

Here's a glimpse into the journey of a child's mind, broken down by age group:

Newborn to 18 Months (Infancy):

- **Focus:** Building trust and attachment with caregivers.
- **Development:** Senses are rapidly developing. They explore the world through touch, taste, sight, and sound. Communicate through cries, facial expressions, and babbling.
- **Key milestones:** Recognizing familiar faces, smiling, reaching for objects, babbling with different sounds.

18 Months to 3 Years (Toddlerhood):

- **Focus:** Developing independence and autonomy.
- **Development:** Language skills flourish. They explore their surroundings actively and experience rapid physical growth.
- **Key milestones:** Walking, talking in simple sentences, playing pretend, experiencing tantrums as they test boundaries.

3 to 5 Years (Preschool):

- **Focus:** Socialization and play.
- **Development:** Imagination soars. They become more curious about the world and ask frequent "why" questions. Basic self-care skills develop.
- **Key milestones:** Engaging in pretend play with others, following simple instructions, expressing emotions verbally, starting to understand concepts like counting and colors.

6 to 12 Years (School Age):

- **Focus:** Learning and developing cognitive skills.
- **Development:** Mastering academic skills like reading, writing, and math. Friendships become increasingly important. They develop a sense of right and wrong.
- **Key milestones:** Building stronger friendships, following rules and routines, understanding cause and effect, engaging in competitive games.

12 to 15 Years (Early Adolescence):

- **Focus:** Developing a sense of identity and self-esteem.
- **Development:** Rapid physical changes due to puberty. They become more self-conscious and explore their individuality. Social interactions become more complex.
- **Key milestones:** Forming strong peer relationships, developing interests and hobbies, experiencing mood swings, increased independence from parents.

Erikson's stages of psychosocial development

Erick Erickson was a prominent child psychoanalyst and developed the breakdown of the developing mind below. His theories do not contradict what was shared above. He adds more information about the “identity crisis” at each stage of development.

Each stage presents a psychosocial crisis, a conflict that needs resolution for healthy personality development.

Here's a quick rundown of the first five stages that apply to children up to 15 years old:

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

- **Crisis:** The infant develops a sense of trust or mistrust based on the care they receive from caregivers.
- **Healthy outcome:** Consistent and loving care leads to trust, forming the foundation for secure relationships.
- **Unhealthy outcome:** Inconsistent or neglectful care can lead to mistrust, making it difficult to form healthy attachments.

2. Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt (1 to 3 years)

- **Crisis:** Toddlers are developing a sense of independence and control over their bodies and actions.
- **Healthy outcome:** Encouragement for self-exploration and independence fosters autonomy and self-esteem.
- **Unhealthy outcome:** Excessive criticism or restrictions can lead to shame and doubt in their abilities.

3. Initiative vs. Guilt (3 to 5 years)

- **Crisis:** Preschoolers are becoming more active and assertive, initiating play and tasks.
- **Healthy outcome:** Guidance and support for their initiatives fosters a sense of purpose and confidence.
- **Unhealthy outcome:** Overly critical or controlling environment can lead to guilt and a fear of taking initiative.

4. Industry vs. Inferiority (5 to 12 years)

- **Crisis:** School-aged children are developing a sense of competence and industry through learning and social interactions.
- **Healthy outcome:** Encouragement for their efforts and achievements fosters a sense of industry and self-worth.

- **Unhealthy outcome:** Discouragement or negative comparisons can lead to feelings of inferiority and inadequacy.

5. Identity vs. Role Confusion (12 to 18 years)

- **Crisis:** Adolescence is a time of self-discovery and exploration. Teenagers grapple with who they are and their place in the world.
- **Healthy outcome:** Exploration of different roles and identities leads to a strong sense of self.
- **Unhealthy outcome:** Pressure to conform or lack of guidance can lead to role confusion and uncertainty about oneself.