Middle Adulthood:
Biosocial, Cognitive, Psychosocial Development
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• Scenes from Middle Age Crazy
  Jerry Lee Lewis sings
  Graduation speech
  Porsche showroom
Changes During Middle Adulthood

Agnetha Faltskog of ABBA
Middle Age: Physical Signs

- Graying & thinning of hair
- Drying & wrinkling of skin
- Change in body shape as pockets of fat settle on the upper arms, buttocks, & other body parts
- Increased likelihood of being overweight
- Loss in height as back muscles, connecting tissues, & bones lose strength
- Decline in hearing & vision
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Atherosclerosis (hardening of arteries)</th>
<th>Cancer</th>
<th>Arthritis</th>
<th>Diabetes</th>
<th>Emphysema</th>
<th>Cirrhosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Start</td>
<td>Elevated cholesterol</td>
<td>Carcinogen exposure</td>
<td>Abnormal cartilage staining</td>
<td>Obesity, genetic susceptibility</td>
<td>Smoker</td>
<td>Drinker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Discernible</td>
<td>Small lesions on arteriogram</td>
<td>Cellular metaplasia*</td>
<td>Slight joint space narrowing</td>
<td>Abnormal glucose tolerance</td>
<td>Mild airway obstruction</td>
<td>Fatty liver on biopsy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Subclinical</td>
<td>Larger lesions on arteriogram</td>
<td>Increasing metaplasia</td>
<td>Bone spurs</td>
<td>Elevated blood glucose</td>
<td>Decrease in surface area and elasticity of lung tissue</td>
<td>Enlarged liver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Threshold</td>
<td>Leg pain on exercise</td>
<td>Carcinoma in situ</td>
<td>Mild articular pain</td>
<td>Sugar in urine</td>
<td>Shortness of breath</td>
<td>Upper GI hemorrhage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Severe</td>
<td>Angina pectoris</td>
<td>Clinical cancer</td>
<td>Moderate articular pain</td>
<td>Drugs required to lower blood glucose</td>
<td>Recurrent hospitalization</td>
<td>Fluid in the abdomen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>End</td>
<td>Stroke, heart attack</td>
<td>Cancer spreads from site of origin</td>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>Blindness; nerve and kidney damage</td>
<td>Intractable oxygen debt</td>
<td>Jaundice; hepatic coma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Prevention or postponement**
- No cigarettes; normal weight; exercise
- No cigarettes; limit pollution; diet; early detection
- Normal weight; exercise; minimize stress on joints
- Normal weight; exercise; diet
- No cigarettes; exercise; limit pollution
- No heavy drinking; diet
Experts vs. Novice
Distinguishing Features

• Experts tend to rely more on their accumulated experience than on rules to guide them & are thus more intuitive & less stereotyped in their performance.
• Many elements of expert performance are automatic.
• The expert has more, & better strategies for accomplishing a particular task.
• Experts are more flexible in their work.
Psychosocial Issues
Terms to Consider

• Sandwich generation, Kinkeeper
• Generativity vs. Stagnation
• Mid-life evaluation (crisis?)
• Refine Your Life, Worksheets, Rogers’ Model
• What Might Have Been
• Burnout
• Coping Styles
Carl Rogers

Idealized Self
- Realized Self
= Discrepancy

that can be used to predict an individual’s behavior. In other words, the difference between how a person sees himself or herself and how that person would like to view himself or herself, may serve as a model of what they need to do to change.
Whatever Happened to “What Might Have Been”

Regrets, Happiness, & Maturity

Laura King & Joshua Hicks, U. of Missouri
American Psychologist (2007, October)

- Adults need to confront lost goals, or lost possible selves, in order to continue personality development.
- Not knowing when to disengage from a goal can lead to distress & an inability to engage in new goals.
- When faced with goal failure, rather than disengage, people are likely to redouble their efforts.
- At such times, people may question, “How did I get here?” & “Where am I heading?”
- Middle age adults are often struggling with lost possible selves (autobiographical memories of once cherished goals).
• Thinking about what might have been is likely to foster feelings of regret & distress.
• Failure to disengage from lost goals is associated with lowered well-being.
• Accommodation is reflected in thoughtful examination of lost goals & reconstruction of & investment in new goals, commensurate with what one has lost.
• Challenging life events may spur individuals to reprioritize and re-envision their possible futures.
• Investing in one’s current goals is a strong correlate of happiness.
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Coping Styles

**Stressors**
- Catastrophes
- Life changes
- Hassles

**Intervening factors**
- Appraisal
- Perceived control
- Personality
- Social support
- Coping behaviors

**Stress reactions**
- Physiological
- Emotional
- Behavioral
Coping Styles

Life events

Personal appraisal

- Challenge
- Threat

Personality type

- Easygoing Nondepressed Optimistic
- Hostile Depressed Pessimistic

Personal habits

- Nonsmoking Regular exercise Good nutrition
- Smoking Sedentary Poor nutrition

Level of social support

- Close, enduring
- Lacking

Tendency toward

- Health
- Illness
Coping Styles

Source: Rahe, 2000, p. 542.