



Adult Development Across the Seasons of Life

Common skills and transitions - not deadlines or a test of worth

Adulthood is not one straight path

People reach milestones in different orders, repeat them, redefine them, or never choose them. Culture, disability, finances, discrimination, caregiving, trauma, health, and opportunity shape the path. Development is less about checking boxes and more about growing capacity, choice, connection, and meaning.

Launching and exploring

Build identity and values; practice work or learning skills; manage daily care and money; form friendships and intimate relationships; learn consent, boundaries, and help-seeking.

Building and revising

Make and revise commitments; deepen communication; develop a livelihood; manage a home; care for health; balance independence and interdependence; recover from setbacks.

Contributing and carrying

Mentor or guide others; parent, grandparent, create, lead, volunteer, or contribute in another way; navigate caregiving; protect health and relationships; reassess what matters.

Adapting and integrating

Adjust to changes in body, roles, work, family, ability, and loss; preserve autonomy; receive help; share knowledge; invest in meaningful people and activities; make sense of one's story.

Skills that keep developing at every age

- Self-awareness: notice needs, limits, values, and patterns.
- Emotional flexibility: feel, regulate, recover, and repair.
- Relationships: communicate, listen, set boundaries, and allow mutual influence.
- Practical life: health care, money, home, transportation, paperwork, and technology.
- Discernment: tolerate complexity, update beliefs, and make values-based choices.
- Interdependence: offer care, receive care, and ask for accommodations.
- Meaning: create, contribute, play, learn, grieve, and belong.
- Resilience: adapt plans without treating change as failure.

A useful question for this season

What is this season asking me to learn, release, protect, accept, repair, or build - and what support would make that more possible?