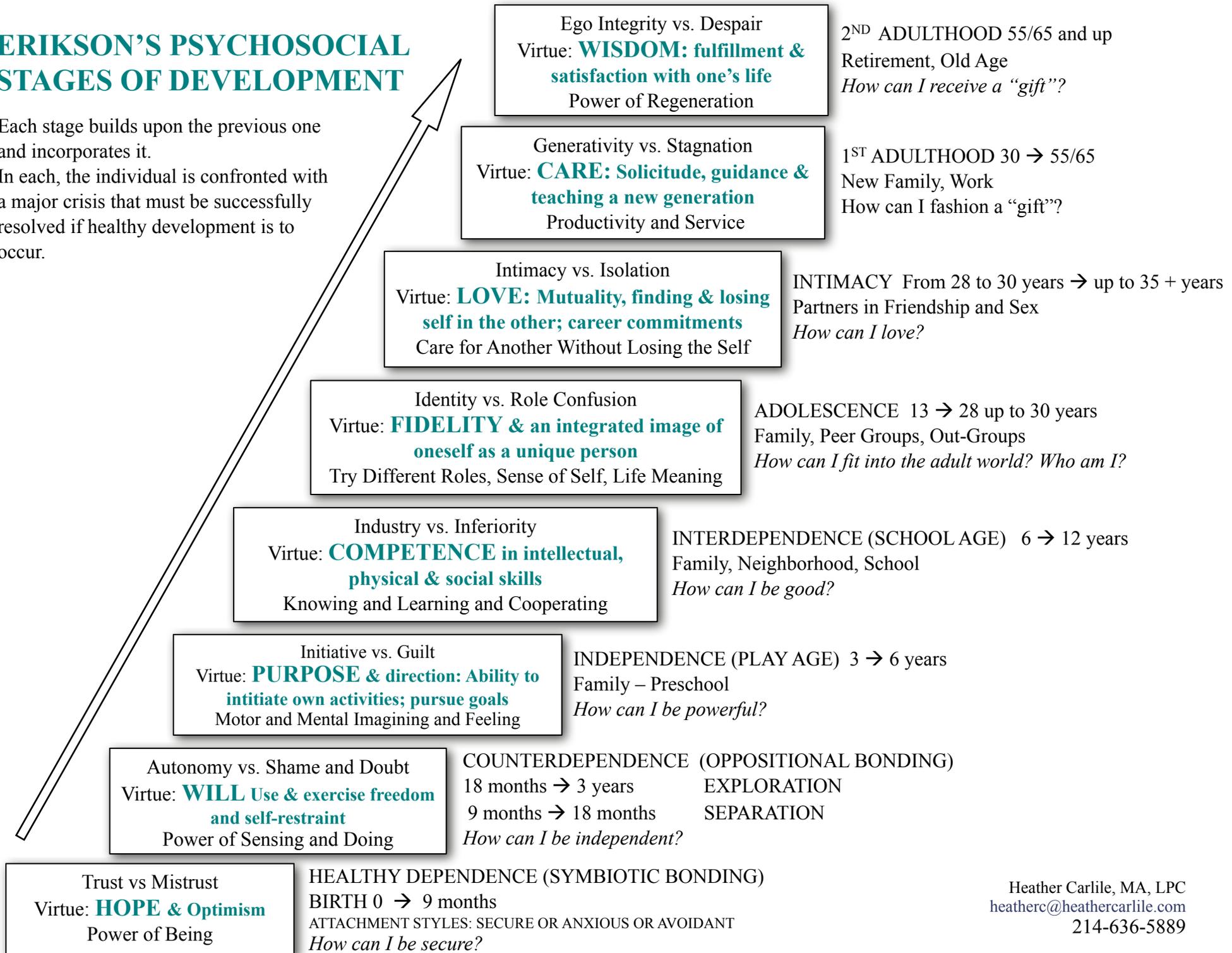


ERIKSON'S PSYCHOSOCIAL STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

Each stage builds upon the previous one and incorporates it.
In each, the individual is confronted with a major crisis that must be successfully resolved if healthy development is to occur.



ERIK ERIKSON: *Childhood and Society* was Erikson's first book, first published in 1950 and revised in 1963. It won him wide recognition as a leading ego psychologist. Erikson identified a series of eight crises that, he said, characterized the growth of personality. A crisis is a challenge to the ego, a threat, an opportunity to grow and improve. Erikson described a lifelong series of crises and called them *psychosocial stages*.

PROBLEM OR VIRTUE? The table summarizes Erikson's stage theory, first described by Erik Erikson at a 1950 White House conference on development. For example, at the top we see that infancy is characterized by a struggle between *basic trust and mistrust*. This is very much like Karen Horney's idea that the mother and young child establish a relationship that creates either basic trust or basic anxiety. If the crisis is successfully resolved (if it has a happy outcome) the child is left with *hope* instead of despair. Hope is a willingness to enter into trusting relationships with others. Similarly, each other crisis or conflict could result in a problem or a new "virtue." Progress or development was achieved by resolving each conflict.

ADOLESCENCE: Erikson felt that adolescents were engaged in a struggle between identity and feelings of confusion. *Identity* consists of self-descriptions and self-perceptions and includes one's values and beliefs. If the conflict between identity and confusion is resolved in favor of identity, the result is *fidelity*: the ability to be true to something, to devote oneself wholeheartedly to a good purpose.

Erikson was described in the early 1980s as the fifth most influential psychologist of the century (Gilgen, 1982). Much research has been done on predictions made by Erikson's theory, especially the adolescent crisis of *identity vs. role confusion*. Erikson is one of the few famous personality theorists who said anything interesting about adolescence."

Marcia (1966) proposed four distinct *ego identity statuses* applied to adolescents, derived from Erikson's theory. These can be shown as a 2 x 2 matrix. If a person **has experienced a crisis and made a commitment**, he or she has "**achieved an identity.**" If the young person accepts what is given by parents or some social institution, and does not feel that this conflicts with his or her own identity, this is called "**foreclosure.**" Sometimes teenagers deliberately postpone making any lasting commitment. This is called a "**moratorium**" phase, with identity put on hold. Finally, there is the "**identity diffuse**" person who experiences neither an identity crisis nor a commitment to a definite personal identity. This has been called "**a commitment to not making a commitment.**"

Marcia and co-workers found that "**foreclosers**" tend to have closer relationships with parents (Marcia, 1980).

"**Identity diffuse**" students tend to regard parents as indifferent or rejecting and are more likely to respond to peer pressures (Adams and colleagues, 1985).

GENERATIVITY UNLIMITED: Van De Water and McAdams (1989) found that **generativity**, supposedly a product of middle adulthood, **is not limited by age.**

THE MIDDLE PASSAGE: "Midlife crisis" is very famous, but it is not universal. A 1971 study of middle-aged men found a variety of developmental paths, with relatively few men reporting a mid-life crisis. Similarly, a great deal of research shows that adolescence is not always marked by rebellion and questioning of parental values.

HAS A COMMITMENT BEEN MADE?

IDENTITY STATUS IN ADOLESCENCE
HAS A CRISIS BEEN EXPERIENCED?

	YES	NO
YES	Identity achievement Experienced crisis; made a commitment.	Foreclosure Accepts what is given by parents or social institution; no conflict with identity.
NO	Moratorium Postpone commitment; put identity on hold.	Identity diffusion See parents as indifferent or rejecting; respond to peer pressure.