

Gerontology Lesson Plan

Perennial Problem

How can students develop positive attitudes toward older adults and understand the continuity of life and its impact on youth to improve quality of life and develop occupational skills related to mature adults?

Practical Problem

What should we do to help students develop an awareness of the continuity of life and to dispel misconceptions and fears of different generations?

Supporting Concepts

- Life Course
- Life Events
- Coping Skills

Objectives/Learning Concepts

- Evaluate the concepts of life course and life events.
- Demonstrate how life events can shape who we are through role-play.
- Develop coping skills that will aid in dealing with life events successfully.

Activities

- Complete Handout 1-d1 on life course
- Set-up for 30th class reunion roll plays (see directions)
- Have students complete assignment on Handout 1-d2
- Draw life event card randomly
- Roll play
- Class discussion led by teacher on stress and coping skills

Materials

- Refreshments
- Copy of Handout 1-d1, Life Course Exercise, for each student
- Copy of Handout 1-d2 for each student
- Copy and cut one set of Handout 1-d3

Alternatives for Slow Learners

- Copy down life events dealt to learner in exercise to further discuss and define with resource instructor.
- May replicate exercise with resource instructor.

Teacher/Learner Interaction

- Instructor will guide students through concept introduction through lecture.
- Instructor will have the opportunity to participate in the role-play for one-to-one contact.
- Instructor will lead class discussion of role-play experiences related to the concepts.

Evaluation

Teacher Instructions:

Focus: Life Course Stages and Life Events

This section focuses on aging process concepts and activities. The section is divided into analysis on life course stages and life events.

Part A: Life Course Stages

Use Handout 1-d1 to introduce the concept of life course stages. Be sure that students know how to read the table to determine stages in chronological age.

Have students complete the handout, and interview an older person of their choice. You may want to require the students hand in their work for evaluation. When you discuss students findings in class, it is important to emphasize:

- Similarities and differences between students and older people.
- Contrast which category of stages is most important to younger and older people.

Part B: Life Events—Reunion Exercise

Refer to Teacher Instructions for the reunion exercise. This exercise will allow students to build upon their knowledge of life course stages to develop a picture of their planned ideal life at that time. After you have had students hand in their ideal scenario (see instructions), you will have students randomly pick life events. It is here that you want to define life event.

Life event: An unplanned happening in one's life that causes stress.

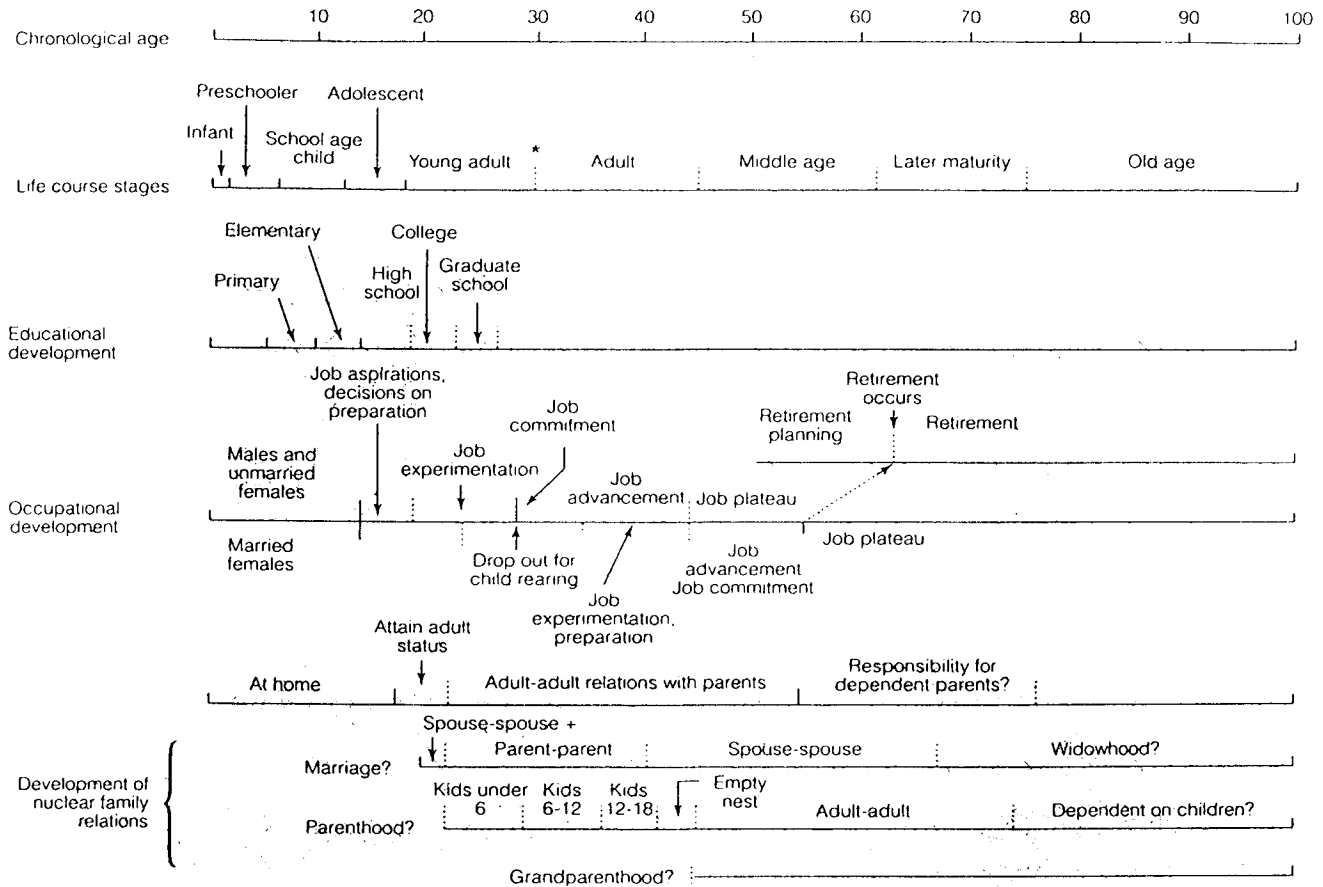
As students begin to change their "ideal" to reflect the life events dealt to them, you may want to comment that stress "ages" people due to physical, mental and emotional reactions to the stress.

After the reunion activity has commenced, be sure to reflect in group discussion on coping mechanisms that students used to deal with their assigned life events. Also ask students if they felt any reactions to their life events.

Name: _____

Life Course Stages

Various Dimensions of Life Course:



* Dotted lines mean that the timing is discretionary.

Source:
Hatchley, Robert C., "Social Forces of Aging,"
Wadsworth 7th edition, Page 156

Study the above table. Based on the information illustrated, answer the questions on the following page.

Name: _____

Continued
Life Course Stages

Directions: Prepare your answers for class discussion and to be handed in.

1. Based on your chronological age, what life course stage are you in _____, educational development stage _____, and occupational development stage _____?

2. Define your current responsibilities and activities related to each stage.

A.) Life course Stage:

B.) Educational Development Stage:

C.) Occupational Development Stage:

D.) Development of Family

3. Which category of stages do you feel is most important to you currently? Why?

4. Interview someone that is beyond the current stages you are in. Identify on the chart based on their chronological age what stages they should be in. (Compare these answers to the answers that you get in question 5).

Chronological Age: _____

Life Course Stage: _____

Educational Development Stage: _____

Occupational Development Stage: _____

Development of Family: _____

5. Ask the person you are interviewing to define their responsibilities and activities related to each of the following:

A.) Life Course Stage (Ex. What activities and responsibilities do they associate with middle age?):

B.) Educational Development (Ex. What is their highest level? Do they feel they need a higher level? Why?)

C.) Occupational Development (Ex. How long have they been at the same firm or company? Do they feel they may advance in their career? Do they want to change careers?)

D.) Development of Family (Ex. Are they married? A parent? A grandparent? What do they enjoy most about being married, parenting, or having grandchildren? If given the chance would they do it over the same way?)

6. Which category do they feel is most important to them currently?

Teacher Instructions:

Focus: Life Event Role Play—A Class Reunion

1. Supply refreshments to create a party/socializing atmosphere. (Have set-up for students before they arrive for class).
2. Make copies of Handout 1-d2 (one for each student) and one copy of Handout 1-d3. Cut Handout 1-d3 into life event cards to be handed out to students later in the exercise.
3. Introduce exercise, the objectives and go over the directions (Handout 1-d2).
4. Students will complete the written assignment to hand in.
5. Deal and distribute the life event cards (at least one per student, give more than one depending on the class size). Have student compare the life event cards dealt with their written ideal.
6. Ask them to mingle with the knowledge of their life event as though they were at their 30th class reunion. (Note: Students may pick a card that has to do with a spouse or children when they have indicated in their ideal they will be single or with no children. The life event card rules their ideal, even though they never planned on marriage or children something changed their ideal.)
7. After students have mingled, ask them to sit down and write a few sentences about how they coped with the life event dealt to them. Also ask them to rate how stressful they view their life event on a scale from 1 to 10.
8. You may want to introduce two concepts before opening the class up for discussion. Stress is a key factor in the anxiety and physical suffering (not eating is one example) that manifests due to life event changes. Typically stress can be categorized as affecting us emotionally, socially, or physically. You may want to point out examples of stress related behavior. Examples include not eating (physical), cutting oneself off from friends (social), or depression (emotional). The second important concept related to life events are coping factors that may help a person with some of the most stressful life events. You may want to suggest coping mechanisms. For instance better family ties for support in rough times, choosing people to be friends with that will be there in rough times and seeking professional help are some examples of coping tactics for life events.

Open the class up for discussion. Discuss each life event stress rating and coping mechanisms that allowed the student to reduce the stress caused by the difference between their “ideal” and the “actual.”

Name: _____

Handout 1-d2

Class Reunion Written Assignment

You have just received your 30-year class reunion invitation. As part of your class activities a page long biography is needed for a class “Who’s Who.” Complete a page long written description of what your life (ideally) will be like at age 48. Include the following topics in your expectations, family (children and marital status), financial, and health status. Prepare your summary to be handed in.

Finance

You were negligent behind the wheel, and as a result, you are being sued for all you have.

Finance

You just lost your job due to downsizing

Finance

Your triplets have just decided to all go to the same private college, a cost of \$22,000 each, per year.

Finance

You have \$40,000 in credit card debt.

Finance

Things are not going well at work, you have just been informed that you will be let go.

Finance

Your child has just asked for a lot of money to cover a lavish wedding.

Finance

Things are so bad financially, that you will have to declare bankruptcy.

Finance

You have decided to return to college to update your skills, this will cost you tuition and lost earnings of \$100,000.

Unexpected Happenings

You have just lost your house due to fire.

Unexpected Happenings

You just lost your entire wardrobe, jewelry, and furnishings due to a robbery

Unexpected Happenings

Your car was stolen just last week.

Unexpected Happenings

You were in a car accident and lost your sight.

Unexpected Happenings

A flood has washed away your car and almost all of your belongings.

Unexpected Happenings

A tornado destroys your home, your car, and your entire block. You and your family escape unharmed.

Unexpected Happenings

Your teenager just wrecked your new, expensive car. Your insurance will not cover it.

Unexpected Happenings

You throw out your back cleaning your attic; you must miss a month of work and lose wages.

Relationships

You just found out your oldest child has leukemia.

Relationships

You find your spouse/fiancée/significant other has been unfaithful.

Relationships

You are unexpectedly, expecting a child.

Relationships

You are the parent of a child that has just committed murder.

Relationships

You cannot biologically have children.

Relationships

Six months ago, both of your parents died in a boating accident.

Relationships

Your spouse has just unexpectedly served you with divorce papers.

Relationships

Six months ago, you lost your spouse/fiancé/significant other in a car accident.

Physical/Social/Emotional

Your oldest child had been threatening suicide.

Physical/Social/Emotional

You just found out that you cannot have children without medical technology that would cost over \$100,000.

Physical/Social/Emotional

Your best friend has informed you that they have been stealing from you.

Physical/Social/Emotional

You have killed a prominent community leader, driving while intoxicated.

Physical/Social/Emotional

You have become very unhappy with your appearance.

Physical/Social/Emotional

You have been diagnosed with AIDS.

Physical/Social/Emotional

Your Spouse abuses you.

Physical/Social/Emotional

You have just been diagnosed with terminal cancer.