

Erikson's theory of personality

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Erikson was a [Neo-Freudian](#). He has been described as an "ego psychologist" studying the stages of development, spanning the entire lifespan. Each of Erikson's stages of psychosocial development are marked by a conflict, for which successful resolution will result in a favourable outcome, for example, trust vs. mistrust, and by an important event that this conflict resolves itself around, for example, the meaning of one's life.

Favorable outcomes of each stage are sometimes known as "virtues", a term used, in the context of Eriksonian work, as it is applied to medicines, meaning "potencies." Erikson's research suggests that each individual must learn how to hold both extremes of each specific life-stage challenge in tension with one another, not rejecting one end of the tension or the other. Only when both extremes in a life-stage challenge are understood and accepted as both required and useful, can the optimal virtue for that stage surface. Thus, 'trust' and 'mis-trust' must both be understood and accepted, in order for realistic 'hope' to emerge as a viable solution at the first stage. Similarly, 'integrity' and 'despair' must both be understood and embraced, in order for actionable 'wisdom' to emerge as a viable solution at the last stage.

The Erikson life-stage virtues, in the order of the stages in which they may be acquired, are:

1. [Hope](#) - Basic Trust vs. Mistrust - Infant stage / 0-1 year. Does the child believe its caregivers to be reliable?
2. [Will](#) - Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt - Toddler stage / 1-3 years. Child needs to learn to explore the world. Bad if the parent is too smothering or completely neglectful.
3. [Purpose](#) - Initiative vs. Guilt - Preschool / 3-6 years - Does the child have the ability to do things on their own, such as dress him or herself? If "guilty" about making his or her own choices, the child will not function well. Erikson has a positive outlook on this stage, saying that most guilt is quickly compensated by a sense of accomplishment.
4. [Competence](#) - Industry vs. Inferiority - School-age / 6-11. Child comparing self worth to others (such as in a classroom environment). Child can recognize major disparities in personal abilities relative to other children. Erikson places some emphasis on the teacher, who should ensure that children do not feel inferior.
5. [Fidelity](#) - Identity vs. Role Confusion - Adolescent / 12 years till mid twenties. Questioning of self. Who am I, how do I fit in? Where am I going in life? Erikson believes that if the parents allow the child to explore, they will conclude their own identity. However, if the parents continually push him/her to conform to their views, the teen will face identity confusion.
6. Intimacy vs. isolation is the first and very crucial stage of development. This development usually happens during young adulthood, which is between the ages of 19 to 40. Dating, marriage, family and friendships are important during the stage in their life. By successfully forming loving relationships with other people, individuals are able to experience love and intimacy. Those who fail to form lasting relationships may feel isolated and alone.

7. Generativity vs. stagnation is the second stage of adulthood and happens between the ages of 40 to 65. During this time, people are normally settled in their life and know what is important to them. A person is either making progress in their career or treading lightly in their career and unsure about if this is what they want to do for the rest of their working lives. Also during this time, a person is enjoying raising their children and participating in activities that gives them a sense on purpose. If a person is not comfortable with the way their life is progressing; their usually regretful about the decisions and feel a sense of uselessness.
8. Ego integrity vs. despair. This stage affects the age group of 65 and on. During this time you have reached the last chapter in your life and retirement is approaching or has already taken place. Many people have achieved what was important to them look back on their lives and feel great accomplishment and a sense of integrity. The ones who had a difficult time during middle adulthood may look back and feel a sense of despair.