

Late adulthood

- Late adulthood is generally considered to begin at age of 65. Its also known as old age and is considered closing period of life span.
- The period of old age during which physical and mental decline is gradual. Erik Erikson suggests that at this time it is important to find meaning and satisfaction in life rather than to become bitter and disillusioned, that is, to resolve the conflict of **integrity vs. despair**.



Characteristic of late adulthood-

It can be characterized by a number of factors including both mental and physical. It can depend upon person to person. Some of them are.

I. Physical characteristics-

- **Bone and joint-** Old bones are marked by thinning and shrinkage. This results in a loss of height (about 2 inches by age 80). Greater susceptibility to bone and joint diseases such as osteoporosis and osteoarthritis.
- **Chronic diseases-** Old people either have one or multiple chronic conditions. The most common are arthritis, diabetes, hypertension and heart disease.
- **Dental problem-** Less saliva and less ability for oral hygiene in old age increases the chance of tooth decay and infection .
- **Digestive system-** Difficulty in swallowing, inability to eat enough and to absorb nutrition, constipation and bleeding.
- **Eyesight-** Diminished eyesight making it difficult to read in low lighting and in smaller print.
- **Hearing-** By age 75, around 35% of elderly have impairments in hearing
- **Heart-** Become less efficient results in loss of stamina.
- **Immune function-** Less efficient immune system

- **lungs-** Expand less providing lesser amount of oxygen as compared to normal rate and results in lesser energy



- **Sexual activity-** Decrease significantly with age .
- **Skin-** loses elasticity, becomes drier and more lined and wrinkled .

II. **Mental characteristics-**

- **Anxiety-** Elderly suffer from anxiety and loss of confidence.
- **Short term memory loss-** Elderly generally forget what they had for lunch or where they put their classes as because they have short term memory loss.
- **Depression-** Depression is very prevalent in elderly due to fear of death.
- **Loneliness-** Either due to loss of spouse or living alone can be a big cause of loneliness

- **Adaptability** – Elderly are more adaptable to the change.
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Erikson's Stage for Late Adulthood

- Ego Integrity vs. Despair
- “Adults who arrive at a sense of *Ego Integrity* feel whole, complete, and satisfied with their achievements. They have adapted to the mix of triumphs and disappointments that are an inevitable part of love relationships child rearing, work, and community involvement” (592).
- Despair occurs when “elders feel they have made many wrong decisions, yet time is too short to find an alternate route to integrity” (593). This sense of despair can include bitterness, anger, defeat, hopelessness and contempt for others.