

Introducing the 7-Year Cycles of Life

Understanding more about the concept, walking through each cycle and exploring possible next steps



What are the seven-year cycles?

As an integral part of the Theory of Human Development, the 7-year cycles of life were developed by Rudolph Steiner in the early 20th century. Best known for anthroposophy, in other words the cultivation of conscious awareness, Steiner viewed humans as spiritual beings, conscious of spiritual, self-development. As a philosopher and 'great seer' (Monte, 2016), Steiner developed insights that permeated many aspects of society, including education, agriculture, medicine, and spiritual growth.

Drawing upon such spiritual and psychological insight, Steiner proposes ten, 7-year cycles which guides our life path. Each cycle helps to outline the blueprint for growth, and lay the foundation for the next cycle.

What this gives us is clarity over the growth that may unfold, lessons to be mastered and the possible available benefits.

Such development is important to us, as it helps us to embrace the significant mind, body and spiritual changes and embrace what it means to be conscious, spiritual beings.



Walking through each cycle

Introducing a thumb-nail sketch of each of the cycles:

Age 0-7: From oneness with mother to growing autonomy

From utter dependence, here there is a growing move away from our mothers, to a greater sense of our own individuality, autonomy and power. Steiner refers to 'growing down', where our spirit little by little is incarnated into our physical body. We gradually realise that we are a separate being, with our own needs and wants.

Age 7-14: A fight for, and commitment to, life

Here the emerging power of our life force and commitment to life is tested. Experiencing childhood illnesses, our ability to fight is confronted and challenged. Our immune system must rise to the challenge or be defeated. Consequently, our survival is on the line. Once such diseases are defeated, Steiner highlights that we have a rebirth physically, where we move into puberty.

Age 14-21: Wild emotions, raging hormones

Steiner suggests that our emotions are housed within a part of our spirit within the astral



body. Driven by emotional and instinctual needs, we can act irrationally, and beyond our control. At this stage, our rational mind is yet to be fully integrated and our 'animal nature' rules. Such unpredictability can test and damage relationships.

Age 21-28: Play that turns towards responsibility

Gradually we begin to control our emotions and integrate with our rational thought. Our physical power is culminating, and we are drawn to take risks and may feel a sense of invincibility. Towards the latter 20s, we begin to feel a growth in responsibility which may be mirrored in life events, such as marrying and having a family. Also, we begin to gain sight of our unique talents as well as recognising others beyond ourselves.

Age 28-35: The body in full bloom

Our skeleton reaches its optimal bone mass and density, and our physical body matures. We can experience the full thrust of our ambitions, and our talents come bursting forth. Our appetite for learning grows, and we begin to channel our growing talents, helping us to realise our personal vision and desires. It is at this stage that our competitive

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nature cumulates, and we can view others in dualistic manner as friend or foe.

Age 35-42: Crisis and questioning

Often here a crisis hits, whether it be related to relationships, work, finance or health. We may experience disappointment and a dinting of our confidence. The question that may emerge, is do we stay small, or do we begin again and reconnect with an even greater life vision. Steiner emphasises that this is a time when our soul may come to the fore, and lead us in our life. In exploring what is our source of happiness, we may begin a new spiritual relationship connecting into the source or energetic flow.

Age 42-49: Soul-searching and wonder

We have laid the foundation for our lives, and established competence in a chosen field. Edging towards a transition with family responsibilities, our soul starts to wonder about life. We may feel drawn to contribute more broadly to society. Creativity and imagination blossoms, and our growing self-reflection helps us to draw upon our intuition as our life compass.

Age 49-56: An ever-growing vision and understanding of life

Our 50s can be an inspiration of mastery and growing power. We may be blessed with a wealth of experience and wisdom. As we integrate our gifts and insights from previous cycles, we can become the person that we have always been inspired to be. We may be a guide in our community. If we have neglected our spiritual development, we may feel concerned over our own ageing and mortality.

Age 56-63: The crossroads: Mastery or re-evaluation

Steiner proposes that 56 is a major turning point. New intuitive, spiritual powers emerge into consciousness, especially if we have been guided by our heart and soul. Intuition is now the single most important guide, being the basis of connection to the source or energetic flow. We feel called to a mission, drawing upon our talents and wisdom. Steiner maintains that if we have neglected our spiritual life, we may be forced to reassess. This call for greater self-reflection may lead to a more heart-centred and spiritual basis to life.

Age 63-70: A time of harvesting and spreading the wealth

With sources of energy and vitality, we feel blessed and drawn to giving back to society. In traditional societies, this role can be called an elder. Here we may contribute our wisdom, vision and intuition.

Age 70 and beyond: Reflection

Being less bound by responsibility to others, we can assess and make sense of our life. Reflecting on our past, we can experience the richness of the present and imagine our onward journey.

Where do I go from here?

As Steiner says, the best years are always ahead of us, if we follow the heart and develop our soul connection.

So, as we pause, although these thoughts were developed 100 years ago: Does what Steiner share resonate for you? Are you drawn to want to learn more about your own

psychological and spiritual development?

Here are some thoughts to support our own journey:

Personal reflecting – take time to map out our lifeline, and mapping the ups and downs. Pause and consider what we are now drawn to in our future

Sense-making – having done this, draw upon these summaries and map across each of the cycles. How do they ring true? What questions emerge now?

Further researching – if your heart is lifting and you are drawn to explore further, then additional books are available

Top tip



Whilst Steiner shared insights on the 7-year cycles of life in institutional lectures across Europe, he didn't publish a book.

However, a range of books have been subsequently written and are available to review and purchase:

www.rudolfsteinerbookstore.com



About the writer

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Cathy Brown is a Chartered Psychologist, consultant and writer. She runs Evolve Consulting Services Limited which works with individuals, teams and organisations to manage transition and change. She is a registered psychologist with HCPC and British Psychological Society.

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