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Unit 7 Essays

Human Growth and Development

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1. According to the Oxford Dictionary, wisdom can be defined as “the quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgement; the quality of being wise.” As it pertains to adult development, yes, wisdom is something that changes over time. This is because at every phase of life, what we have access to as well as the expectations change. For example, a person in the young adulthood phase of life may be living in a college dorm making little to no money while pursuing their academics. It may be wise for them to eat ramen noodles often because at that stage of life, a diet of ramen may be more cost effective. Just the same, though, for a first-time expecting mother in her late thirties, it may be wise for her to NOT eat ramen noodles frequently. By this definition, wisdom and its implications change at every phase of life. Wisdom is ultimately fueled by the knowledge we’ve gained through the years. Wisdom is also something that the Bible says we can simply ask for if we lack it.
2. Though late adulthood is usually seen as a time in which adults can sit back and enjoy the fruits of their labor due to the lack of stress they may have experienced during young to middle adulthood, it still comes with its fair share of mental health issues. These mental health issues could be brought on by some of the changes that adults experience in late adulthood. Things like watching loved one’s die could bring on anxiety and even depression. Health issues could also bring on the same mental health issues. Old age can

bring on things like dementia and even bouts of psychosis. Another big mental health issue that older adults experience is substance misuse. To cope with the new and strange world that they have to grow accustomed to, many in the late adulthood phase use drugs and alcohol to cope with their feelings toward it. Sleep disorders are also fairly common at this phase of life as well. Though they may be at the late stage of adulthood, it is still recommended to seek treatment for these mental health issues to have a more improved quality of life.

3. Unfortunately, despite how progressive we've become as a nation, we still have some work to do. This is evident in the treatment of elderly, ethnic women in the late adulthood phase of life. We live in an America in which not too long ago, both characteristics were seen as an offense against humanity; being a woman and being of color. Another demographic that faces significant struggles are the elderly. When one embodies all three of those characteristics simultaneously, there are some challenges to be faced. One challenge a woman of color in the late adulthood phase of life can expect is erasure. This means that unless they have loved ones advocating for their needs, the needs of elderly women of color can easily be ignored. This can be in health, finances and even mental health. It may be harder for women of color at this phase of adulthood to find jobs if they need it. This is because companies look to hire younger employees. These companies trust younger employees with getting the jobs done better than elderly women of color. This is despite how qualified she may be. She may also experience isolation at this phase of life. If she has not established a strong social network through the years, it may be very difficult to form one at this phase of life leading to isolation and possibly depression. When she speaks her mind about things, she may be passed off as being "old and ornery."

All of these examples fall under the umbrella of being overlooked. As stated before, it is ideal to establish a strong network including loved ones, support systems and the community itself. This may bring more peace during the aging process.

4. Though death itself can be defined as the end of life, there is an alternative definition of death. For example, there is something called “legal death” which is where the body has not completely shut down, but by law and medical understanding, one can still be considered dead. Two examples of legal death are (1) the irreversible ceasing of circulatory as well as respiratory functioning and (2) the irreversible ceasing of brain activity. When this is the case, one is kept “alive” via tubes and medical intervention. But the functionality of their vital organs has ceased. This means that the person is dead as they are alive. There are no thoughts, no ideas, and essentially no hope for any medical intervention to fix this. Though this is a generalized summary of what the alternative definition of death is, ultimately, each culture has their own idea of what death is. For many families, this is a time of deliberation. This is a time in which they decide how they want to arrange the cultures homegoing service, how the body is to be handled (i.e. cremation or embalming) and what to do with the bereaved belongings.
5. When one thinks about losing a life partner, a natural response is to think about the emotional impact of the loss. They may think about things like the feelings of emptiness, loneliness, depression and just grief as a whole. However, aside from the emotional burden that the loss of a life partner may cause, there are also health risks that come with that loss. A common occurrence in those who have lost a life partner is the inability to sleep soundly. They may either struggle getting to sleep, or when they do sleep, it may be interrupted by intense emotions and grief. A direct result of this is fatigue. Losing a life

partner may make it hard to have an appetite. This could lead to significant weight loss. Headaches are common. It is also expected that one may experience feeling stuck as a result of losing their life partner. After spending so many years sharing and planning things together, they may find it hard to go on and function without their partner. Another potential consequence of losing a life partner is death.

6. There is no one way to mourn. Every person, culture and religion have their own way of mourning the dead. In the country of Mexico, there is a ritual called “Dia de los Muertos” or ‘day of the dead’. This ritual is a time in which the people of Mexico get together from October 31<sup>st</sup> through November 2<sup>nd</sup> and honor the dead by summoning their spirits. Though the context may sound morbid, this is seen as a time of celebration. In New Orleans, a funeral is often accompanied by upbeat jazz music. Musicians may start off at the funeral home and follow the grieving to the gravesite where they continue to play jazz as their loved one is being buried. A common way of mourning in America is to set up a candlelight vigil and have loved ones show up and pay their respects. This can be done with candles, posters filled with memorable pictures and balloons. Though mourning can be attributed to crying and sadness, I have known people who in their households, crying for the loss of a loved one was deemed weak and unnecessary. Though that was not something I personally agreed with, I still respected it because that was their belief. As stated before, there is no right or wrong way. Some people mourn in therapy. This is because they do not know how to even process their thoughts about the fact that they are dealing with this loss at all.
7. According to the Oxford dictionary, ageism can be defined as “prejudice or discrimination on the grounds of someone’s age.” Ageism can happen to people in late

adulthood, but it can also happen to those who are in the early adulthood phase of life. For example, a group of women at a local church may be working together to organize the annual women's retreat. Anna, who is 20 years old and loves the Lord may want to be a part of the planning. She may have fresh, new ideas that the women have never even thought of. Anna may be a dedicated member of the church, she may be prompt and even pay her tithes faithfully, yet ageism may influence the women to exclude Anna. They may say things like 'she's cute, but she can't handle this type of responsibility. She's too young. Maybe next year.' Writing Anna off because she is only 20 years old is ageism. Another example can be seen with 50-year-old Fred. The company may be considering people for promotions. Despite how many dedicated years Fred has put in with the organization, the company may overlook Fred for Tom, who is 30 and just started with the company last year. Despite Fred having more experience and having proved himself through the years, they may assume that Fred is too old to handle the responsibilities, thus automatically making Tom the more qualified employee. Excluding Fred from even being considered for the promotion due to his age is a form of ageism.

8. During late adulthood, one experiences a vast amount of physiological as well as physical changes. This may look like them gaining more wisdom, a better sense of self and contentment with the life that they've created for themselves through the years. Just the same, though, late adulthood has some changes that are not as favorable for those experiencing them. For example, this is the phase in life in which the body begins slowing down significantly. During this time, the skin may begin to lose its elasticity, rendering it thinner and marked with wrinkles. Hair may either turn gray, and or thin. This could lead to significant hair loss. Abilities like seeing and hearing may become

impaired during late adulthood. Those at this phase may require assistance with things like hearing aids or specialized glasses. The digestive tract may not function the way it did during previous phases of adulthood. This may mean inability to process certain foods without difficulties. One may experience a loss of strength due to muscle mass decreasing. They may also become slower as a whole. Reaction times may decrease. During this phase of life, adults may grow shorter while their ears and noses continue to grow larger. Their immune systems may be significantly weaker, making it harder to fight off colds and infections. If one does not have a proper social network, they could experience depression during this phase of life due to the significant changes within as well as around them. Despite the possibility of these changes, one should still remain active. It is also helpful to eat whole foods, go to regular doctors visits and stay connected to friends and family.