

Family life cycle:

- The family which we are born into is the first (primary) relationship context of our lives. The family changes over time in the context of developmental and growth over lifespan. Impact on human development: ongoing.
- “major life cycle transitions require fundamental change in the system itself which continues throughout life. Processes to be negotiated are the expansion, contraction and realignment of relationship systems to support the entry, exit and development of family members in a functional way.
- Adapting to new circumstances: happens in bursts, stages, periods of change where adjustment/reorganisation takes place – developmental tasks that are important to stages of the family lifecycle.
- Family lifecycle model considered useful framework for reflecting on developmental context of family
- Stages of family life cycle:

Stage	Emotional issues	Critical tasks
Unattached adult	Accepting parent-offspring separation	Differentiation from family, peer relations, career
Newly married adult	Commitment to marriage	Forming marital system, spouse/family/friends, adjusting career
Childbearing adults	Accepting new members into system	Adjusting marriage to make room for kids and grandparents, parental roles.
Preschool aged child	Accepting new personality	Adjusting to meet needs of kid, coping with energy drain, couple time
School aged child	Allowing child to establish relationships outside of family	Extended family/social interactions, kid's education, time demands
Teenaged child	Flexibility of boundaries to allow independence	Shifting balance of parent/child rel, midlife career, marital issues, older generation concerns
Launching centre	Exits and entries into the family	Releasing adult kids into marriage, work etc, maintaining home base, returns of kids.
Middle-aged adults	Letting go of children, facing each other again.	Rebuilding marriage, children's spouses, grandchildren

Retired Adults	Adopting old age	Supporting middle generation, death, closing/adapting family home.
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- First and second order change in family lifecycle.

Stage	First order	Second order
The couple	Negotiating living arrangements	Negotiating relationship boundaries with family of origin
The couple with kids	Changes in lifestyle to allow for children	Moving from 2 person to 3 person system, responsibilities, roles etc.
Family with adolescent children	Changes in lifestyle to accommodate adolescents	Move back to the primary couple, questioning of couples sexuality in light of adol's emerging sexuality
The couple without children	Lifestyle changes: work, career, finances etc.	Questioning adequacy of couple: search for intimacy
Retirement and old age	Lifestyle changes: health, finances	Use of time, intimacy, companionship, boundaries.

- Unexpected and expected change: transition from stages are often stressful times when rebalancing, redefining and realigning relationships occur. Families often get 'stuck' or have been unable to negotiate the transitions.
- Vertical axis: historical influences and stressors (think: passed down) biological heritage, genetics, culture, psychological issues, attitudes, expectations, family history of functioning.
- Horizontal axis: development unfolding over time (think: along a timeline) coping with transitions, predictable and unpredictable (death, illness, loss of job) transitions.
- Resilience: ability to bounce back after difficulty
- Contemporary families: sociocultural factors, hard to define 'normal pattern of development' – historically applied to white, middle class families – divorce affects all members differently, factor in age, level on conflict, relationships after divorce etc.

- Divorce: blended families, tensions, finances, loyalty
- Always consider family life cycle in a case – why now?
What is the problem being addressed at this point?