Family Life Cycle
Developmental Changes

- As we all grow and enter different phases in our lives, we go through various challenges and conquer milestones unique to that phase.
- This is done on a personal, family, societal, and global scale!
Personal Development

- There are many theories out there that discuss the various developmental steps that we go through as individuals!
  - Erik Erikson – psychosocial growth of children and teens
  - Jean Piaget – cognitive or mental growth
- Knowing this information is helpful, as it gives a foundation for understanding what typical issues individuals go through during different periods of life.
Family Development

- The stages an individual goes through during life is not the only type of growth that is tracked and monitored.
- It is also important to understand that the family itself has its own stages of development. This can be described by the **family life cycle**, or a series of developmental stages a family typically moves through over time.
1. Unattached Adult (Independence)

- Average Age: 18-23
- The main issue occurring in this first stage is accepting parent-offspring separation.
- The tasks that are critical to accomplish in this phase include:
  - Separating from family
  - Connecting with peers on a more intimate and deep level
  - Establishing personal finances
  - Developing personal beliefs
  - Initiating a career
Tyler McFarland has just turned 18. He is just entering college, which means he is experiencing life on his own for the first time.
2. Newly Married Adults (Coupling)

- Average Age: 24-30
- The main issue in this stage is commitment to the marriage.
- The tasks that are critical to accomplish in this phase include:
  - Establishing a positive marriage
  - Merging beliefs, ways of living, and generally managing life with another person on a daily basis
  - Continuing to devote time to career
Tyler is 24, and he has just gotten married. He is learning how to no longer act for himself, and now act for the welfare of his wife and their relationship.

He is accomplishing the tasks of forming a marital system while continuing to address career demands at his job as an English teacher.
3. Childbearing Adults (Parenting)

- Average Age: 24-34
- The main issue in this stage is adjusting to being part of a larger family.

- The tasks that are critical to accomplish in this phase include:
  - Adjusting to less “couple time”
  - Managing parenting an infant, marriage, and work
  - Making sacrifices for an expanding family
3. Childbearing Adults (Parenting)

- Tyler’s wife, Sally, has just given birth to their first child, Becky. They are now accepting new members into the system.
- They need to make adjustments in their usual schedules, finances, and duties in order to care for this new child.
- They are also needing to make room for visits and interactions with their parents in their new role as grandparents.
4. Preschool-Age Children (Parenting)

- Average Age: 28-38
- The main issue in this stage is accepting the new personality of their child
- The tasks that are critical to accomplish in this phase include:
  - Caring for child needs over personal needs
  - Coping with the demands of energy and attention
  - Very stressful time for parents
  - Remembering to make time for “couple” activities
4. Preschool-Age Children (Parenting)

- Becky has just entered a preschool and is full of energy, joy, and curiosity. And while adored by her parents, she is also a bit draining.
- Now is the time for Tyler and Sally to accept the new personality of their child, adjusting to it in whatever ways are best.
- It is also important that Tyler and Sally make efforts to take time out as a couple - going out on dates, for example.
5. School-Age Child (Parenting)

- Average Age: 30-40
- The main issue in this stage is promoting educational achievement of children.
- The tasks that are critical to accomplish in this phase include:
  - Fitting in the community families with school-age children
  - Supporting children’s interests (attending events)
  - Adjusting to child relationships
Becky is 8 years old, and the issue at hand now is for Tyler and Sally to allow their child to establish relationships outside the family.

This means they give Becky permission to go over to Billy’s house for her birthday party or to have Miranda over to the house on Saturday.

Along with encouraging social interactions, this time includes tasks like encouraging the child educationally and managing increased activities, like Becky's play rehearsals after school.
6. Teenage Child (Parenting)

- Average Age: 40-50
- The main issue in this stage is promoting and coping with the independence of teens.
- The tasks that are critical to accomplish in this phase include:
  - Allowing and helping teens to become independent
  - Creating boundaries to support teens
  - Developing or enhancing interests beyond child care
  - Redefining marital relationship
This is a challenging time for Tyler and Sally. Becky is now 15 years old and wanting more independence.

The main issue is the increasing flexibility of family boundaries to allow independence.

Sally and Tyler need to shift to some degree in their parental role and provide opportunities for Becky's growth.

Sally and Tyler also decide to take a pottery class together.
7. Launching Center (Empty Nesting)

- Average Age: 42-52
- The main issue in this stage is promoting and coping with becoming empty nesters.
- The tasks that are critical to accomplish in this phase include:
  - Adjusting to living as a couple with no children
  - Understanding that being “empty nesters” isn’t always permanent
  - Developing more personal and couple interests
7. Launching Center (Empty Nesting)

0 Tyler and Sally find it hard to believe, but it is actually time for Becky to head off for college and live on her own.

0 The issue now is for them to accept exits from and entries into the family.

0 While Becky leaves home, she still comes back every several months to visit, so one of the tasks is to accept her leaving while also maintaining a supportive home for her to return to.
8. Middle-Aged Adults (Grandparents)

- Average Age: 48-65
- The main issue in this stage is adjusting to another generation entering the family – aka becoming grandparents.
- The tasks that are critical to accomplish in this phase include:
  - Fulfilling the role of grandparents
  - Preparing for retirement
  - Caring for elderly parents
It is a strange feeling for Tyler and Sally to be alone in the house again after all those years.

They are now letting go of children and facing each other again. Now that their conversations are not focused on Becky, they are learning to share other things with each other and building their closeness.

Becky is now 27 and married with kids, so they welcome her back to their home for visits. The final task to face now is managing the continued aging and new illnesses present in Sally’s father and Tyler’s mother.
9. Retired Adults (Senior Stage)

- Average Age: 65+
- The main issue in this stage is tackling the changed associated with old age and retirement
- The tasks that are critical to accomplish in this phase include:
  - Maintaining health
  - Caring for a sick partner
  - Downsizing living arrangements
  - Coping with death of parents and/or friends
9. Retired Adults (Senior Stage)

- Tyler and Sally have just moved to Florida because they thought it would be a great change of pace for their retirement.
- They are accepting retirement and old age, which means they are taking part in tasks like keeping up their own health, keeping in close touch with Becky and her family, and dealing with the grief of losing their parents.
Diverse Families

The family life cycle discusses the cycle of a family in a very “traditional” view. As we discussed, there are MANY diverse types of families.

- Unmarried couples who never marry
- Married couples with no children
- Single adults with no children
- Divorced adults who share custody of children
- Etc.
Responsibilities

0 Grab a white board... (three per group)
0 Label each:
   0 Social changes
   0 Financial responsibilities
   0 Emotional changes
0 Brainstorm a list (at least FIVE on each board) about what changes or responsibilities may happen at your assigned life cycle stage.

0 SHARE!
For This Class..

- We will be going through this class as if you were an individual going through this traditional Family Cycle.
  - Me, Myself, and I
  - Foundations of Relationships
  - Dating
  - Engagement/Marriage
  - Children/Parenting
  - Household Responsibilities
  - If time.. Late Adulthood