

**MIDDLE AGE**  
**UNIT- IV**

**The main headings are given in the BLUE colour**  
**Main Subheadings are given in the YELLOW colour**  
**Subheadings are given in the Green colour**

## **CHARACTERISTICS**

### **1. Middle age is a dreaded period**

- It is the most dreaded period in the total lifespan
- Traditional beliefs concerning mental and physical deterioration, cessation of reproductive life
- This causes an unfavorable attitude

### **2. Time of transition**

- From old to new physical and behavioral characteristics
- Virility and women's fertility changes
- Adjustment to new interests, values, and patterns of behavior
- Men adjust to impending retirement and physical condition
- Empty nest period
- The 3 Common most developmental crises are
  - ★ Parenthood crises- where did they go wrong
  - ★ Dealing with aging parents- feel guilty when they do not want to have their aging parents live in their homes
  - ★ Deal with the death of a spouse

### **3. Time of stress**

- Somatic stress- Physical evidence of aging
- Cultural stress- the high value placed on youth
- Economic stress- the financial burden
- Psychological stress- the death of a spouse

### **4. Dangerous age**

- The Male wants to have a fling
- Individuals breakdown as a result of overwork, over-worry, careless living
- Mental illness arises rapidly- peak age for suicide
- Men upset because of menopause in women

### **5. Awkward age**

- Stand between the 'rebel generation' and the senior citizen generation
- Feeling they have no recognition in society

### **6. Time of achievement**

- Generativity vs stagnation
- A strong desire to succeed will reach its peak during this period

#### 7. Time of evaluation

- Men and women normally reach their time of achievement
- Evaluate their accomplishment in light of their earlier aspirations and the expectations of the others

#### 8. Double standard

- The standard for men and standard for women develops
- Egalitarian roles for men and women in the home, in business, industry, professions, and social life
- Two different philosophies = one, how people adjust to middle age and two, how they should grow old gracefully, deliberately slowing down and taking life comfortably - **rocking chair philosophy**.

#### 9. Time of empty nest

- The time when children don't want to live under the parental roof
- Most adults find it difficult to adjust to pair-centered home
- Far more traumatic for women than men
- Men mostly experience retirement shock

#### 10. Time of boredom

- Men and women experience boredom during the late thirties and forties
- Men become bored with the daily routine of work and family life.

## DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS

### Task relating to physical changes

- Includes the acceptance of, and adjustment to, the physical changes that normally occur during middle age.

### Tasks relating to changed interest

- Middle age person often assumes civic and social responsibilities and develops an interest in adult-oriented leisure-time activities in place of family-oriented activities which prevailed during early adulthood

### Task-related to vocational adjustment

- These tasks revolve around establishing and maintaining a relatively stable standard of living

### Tasks relating to family life

- Relating oneself to one's spouse as a person, adjusting to an aging person, and assisting teenage children to become responsible and happy adults

## ADJUSTMENT TO PHYSICAL CHANGES AND MENTAL CHANGES

## **PHYSICAL CHANGES**

One of the most important changes where they must recognize that the body is not functioning as adequately as it formerly did and may even be wearing out in certain vital areas.

### **Changes in appearance**

- Appearance plays a major role in social judgments, social acceptance, and leadership
- Middle age people rebel against threats to their status they fear they may lose their appearances
- Men in our culture show faster aging than women

### **Changes in sensory abilities**

- Gradual deterioration of sensory abilities begins with middle age
- Most marked changes are in the eyes and ears
- Decrease in pupil size, acuity, and glare resistance and tendency towards glaucoma, cataracts, and tumors
- Hearing is likely to impair
- Sensitivity to high pitches is lost first
- Decrease of sense of smell and taste with advancing age

### **Changes in physiological functions**

- Changes in the exterior part of the body are paralleled with the interior part and their functioning
- It is a most direct or indirect result of body tissues
- The pore and skin glands rid the skin of waste materials more slowly with an increase in body odors
- Changes in eating habits take place and constipation is very common among middle age

### **Changes in health**

- The general decline in physical fitness and some deterioration of health are common
- Increase in disability and invalidism which progress rapidly from then on
- Tendency to fatigue easily, buzzing or ringing in the ears, muscular pains, skin sensitivity, general aches
- Gastrointestinal complaints such as constipation, acid stomach, acid stomach, belching, loss of appetite, and insomnia
- Other factors such as hereditary, past health history, emotional stress, life, and willingness to adjust the pattern of living to change physical condition.

### **Sexual changes - men and women ( menopause and climacteric syndrome)**

- Physical adjustment men and women must make in middle age is to changes in their sexual capacity.
- Women go through menopause, or a change of life, at which time the menstrual periods cease, and they lose the childbearing ability.
- Men experience climacteric syndrome, usually in the late 60s or 70s, and progress at a very slow rate

- The entire body comes with the very gradual weakening of the male sexual or reproductive powers due to emotional imbalance
- Testosterone secretion begins to decline.
- The male climacteric syndrome is the cluster of physiologic, constitutional, and psychological symptoms occurring in some men age approximately 45 to 60 associated with hormonal changes and often closely resembling the female climacteric syndrome.

## MENTAL CHANGES

To **develop generativity, or the desire to expand one's influence and commitment to family, society, and future generations.** In other words, the middle adult is concerned with forming and guiding the next generation.

### Adjustment to changed interest

- Changes in interest converted into changes in duties and responsibilities
- Women experience far more role-changed experiences than men
- Interests are more commonly narrowed down than expanded with advancing age
- Shift towards interests that are more solitary in nature, such as hobbies, reading, and television watching
- Increased interest in cultural pursuits reading, painting, and attending lectures.
- The tendency for men and women in shared interest
- Increased interest in activities leads to self-improvement.

### Appearance and clothes

- Interest in appearance begins to wane after marriage and especially during the early years of parenthood,
- Both men and women use diets, exercise, cosmetics, or either to reverse those changes to hide them.
- Middle-aged people are well aware that clothes are important to their image
- Women in contrast have less conscious about clothes

### Money and status symbol

- Regardless of how little money they may have middle-aged women and men are interested in money though the emphasis of their interest may be different.
- Poor health and debts carried over earlier years are economic responsibilities for elderly relatives that tend to heighten money worries for middle-aged men in occupational groups except those whose incomes are more than adequate to meet their needs.
- Middle-aged women are more interested than men
- In middle age, there are usually changes in interest over the use of money.
- Middle age people think of themselves as a command generation - the group that exercises more power
- A home is mainly considered the most important status symbol
- The more anxious the individual is to move up the social ladder, the more important the status symbol becomes.

## Religion

- Middle age men and women are more interested in religious activity
- They find that religion is a great source of comfort
- Tolerant towards the attitude of religious

## Community affair

- They start to devote themselves to community affairs
- Men and women have different reasons for joining community organizations and for taking an active part in them.
- Loneliness is by no means the only reason middle-aged men and women join community organizations and take part in their activities.
- Interest in active participation in community organizations is not consistent through the years of middle age
- The decline in interest in active participation in community organizations during the fifties may be due to part to the decline in health and energy that tend to send at this time

## Recreation

- A major developmental task of this age is how to use leisure time
- Interest in strenuous recreation wanes rapidly and individuals prefer quieter activities
- There is a shift from large people groups to the only several people
- Adult-oriented rather than family-oriented like those of early adulthood

## SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT

### Assessment of social adjustment in middle age

- Social adjustment factors - how adequately people play social roles that are expected of them and how much personal satisfaction they derive from playing those roles
- Poor health or physical disability may prevent them from engaging in social or civic activities they would otherwise enjoy
- The study pattern of social relationships among middle-aged couples has revealed that close-knit social networks are most common when the husband and wife have grown up and lived in the same area.

## VOCATIONAL ADJUSTMENT

Changes in vocational patterns and in working conditions took place at a much slower rate than they do now.

### Sex difference in vocational adjustment

- An increasing number of women are entering the work world during middle age, and vocational adjustment problems are no longer experienced mainly by men.
- Middle-aged men who have achieved status vocationally are still dissatisfied with looking around for jobs.

- As the number of middle-aged women in professionals, business, and industry increases so do their adjustment problems.
- Most women, compared to men, have difficulty getting promoted in their careers.
- This leads to less satisfaction for women and remaining in the same job

### **Factors influencing vocational adjustment in middle age**

- Good vocational adjustment in early adulthood will not necessarily guarantee the same in middle age.

### **Achievements**

- Many middle-aged workers enjoy a degree of success that gives them the income, the prestige and authority, and autonomy they had hoped for.
- Trained and experienced find less rewarding jobs below their capacity.
- Women far more often than men fail to achieve the success they are capable of during middle age.
- The failure is not due to lack of ability and training but to prejudice against women in positions of responsibility.

### **Satisfaction**

- The forties are the critical age for job satisfaction
- This age comes slightly later for workers in business and the professions
- By the end of the fifties and early sixties, there is usually a sharp drop in vocational satisfaction
- Job satisfaction also wanes as middle age progresses because men begin to feel the pressures of work as a result of their general slowing down and an increased tendency towards fatigue both of which are natural accompaniments of aging.
- Middle-aged women even more than men, fail to derive the satisfaction they should from their work

## **ADJUSTMENT TO CHANGES IN FAMILY PATTERNS**

### **Adjustment to changes in roles**

- Children leave home - to go to college, to marry, or to pursue a career - parents must face the adjustment problem of what is commonly referred to as the period of an empty nest.
- The empty nest period will begin in the forties or fifties

### **Adjustment to spouse**

- With the ending of parental responsibility the husband and wife once again become dependent upon each other for companionship
- Adjustment to their changed family pattern ensures the happy and healthy life

### **Sexual adjustment**

Sex is important in marital satisfaction in middle age

Sexual satisfaction is greater for both men and women when intercourse can be carried to its completion.

Poor sexual satisfaction is responsible for contributing to disenchantment

### Causes of poor sexual adjustments

- The difference in sex drive - male sex drive is stronger earlier than female whereas female sex drive becomes stronger during middle age
- Men become concerned with the loss of their sexual vigor. They may develop the feelings of inadequacy
- Many women lose their earlier inhibition and develop more interest in sex
- Some middle-aged women decide that was the last chance to have a child

### Effects of good sexual adjustment

- In some cases, both men and women experience sexual satisfaction
- Women's decline in sexual satisfaction in some cases may be due to their husband's behavior
- Men's decline in sexual satisfaction is due to conditions within themselves or about their wife or home

### Adjustment in-laws

- Adjustment to children's spouse and adjustment to care of aging parents are the two factors

### Adjustment to grandparenthood

- Some men and women become grandparents when middle age begins
- Grandparents as a group play less important roles in the lives of their children and grandchildren than they did in the past
- Relationships of the grandparents with their children and their grandchildren depend on the role they play in their children's lives.
- Pleasure without responsibility is the responsibility of the grandchildren
- They are willing to help out in emergencies and babysit occasionally, they prefer playing with them.

## BEING SINGLE

### The problem of single women

- Problems related to employment and vocational advancement are even more serious for middle-aged women than for men.
- Less often promoted to positions of prestige and responsibility than men
- Worries about economic security and frustrations arising from the realization that promotion will be denied her more because of her sex
- Financial burden in addition to the physical and emotional burden

### The problem of single men

- Devote as much time as he wished to his work, and he has been free to move to areas where greater opportunities were available.

- The middle-aged bachelor is therefore generally at the peak of his career, he has little reason to be concerned about unemployment
- He usually provides financial aid rather than sacrificing his time and efforts to take care of their needs.

## LOSS OF A SPOUSE

Loss of spouse - the result of death or divorce

The man whose wife dies, or who is divorced experienced a disruption in his pattern of living unless a relative can manage the home for him.

### Loss by divorce

- Loss of a spouse as a result of divorce affects middle-aged people very differently, depending primarily upon who wanted the divorce
- For women, social problems are even harder to cope

### Loss by death

- Except when the death of severe illness most middle-aged men and women go through a predictable course of grief.

### Remarriage

- Middle-aged men and women who lose their spouses due to divorce or death make reasonably satisfactory adjustments to being single after a period of time
- Some middle-aged men and women, especially those who live in urban areas, prefer cohabitation to remarriage after the divorce or death of a spouse.

### Common problems of widowhood

- **Economic problems** - unless a man has built up a sizable estate and has carried large life insurance policies, the widow finds herself greatly reduced economic circumstances when her husband's earnings come to an end.
- **Social problems** - the social life of middle-aged as true of young adults, is pair oriented a widow soon discovers that there is no place for her.
- **Family problems** - widows must play the role of both father and mother and must face all the problems of one-parent homes described earlier.
- **Practical problem** - trying to run a household alone, after being used to helping a husband with fixing appliances, cutting the grass, shoveling snow, etc. presents many practical problems for every widow.
- **Sexual problems** - widows who enjoyed a satisfactory sexual life during middle age now feel frustrated and deprived.
- **Residential problem** - depends on her economic status and whom she lives with, health is the factor that determines whether to live alone or not.



## **ADJUSTMENT TO APPROACHING RETIREMENT**

Most business and industrial organizations as well as firms of professional workers only require their workers to retire at the government mandatory age of 70, they have voluntary retirement at 60, 62, and 65.

This engages workers to take advantage of financial benefits.

### **Understanding the reality & Family support**

- Understanding the reality of aging and the transition should be the main factor in approaching the retirement
- Planning about recreational activities and life after retirement is most important in this phase of life
- Family support on a physical, mental, and financial basis helps an individual to lead their retirement lifestyle in a happy and productive way

## **VOCATIONAL AND MARITAL HAZARDS**

### **Vocational hazards**

#### **Failure to reach earlier goals -**

- Reactions to failure to reach their goals will affect their attitude towards themselves and the kind of personal and social adjustment they make now when they reach old.

#### **Decline in creativity**

- Even though the amount of productivity remains the same or increases there exists a kind of decline in vocational creativity, which makes them feel less satisfied.
- This may be due to a decline in mental ability or mental rigidity

#### **Boredom**

- It affects middle age workers more than young workers because their chance of finding more stimulating jobs grows slimmer with each passing year.

#### **Bigness**

- The tendency towards bigness in business, industry, and professions is a vocational hazard to many of them today.
- Little opportunity to know about the client and the friendly interaction they used to have in the past may lessen the fact to face the bigness.

#### **The feeling of being trapped**

- Many middle-aged workers who are not happy in their work feel that they are trapped for the rest of their life and will never be able to free themselves until they reach retirement.

#### **Unemployment**

- Four groups of middle-aged workers are vulnerable to unemployment - low IQs, women, men of minority groups, and executives of those in middle management level jobs.

- Unemployment is a serious psychological hazard for any worker, regardless of age, sex, race minority group status

### **Unfavorable attitudes toward job**

- It has detrimental effects on achievements and personal adjustment
- Workers are dissatisfied because they feel trapped.

### **Geographic mobility**

- Some middle-aged people need to be moved as per their job situation from one region to another.

### **Marital hazards**

**Role changes** - a serious hazard for women, most mothers want their children to be independent when they are developmentally ready, to have homes, and families of their own, and to be successful in their work.

- For such women the ending of parenthood is trauma and neurotic difficulties are often the aftermath.

**Boredom** - become bored as being highly repetitious, motivation decreases as family shrinks when children leave home, boredom leads to underachievement and discontent.

**Opposition to a child's marriage**- serious problems arise when a teenager or even a grown child marries someone their middle-aged parents don't approve of. Created barriers between children, parents, and even their grandchildren.

**Inability to establish a satisfactory relationship with the spouse as a person** - difficulty for women because of the problem she faces to give satisfactory adjustment to the new role she must play as children have left the home, it is the most important and hazardous transition.

**Sexual adjustment** - sometimes in this age the conditions of extramarital affairs take part as any one of the partners is not involved in sexual satisfaction.

- Also the unfavorable attitude of the children toward the sexual interest of their parents.

**Caring for the elderly** - caring for elderly parents in their homes is a serious hazard for many middle-aged couples because it interferes with their adjustment to each other.

**Loss of spouse** - divorce or loss of a spouse is one of the hazards of this period

- Most middle-aged people get divorced because of an unfaithful, irresponsible or constantly nagging partner.

**Remarriage** - it is always difficult for middle-aged people as it is difficult for them to change their roles and responsibilities.

## **ADJUSTMENT TO APPROACHING OLD AGE.**

### **Preparation for Retirement**

- It is important to face and cope with unusual disappointment during this age.
- Preparation for the retirement and importance of life after retirement should be properly understood by an individual.

### **Understanding unfavorable stereotypes**

- It is important to understand Common negative stereotypes about older people include their suffering from poor health and loneliness, physical and cognitive incompetency, unproductivity, and unattractiveness

### **Successful adjustment to old age.**

- Being free of disability or disease,  
Having high cognitive and physical abilities, and
- Interacting with others in meaningful ways. These are some of the common factors meant for successful adjustment to old age.