

Practice Across the Lifespan Task

One of the core competency areas for trainee psychologists and registrars is the ability to practice across the lifespan.

In the organisational context, this requires competence in considering the needs of individuals and groups across different generations. This may include issues such as childcare, designing family-friendly workplaces, carer leave, the interaction styles of different generations, and the needs of individuals across different ages within the organisational context in which the psychologist works.ⁱ

This exercise is designed to encourage supervisees to reflect on factors associated with practicing across the lifespan in the organisational context, and how they might address such factors. This task could be worked through as a discussion exercise during supervision or completed in the supervisee's own time and summarized in a brief report.ⁱⁱ

The supervisee is asked to consider the following scenario:

You are an organisational psychologist who has been hired by Company A. The organisation has recently undergone a merger involving two smaller companies. Company A now has a much larger and more varied staff group, with employees at different stages of their careers (including new graduates and early career staff, mid-career professionals, and several in the later stages of their working life). You have come on board to assist Company A with integrating and supporting their employees following the merger and to find out what interventions might be needed to support both the organisation and its staff.

Reflective Questions:

1. What considerations might be relevant generally when practicing across the lifespan?
2. What developmental stages or changes occur across the lifespan and how do they impact an individual's working life?
3. In the above scenario, how might you (the psychologist) prepare to work with this organisation and its employees?
4. Are there any legal/ethical/professional matters associated with this lifespan issue? (if not, when might these considerations be relevant?)
5. Are there any lifespan issues that are specific to a particular gender or client group?
6. How do different lifespan stages influence assessment and intervention strategies? (such as in the above scenario?)
7. Can you identify any specific skills, training, or knowledge that you would need to work effectively with Company A?

Alternative scenarios:

Other presenting issues relevant to practicing across the lifespan in the organisational context include:

- Flexible work design (work from home, work-life balance initiatives)
- Generational differences in work styles
- Return to/fitness for work (following maternity leave, injury, illness)
- Career transitions (career change, retirement, redeployment)



Further reading:

A useful article by the American Psychological Association discusses career decisions and transitions across the lifespan and provides some strategies for assisting clients in this regard:

American Psychological Society. (2017). *Professional practice guidelines for integrating the role of work and career into psychological practice*, Guideline 3. <https://www.apa.org/practice/guidelines/role-work-career>

See also:

Nagy, N., Froidevaux, A., & Hirschi, A. (2019). Lifespan perspectives on careers and career development. In B.B. Baltes, C.W. Rudolph, & H. Zacher (Eds.), *Work across the lifespan* (pp. 235-259). Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-812756-8.00010-4>



ⁱ Ahpra. (2021). *Competencies required for organisational psychology endorsement*. <https://www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Standards-and-Guidelines/Codes-Guidelines-Policies/Guidelines-area-of-practice-endorsements.aspx>

ⁱⁱ Resource adapted from The Provisional Psychologist Network (2021). *Lifespan Task Guidelines and Tips*. <https://www.provisionalpsychologistnetwork.com/free-resources>