You can’t help getting older, but you don’t have to get old.

George Burns

What does this quote mean to you?
Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg and even William Shakespeare have written about the developmental stages individuals pass through as their lives move from birth to death. The stages do not occur in exactly the same way in all families. Some families can be in two stages at one time. For example, the same family could be living with an adolescent and launching an older child. Remember, the family life stages are fluid, without rigid boundaries, and they can encompass the emotional, intellectual, physical and spiritual aspects of life.
Noted theorist Erik Erikson, developed the “eight stages of man,” beginning at birth and continuing through old age. He talked about social/emotional development in all stages of life. Research supports Erikson’s theory that generativity is an important factor in middle-age. People enjoy feeling needed by people. They are needed in their community, show appreciation and awareness of older adults, and have interests beyond the family life.

In middle adulthood, he spoke of generativity versus stagnation. His thought was that during this time of life, adults must determine whether they will think about generativity (giving back to others; bringing up the next generation by leading and guiding them) or face stagnation (no longer growing and giving). In other words, being in the world. What have we done to help those we love and the world at large? Middle adults have thoughts of future generations and their personal influence on them.

How do you think middle-aged adults might show generativity?
Another theorist, Daniel Levinson, stated that everyone goes through certain definable stages of life and that no one “season” is more important than another. Change happens in each season and is influenced by the ones that went before. Each season requires a transition. What types of transition might take place as people enter middle age, around age 40?

It’s often true that adults in this age range can begin a shift toward more individualization. Many of them have finished rearing their children and are now finding time to discover themselves again. For many people, midlife is a time of consideration, valuation and assessment of their existing work and what they propose to do in the future. One important concern is whether individuals will continue to do the type of work they presently do or change jobs or careers. How might this be expressed in a middle age individual?

Others often find this a time of career change, either through choice or circumstance. Do you know anyone who made a career shift in middle-age? What were the implications of that? How might it have impacted his or her family?
What are some key physical changes that occur during middle adulthood?

How would you characterize health and disease in middle adulthood?
Physical changes are often very visible in middle adulthood. Sensory changes, such as vision, hearing, smell, taste and touch may all begin to occur. There are muscular changes that occur as well. What are some evidences of these changes? How has technology helped middle adults cope with some of these changes?

Genetic and lifestyle elements play significant roles in whether long-lasting diseases will appear and when. Physical development for middle adults is most noticeable in changes in hearing and vision, as both begin to decline. Most middle adults begin to lose a small amount of height as well. Signs of aging are the other hallmark of physical development in the middle years.
Wellness, while important in any stage of life, starts becoming even more important in middle adulthood. In order to maintain good health, it is important to develop good wellness habits. Life expectancy has increased to about age 74, but practicing wellness is an important aspect of that. As you grow older, if you continue eating the same types and amounts of food but do not become more active, you will probably gain weight. That’s because your metabolism (how your body gets energy from food) slows with age.

However, research shows that proper nutrition and physical activity can slow the effects of aging considerably. They also can reduce much of the risk of physical illnesses associated with middle adulthood, such as cardiovascular disease and cancers. In middle adulthood, chronic diseases contribute to the majority of deaths in this age group. Most women will go through the process of menopause between the ages of 42 and 55, marking the end of fertility. Women will experience a range of side effects during this period including changes in menstrual cycle, hot flashes and sleep disturbances.

What are the main causes of death in middle age?
The USDA Food Patterns suggest that people over 50 keep an eye on calories while choosing a variety of healthy foods from five major food groups and limiting solid fats and added sugars. Calories are the way to measure the energy you get from food. How many calories you need depends on whether you are a man or a woman and how physically active you are each day.

According to the National Institute of Aging, here are some tips for getting adequate nutrients:

• Eat many different colors and types of vegetables and fruits.
• Make sure at least half of the grains are whole grains.
• Eat only small amounts of solid fats and foods with added sugars. Limit saturated fat (found mostly in foods that come from animals) and trans fats (found in foods like store-bought baked goods and some margarines).
• Eat seafood twice a week.
How does intelligence develop in middle adulthood?
John Horn (a researcher) has come to the conclusion that intelligence is divided into two types. We’ll discuss them in the next slides.
Crystalized intelligence is more about our long-term memory; things that have been hard-wired into our system. This is another word on the word wall. John Horn claimed that crystallized intelligence (gathered information and verbal skills) continues to escalate in middle adulthood, though fluid intelligence (ability to reason abstractly) begins to weaken. The maximum level of four intellectual abilities (vocabulary, verbal memory, inductive reasoning, and spatial orientation) ensued in middle age. Speed of information dispensed, often assessed through response time, continues to drop in middle adulthood. Working memory wanes in late middle age. Memory is more likely to decline in middle age when individuals do not use active strategies. Expertise often surges in the middle adulthood years. Adults in their 40s and 50s are still very capable of mental tasks and have years of experience to complement their knowledge. It may be slightly more difficult to learn new things, but the ability to perform tasks with knowledge already learned is as strong as ever.

The University of Alberta's Cognitive Science Dictionary
http://penta.ufrgs.br/edu/telelab/3/control.htm
Fluid intelligence describes our ability to reason abstractly, think on the spot and make decisions. It is one of the words on our word wall.

The University of Alberta's Cognitive Science Dictionary
http://penta.ufrgs.br/edu/telelab/3/fluid_in.htm
Middle-age memory becomes more limited as a result of information overload that builds up as we go through the adult years. Memory decline is more likely to occur when individuals don’t use effective memory strategies, such as organization or imagery. Adults can imagine phone numbers, names or objects as representing different objects around the house. Are there things we can do to help memory loss? A recent Harvard Health Publication had some ideas. Let’s visit that site and read what it has to say.

Teacher note: From the link on this slide, review “Troubleshooting memory problems: Common memory lapses and strategies to overcome them” with the students.

Harvard Health Publications
Preventing memory loss: Seven preventative steps.
www.health.harvard.edu/newsweek/Preventing_memory_loss.htm
What societal changes in the last few decades might impact how people live in middle-age?
At one point in time, many persons took a job and worked there until retirement. With the increase in technology and moving into the information age, many jobs became obsolete, forcing workers into different arenas. This is sometimes referred to as the “buggy whip” situation. There was a time when buggy whip makers were assured plenty of work because everyone rode in buggies, not automobiles. Since the automobile had not yet been invented, it was impossible to imagine that buggy whip makers would not always be in great demand. The automotive industry, though, effectively did away with buggy whip makers. What’s a more current example of this?

Economic circumstances caused many businesses to go under or change their focus, again causing workers to move to different employment. How might this trend impact your middle adult years?
What are some of the things that are considered necessities in today’s world that were certainly not necessities 40 years ago? 20? Even 10? What does this do to financial considerations in middle adulthood? Think about the things that your parents (or grandparents) did not have growing up. Did they have color television or microwaves? What about cell phones and the Internet? Was a cable bill part of their lives? A data plan? Are these necessities in today’s world?

How does technology affect middle-aged adults? Do your parents or grandparents know how to deal with all the technology in their lives, or do you have to help them? Do you think this causes stress for them now?
How do these threats to jobs affect middle-age individuals?

Another concern for most middle-aged adults is establishing their financial security for retirement. During these years of peak earnings, the strain of paying for children’s college, parent’s health care and and/or living arrangements can disrupt plans for retirement savings.

San Francisco Gate
Top Jobs Threatened by Technology
The escalation of drug use has changed society in many ways. How might that change what happens in our middle adulthood? Could it impact costs to a family? Could tax or health costs increase?

Binge drinkers are more likely to take risks like driving while intoxicated and to experience falls and other accidents. Older people have less tolerance for alcohol. Texas males age 50-64 reported binge drinking while more than 13 percent of those in the 65+ group reported similar behavior.

A new survey finds that adults aged 45 and over are more than three times as likely to drink alcohol almost every day as those under 45. This could mean that the middle-aged population is ignoring the serious health risks associated with excessive drinking.

The encumbrance and health costs related with binge drinking among middle-aged and elderly adults seem to be a disturbing public health issue. Consequently, the problem of binge drinking among older adults indicates the need for reinforced global prevention.

Nationally, illicit drug use has nearly tripled among 50-59 year old adults since 2002. In the 50-54 year age group, the rate rose from 2.7 to 6.2 percent. The rate rose from 1.9 to 5.4 percent in the 55-59 year age group. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), “These patterns and trends partially reflect the aging into these age groups of members of the baby boom cohort, whose rates of illicit drug use have been higher than those of older cohorts.”
How else does our shifting culture affect middle adulthood? Do you believe the entities that we have always seen as the pillars of society (home, school or church) are as effective as they used to be? Why or why not? How have these entities changed?

We have become a very mobile society, in part because of the changing workplace environment that we talked about earlier. How does this mobility affect families? How many of you live ten minutes or fewer from a relative, such as a grandparent, aunt or uncle? How many of you live within an hour’s drive of those relatives? What does this mean for parents rearing children? What does it mean for the children?
How has technology changed? Let’s watch a timeline to see some of the changes.

Teacher note: This video is 20 minutes long. You may elect to show the video during the PowerPoint™ presentation or assign it as an enrichment activity.

Technology Timeline; 1920s to Present
From The Invention of Television to the Advent of Advertising, From the First Computers to the Internet... the Convergence of Turning Television into Computers.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXewcY6l_VA
Many people have heard the term “midlife crisis.” However, there is little scientific research that supports its existence. Emotional development for middle-age is generally centered around new family roles as children begin to establish their independence. Some couples enjoy a second honeymoon period or “empty nest syndrome” in which they rediscover their relationships. This period can be more difficult for women, especially if they had a more traditional role of homemaker. Some families who delayed marriage and childbearing will still have young children at home during the middle adult years. Others will become grandparents. Many middle-aged adults begin caring for their own aging parents as well.

For many people, midlife is a time of consideration, valuation and assessment of their existing work and what they propose to do in the future. One important concern is whether individuals will continue to do the type of work they presently do or change jobs or careers. What do you want your work life and leisure to be like in middle-age?
What does the term “sandwich generation” mean? Let’s watch a video and then we’ll discuss this fairly new phenomenon.

Questions to ask after viewing the videos:

- Do you know anyone who is living a “sandwich” life? Remember that some people are also in a “club sandwich,” which has three layers.
- Do you know anyone in that situation?
- What type of stress do you suppose this causes the persons involved?

Living with Integrity: The Sandwich Generation
When your children and parents both need care, where do your responsibilities lie?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OoLgfRNW124

The Sandwich Generation
The Sandwich Generation, those caught between their aging parents and young children, includes some 20 million Americans.
http://youtu.be/YhXrHD7qWDk8k0
What about grandparents rearing grandchildren?

Some grandparents in today’s society are functioning as the parents for their grandchildren. Are there special challenges for persons doing this? What would some of them be? What would the challenges for the children be?

How many of you were raised by a grandparent? What are the pros and cons of this type of living arrangement?
Grown children move back home for many reasons, but the primary one is economic. Other reasons include health issues, divorce, or a desire to continue education. What other reasons can you think of?

We’ve talked a little bit about our mobile society. How do you think this affects relationships within a family? Can you give some examples?

Boomerangers and Kidults
A couple discuss the pros and cons of having their son and his wife living with them.
http://youtu.be/2r2P1p8fWNg
We’ve also talked about the challenges of technology in middle adulthood. However, social media can be a boon for middle-aged people, particularly those who are living alone. How might this be true? Do your parents or grandparents use social media? If so, what is their purpose? Do you think people can form real relationships via social media?
It's a new and changing world. Middle adulthood offers many challenges, including physical and cognitive changes as well as societal and cultural changes that must be coped with. Even relationships are different in middle adulthood.

Perhaps this short look will help us understand development in middle adulthood.
Questions?
Journals:

Textbooks:
Resources

Websites:
- American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)
  Free Online Brain Games
- Colorado State University Extension Office
  Grandparents: As parents.
  http://ext.colostate.edu/pubs/consumer/10241.html
- Harvard Health Publications
  Preventing memory loss: Seven preventative steps.
  www.health.harvard.edu/newsweek/preventing_memory_loss.htm
- Huffington Post
  40 Signs You Are Middle Aged...
  http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/28/middle-age_n_3830194.html
- MiddleAge.org
  Definition: When or What is Middle Age?
  www.middleage.org
- Study Mode
  Human Growth and Development – Daniel Levinson.
  Daniel flash cards and quizzes.
Presentation Notes
Life in the Middle: Understanding Development in Middle Adulthood

Slide 32

Resources


YouTube Videos:
- Progression: Best Time-lapse video shows little girl growing into an old woman. [Link]
- Sandwich Generation: Living with Integrity: The Sandwich Generation [Link]
- Technology Timeline: 1920 to Present: From The Invention of Television to the Advent of Advertising, from the First Computers to the Internet... the Convergence of Turning Television Into Computers. This is a 20 minute video. [Link]
- The Sandwich Generation: The Sandwich Generation, those caught between their aging parents and young children, includes some 30 million Americans. [Link]

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