

Erik Erikson's Eight Life-Span Stages
A GED 501 Photo Essay
By Jeff Sapp

Stage 1 – Trust vs. Mistrust (Birth to 1 year)



Trust develops when infants receive consistently loving care. Mistrust results from unpredictable or harsh care.

Thoughts on this Photo:

I was born in June of 1958. Shortly after my birth, my parents separated and, although this could have caused mistrust on my part, my Mother's love and caring, risk-taking and transformation allowed me to develop into a trusting child.

Stage 2 – Autonomy vs. Shame (1 - 3 years)



Autonomy develops when children use their newly formed mental and psychomotor skills to explore their worlds. Parents support autonomy by encouraging exploration and accepting the inevitable mistakes.

Thoughts on this Photo:

I was raised as a feral young child in the Appalachian woods. My entire childhood was about exploring nature as I played all day in the woods, the creek and studied both plants and animals. In the days of my childhood children were less chaperoned and we would take off and explore the world beyond our neighborhood, thinking that we'd traveled great, great distances when, in reality, we'd gone at the most a mile.

Stage 3 – Initiative vs. Guilt (3 – 6 years)



Initiative, a sense of ambition and responsibility, develops from encouragement of children's efforts to explore and take on new challenges. Over-control or criticism can result in guilt.

Thoughts on this Photo:

This is my first-grade school photo. I was excited to finally be in school as I was the youngest of four boys. I went to the same elementary school as my brothers before me and felt a sense of safety about that. We walked to and from school by ourselves. I was also a latchkey child, coming home at 2:30 and being responsible for myself until my Mother came home after her 5:00 o'clock job.

Stage 4 – Industry vs. Inferiority (6 – 12 years)

Progress in Subjects

It is important to know how well your child is achieving in relation to how well other children of similar age usually achieve. This statement applies to the marking symbols on the left.

Because children grow and achieve at different rates it is important to know how well your child is progressing in relation to how well he may be able to learn. This statement applies to the marking symbols on the right.

MARKING SYMBOLS	PERIOD					PERIOD				MARKING SYMBOLS
	I	II	III	IV		I	II	III	IV	
	2	2	2	2	READING	2	2	2	2	
					Reads well orally					
					Understands what is read		3			
1— Above Most Children	2	2	2	3	ARITHMETIC	2	2	2	3	1— Very Good
					Knows number facts					
				3	Understands number relationships				3	2— Satisfactory
2— Same as Most Children				3	Applies learnings to new situations			3	3	3— Needs Improvement
	2	1	2	2	LANGUAGE	2	2	2	2	
					Uses correct speech					
3— Below Most Children				3	Uses correct written language forms				3	
	2	2	3	3	WRITING	3	3	3	3	
	3	2	3	3	SPELLING	3	2	3	3	
	2	2	2	2	*SCIENCE	2	2	2	2	
	3	2	2	2	*SOCIAL STUDIES	3	2	2	2	
	2	2	1	2	*MUSIC	2	2	2	2	
	2	2	2	2	*ART	2	2	2	2	
	2	1	2	2	*HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION	2	2	2	2	

* Marks for science, social studies, music, art, health and physical education will be given in third grade only.

School and home provide opportunities for students to develop a sense of competence through success on challenging tasks. A pattern of failure can lead to feelings of inferiority.

Thoughts on this Photo:

This is my 3rd-grade report card. I did honestly struggle in my schooling throughout my K-12 experience due to abuse in my home situation. But I also was incredibly resilient because of my Mother, my faith, and my love of nature. I think some might have responded to a history of low grades with a sense of inferiority, but I responded with digging in my heels to show that I could succeed! That's what resiliency does for a child!

Stage 5 – Identify vs. Confusion (12 – 18 years)



Adolescents experiment with various roles in an atmosphere of freedom with clearly established limits. Confusion results when the home environment fails to provide either the necessary structure or when it is overly controlling, failing to provide opportunities for individual exploration with different identity roles.

Thoughts on this Photo:

I was a good child. Obedient and conforming, my Mother's pride-and-joy. I became very involved with my youth group in my church community and my identity was wrapped up in my roles associated with that. One thing that helped with this was that my Mother was not controlling at all. She always said that she had these four young men and knew she couldn't control us, so she made it her life's work to teach us responsibility.

Stage 6 – Intimacy vs. Isolation (Young adulthood)



Intimacy occurs when individuals establish close ties with others. Emotional isolation may result from earlier disappointments or a lack of developing identity.

Thoughts on this Photo:

I chose this photo of my days on staff at Camp Cowen, the camp of my childhood. Being on staff as a lifeguard was a big deal to me and the intimate relationships I developed as a result of it set the foundation for the caring relationships I'd have throughout my life.

Stage 7 – Generativity vs. Stagnation (Adulthood)



Generativity occurs when adults give to the next generation through child rearing, productive work, and contributions to society or other people. Apathy or self-absorption can result from an inability to think about or contribute to the welfare of others.

Thoughts on this Photo:

I have spent most of my adult life in the productive work of school teaching and this is my 32nd-year of teaching! That alone is a great contribution to society! I also have worked tirelessly for equity and justice on many issues. And now I am a Daddy! I chose this picture of my daughter Helena and to illustrate my life at this point.

Stage 8 – Integrity vs. Despair (Old age)



Integrity occurs when people believe they've lived as well as possible and accept the inevitability of death. Remorse over things done or left undone leads to despair.

Thoughts on this Photo:

I chose this picture of our recent trip to introduce baby Helena to my family in West Virginia. Above you see my parents, my brother and his family, my partner Sino and our daughter Helena, and Sino's parents. This picture makes me very emotional because my Christian parents and Sino's Jehovah Witness parents fully embrace their gay sons and adopted grandchild. Thus, they exhibit their faiths well and have more integrity than anyone I know of.