



## Adulthood and Aging

In this chapter, you will learn about:

- the stages of adulthood
- physiological and cognitive changes in adulthood
- concerns related to aging

*Adulthood continues the process of psychological development, but more slowly. Psychologists are redefining the stages of adulthood. Some propose that by the year 2020, we may see six Eriksonian stages of adulthood, ranging from youth (18–25 years) to “very old age”—100 years and over.*

*During each stage of adulthood, various physical and cognitive changes occur. How much these changes affect a person is determined by a number of factors, not the least important of which is expectation or attitude.*

*In 1999, 91-year-old comedian Milton Berle was honored for his lifetime of work. “In 1951,” he quipped, “I signed a lifetime contract with NBC. It expired 20 years ago!” More and more often, people once considered “very old” are producing remarkable accomplishments. A branch of psychology known as gerontology now studies the effects of aging and the concerns of older people about living out their lives with meaning and facing death with dignity.*

## What Is an Adult?

Childhood describes a span of years during which tremendous changes take place within an individual. Adulthood is very much the same, though it can be more than three times as long, lasting from about age 20 through the end of life. Today, that can easily come well into one's eighties or nineties.

The changes in childhood are obvious. An individual grows from a tiny infant to a fully formed adult. Psychologically, the changes are just as profound. The changes in adulthood take place more slowly and less obviously, but they are there, nonetheless. Just as there are important developmental tasks at each stage of childhood and adolescence, adults also have tasks to accomplish.

### Individual Differences

At the beginning of a marathon, all the runners are bunched together. Soon, however, considerable distances may open up between individual runners. The same is true of life. By the time we reach adulthood, many of the psychological traits that define us have already developed. Some individuals still seem rather young, while others seem very mature in their behavior.

You may know people who seem "old" at 30, while others appear "young" at 70. Our perceptions about people are due as much to their attitudes about life, their expectations, and their openness to change as they are to their physical appearances.

## Periods in Adulthood

Because individual development differs greatly—a difference that often increases through the years of adulthood—it is difficult to clearly define stages within the adult years. Some studies indicate that people perceive their lives as having periods of stability, followed by periods of change. These may or may not occur in the same age ranges.

It is helpful, however, to have a framework for considering the tasks or developmental challenges that individuals face as they move through their adult years.

### Stages of Adulthood

#### Early Adulthood—Erikson: Stage 6

20–40 years.

Decisions are made about relationships, marriage, and parenthood; physical health peaks; sense of identity continues to grow; career choices are made; intellectual abilities increase.

#### Middle Adulthood—Erikson: Stage 7

40 to 60–65 years.

Search for meaning in life assumes greater importance; some physical deterioration occurs; gender characteristics may become less defined; wisdom and problem-solving ability increase.

#### Late Adulthood—Erikson: Stage 8

60–65 years and older.

Most people are healthy and active mentally and physically, although some abilities decline; they cope with physical/health limitations, loss of loved ones, retirement; they reflect on life and its successes.

## Early Adulthood

Early adulthood is often described as the period between ages 20 and 40. In the early stages, people may “try their wings”—to begin to do things a bit differently from their parents. Many need to become independent—to move away from home and begin a life of their own. For some, establishing a career becomes the focus. Others focus on forming close relationships.

### Intimacy vs. Isolation

In his stage six, early adulthood, Erikson suggests that the primary task is the development of intimacy. **Intimacy**, to a psychologist, does not describe a physical relationship but refers to one’s ability to relate to another human being on a deep, personal level.

In adolescence, relationships are often an exploration of one’s identity—a role that one “tries on” to see how it feels. Relationships in young adulthood are less about one’s self and more about the larger satisfaction that can be experienced through the close interaction of two individuals. This includes the formation of close friendships as well as marriage, companionship, and family life.

Commitment may be difficult for a person who hasn’t yet come to terms with his or her own identity. The intimacy of young adulthood is different from earlier relationships, in that the focus is not on what you will get in return for your participation. In a general sense, love is the willingness to give without expecting anything in return.

The inability to achieve this sort of intimacy with others results in a form of **isolation**. The individual feels separate from others and lacks the advantages of the strength and support people gain from close relationships.

### Work

Freud once said that a healthy adult is one who can love and work. In early adulthood, people explore career choices and decide what they will do to feel productive and to support both their independence and a family.

Someone who attended college or other training beyond high school may have already decided on a career. It is, however, becoming more common for people to reevaluate their work after a number of years. In some cases, people may be attracted to newly created professions. In other instances, people may embrace opportunities that they previously avoided for economic or practical reasons.

And sometimes the family structure changes so that one or the other parent can return to the work force.

### Marriage

Finding a marriage partner with whom to bear and raise children is important to most people in early adulthood. This makes considerable biological sense. The commitment of marriage encourages couples to stay together and cooperate to nurture children to adulthood, thus increasing the likelihood that one’s genes will be passed on.

## Marriage in America

Only about a quarter of Americans over 18 have never been married. Worldwide, 90 percent of adults marry. With many young Americans focusing on educational and career goals, the average age at the time of a first marriage has risen from 23 to 27 for men and from 21 to 25 for women.

In the 1600s and 1700s, parents arranged most marriages. Arranged marriages were based on the social or monetary benefits to the families involved and were intended to provide a stable home for children of the marriage. Since the 1800s, most Americans have based their marriages on romantic love.

In many successful marriages, companionship and intimacy—in both the physical and psychological senses—are the primary goals. Married people have a sense of security, as well as the opportunity to share their successes and problems with someone who cares for them.

## Choosing a Spouse

Some of the factors that influence one's choice of a spouse are:

- \* Religion.
- \* Level of education.
- \* Social status.
- \* Age.
- \* Ethnicity.
- \* Attitudes toward health.
- \* Attitudes toward life goals.
- \* Attitudes toward having children.

Most people choose a spouse with whom they share some or most of these attitudes. Marrying someone with whom one has grown up is fairly common, perhaps because of the likelihood of sharing similar attitudes and attributes.

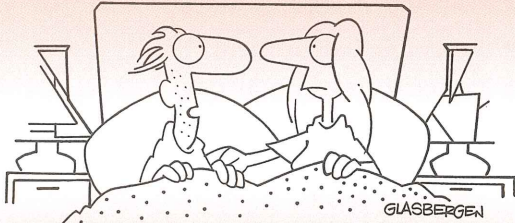
Marriages between people with similar interests and goals have a greater chance of success, partly because fewer opportunities for disagreements arise as the marriage is developing. Further, a sense of working together toward and achieving a common goal may help to strengthen a marriage.

## Family Life

As people become more settled in their career choices and within a marital relationship, the natural tendency for many is to start a family. Because people are marrying for the first time later in life, they are also having children later in life. Today many people, for example, begin having children when they are in their thirties.

Against this backdrop, it is not unusual for both parents to work outside the home and share parenting responsibilities. This is a much different scenario from a generation or two before, when gender roles were much more clearly defined. Typically the mother stayed home to take care of the children while the father worked outside the home. Today no scenario is typical, since any combination of responsibilities for each parent is possible.

Whatever the roles and responsibilities of each parent might be, the important result should be for children to feel loved and secure.



**“Let’s try getting up every night at 2:00 AM to feed the cat. If we enjoy doing that, then we can talk about having a baby.”**

## Divorce

Many marriages end in divorce. Divorce rates are high when people marry at a very young age. Because teenagers’ identities are not fully established and their reasons for marriage may be shortsighted, many teenage marriages end in divorce. Even marriages among people in their early twenties have a higher divorce rate than among adults on the whole. Marriages among adults in their late twenties and those who are better educated tend to stand a greater chance of surviving.

## Reasons for Divorce

Most people say that they believe in marriage for life. Why, then, do more than 40 percent of all first marriages in the United States end in divorce? At one time, people stayed in marriages because of their commitment and a sense of responsibility, but today’s societal norms make divorce more acceptable. And where a spouse once had to have a reason such as abuse, abandonment, or infidelity before filing for divorce,

today’s “no-fault” divorces allow the courts to rule in favor of dissolving the marriage if both participants are willing.

Here are some other common reasons for divorce:

- \* Unrealistic expectations that marriage will always be romantic or gratifying and that disagreements won’t occur are not met.
- \* As people reassess their careers and life goals through their twenties, they may think that the marriage no longer fits their new goals.
- \* Women or men able to support themselves (and their children) leave unhappy or abusive relationships.

## Physical Changes in Early Adulthood

For most people, physical attributes such as muscle strength, cardiac output, sensory sharpness, and reaction time are at their peak during the twenties. Unless people have abused their bodies through excessive sports training, work, or unhealthy habits such as drug or alcohol abuse or poor nutrition, they are at their physical best during these years.

## Cognitive Changes in Early Adulthood

Because cognitive abilities are often linked with physical health and well-being, young adulthood also represents a high point in a person’s creative and intellectual abilities.

Much of the work done by leading researchers in the sciences, for example, is done before they are 40. One theory suggests that only the “relatively young” can take full advantage of new ideas. As individuals age, their ideas become more set, prejudices increase, and fear of peer disapproval overcomes the drive for new and different ways of approaching problems.

## Developmental Tasks of Early Adulthood

- \* Becoming independent.
- \* Forming a social network.
- \* Developing intimate relationships.
- \* Adjusting to sharing one’s life with another person.
- \* Assuming the responsibilities of a family and home.
- \* Engaging in a career or job.
- \* Assuming some responsibility within the larger community.



## Adulthood and Moral Development

Lawrence Kohlberg’s stages of moral development (see Chapter 13) suggest that, during adulthood, people may reach two stages of morality beyond the fourth stage achieved by most adolescents. In stage five, people behave as they do because they respect others, respect social order, and prefer living under legally determined laws. While people respect individual rights and acknowledge that society has agreed upon a set of appropriate behaviors, they reserve the right to work toward a change in that system if they see it as flawed.

In stage six, individuals are motivated by a sense of universal ethics—“I did it

because it was the right thing to do.” What is “right” in this case is determined by one’s conscience and is based on universal principles of justice, human rights, and the dignity of human beings as individuals. It is suggested that only a small percentage of people actually reach this final stage of morality.

Critics of Kohlberg find his experimental methods flawed and suggest that he was biased against women or did not include them in his studies. Some argue that ethical behavior changes from context to context. A person may achieve stage five or six behavior with family but only stage three or four with the rest of society.

## Middle Adulthood

Middle adulthood—or what is commonly referred to as “middle age”—spans ages 40 to 60 or 65. In the early part of this century, many people didn’t live long enough to enjoy this period of their lives. Men who worked the land or in mines and factories often died in their late forties. Once children had been raised and sent out on their own, women felt that their life role had been fulfilled. Even if they lived longer, it would never have occurred to most of them to take on a new role at that point in their lives.

Today, the middle years focus on meaning in one’s life. People reassess their goals and recognize that some of them may never be achieved. In every growth process, acquiring new abilities comes with the loss of something. Focusing on the loss rather than the new possibilities is a danger during the middle years.

### Generativity vs. Stagnation

The middle years of adulthood comprise Erikson’s seventh stage. During this time, the challenge is generativity.

**Generativity** includes the following tasks:

- \* Caring for and guiding the next generation.
- \* Creating, originating, and producing something meaningful for one’s self and the next generation.
- \* Doing something for the betterment of the world in general.

Erikson suggested that if one did not become generative during the middle years, the alternative was stagnation. **Stagnation** is a failure to develop and grow, and it can result in feeling that life is empty and meaningless.

### Midlife Crisis

At one time, researchers believed that people in middle adulthood went through a period when they thought their lives were meaningless. They became dissatisfied with their careers or jobs and grew uninterested in their marriage partners. The recognition that one was not just starting out and that the years available to fulfill one’s dreams were dwindling were believed to trigger these feelings.

More recent research has found little, if any, evidence that such a crisis actually occurs. Rather than age triggering events, the events themselves may trigger a change in outlook and a reorganization of one’s life goals. Children leaving home, a change in career or job, divorce, relocation, or retirement are all important events in middle adulthood. They can occur at a variety of ages and have different effects on the people who experience them. Instead of experiencing the “empty nest” syndrome—a feeling of being useless and of having nothing more to do after the children leave home—many people undergo a **midlife transition** and undertake new projects, become more active in the community, or tackle a new career.

## Physical Changes in Middle Adulthood

During middle adulthood, physical capacities may have less to do with age than with a person's general health and lifestyle habits. Those who have maintained healthy habits such as good nutrition and regular exercise are often in better physical condition, and capable of more activity, than younger people who have relied on their youth to maintain their bodies and minds.

Here are several important factors in physical aging:

- \* Exercise is important in keeping bodily functions, such as the heart's pumping capacity and lung volume, at their maximum potential.
- \* Genetics plays an important role in overall health, but genes do not predetermine an individual's health in later life. That depends on many factors interacting with a possible genetic predisposition.
- \* Expectations play a critical role in maintaining a healthy life. They affect the choices we make in activities, challenges, or job changes. "I'm getting too old to do that" can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. When one doesn't remain active or doesn't accept new challenges, the capacity to do so declines.
- \* Hormonal changes can affect both men's and women's bodies as they age. Many myths are associated with these changes, myths that can cause more harm than the physical changes involved.

## Female Menopause

**Menopause** is defined as the cessation of a woman's menstrual cycle. Research has shown that menopause is not as traumatic an experience for women nor the source of depression and many physical ailments as earlier myths held.

Expectations play an important role in the changes that occur with menopause. If a woman perceives it as a loss of her identity or grieves over her inability to bear children, the onset of menopause can result in depression. If she expects the physiological changes that her body undergoes during menopause to be debilitating, they can be. But if she perceives menopause as a normal progression of age, and if she considers it as liberation from fears of pregnancy or the responsibilities of raising children, it may be the beginning of a new and potentially exciting phase of life.

## Male Menopause

While there is no obvious menopause in males equivalent to the cessation of the monthly cycle in women, men do experience a gradual reduction in their hormonal levels. For a few men, this triggers physical reactions similar to those of female menopause.

The hormonal changes men experience may be tied to other age-related changes such as weight gain, lower energy levels, and decreased fertility. The psychological reactions to hormonal changes can be more limiting than any actual physical change.



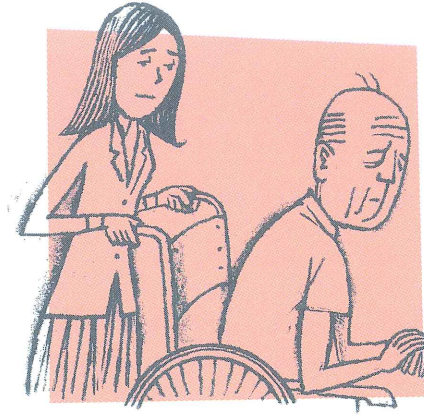
## Cognitive Changes in Middle Adulthood

There is some debate about the mental and intellectual changes that occur with age. Studies show that the ability to recall information declines during middle adulthood. However, the ability to recognize that same information increases throughout life. Some believe that while some cognitive abilities decrease, other ways of coping or processing information may actually increase.

Different types of studies yield different results. Cross-sectional studies (in which researchers test people of various ages at the same time) suggest that mental abilities decline as a person ages. Longitudinal studies (in which the same people are tested over a period of years) suggest that mental abilities increase until sometime in the sixties. They then decrease—but to a much smaller degree than cross-sectional studies would suggest.

What is being tested is an important variable in these studies. An older person with weaker vision may not complete an IQ test—not because he or she couldn't, but because of trouble reading the print. In addition, some suggest that "wisdom" acquired throughout life is not the same as the "intelligence" tested.

It is fairly well established that if a person continues to use and challenge his or her mental capacities, they will, in many cases, remain sharp. "Use it or lose it" is an appropriate instruction for both physical and mental faculties.



## The Sandwich Generation

As the population ages and parents live into their eighties and nineties, many people in middle adulthood find themselves responsible for their parents' well-being. At the same time, there is a trend toward children who have been out on their own for a time to return home. They may be trying to save money for a business or to reevaluate the direction of their lives. This double responsibility puts both a psychological and economic burden on people in midlife at a time when they typically are reevaluating their own goals and finally feeling the freedom to take on new challenges.

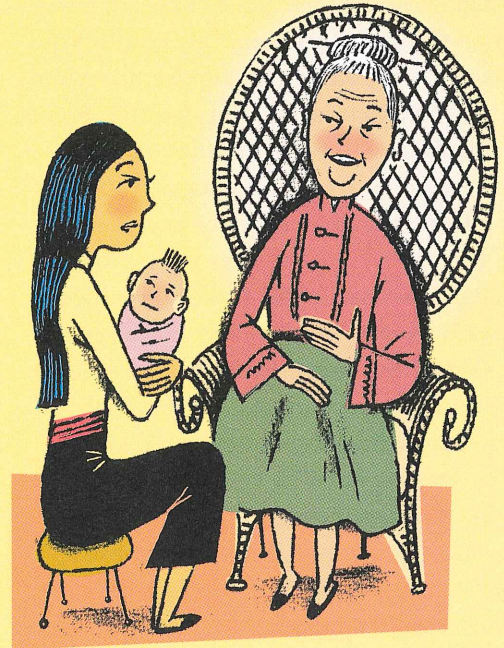
## Developmental Tasks of Middle Adulthood

- \* Assisting one's children to become successful and happy adults.
- \* Establishing and maintaining an appropriate economic stability.
- \* Achieving civic and social responsibility.
- \* Making decisions about one's identity in later life.
- \* Developing healthy leisure activities and strengthening social relationships.
- \* Adjusting to the aging of parents.



### Cultures and Attitudes Toward Aging

Attitudes toward the role of elder members of society differ from culture to culture. For example, in China, a woman is forbidden to have another child once she has become a grandmother. In Ladakh, Pakistan, when the eldest son marries, the parents move to a smaller home to prepare themselves for a life of prayer and what they call a “reduced worldly authority.” In Israel, members of the kibbutz (collective farm or settlement) are encouraged to work as long as they are able to maintain a meaningful social role in the community. In India, the mother-in-law makes the decisions about the household and directs the wives of her sons living in the same home. In Poland and Italy, the grandmother fills this role.



### Late Adulthood

In 1900, only about 4 percent of the population of the United States was 65 or older. By 1990, that figure reached 12.5 percent. By the year 2020, advances in health care and new attitudes toward aging will push Americans over 65 to 20 percent of the population. The average life expectancy of adult females will be about 88 and of adult males about 83.

### Physical Changes in Late Adulthood

Even though people are living longer and staying much more active, the human body continues to age in recognizable ways:

- \* Wrinkles and folds appear in the skin as it loses its elasticity.
- \* Senses can become less sharp.
- \* Bones can become more brittle as they lose calcium, making the risk of fractures greater.
- \* The immune system may weaken, making older people more prone to disease.

## What Causes Aging?

Several theories regarding aging have been proposed. One suggests that we have biological clocks that move ahead at a programmed rate. That rate is determined, in large measure, by the genes we inherit. Cells may be programmed to divide a certain number of times and no more. In addition, cells are less capable of repairing themselves in later life. Another theory suggests that environmental damage may influence aging. Depending on the number and type of potentially damaging agents, such as pollutants or carcinogens (cancer-causing agents) in our environments, cell damage may occur that can no longer be repaired. In addition, our bodies produce

substances known as *free radicals* during digestion. These substances may also contribute to the destruction of healthy cells.

Aging is a complex biochemical and psychological process. Perhaps the healthiest approach is to select activities and foods that are known to be healthy and to be aware of and avoid the potential hazards.

## Cognitive Changes in Late Adulthood

The great majority of older people have no serious reduction in intellectual capacity. Unless some illness or malfunction damages the brain, they retain the ability to learn and can develop new cognitive skills, such as using computers or other technologies.

| Myths of Aging  |  |
|---|--|
| Myth  | Reality  |
| People will age the same way their parents aged—either in good or poor health.                  | Although genetics plays a role in health, many seniors are now living more healthy lifestyles than did their parents, resulting in fewer illnesses and longer lives. |
| People should just accept the fact that their bodies are old and shouldn't expect to feel good. | While people should not deny that their bodies are aging and slowing down, poor health is not inevitable.  |
| Most older people lose their intellectual capacity.   | Most older people have no serious reduction in intellectual capacity.  |
| After a certain age, people can't change.   | People can and do change at every stage in life. Consider the senior sites on the Internet and seniors who begin new careers in their seventies.                     |

## Senile Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease

Some older people suffer from a serious loss of mental ability known as **senile dementia**. It can produce problems with memory, concentration, and decision-making ability. Dementia is caused by a malfunction in the brain—not by aging. The very fact that people are living longer increases the probability that a malfunction may occur. Dementia occurs more often in people in their eighties or older.

Alzheimer's disease is the primary cause of senile dementia. It involves the deterioration of cells in the brain. Heredity seems to play a role in the disease, and a number of different treatments are being tested. The other major cause of senile dementia is blood vessel damage due to stroke.

## Ego-Integrity vs. Despair

Erikson believed that in late adulthood people recognize that their lives have had meaning. They are satisfied with themselves as they are and feel fulfilled. Erikson called this reflection on and acceptance of one's life **ego-integrity**.

Confronting the end of life without ego-integrity can result in despair. One might feel that time is running out and that not all of one's achievements have been made. The person in despair might be angry at or deny physical limitations. It is understandable that older people in good health or in comfortable economic positions are more satisfied with their lives than others.

## Social Changes in Late Adulthood

As people age, they must adjust to changes in their social situations. People often eagerly anticipate retirement as an opportunity for more free time. However, once retired, some may begin to feel less productive and less connected to society as a whole. To increase productivity and interact with others, many seniors turn to volunteerism, community projects, visiting with friends, or even part-time work.

Family dynamics, too, change as we age. Grandparenting can be a very different experience from parenting. Without direct responsibility for their grandchildren, grandparents enjoy them in ways they couldn't enjoy their own children.

## Developmental Tasks of Late Adulthood

- \* Reflecting on and acknowledging the meaningfulness of one's life.
- \* Adjusting to physical and health changes and remaining active.
- \* Adjusting to the loss of friends and loved ones.
- \* Establishing affiliations with other members of one's age group.
- \* Remaining active in social and civic organizations.
- \* Adjusting to retirement and financial changes.
- \* Shifting interest from work to leisure, social, or volunteer activities.

## Research in Aging

**Gerontology** is a branch of psychology that studies the effects of aging. **Thanatology** is the study of death and the ways of coping with it. Both of these fields will become increasingly important as a larger percentage of the population enters late adulthood.

As attitudes toward aging change and new research challenges the myths of aging, more and more people live rewarding and happy lives in their later years. Validating one's role in life, refocusing on goals that are appropriate for one's age, and continuing to maintain a positive outlook and accept new challenges are as important in later life as they are for the young.

## Death and Dying

At some point, everyone reaches the end of life. As people grow older, they experience the loss of parents, friends, brothers, sisters, or even spouses. Part of ego-integrity is the acceptance of death as a natural part of life. Some people accept imminent death in stages. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross theorized that these **five** stages are common, although not everyone experiences all of them:

1. **Denial:** "The doctor must be wrong. I'm not that sick."
2. **Anger:** "It's not fair. Why me and not someone else?"
3. **Bargaining:** "If I get better, I'll give all my money to charity."
4. **Depression:** "Why bother going on if I'm going to die anyway?"
5. **Acceptance:** "I've had a full and rewarding life. I'm ready to move on to the next step."

## Facing Death with Dignity

One of the greatest fears for some people is losing their dignity as they age. Images of people being kept alive by machines or of losing control of their bodily functions can be frightening. It is important to treat old or dying people not as helpless infants but as mature adults who have earned dignity and respect.

At one time, elderly or terminally ill people had little choice of where they would die: either at home or in the hospital. Today, hospices provide an alternative. A **hospice** offers terminally ill patients and their families physical and emotional support to help them cope with death. It encourages family and friends to visit or stay with the dying person for as long as they want or need to.

Some people choose to execute a **living will** to express their wishes about being kept alive by artificial means. Not only does this reduce the personal indignity that a person might experience, but it also gives older people a sense of control over their lives—and deaths.

## Funerals

A funeral is a traditional way to say goodbye to a member of a family or community. While the specifics of a funeral depend on religious or spiritual beliefs, the process serves a number of functions. It is a symbolic way to separate the living from the dead. This provides those who remain behind with a way of closing that chapter in their lives. Funerals also provide a way to celebrate the deceased person's life and to acknowledge the legacy he or she leaves behind.



# CRITICAL THINKING

## Should We Try to Extend the Average Life Span?

Many people are thrilled that advances in medicine and psychology promise longer life spans, but extensive resources are being used to accomplish this. Is this the best use of these resources? Read about the issues and form your own opinion.

### THE ISSUES

Some say that, by the year 2020, advances in medical diagnoses, organ transplantation, gene therapy, and lifestyle management will enable more people to live into their eighties, nineties, and even hundreds. People will have more time to realize their dreams and to accomplish more in their lifetimes. Families may include four and five generations. People in their fifties may go back to school and enter new careers in their sixties and seventies. The demographics that have driven product development and advertising will shift from the young to more mature buyers.

But the resources necessary to accomplish this are also extensive. Millions of dollars and large amounts of medical resources are being

used to extend the average life span. Some people feel these resources should be spent on ways to improve the average person's quality of life, not the length of life. What good is longer life if you're burdened with poor health? Use those resources to find cures for disease instead, they argue.

Some people fear that an increasing number of older, active people will remain in a work force that is, even now, difficult for some young people to enter. If older workers aren't forced to retire, fewer and fewer jobs will be available. Perhaps these opportunities should go to younger and potentially more productive people.

Should resources be used to extend the average life span?

### THE PROCESS

- 1 Restate the issues.** In your own words, state the nature of the issue.
- 2 Provide evidence.** From your own experience and from the information above, list the evidence *for* increasing the expected life span of humans.
- 3 Give opposing arguments.** From your own experience and from the information above, list the evidence *against* increasing the expected life span of humans.
- 4 Look for more information.** What else would you like to know before you form your opinion? Make a list of your questions. On the Internet, in the psychology section of the library, or in the index of psychology

books, research *life span*, *euthanasia*, and *gerontology*.

- 5 Evaluate the information.** Make a chart with two columns:

| Increasing the Human Life Span |         |
|--------------------------------|---------|
| For                            | Against |

Record the arguments in each column and rank each column of arguments in importance from 1 to 5, with 1 as the most important.

- 6 Draw conclusions.** Write one paragraph supporting your answer to the question "Should resources be used to extend the average life span?" Be sure to state reasons, not just opinions.

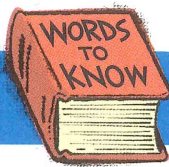
## Chapter 14 Wrap-up

### ADULTHOOD AND AGING

The stages of adulthood include early adulthood, from 20 to 40 years; middle adulthood, from 40 to 65 years; and late adulthood, age 65 and older. Each period of adulthood carries with it certain challenges. Young adults have the challenge of intimacy vs. isolation; middle adults, of generativity vs. stagnation; and older adults, of ego-integrity vs. despair.

Each period of adult life entails certain tasks of development. In early adulthood, those tasks include establishing committed and open relationships with others, identifying a career, and becoming independent. In middle adulthood, tasks such as making a home, starting a family, and forming a commitment to the good of society are major concerns. Older adults must adjust to changes in their lives and continue to challenge themselves while coming to terms with their mortality.

### Psychology



**ego-integrity**—reflection on and acceptance of one's life as it has been and is. p. 244

**generativity**—ability to create and produce throughout one's life. p. 239

**gerontology**—branch of psychology that studies the effects of aging. p. 245

**hospice**—facility or program for terminally ill patients. p. 245

**intimacy**—ability to relate to another human being on a deep, personal level. p. 235

**isolation**—feeling of separateness from others and a lack of the strength and support gained from close relationships. p. 235

**living will**—legal document that expresses what someone wants done if he or she becomes incapable of making decisions about health care. p. 245

**menopause**—cessation of a woman's menstrual cycle. p. 240

**midlife transition**—change that occurs as a result of life events during which one may undertake new activities. p. 239

**senile dementia**—condition of aging that produces problems with memory, concentration, or decision-making ability. It is caused by a malfunction in the brain, such as Alzheimer's disease or blood vessel damage due to stroke. p. 244

**stagnation**—failure to develop and grow resulting in feeling that life is empty and meaningless. p. 239

**thanatology**—study of death and the ways of coping with it. p. 245