



## Humans and the Human Family are Special!



## MODULE 1



## OBJECTIVES

1. Students will understand that human development, the human life history and the human family are special. Our combination of attributes is not found in any other species.
2. The student will explore his/her own past, present and future stages of life development as described by Erickson.
3. Students will learn about human social emotions and personality traits and the ways these determine well-being. The student will explore his/her own experience of social emotions and his/her own personality traits.
4. Students will learn about genetics and the human genome project.
5. Students will consider ways in which parents influence their child's life course, emotional health and personality. Students will be challenged to explore the ways that genes and environment interact to shape a person.
6. Students will discover how learning about child development can positively impact their own lives, now and in the future.

## VOCABULARY

Ability to Love	Genetically Determined	Responsiveness
Agreeableness	Innate	Self-Control
Attachment	Intellectual Potential	Sensitive Periods
BIG 5	Maternal Behavior	Sensitivity
Conscientiousness	Neuroticism	Social Goals
Empathy	Openness to Experience	Surgency
Extraversion	Persistence	Unique Brain Circuit
Genes	Personality Trait	

## PRE-TEST

True or False?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Humans have instincts that tell them how to be parents.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Parenting in other animals is always by instinct.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Males of most mammal species care for their young.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Parents shape their children's personalities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Parents can make a child smarter.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Genes, upbringing and personal choice shape a person's personality.
- \_\_\_\_\_ There are sensitive periods during development when experiences determine a child's abilities for life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ In some animal species, males and females "fall in love" with their mates.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Hormones affect human behavior.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Experiences with babies change a man's hormone levels.



## What makes humans special?

There are a lot of things that make humans special and unlike any other species on Earth. If you learn about why humans are so special you will understand why being a parent is such a big responsibility and such an important job. Here is the list of the things that make humans special that we will cover in this module.

1. Our life history
2. Our families
3. Our individual similarities and differences
4. Our ability to be aware of ourselves and make choices
5. Our other abilities

### 1. Our life history

Remember **THE FROG** that changes form from an egg to a tadpole to an adult?



In grade school and high school biology students learn about the development of animals.

Humans have a life history too...

The Life history of a species is defined by the physical and behavioral changes individuals go through between conception and death. Even though humans don't undergo **metamorphosis**, or pupate, or move from a water to a land existence, humans still change a great deal in our life history. We still progress through a series of stages. As we progress from one stage to the next, the change is irreversible, it cannot be undone.

Just like a frog can't become a tadpole again, you can never again be a baby. A child has only one chance to grow up right because human development happens in stages that are irreversible. If development goes wrong, there is no possibility of becoming a baby again to fix the problem. There are many examples of problems caused during development that are discussed in the other modules of this course. The important thing for you to know is that ***if development goes wrong, a child may not reach his or her full potential.*** The child may not be the same as he or she would have been without the problem.

Although the human stages are not as obvious as those of the butterfly or frog, we can still name them:

1. Prenatal- Conception to birth
2. Infant- Birth to 1 year
3. Toddler- 1 to 3 years
4. Preschooler- 3-5 years
5. School-age child- 5-12 years
6. Adolescent- 12-20 years
7. Young adult- 20-45 years
8. Middle adult- 45-65 years
9. Older adult- 65 and up

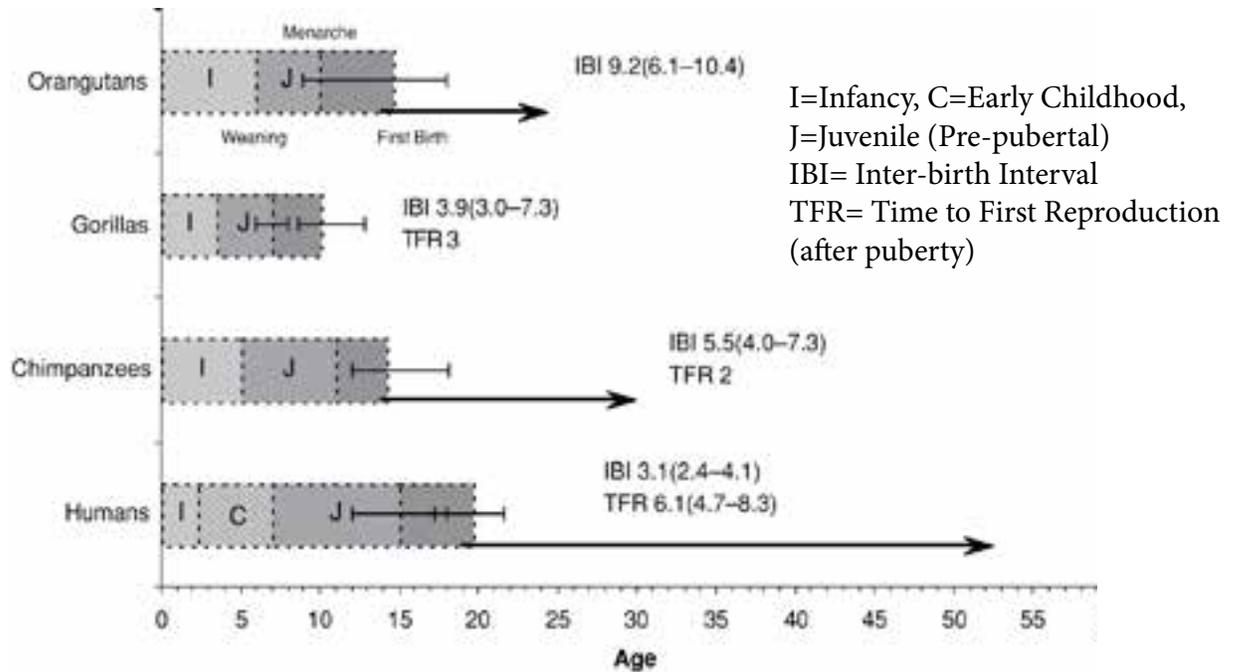


## How is our life history special?

1. Compared to other mammals, human babies actually drink their mother's milk for a short period of time. Weaning happens when a baby no longer depends on mother's milk. On average, human infants are weaned at a young age.
2. After weaning, human children still need to be fed. The young of most other species can get their own food and feed themselves after weaning. If we were like most other species, toddlers would go to the kitchen and get their own food!
3. Humans stay immature and don't turn into adults for many years after birth. The fact that childhood and adolescence last many years gives our big brain a long time to mature.
4. Human infants, children and sometimes even adolescents are cared for by many people besides their own mothers. Fathers, grandparents, older brothers and sisters, relatives, friends and teachers all care for children. Mothers of most other species are the sole care-givers of their young.
5. We are the only animal on Earth that lives many years after we stop having babies. Because of menopause, women cannot have babies after about age 45 or so, and yet they can live to be 100 or more! Most other mammals die a short time after they stop having babies.



## Comparison of human and Ape life history stages:



The Table above compares the stages of human life with those of the apes. Study the graph, which species has the shortest infancy? Because infancy is shorter in humans, human mothers can have babies closer together. (The inter-birth interval is also shorter in humans.) **Only humans have a childhood where they need adults to provide their food.** Women can also choose to delay having their first baby until they are ready. Only humans live long after reproduction stops.

## Why is it important to talk about our life history?

Our life history shows us how important families are. Anthropologists think that the reason babies are weaned early and that we live so long is because of multiple caregivers. Children need care by many people other than mother. Fathers, siblings, grandparents, other relatives and teachers all care for children. Fathers are especially critical and have an important role to play in children's lives.

Our life history is also important in understanding human psychological, emotional and social development. Humans face unique challenges during each stage of our life history. These challenges are psychological and involve our relationships with others. How we grapple with each challenge affects our emotions, quality of life and our ability to deal with the challenges of future stages.

**Anthropology** is the study of humans, past and present. Anthropologists seek to understand how humans adapt to different environments, how biological and cultural processes work together to shape growth, development and behavior, and what causes disease and early death. In addition, they are interested in human biological origins, evolution and individual differences. To learn more about anthropology visit the American Anthropological Association. Students desiring to learn more can read an anthropologist's view of the human life history in these articles:

Easier: [10 The Evolution of the Human Life Course](#)

Advanced: [Modern Human Life History](#)

## Stages of human life and psychological challenges

Each stage of human life brings with it special psychological challenges. These challenges are questions a person has to answer in order to grow and have well-being. As we answer these questions in a healthy way, we gain strength to cope with later challenges. Below is a list of the stages of human life and the challenges that most go along with each stage.

### **Infant**

*Challenge: Can I trust?*

During infancy a human learns to trust others. The infant needs to feel safe and comforted, to develop trust in himself/herself, others, and the environment.

## **Toddler**

*Challenge: Am I a separate person with a will of my own?*

In the toddler stage, a child works to master the physical environment and assert himself/herself. The toddler begins learning to be a person with goals that may not be the same as his /her parent's goals. The self-concept also begins to develop during the toddler years.

## **Preschooler**

*Challenge: What can I do and what does that say about who I am?*

The preschooler begins to initiate, not imitate, activities. During this stage, children develop a conscience. Self-concept broadens to include sexual identity.

## **School-Age Child**

*Challenge: How can I develop my own special skills and abilities?*

The task of the school-aged child is to develop a sense of self-worth by acquiring skills. Motivation to achieve in academic and other realms becomes important and if not developed during this stage may be difficult to acquire. Self-esteem comes to be influenced by accomplishments.

## **Adolescent**

*Challenge: Can I find my place in this world?*

The task of adolescence is to develop an identity; that means adolescence is a time to find yourself, to learn who you are and figure out what you are good at. Adolescents also learn that in spite of the fact that we all have many roles (like son or daughter, sibling, student, athlete, worker, boyfriend, girlfriend) we are one person, and need to be true to ourselves even when performing different roles. Developing an identity may be a difficult task because of the differing demands of parents, teachers and peer pressure.

## **Young Adult**

*Challenge: Can I love and commit?*

If adolescence has gone well and the young adult has a good sense of him or herself, young adulthood is the time when a person learns to make a personal commitment to another as a spouse or partner. Young adults also face the commitments of work and new parenthood.

## **Middle-Age Adult**

*Challenge: Can I be productive?*

In middle adulthood people seek satisfaction through productivity in career, parenthood, and civic interests.

## **Older Adult**

*Challenge: Does what I have accomplished show I have integrity?*

Older adults continue to be productive. This is also a time when people review their life accomplishments, deal with loss and prepare for death.

For more see: [Erickson's Developmental Stages](#)

## Section 1 Conclusion

You have learned about the stages of a human life. Since human childhood is so long, parents spend a great deal of energy caring for children. Other adults help human parents because the job of parent is so tough. Children and adults face special life challenges over the stages of development. How the challenges are faced in early life affects a person's ability to meet later challenges. Because human development happens in stages, if something goes wrong, it may not be possible to correct it.



**During the time it was growing this tree faced the stress of being blown by the wind.** The wind stress caused the tree to grow crooked. Now even if the wind were to stop blowing, the tree will always be crooked. It will never be straight. Are there any similarities between what wind stress did to this tree and what can happen during human childhood? How do we fix problems caused by too much stress during human childhood?