**Adulthood**

***Physical Changes***

Our Physical abilities peak in early adulthood; world-class sprinters and swimmers peak in their teens or early twenties but decline of abilities not noticed till later in life. Women, because of early maturation, tend to physically peak earlier than men.

The foremost biological sign of aging in women is **menopause**. This is the time of natural cessation of menstruation and refers to the biological changes that a woman experiences as their ability to reproduce declines. Menopause does not usually create psychological problems for women yet womens expectations and attitudes regarding menopause influence its emotional impact.

Some believe in a "male menopause" yet there is no cessation of fertility and no sharp drop in male sex hormones. Men do experience decline in sperm count, testosterone level, and speed of erection and ejaculation.

**Later Life**

The following changes accompany the aging process:

* With age, the eyes pupil shrinks and the lens becomes less transparent thereby reducing the amount of light reaching the retina.
* Our disease-fighting immune system weakens the elderly are more susceptible to life-threatening disease but due to lifetime collection of antibodies, they suffer less short-term ailments.
* Since early adulthood, there is a small, gradual loss of brain cells, but these can be compensated for by the growth of neural connections in people who remain active.
* Some do suffer brain ailment such as **Alzheimers disease**. This is the progressive and irreversible brain disorder characterized by a gradual deterioration of memory, reasoning, language, and physical functions. These symptoms appear to be due to the deterioration of neurons that produce the neurotransmitter **acetylcholine**.
* It is more difficult for older people to recall meaningless information but if it is meaningful, their rich bed of existing knowledge helps them to retain this information.

***Death and Dying***

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross proposed that terminally ill pass through 5 stages (Dabda):

1. Denial (lacking acceptance of the illness)*.*

2. Anger or resentment (the "Why me" attitude).

3. Bargaining (with God or physicians for time).

4. Depression (feelings of loss of everything and everyone).

5. Acceptance (a peaceful acceptance of ones fate).

***Developmental Studies***

Depending on how researchers study the aging process, answers to such question as "what happens to the aging memory" or "does our IQ get better with age" may vary. Two main types of studies used are:

**1. Cross-sectional study: a study in which people of different ages are compared with one another  *across the age groups.* Such studiesshow that younger people do better on intelligence tests than older ones but is it correct to compare intelligence of people from two different eras if the tests are based on one eras information?**

**2. Longitudinal study: research in which the same people are restudied and retested over long period of time*.* With respect to the measuring intelligence, it showed that until late in life, intelligence remains stable. Although cross-sectional studies use people of different eras, longitudinal research may be at fault in that those who survive the end of test may be the healthiest, smartest.**

***Conclusion:*Whether intelligence increases or decreases over the life span depends on the type of intellectual performance measured.**

***Terms to know:***

**Crystallized intelligence: refers to ones accumulated knowledge and verbal skills and tends to *increase* with age.**

**Fluid Intelligence: refers to ones ability to reason speedily and abstractly and tends to *decrease* with age.**

***Note*: The above types of intelligence explain why mathematicians and scientists produce creative work in early adulthood while those in literature produce their best work in late adulthood.**

**Social clock: the culturally preferred timing of social events such as marriage, parenthood, and retirement.**

***Findings:***

* **According to Erikson, two basic aspects of our lives dominate adulthood: intimacy (forming close relationships) and generativity (being productive and supporting future generations).**
* **Having children is the most enduring of life changes.**
* **When children leave home, the empty nest is for most people a happy place and they report greater happiness and enjoyment of marriage.**
* **People of all ages report similar levels of happiness and satisfaction with life; teenagers have quick changing range of moods while adults have less extreme, but more enduring moods.**
* **Studies show that couples that live together before they marry have higher divorce rates than those who do not.**