

UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD'S JOURNEY

What Every Parent Should Know About Ages 6-18



The Two Most Critical Stages of Development

TWO STAGES THAT SHAPE WHO YOUR CHILD BECOMES

Erik Erikson, a renowned developmental psychologist, identified 8 stages humans pass through from birth to old age. Each stage has a core challenge that, when resolved successfully, builds a strength that lasts a lifetime.

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT ➤



STAGE 1: TRUST VS. MISTRUST

IMPORTANT EVENT: FEEDING | OUTCOME: HOPE

INFANCY | AGE: 0 TO 18 MONTHS

When babies receive consistent warmth, comfort, and nourishment, they develop Hope—a fundamental belief that the world is safe and people can be trusted. Inconsistent care creates early mistrust that can show up as anxiety and insecurity throughout life.

YOUR ROLE THEN: RESPOND CONSISTENTLY TO THEIR NEEDS.

STAGE 2: AUTONOMY VS. SHAME AND DOUBT

IMPORTANT EVENT: TOILET TRAINING | OUTCOME: WILL

EARLY CHILDHOOD | AGE: 2 TO 3 YEARS OLD

When babies receive consistent warmth, comfort, and nourishment, they develop Hope—a fundamental belief that the world is safe and people can be trusted. Inconsistent care creates early mistrust that can show up as anxiety and insecurity throughout life.

YOUR ROLE THEN: ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENCE WITHIN SAFE BOUNDARIES.



STAGE 3: INITIATIVE VS. GUILT

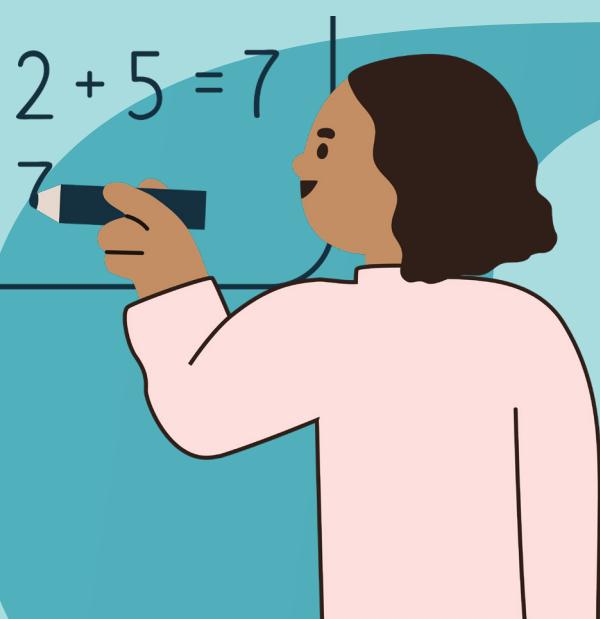
IMPORTANT EVENT: EXPLORATION | OUTCOME: PURPOSE

PRESCHOOL | AGE: 3 TO 5 YEARS OLD

Through imaginative play and exploration, young children test what happens when they take initiative. When their ideas are encouraged, they develop Purpose—the confidence to pursue goals. When dismissed or criticized, they link their actions with guilt and become hesitant to lead.



YOUR ROLE THEN: SUPPORT THEIR CURIOSITY AND CREATIVE IDEAS.



STAGE 4: INDUSTRY VS. INFERIORITY

IMPORTANT EVENT: SCHOOL | OUTCOME: CONFIDENCE

SCHOOL AGE | AGE: 6 TO 11 YEARS OLD

As children master skills and receive recognition for their efforts, they build Competence, belief in their ability to accomplish things. Repeated failure or harsh criticism creates feelings of inferiority that can last a lifetime.

YOUR ROLE THEN: RECOGNIZE EFFORT, NOT JUST OUTCOMES.

STAGE 5 : IDENTITY VS. ROLE CONFUSION

IMPORTANT EVENT: SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS | OUTCOME: FIDELITY

ADOLESCENCE | AGE: 12 TO 18 YEARS OLD

This is where everything changes. Through peer relationships and self-exploration, teenagers ask the defining question: "Who am I?" When teens successfully navigate this stage, they develop Fidelity—the ability to stay true to themselves and their values, even under pressure. They know who they are. They can make decisions aligned with their authentic self. They're prepared for everything that comes next.

When they don't get the guidance, space, and support they need? They experience role confusion, a sense of not knowing who they are or where they fit. This shows up as:

- Constant anxiety about fitting in
- Difficulty making decisions
- Susceptibility to peer pressure and social media influence
- Feeling lost or directionless
- Low self-esteem masked by performance

YOUR ROLE NOW: PROVIDE SPACE FOR EXPLORATION WITHOUT JUDGMENT, GUIDANCE WITHOUT CONTROL, AND UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT AS THEY DISCOVER THEIR AUTHENTIC SELF.





STAGE 6 : INTIMACY VS. ISOLATION

IMPORTANT EVENT: WORK AND PARENTHOOD | OUTCOME: LOVE
YOUNG ADULTHOOD | AGE: 19 TO 40 YEARS OLD

Young adults who developed a strong identity in Stage 5 can now form deep, authentic relationships and develop Love—the capacity for intimacy without losing themselves. Those who skipped identity formation struggle with emotional distance, fear of vulnerability, or losing themselves in relationships.

BUILT ON: A STRONG SENSE OF SELF FROM STAGE 5.



STAGE 7 : GENERATIVITY VS. STAGNATION

IMPORTANT EVENT: RELATIONSHIPS | OUTCOME: CARE
MIDDLE ADULTHOOD | AGE: 40 TO 65 YEARS OLD

Adults in midlife focus on contributing meaningfully through parenting, work, or community involvement and develop Care, the desire to nurture the next generation. Without this, people can feel stuck, self-absorbed, or purposeless.

BUILT ON: KNOWING WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT MATTERS (STAGE 5).



STAGE 8 : INTEGRITY VS. DESPAIR

IMPORTANT EVENT: REFLECTION ON LIFE | OUTCOME: WISDOM

MATURITY | AGE: 65 YEARS +

In later years, people reflect on their lives. Those who feel they lived authentically develop Wisdom and acceptance. Those with unresolved regrets often stemming from never truly knowing themselves experience despair and fear.

BUILT ON: A LIFETIME OF DECISIONS MADE FROM AUTHENTIC IDENTITY (STAGE 5).

**IN DETAIL VIEW
AT STAGE 4 AND 5**



STAGE 4: INDUSTRY VS. INFERIORITY

AGES 6-11 YEARS | SCHOOL AGE

The Core Question:

Can I master skills and accomplish things?

What's Happening:

During these years, children learn to master academic, social, and physical skills. They're figuring out: Am I capable? Am I good enough? Can I do things well?

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The Important Event:

School and learning – Grades, sports, arts, friendships, recognition from teachers and peers.



When Resolved Successfully, it develops COMPETENCE

Children develop:

- Confidence in their abilities
- Pride in accomplishments
- Willingness to try new things
- Resilience when facing challenges
- Belief that effort leads to results

These children enter adolescence thinking:
"I can figure things out. I'm capable."

When Not Resolved, it develops INFERIORITY

Children experience:

- Feelings of inadequacy
("I'm not good at anything")
- Fear of failure
- Reluctance to try new things
- Comparison with peers
("Everyone is better than me")
- Low self-esteem

These children enter adolescence thinking:
"I'm not good enough. I can't do this."

STAGE 5: IDENTITY VS. ROLE CONFUSION

AGES 12–18 YEARS | ADOLESCENCE

The Core Question:

“Who am I?”

What's Happening:

During these years, teenagers explore values, beliefs, interests, friendships, and future direction. They're figuring out: Who am I? What do I stand for? Where do I fit ?

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The Important Event:

Social relationships and self-exploration – Peer groups, identity experimentation, value formation.



When Resolved Successfully, it develops FIDELITY

Teens develop:

- Clear sense of self and values
- Ability to stay true to themselves
- Confidence in decision-making
- Authentic relationships
- Direction and purpose

These children enter adolescence thinking:

“I know who I am. I trust myself.”

When Not Resolved, it develops ROLE CONFUSION

Teens develop:

- Uncertainty about identity (“I don’t know who I am”)
- Constant performance or people-pleasing
- Difficulty making decisions
- Vulnerability to peer pressure and social media
- Anxiety and low self-esteem

These children enter adolescence thinking:

These children enter adolescence thinking:
“I’m lost. Who am I supposed to be?”

THE CRITICAL CONNECTION:

Stage 4 (Competence) builds the foundation for Stage 5 (Identity).

Children who develop competence in Stage 4 enter Stage 5 with confidence:
“I’m capable, so I can figure out who I am.”

Children who struggle in Stage 4 enter Stage 5 already doubting themselves:
“I’m not good enough, so who am I even supposed to be?”

Both stages matter. Both need support. Both shape who your child becomes.



WHY THIS MATTERS NOW?

The Stakes Have Never Been Higher

Today's children and teens face challenges previous generations never encountered:

For Ages 6-11 (Stage 4):

- Academic pressure starting younger than ever
- Constant comparison through social media (even at 8-9 years old)
- Less free play and exploration time
- Performance culture (“you must be the best”)
- Limited opportunity to master skills without adult direction

Result: More children reaching adolescence without a solid foundation of competence.

For Ages 12-18 (Stage 5):

- Social media creating impossible identity standards
- Information overload making it harder to know what's "real"
- Less time for identity exploration (packed schedules, academic pressure)
- Conflicting messages about success and authenticity
- Mental health crisis at unprecedented level

Result: More teens entering adulthood without knowing who they are.

THE LONG-TERM COST

When children don't successfully navigate these stages:

Stage 4 struggles show up as:

- Chronic self-doubt and imposter syndrome
- Fear of trying new things or taking risks
- Perfectionism or procrastination
- Difficulty recovering from setbacks

Stage 5 struggles show up as:

- Career changes in 20s/30s (“I don’t know what I want to do”)
- Relationship struggles (“I lose myself in relationships”)
- Chronic anxiety and decision paralysis
- Feeling lost while peers seem settled

THE OPPORTUNITY

But here's the good news:

**These stages are happening RIGHT NOW.
The window is open.**

With the right support, guidance, and opportunities:

- Children in Stage 4 can build unshakeable competence
- Teens in Stage 5 can discover their authentic identity
- Both can enter the next stage of life with confidence and clarity.

You can't do this work for them. But you can create the conditions for them to do it successfully.



WHAT YOUR CHILD NEEDS FROM YOU:

For Stage 4 (Ages 6–11):

- Opportunities to master skills without performance pressure
- Recognition for effort, not just outcomes
- Safe space to fail and try again
- Varied experiences to discover strengths
- Connection between effort and results

For Stage 5 (Ages 12–18):

- Space to explore identity without judgment
- Freedom to experiment with interests and values
- Guidance without control
- Validation of the struggle
- Support through confusion and mistakes

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THANK YOU