



**KMC 1093**  
**PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT**

UNIT FIVE –  
Middle Adulthood Personality  
Development

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# LEARNING UNIT OBJECTIVES

- Discuss about personality development on middle adulthood
- Discuss about perspectives on adult personality development
- Discuss about personality development in middle adulthood theories
- Discuss about Carol Ryff: Components of Well Being in Middle Adulthood
- Discuss about relationship and issues in relationship
- Discuss about work and issues related to work



# INTRODUCTION

- This period of life can be described by rapid change in the environment and internal continuity.
- Middle adulthood is discussed in terms of role shifts, marker events, milestones, critical issues, and development tasks.
- Physical changes during middle adulthood are characterized by a gradual decline.
- Visual and auditory sensitivity declines, muscle strength decreases about 10%, and reaction time is noticeably slower.



# PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT ON MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

- Women undergo a series of hormonal changes, known as menopause, that mark the end of childbearing.
- The decrease in estrogen production that accompanies menopause may result in osteoporosis, a condition in which the bones become thinner and prone to fractures.



- Fluid Intelligence (the ability to solve new problems and form new concepts) may begin a gradual decline at about age 30.
- Crystallized intelligence (the ability to retrieve and use stored information) shows a gradual increase throughout adulthood.



- As people review their lives and achievements, they may experience a midlife crisis - feelings of self-doubt and a lack of confidence experienced by some people when they become middle-aged which leads them to engage in radical behavior changes aimed at regaining youth.
- The psychosocial crisis of middle adulthood, generativity versus stagnation, centers on concern for the well-being of future generations.



- A midlife crisis is experienced between the ages of 40 and 60.
- It was first identified by the psychologist Carl Jung and is a normal part of the maturing process.
- Most people will experience some form of emotional transition during that time of life.
- A transition that might cause you to take stock in where you are in life and make some needed adjustments to the way you live your life. Most seem to come through the process smoothly without making major life changes.





## Other studies:

- Middle-age adults feel a growing sense of control in work and personal life
- Individuals' emotional instability did not significantly increase through middle-age years
- Environmental mastery and self-determination increased in middle-age
- Midlife crisis has been exaggerated – individuals vary in middle adulthood development



# **1: Midlife Crisis**

- The "midlife crisis" is a term that describes the feelings of distress that affect some people when they realize that they are no longer young.
- The term is used most often to describe men who strive to recapture their sense of lost youth by having extramarital affairs, suddenly changing jobs, or adopting youthful fashions.

# **2: Stability vs. Change In Personality**

- Most people perceive important similarities between their present selves and their younger selves



# PERSPECTIVES ON ADULT PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

## 1. Normative-crisis models

- ❖ Traditional view
- ❖ Argues that people move through fixed stages
- ❖ Tied to age
- ❖ Related to specific crisis in which individuals go through periods of intense self questioning and psychological turmoil
- ❖ This traditional perspective is evidenced by the theories of Erikson and Levinson
- ❖ Critics suggest that normative crisis models are outdated (based on traditional models of family & roles: they came from a time when gender roles were more rigid)



## 2. Contemporary Life Events Approach

- Newer model
- Suggest that things that occur in life determine personality development (not age)
  - E.g: 2 women at different ages could be the same developmentally at the birth of their first child
- Ravenna Helson (social Clock)



- Social clock- the timetable according to which individuals are expected to accomplish life's tasks, such as getting married, having children, or establishing themselves in career.
- Social clocks provide guides for our lives; individuals whose lives are not synchronized with these social clocks find life to be more stressful than those who are on schedule.



- Not clear which model better represents personality development!
- Because, both models agree that adulthood is not a time of passivity but of continued psychological growth.
- Whichever model is chosen, it is clear that middle adulthood is a time of continuing psychological growth!



# PERSONALITY THEORIES AND DEVELOPMENT

- Many personality and development theories of middle age have adult stages:
  1. Erikson's "generativity versus stagnation"
  2. Levinson's "seasons of a man's life" emphasizes on developmental tasks



# 1. Erik Erikson

- Stage 7 : middle adulthood
- Age: 40-60 years old
- Conflict: Generativity Vs Stagnation
- Important event: people consider their contributions to family, community, work, and society.





- Erikson's "generativity versus stagnation"
  - Generativity - desire to leave legacies of themselves to the next generation.
  - Middle-aged adults develop generativity through parenting, work, and culture.
  - Through generativity, adults promote and guide the next generation by parenting, teaching, leading and doing things that benefit the community.



- Guiding and encouraging future generations.
- Leaving a lasting contribution to the world through creative or artistic output.
- Making a personal contribution to family, community, work, and society as a whole. (Middle-aged adults develop generativity through parenting, work, and culture)



- Based on research, parents' generativity was linked to young adult offspring's successful development.
- Generative women with careers found gratification through work and generative women who had not worked in career experienced gratification through parenting.



# CHARACTERISTICS OF A PERSON DURING GENERATIVITY STAGE

- Interest in things beyond family
- Feeling needed by people
- Effort to ensure that young people get their chance to develop
- Influence in his community or area of interest
- A new level of productivity or effectiveness
- Appreciation and awareness of older people
- Having a wider perspective
- Guiding and encouraging future generations.
- Leaving a lasting contribution to the world through creative or artistic output.
- Making a personal contribution to family, community, work, and society as a whole.



# STAGNATION

- People focus on the triviality/insignificance of their life.
- Feel that they have made only a limited contribution to the world, that their presence has counted for little.

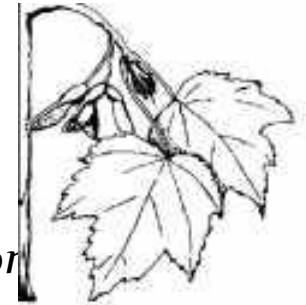


# CHARACTERISTICS OF A PERSON DURING STAGNATION STAGE

- Does not interested in things beyond FAMILY.
- Not feeling needed by people
- No effort to young people get their chance to develop
- Does not possess influence in community or area of interest
- Does not develop new level of productivity or effectiveness
- Does not have wider perspective
- Do not able to encourage and guiding future generation
- Do not able to leave lasting contribution to the world, society, family and future generations.



# PERSONALITY THEORIES AND DEVELOPMENT



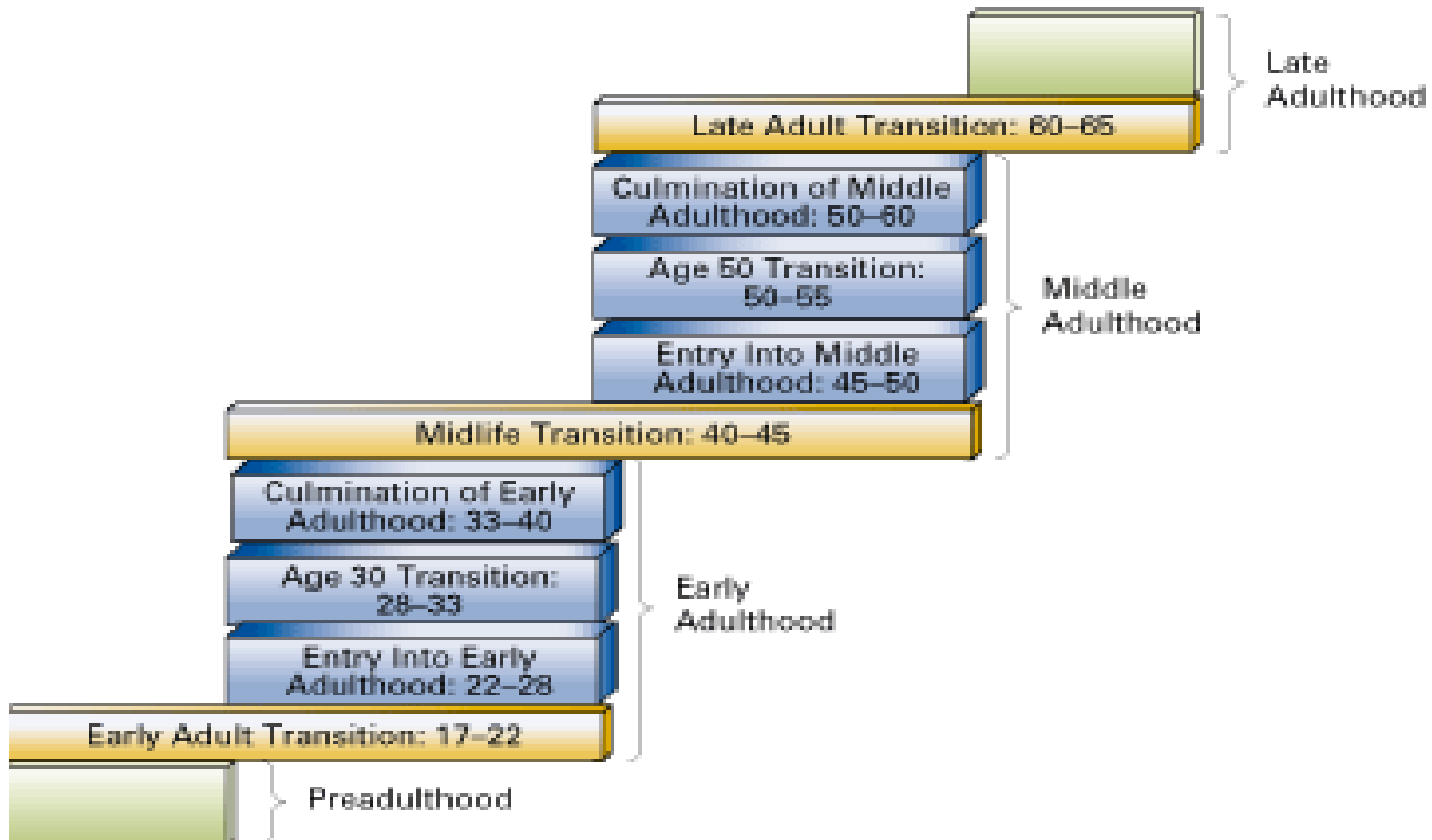
## 2. Levinson's ideas about development:

### Season's of Life

- Daniel Levinson suggests that the early 40's are marked by *transition and crisis*
- Midlife transition occurs at 40/45, a time of questioning which leads to midlife crisis.
- Central to his theory is the concept of a midlife crisis—a period of intense psychological turmoil.
- Smooth midlife transition brings acceptance of past and adjustment may include memory distortion.
- In this stage, a person must come to grip with 4 conflicts:
  - being young versus old
  - being destructive versus constructive
  - being masculine versus feminine
  - being attached to others versus being separated.
    - These conflicts lead many to a midlife crisis where a person has a rough time coping with the future and instead they attempt to stay young.



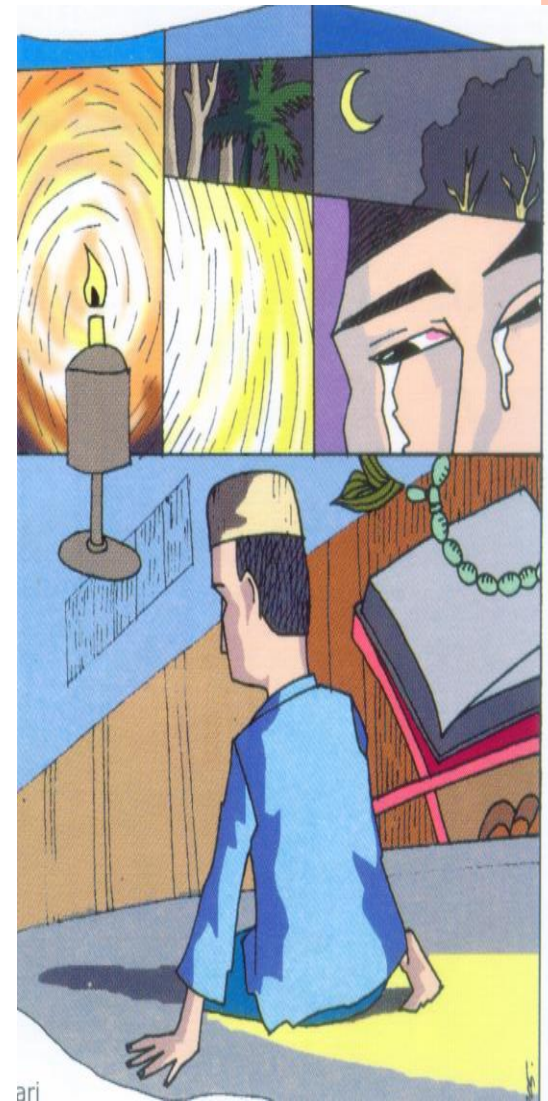
# MEN'S STAGES OF ADULTHOOD (LEVINSON)



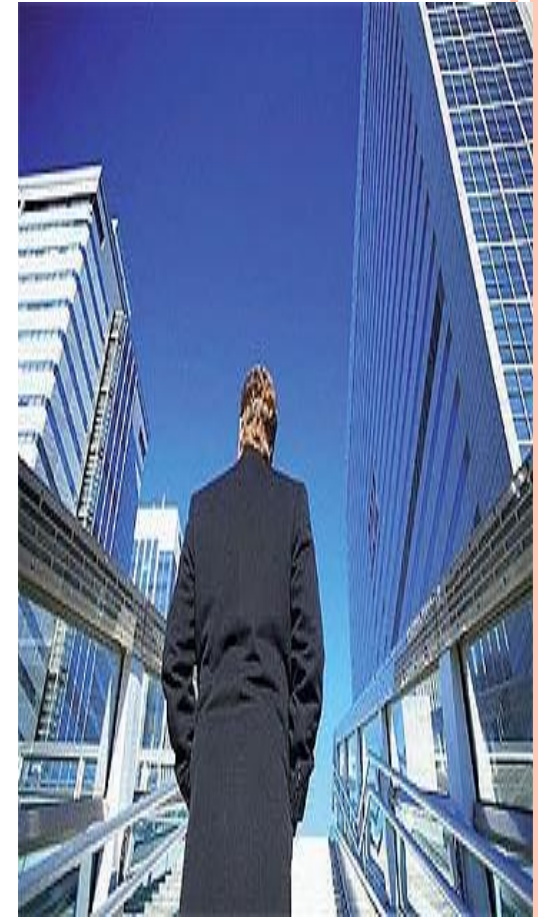


# DURING MIDLIFE TRANSITION

- Focus on the limited nature of life.
- Realize they will not live forever.
- Concentrate on the present.
- Begin to question some of their fundamental assumptions.
- Experience their first signs of aging.
- Begin to doubt the value of their accomplishments.
- Confront the fact that they will not be able to accomplish all their aims before they die.



- Those who were less successful in dealing with the midlife crisis entered a period of stagnation or decline for the rest of their 40s.
- Most people got through the crisis and by their 50s felt secure and looking toward a fulfilling future.
- Levinson claims women go through similar stages but have a more difficult time with "the dream" stage because of inner conflicts over career versus family.



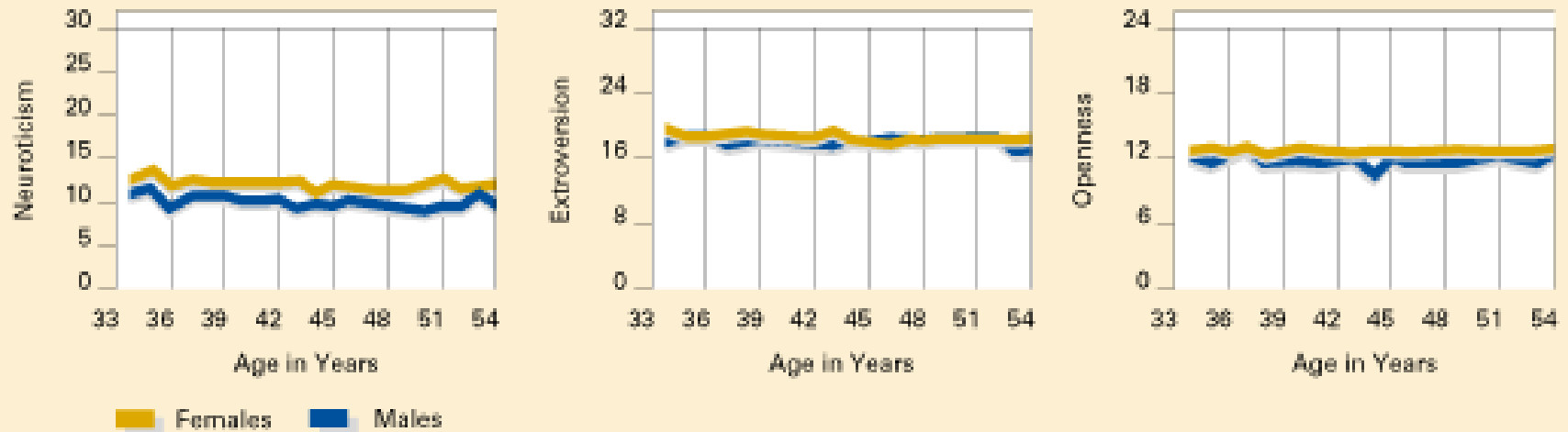
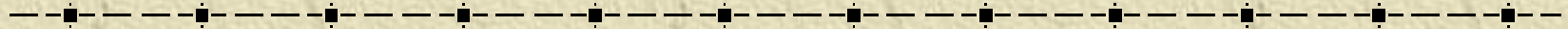
# The “Big Five”

✦ Well researched personality traits representing the five major clusters of *stable* personality characteristics:

- ✦ Neuroticism (degree of moodiness, anxiousness, self-criticism)
- ✦ Extraversion (how outgoing or shy a person is)
- ✦ Openness (curiosity and interest in new experiences)
- ✦ Agreeableness (how easygoing & helpful a person is)
- ✦ Conscientiousness (degree of being organized & responsible)



# The Stability of Personality



**According to Costa & McCrae (1986), basic personality traits such as openness, extroversion, & neuroticism are stable & consistent throughout adulthood.**

# CAROL RYFF:

## SEVERAL COMPONENTS OF WELL-BEING IN MIDLIFE.



- *Self-acceptance*: holding a positive attitude toward oneself and one's past life.
- *Positive relations with people*: having warm, satisfying, trusting relationships with others and concern and empathy for others.
- *Autonomy*: being self-determined, independent, and resistant to social pressures.



- *Environmental mastery*: having a sense of mastery and competence in managing the complexities of everyday life.
- *Purpose in life*: having goals, aims, and objectives that provide meaning in life.
- *Personal growth*: feeling a sense of continuing development and being open to new experiences.



## ○ RELATIONSHIPS



## CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

- Middle-age well-being includes good relationships with family and friends
- Affectionate love increases during middle adulthood
- Those still married report being “satisfied,” while those in process of divorcing are alienated and avoidant, with a sense of “emptiness”





- In today's world, stress often results when the empty nest refills with adult children returning home to live for various reasons
- The most common complaint from children returning to refill the nest is “loss of privacy” and parents' restrictions on behaviors
- Relationships between adult children and mothers appear to be closer than those with fathers



- Many middle-aged parents regret not spending more time with their children when those children were younger
- Research suggests that adults restructure perceptions of their parents during middle adulthood
- Sibling relationships continue over the entire life span – the majority appearing to be very close in adulthood
- Intimate friendships that have developed over a long time deepen in middle adulthood



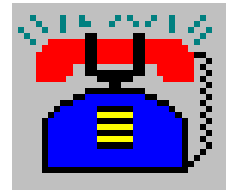
# FAMILY EVOLUTIONS

## 1: EMPTY NEST SYNDROME

- when parents experience feelings of unhappiness, worry, loneliness, and depression resulting from their children's departure from home.
- For many couples, a major transition that typically occurs during middle adulthood is the departure of children.
  - This challenge is harder for many stay-at-home mothers to face than for working mothers



- Although temporary feelings of sadness & distress may occur...there are many benefits when children leave home.
  - Parents can work harder.
  - More time alone.
  - House stays cleaner.
  - Phone doesn't ring so much



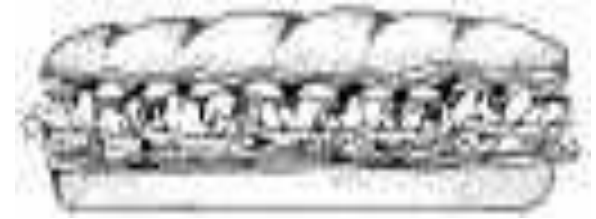
## 2: BOOMERANG CHILDREN

- Refilling The Empty Nest
- A significant increase in the West in the number of young adults who come back to live in the homes of their middle-aged parents.
- Men are more likely to do it than women.



- Reasons of come back to home;
  - Unable to find a job.
  - Difficulty making ends meet.
  - People are marrying at later ages.
  - Ending of a marriage
- Parents' reactions are both positive and negative.





### 3: The Sandwich Generation (Between parents and children)

Middle-aged adults who feel squeeze between the needs of their aging parents and their children (*they must fulfill the needs of both their children and their aging parents*)

- This is difficult because of role reversal.
- The care of parents ranges from financial aid to having parents live in their home.
- Most of the burden falls on the wife.
- More objective look at parents- neither idealizes nor blames them for mistakes.
- Realization that she/he is now the pillar of strength, not the parents.
- Emotional support is mutual.





## 4: Becoming A Grandparents

- Middle adulthood often brings one of the unique symbols of aging becoming a grandparent.
- Grandparents tend to fall into style categories
  - *Involved* grandparents are actively engaged in grand parenting and have influence over their grandchildren's lives.
  - *Companionate* grandparents are more relaxed, and act as supporters and buddies to their grandchildren.
  - *Remote* grandparents are detached and distant, and show little interest in their grandchildren.





- Impact of divorce and remarriage
  - grandparents have rights to visitation
  - grandparents may have step grandchildren
- Raising grandchildren
  - Parents by default- death, addiction, abusive
  - Strains because of reduced energy and stamina, financial burdens, feel cheated out of traditional roles, guilt and anger toward adult child, lack of respite care (time to rest).
- Rewards include love, sense of purpose in life.



# MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE



- **Marriage and divorce** significantly impact social and personality development in middle adulthood!
- The institution of marriage is not stable, and societal norms change over time:
  - 100 years ago, people in their 40's often had experienced the death of a spouse
  - 50 years ago, couples that married during early adulthood were still married at middle adulthood—to each other!
  - Now, marriages are mixed; some divorced by middle adulthood, blended families, and many people experience the peak of marital satisfaction during this period.

- Middle-age well-being includes good relationship with family and friends
- Affectionate love increases during middle adulthood
- Those still married report being 'satisfied', while those in process of divorcing are alienated and avoidant, with a sense of 'emptiness'
- Many who divorce in their 40s or later, had stayed together for the children : - one study showed more women than men initiating the divorce



- Some of the main reasons men and women seek divorce in middle adulthood;
- **Women:**
  - Verbal, physical or emotional abuse
  - Alcohol or drug abuse
  - Cheating
- **Men:**
  - No obvious reason, just fell out of love
  - Cheating
  - Different values or lifestyles
- ❖ Divorce can have both positive and negative effects and reasons greatly vary among individuals.



# THE UPS & DOWNS OF MARRIAGE

- Even for happily married couples, marriage has its ups and downs, and satisfaction rises and falls over the course of the marriage
- The most frequent pattern of marital satisfaction is *U-shaped*.
- Satisfaction begins to decline just after a marriage begins, and falls till it reaches its low point at the birth of the child; then it slowly returns to high levels



- For some, the “U pattern” does not apply, and satisfaction keeps falling
- These marriages may end in divorce and many experiencing this become a "blended family".
  - About 1 woman in 8 will get divorced after 40.
  - Divorce can be especially hard for traditional women over 40 who stayed home with the kids and never worked.
  - 75 % to 80 % of divorced people eventually remarry (usually within 2-5 years).



# FAMILY VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is one of the ugly truths about marriage and is occurring at epidemic levels.

- Some form of violence happens in one-fourth of all marriages.
- More than half of all women murdered are murdered by a partner.
- Close to 15 % of marriages in the U. S. are characterized by continuing, severe violence.
- Violence occurs across social strata, ethnic groups, and religions.
- Mostly it is men abusing women, but 8 % of the cases involve the wife physically abusing the husband.



## Certain factors increase the likelihood of abuse.

- **Families with 4 or more children**
  - Increased stress, fewer resources
- **Low SES**
  - less annual income = 7x higher rate
- **Growing up in a violent home**
  - According to the **CYCLE-OF-VIOLENCE HYPOTHESIS**, abuse and neglect of children leads them to be predisposed to abusiveness as adults.





## ○ The Styles of Abusers

- **Psychologists Neil Jacobson & John Gottman suggest that abusers fall into 2 categories...**
  - **Pit bulls:** confine violence to those they love, strike out in rage or when jealousy or fear of abandonment is aroused
  - **Cobras:** generally aggressive to everyone, violence more likely to involve weapons, more calculating (little emotional or overt physiological arousal when acting aggressively)



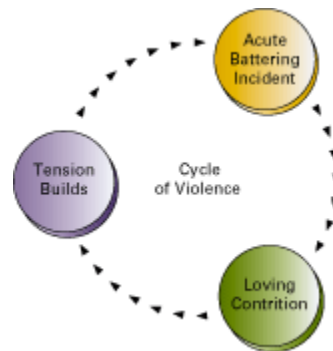
## ○ Stage of Violence

- According to Lenore Walker, marital abuse by a husband occurs in three stages.

- 1) The **tension-building stage** is where a batterer becomes upset and shows dissatisfaction initially through verbal abuse.
- 2) The **acute battering incident** is when the physical abuse actually occurs.
3. The **loving contrition Stage** occurs in some, but not all cases, and involves the husband feeling remorse and apologizing. This stage helps explain why women main remain in the relationship.



## The Stages of Violence



- **Despite these plea for forgiveness, research shows that without therapy, abusers will repeat the stages of relationship violence.**
- **Some women stay in abusive relationships because they mistakenly feel that they are somewhat at fault.**
- **Some stay out of fear (that husband may come after them, or that there are no alternatives).**
- **Many women stay because they have grown up in a violent home and think that violence is a way of life**



# ○ WORK AND LEISURE



# WORK AND LEISURE IN MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

- For many, middle age is the time of greatest productivity, success, and earning power.
- The factors that make work satisfying undergo a transformation during middle age:
  - Middle-aged workers care more about the here-and-now qualities of work.
  - The older workers are, the more overall job satisfaction they experience



# POSITIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS OF A WORKER DURING HIS/HER MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

- **Care more about quality of work.**
- **Wanted to share with others.**
- **Possess good skill.**
- **Environmental mastery.**
- **More reliable.**
- **Willing to learn.**
- **Less absenteeism.**
- **Possess good coping strategies**
- **Try to maintain his/her career.**
- **Highly discipline**
- **Well experienced**



## LEISURE TIME

- Most middle-aged people have some 70 hours a week.
- Watch TV, become involved in activities outside the home, take up sports or civic participation and other community services.
- Most report that pace of life does not seem





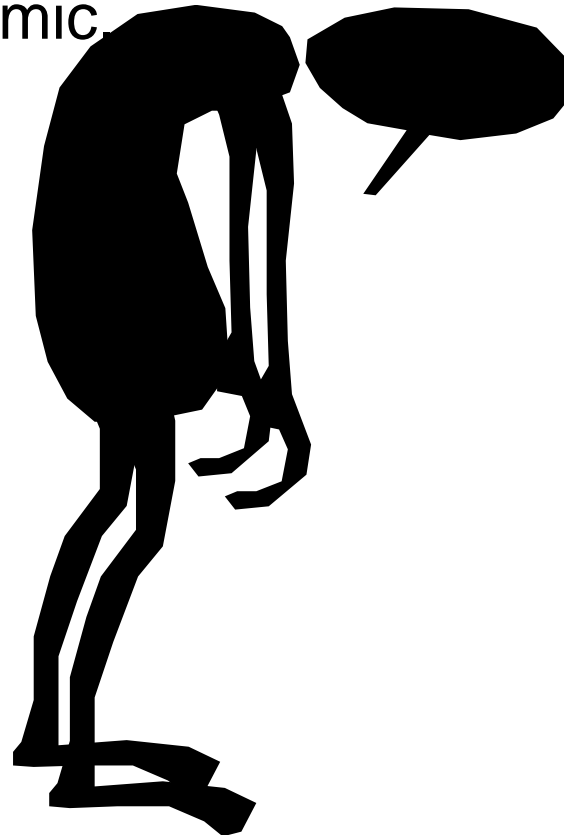
# JOB SATISFACTION IN MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

- Job satisfaction is not universal in middle adulthood.
- Some people experience **BURNOUT**, which occurs when highly trained professionals experience dissatisfaction, disillusionment, frustration, and weariness from their jobs.



# UNEMPLOYMENT

- For many workers, unemployment is a hard reality of life and the implications are more psychological than economic.



# SWITCHING & STARTING CAREERS AT MIDLIFE

- Some people change their jobs voluntarily in middle adulthood.
- Their old job gave little satisfaction.
- They achieved mastery of the old job's challenges.
- They no longer enjoy what they do.
- Research shows that older workers have less absenteeism, hold their jobs longer, are more reliable, and more willing to learn new skills.



- For those who switch or start new careers, the outcome can be positive or negative
- Some middle aged job switchers are disappointed due to overly high expectations
  - Entry level jobs
  - Peers that are much younger
- Others have extremely positive experiences
  - Feel refreshed by their work
  - Especially valued because of their previous work experience and commitment
- ~ Some suggest that career changing may become the rule in our society rather than the exemption



# CONCLUSION

- This period of life can be described by rapid change in the environment and internal continuity.
- Middle adulthood is discussed in terms of role shifts, marker events, milestones, critical issues, and development tasks.

