



The Family Life Cycle

Families go through a series of stages called the Family Life Cycle. Of course, families differ in how they experience this pattern. Families spend different amounts of time in the same stage. Some may return to a stage after they have left it.

The Beginning Stage

- A Couple works to establish a home and a marriage relationship.
 - What do you think some challenges of this stage are?
 - What rewards do you think would be associated with this stage?

Expanding Stage

- The couple prepares for and adjusts to parenthood. A couple is in this stage for as long as they are adding (or expanding) to their family.
 - What do you think some challenges of this stage are?
 - What rewards do you think would be associated with this stage?

Developing Stage

- As children grow, parent work to meet children's changing needs and help thme develop independence.
 - What do you think some challenges of this stage are?
 - What rewards do you think would be associated with this stage?

Launching Stage

- Children gradually leave home to support themselves. Parents help their children adapt to life on their own.
 - What do you think some challenges of this stage are?
 - What rewards do you think would be associated with this stage?

Middle Age

- The couple renews their relationship and prepares for retirement. If they had children who left home, this is called the “empty nest” stage.
 - What do you think some challenges of this stage are?
 - What rewards do you think would be associated with this stage?

Retirement Stage

- The couple retires and adjusts to their new lives.
 - What do you think some challenges of this stage are?
 - What rewards do you think would be associated with this stage?

Think about it...

- Which situations can change the pattern of the family life cycle?
- What are the implications for society of the fact more and more people are spending more time in the retirement stage? How might this cause problems? How might this help people?
- What do you think the impact will be on the family life cycle as many couples' choose to delay parenthood until middle age?
- Do all families pass through all of these stages? Why or why not?