Managing Stress

- Reevaluate the situation
- Focus on events you can control
- Consider alternatives
- Exercise regularly
- Relaxation techniques
- Constructively reduce anger
- Seek social support

Problem- versus Emotion-Centered Coping

**Problem-Centered Coping**
- Identify and appraise problems
- Choose and implement potential solutions

**Emotion-Centered Coping**
- Control distress when situation can’t be changed
Hardiness

- **Control**
  - Regard most experiences as controllable

- **Commitment**
  - Find interest and meaning in daily activities

- **Challenge**
  - View as normal part of life, chance for growth

Double Standard of Aging

- Aging men rated more positively; women more negatively
- Evolutionary roots; media, social messages
- May be declining

Cohort Effects in Intelligence Studies
Fluid and Crystallized Intelligence

Fluid
- Depends on basic information processing skills:
  - Detecting relationships among stimuli
  - Analytical speed
  - Working memory

Crystallized
- Skills that depend on:
  - Accumulated knowledge
  - Experience
  - Good judgment
  - Mastery of social conventions
- Valued by person’s culture

Individual and Group Factors in High Intelligence Scores

Lifestyle
- High education
- Complex job or leisure
- Lasting marriage
- High SES

Personal
- Flexible personality
- Healthy
- Gender
- Cohort
- Perceptual speed

Age-Related Slowing of Information Processing

Neural Network View
- Neurons in brain die, breaking neural connections
- Brain forms new connections
- New connections are less efficient

Information-Loss View
- Information lost at each step through cognitive system
- Whole system slows down to inspect, interpret information
Attention in Middle Adulthood

- More difficulties in
  - Multitasking
  - Focusing on relevant information
  - Switching attention
  - Connecting visual information
  - Inhibition
- May be linked to slower processing
- Experience, practice, training help adults compensate

Memory in Middle Adulthood

- Working memory decreases from 20s to 60s
  - Less use of memory strategies—may be due to slower processing, attention problems
- Adults can compensate
  - Self-pacing
  - Strategy reminders
  - Relevant information
- Few changes in:
  - Factual Knowledge
  - Procedural Knowledge
  - Metacognitive Knowledge

Practical Problem Solving and Expertise

- Practical Problem Solving
  - Evaluate real-world situations
  - Achieve goals that have high uncertainty
  - Helped by expertise
- Expertise
  - Extensive, highly organized knowledge base
  - Provides efficient, effective approaches to solving problems
  - Organized around abstract principles
  - Result of years of experience
Changes in Creativity

- More deliberate, thoughtful
  - Less spontaneous, intensely emotional
- Sum up or integrate ideas
  - Less focus on unusual new ideas
- Goals more altruistic

Development Through the Lifespan

Chapter 16
Emotional and Social Development in Middle Adulthood

Erikson’s Theory: Generativity versus Stagnation

**Generativity**
- Reaching out to others in ways that give to and guide the next generation
- Commitment extends beyond self
- Typically realized through child rearing
- Other family, work mentoring relationships also generative

**Stagnation**
- Place own comfort and security above challenge and sacrifice
- Self-centered, self-indulgent, self-absorbed
- Lack of involvement or concern with young people
- Little interest in work productivity, self-improvement
Levinson’s Middle Adult Season

- Midlife transition (40–45)
  - Sense of time running out in life
  - Evaluate early adulthood
  - Make drastic or small changes
- Entry life structure (45–50)
- Age 50 transition (50–55)
- Culminating life structure (55–60)

Levinson’s Four Tasks of Middle Adulthood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Young-Old</th>
<th>Find new ways of being both young and old</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Destruction-</td>
<td>Acknowledge past destructiveness, try to create products of value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculinity-</td>
<td>Balance masculine and feminine parts of self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Femininity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement-</td>
<td>Balance involvement with external world and separateness from it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separateness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vaillant’s View of Midlife

- Keepers of meaning
  - Guardians of culture
  - Adults in 40s and 50s carry responsibility for functioning of society
  - “Passing the torch” becomes important
  - Focus on longer-term goals
  - Prevents too rapid change
Midlife Crisis?

Research: Wide individual differences
- Gender differences
  - Men – changes in early 40s
  - Women – late 40s–50s, different directions
- Sharp disruption uncommon
- Differences in handling regrets
  - Changes or not
  - Interpretation, acceptance

Midlife: Stage or Life Events?

Stage View
- Midlife changes are developmental transitions or crises

Life Events View
- Midlife changes simply adaptation to normal life events

Possible Selves

- What one hopes or fears becoming
- Become fewer, more modest & concrete with age
- May become more time-oriented with age
  - Compare to what you had planned
- May help with adjustment and self-esteem
Self-Perceptions in Midlife

- More complex, integrated self-descriptions
- Increases in feelings of
  - Self-acceptance
  - Autonomy
  - Environmental mastery
- Linked to increased well-being, happiness
  - Varies with culture

Coping Improvements in Middle Adulthood

- Identifying positives
- Postponing action during evaluation
- Anticipation and planning
- Humor
- Integrating strengths and weaknesses
- Confidence, experience

Gender Identity in Middle Adulthood

- Women: Increase in "masculine" traits
- Men: Increase in "feminine" traits
- Theories
  - Parental Imperative
  - Decline in sex hormones
  - Demands of midlife
Relationships at Midlife

- Many people have more close relationships than any other period of life
  - Children
    - “launching”
  - Parents
  - Friends

Caring for Aging Parents

- “Sandwich generation”
- Finances, location, gender, culture are factors
- Highly stressful
  - Average 20 hours/week
  - Often starts suddenly, duration uncertain
  - Work and costs increase
  - Hard to witness parent’s decline
  - Support needed

Relieving Caregiving Stress

- Use effective coping strategies
- Seek social support
- Use community resources
- Get workplace help
- Work for helpful public policies
Siblings in Middle Adulthood

- Contact and support decline during middle adulthood
  - Demands of diverse roles
- Still, often feel closer
  - Share similar events
- Affected by
  - Earlier relations
  - Culture

Friendships in Middle Adulthood

- Gender trends continue
  - Men less expressive than women
- Fewer friends; more selective
- More complex ideas of friendship
  - Rely on for pleasure more than support
- Invest more time, effort in friends