, and social relationships; process proposed by Erikson in which social tasks are mastered as humans move through eight stages of life from infancy to adulthood

**resistant attachment**

characterized by the child's tendency to show clingy behavior and rejection of the parent when she attempts to interact with the child

**reversibility**

understanding that objects can be changed and then returned back to their original form or condition



**rooting reflex**

newborn's response to touch on the cheek, turning the head and initiating sucking

**schema (plural = schemata)**

concept (mental model) that is used to help us categorize and interpret information

**secondary sexual characteristics**

physical signs of sexual maturation that do not directly involve sex organs

**secure attachment**

characterized by the child using the parent as a secure base from which to explore

**secure base**

parental presence that gives the infant/toddler a sense of safety as he explores his surroundings

**sensorimotor stage**

first stage in Piaget's theory of cognitive development; from birth through age 2, a child learns about the world through senses and motor behavior

**spermarche**

first male ejaculation

**stages of moral reasoning**

process proposed by Kohlberg; humans move through three stages of moral development

**sucking reflex**

automatic, unlearned sucking motions infants perform with their mouths

**temperament**

innate traits that influence how one thinks, behaves, and reacts with the environment

**teratogen**

biological, chemical, or physical environmental agent that causes damage to the developing embryo or fetus

**theory-of-mind**

the understanding that people have thoughts, feelings, and beliefs that are different from our own

**uninvolved parenting style**

parents are indifferent, uninvolved, and sometimes referred to as neglectful; they don't respond to the child's needs and make relatively few demands

**zygote**

structure created when a sperm and egg merge at conception; begins as a single cell and rapidly divides to form the embryo and placenta