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Essay 1: Required Question

Middle adulthood, which spans between the ages of 40 and 65, marks a significant developmental stage in one's life. During this period, individuals undergo notable physical and physiological changes that impact various aspects of their lives. In this essay, we will briefly discuss the primary physical and physiological changes that occur during middle adulthood, as per John W. Santrock's "Essentials of Lifespan Development, 6th Edition."

As middle age sets in, physical changes become noticeable, particularly a decline in muscle mass and strength. This decrease is known as Sarcopenia, which begins in the early 30s and worsens with age. Sarcopenia results from a loss of muscle fibers, decreased muscle protein synthesis, and reduced anabolic hormone levels. These changes make individuals more susceptible to falls and accidents due to their decreased mobility, balance, and flexibility. (Santrock, 2019)

Middle age can bring about a decline in sensory abilities, especially concerning vision and hearing. Presbyopia, which is the inability to focus on nearby objects, usually sets in during the mid-40s and deteriorates with time. Presbycusis, a reduction in hearing sensitivity, is also

common among middle-aged individuals. These changes can impact one's ability to carry out daily tasks and communicate effectively, as noted by Santrock in 2019.

Middle age brings about a range of endocrine system changes that affect the body in various ways. Menopause, usually occurring between ages 45 and 55, brings an end to menstruation in women, leading to a decline in estrogen production. This reduction can result in hot flashes, dry vaginal skin, mood swings, and a decrease in bone density. Similarly, men experience a decrease in testosterone production, which may affect their libido, muscle mass, and bone density (Santrock, 2019).

Middle adulthood is a phase of significant physical and physiological transition. This stage is typified by decreased muscle mass and strength, sensory perception deterioration, and changes to the endocrine system. To maintain physical and emotional well-being during this time, it is vital to engage in regular exercise, consume healthy meals, and routinely visit a medical professional.

Essay 2: Question 1

The developmental stage of middle age generally encompasses the ages of 40 to 65, and it is marked by numerous physical, cognitive, and socioemotional alterations that can have a profound impact on a person's life. This essay aims to explore the fluid nature of middle age, referencing "Essentials of Lifespan Development 6th Edition" by John W. Santrock and other relevant sources to provide a comprehensive definition of this phase.

Middle age is typically described as the phase that falls between young adulthood and old age. As per Santrock's (2019) observations, it's marked by a heightened awareness of the limitations of time, a reassessment of values and objectives, and an increasing sense of vulnerability towards mortality. These changes are largely emotional and psychological in nature and are typical hallmarks of middle age.

Middle age is transforming its very essence. No longer is it simply a period of physical and cognitive decline, as was once believed. According to Sheehy and Duxbury's (2010) study, people can maintain their health and energy levels well into their 60s and 70s despite popular stereotypes. This is partially due to advancements in healthcare, nutrition, and lifestyle choices such as regular exercise and quitting smoking.

The definition of middle age is no longer set in stone, as changes in societal expectations are altering its meaning. In the past, middle-aged individuals commonly sought stability in their careers and family lives. Presently, however, middle-aged adults are more inclined toward pursuing new career avenues, hobbies, education, or even starting new families. As Santrock

(2019) points out, middle-aged adults are going through a "second adolescence" where they take risks and explore new identities that they may not have been able to before (p. 437).

To summarize, middle age has been commonly known as a phase marked by a sense of temporal constraint and a reconsideration of objectives and principles. Nonetheless, the modern-day middle age has transformed with people retaining their well-being and vibrancy well into their 60s and 70s, and also exploring fresh prospects and identities. As per Sheehy and Duxbury (2010), the middle age years are no longer viewed as an inevitable period of decline, but rather an era of potential, challenges, and personal development (p.16).

Essay 3: Question 2

Physical changes are an inevitable component of aging. Early and middle adulthood brings about major body changes that might have an impact on a person's overall health and wellness. In this essay, I will investigate and examine the physical changes that occur between these two stages of life, drawing on insights from John W. Santrock's "Essentials of Lifespan Development 6th Edition" as well as other reliable sources.

Early adulthood is a period of rapid physical development and growth, with people in their twenties experiencing peak levels of vitality and physical prowess. They demonstrate exceptional muscular strength, cardiovascular endurance, and enhanced sensory acuity, strength, reaction time, and cardiac output throughout this phase. Nonetheless, as early adulthood progresses, bodily changes become less pronounced, and the peak of physical performance begins to fade.

When people approach middle age, their physical health often begins a slow and steady degradation known as "aging." According to Santrock (2019), this stage is characterized by a reduction in the proper operation of the body's systems, including vision, hearing, and strength, and is particularly noticeable in the loss of muscle mass and bone density. These changes increase the likelihood of middle-aged adults acquiring osteoporosis and sustaining bone fractures.

Sensory abilities can diminish as people age, notably in the domains of hearing and vision. According to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (2021), presbycusis, also known as age-related hearing loss, affects around 33% of those aged 65-74 and over 50% of people over 75. Similarly, presbyopia, or difficulties seeing up close, and cataracts, or clouded lenses, are becoming more common in middle-aged adults (Santrock, 2019).

To summarize, physical alterations in early and middle adulthood differ in their character and occurrence. Early adulthood is characterized by peak physical performance, but middle adulthood is characterized by a continuous loss of physical capability. Though early alterations are usually positive, physical changes in middle adulthood can have a significant impact on a person's general health and well-being. To maintain physical function and avoid age-related health difficulties, it is critical to adopt healthy habits and exercise.

Essay 4: Question 4

Reaching middle age is a significant milestone for people, as it brings about various physiological changes that can affect one's sexuality. In this essay, we will delve into these changes and debunk common myths related to midlife sexuality.

As individuals enter middle age, their sexual physiology undergoes significant alterations. Women experience a crucial milestone during this period, as menopause represents the cessation of their reproductive years. Santrock (2017, p.354) describes it as "the termination of menstruation and the end of a woman's fertility." Symptoms such as vaginal dryness, hot flashes, and reduced sexual desire often accompany this phase.

With advancing age, men may experience a decline in testosterone levels, resulting in a range of sexual changes. The American Urological Association reports that men's testosterone levels diminish gradually as they age, leading to a decrease in libido, lower frequency of erections, reduced quality of erections, and lessened sexual satisfaction. Additionally, erectile dysfunction is a prevalent issue, which may be linked to diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and other factors.

Misconceptions about sexuality in middle age exist, but they are unfounded. Despite popular belief that older people are less interested in sex than younger adults, studies show that many middle-aged individuals still consider sex a vital aspect of their lives. The National Council on Aging's 2010 report revealed that more than 50% of women and nearly 75% of men aged 50 and above remain sexually active.

Despite frequent assumptions that sexual satisfaction wanes with age, a recent study published in the Archives of Sexual Behavior challenges this idea. Researchers found that middle-aged individuals tend to report higher levels of sexual satisfaction, particularly if they maintain sexual activity. The study highlights the significance of sexual engagement in promoting happiness during midlife.

To sum up, middle age brings significant physiological shifts that can affect sexuality. Men's testosterone levels gradually decrease, causing them to experience a range of sexual changes. For women, menopause marks the end of their reproductive years. However, studies show that many individuals in this age range still consider the sexual desire to be an essential component of their lives. Despite common misconceptions, sexual satisfaction is generally high during this phase.

Essay 5: Question 12

Midlife is widely regarded as a crucial developmental stage that may trigger a crisis, as per several adult stage theories. Our essay will explore this midlife crisis in detail with the help of "Essentials of Lifespan Development 6th Edition" by John. W Santrock and other credible sources to provide supporting evidence for our evaluation.

Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory proposes that people go through eight developmental stages, each with a unique psychosocial crisis. One of these stages is midlife, which is characterized by generativity versus stagnation. During this stage, individuals are expected to contribute positively to society and future generations while also reflecting on their achievements. Failure to do so may lead to feelings of stagnation. Santrock (2019) clarifies that "being productive in a caring way" (p. 382) is the challenge of generativity versus stagnation in middle age. Therefore, according to Erikson's theory, midlife is a vital time for individuals to make valuable contributions to society and avoid stagnation.

Daniel Levinson's adult development theory posits a succession of life stages and transitions, punctuated by a midlife crisis. Levinson's (1978) assertion is that the middle years are a time of introspection, where individuals weigh past and future. Role responsibilities decline sharply. Levinson believes this turning point prompts questioning of life's goals and choices, often leading to uncertainty and confusion.

While Erikson and Levinson view midlife as a period of crisis, Robert Peck's theory of adult development is in stark contrast. Peck's theory posits that midlife is a time of growth and development, where individuals become increasingly introspective, shifting away from acquiring

new roles and relationships and towards understanding and appreciating existing ones. In midlife, Peck suggests that people may experience a newfound sense of self-awareness and wisdom, fostering personal growth and development.

To sum up, various theories about adult development propose differing viewpoints regarding midlife as a stage of growth. Erikson's theory emphasizes the significance of contributing to society during this period, while Levinson's theory suggests that midlife may involve a time of questioning and uncertainty. Peck's theory, on the other hand, highlights the potential for personal growth and development during midlife. Ultimately, individual factors such as personality, life experiences, and social context may influence one's experience of a midlife crisis.

Essay 6: Question 19

Middle adulthood is a crucial phase where individuals undergo a multitude of changes, particularly in their romantic relationships. As people age, their experiences of love and commitment undergo a significant transformation, shaped by various factors such as physical and psychological changes, societal roles, and cultural norms. This article explores the nature of love and marriage during middle adulthood, drawing insights from John W. Santrock's "Essentials of Lifespan Development 6th Edition," along with additional sources from various disciplines.

As individuals enter middle adulthood, their love and marriage dynamics tend to shift towards companionship. Companionate relationships are grounded in emotional intimacy, mutual respect, and shared interests. According to Santrock, couples in this age group prioritize affection and companionship more than their younger counterparts do (p. 465). This transformation stems from several factors, including the diminishing intensity of passion, the need for emotional security, and the fulfillment of social roles, such as parenting.

As people reach middle adulthood, the concept of marriage as a partnership gains significance. Mutual support, shared goals, and equal decision-making form the crux of such partnerships. Aging individuals embrace interdependence and rely on their partners for practical and emotional support. Santrock emphasizes that marriages in middle adulthood tend to involve sharing roles and responsibilities, along with high levels of interdependence (p. 465).

Marital relationships can be tested during middle age as individuals face various stressors, such as health concerns, job-related pressures, and caring for elderly parents. These

Stressors can have a detrimental effect on the relationship. According to a study conducted by Kurdek in 1993, work and financial pressures were key factors that predicted marital issues in couples in their middle age.

The societal and cultural context also affects how love and marriage are viewed in middle adulthood. Gender roles, for example, can play a significant part in shaping the distribution of responsibilities in a marriage. Although traditional gender roles expect men to be the primary earners and women to take care of domestic duties, modern marriages can experience tension from these expectations. Furthermore, the cultural norms surrounding divorce can also influence how couples approach their relationship during middle adulthood.

To sum up, middle adulthood is characterized by a transition towards companionate relationships and a greater emphasis on partnership. Marital relationships during this period entail sharing responsibilities and mutual dependence. Nevertheless, the complications of middle age, cultural norms, and societal gender role expectations could also have an impact on love and marriage during this phase.

Essay 7: Question 20

When children leave the family home to pursue their passions, parents may experience emptiness and sadness known as the "empty nest syndrome". Such a psychological condition is a natural part of life, as John W. Santrock explains in his book "Essentials of Lifespan Development". While it may affect both parents, mothers tend to experience it more frequently (p. 383).

Studies show that the empty nest syndrome has a significant effect on the quality of a couple's marriage. Research indicates that the departure of children from home can worsen pre-existing marital issues or even create new ones. Bouchard and Julien's 2015 study discovered that the empty nest syndrome can lead to a decrease in marital satisfaction, especially for those who were already discontent with their relationship before their children left home.

The empty nest syndrome can negatively impact marital satisfaction, possibly due to the shared identity loss that parenting provides. With children at home, raising and nurturing them becomes a shared objective for parents. However, when the children move out, this common goal vanishes, and couples may find it challenging to discover new shared interests. Consequently, they may feel emotionally distant, leading to a decline in marital satisfaction.

Increased conflict between partners due to the empty nest syndrome can be attributed to varying levels of difficulty experienced by each partner during the transition. While one may feel a sense of loss and grief over their children's departure, the other may welcome the newfound

freedom. With these divergent emotions, tension, and conflict may arise, leading to a decline in marital satisfaction.

The empty nest syndrome can present difficulties, but it's worth noting that not all couples suffer a dip in marital satisfaction after their children leave home. In some cases, marital satisfaction may even increase, allowing couples to concentrate on their relationship and individual pursuits.

To summarize, the empty nest syndrome is a natural phase of life that can potentially influence marital satisfaction. The loss of a collective identity and amplified conflict are potential reasons for the decline in marital satisfaction after children leave the house. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that not all couples undergo a decline in satisfaction, and some may even experience an uptick. Overall, how the empty nest syndrome affects marital satisfaction depends on various factors, such as individual experiences and the couple's coping mechanisms.

Essay 8: Question 22

Intergenerational relationships refer to the bonds between people of different age groups, often between the elderly and youth. These special connections are crucial to human progress and can impact the social, emotional, and cognitive development of both sides. This essay examines the concept of intergenerational relationships and delves into two examples of such relationships.

Intergenerational relationships, such as those between grandparents and grandchildren, can be mutually beneficial. As noted by Santrock (2019), grandparents can offer emotional support, wisdom, and guidance, while grandchildren can provide companionship and a sense of purpose. Through sharing personal stories, grandparents can assist their grandchildren in overcoming tough circumstances. In return, grandchildren can help their grandparents with tasks around the house or technology-related matters.

Intergenerational bonds can also take the form of mentor-mentee relationships. In this kind of dynamic, a seasoned individual imparts knowledge and encouragement to a younger person. As per Santrock's (2019) findings, such relationships can bolster a mentee's social and emotional aptitudes, elevate self-esteem, and enhance their academic and professional performance. Mentors may offer counsel on career paths, aid with networking, and provide emotional succor during trying times. In turn, mentees can proffer novel viewpoints and innovative ideas, resulting in a symbiotic alliance.

To sum up, intergenerational bonds are crucial for personal growth, providing guidance, emotional support, companionship, and wisdom for individuals of various ages. Mentor-mentee and grandparent-grandchild relationships are notable examples of such connections, emphasizing the range of advantages that could arise from intergenerational interactions.

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