

- Module Title: **Psychology in Health and Social Care**
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# Supporting Amira: An Application of Erikson's Psychosocial Theory

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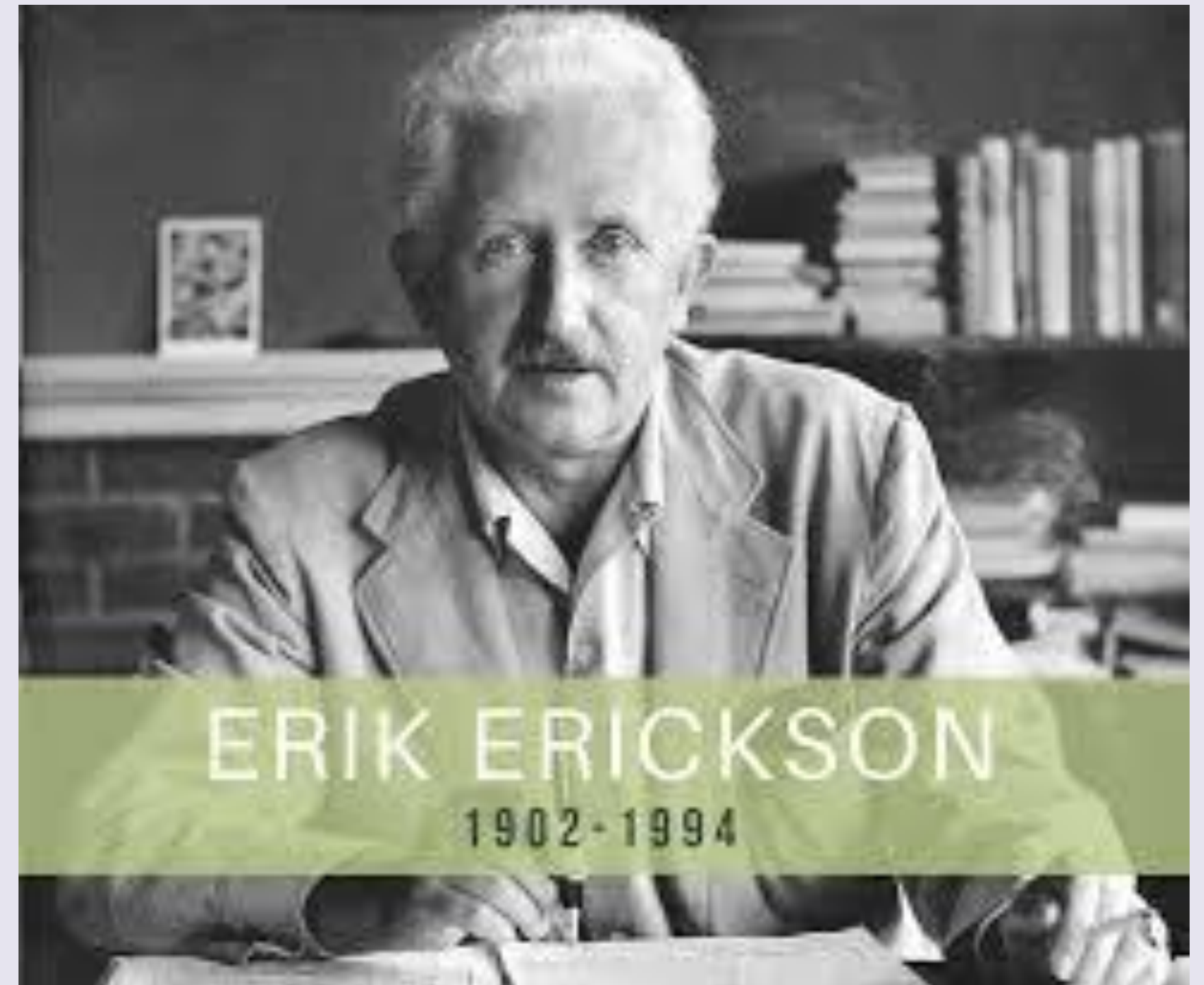
Module Title: Psychology in Health and Social Care

**Declaration:** I declare that I have not used AI tools in the creation of this assessment.



# Psychosocial Development

“The most important period of life is not the age of university studies, but the first one, the period from birth to the age of 6”



# Introduction

## Who is Amira?

- A 4-year-old girl attending Sunshine Nursery.
- Presents with separation anxiety, lack of initiative in play, fear of being wrong, and frustration with challenges.



## The Chosen Theory:

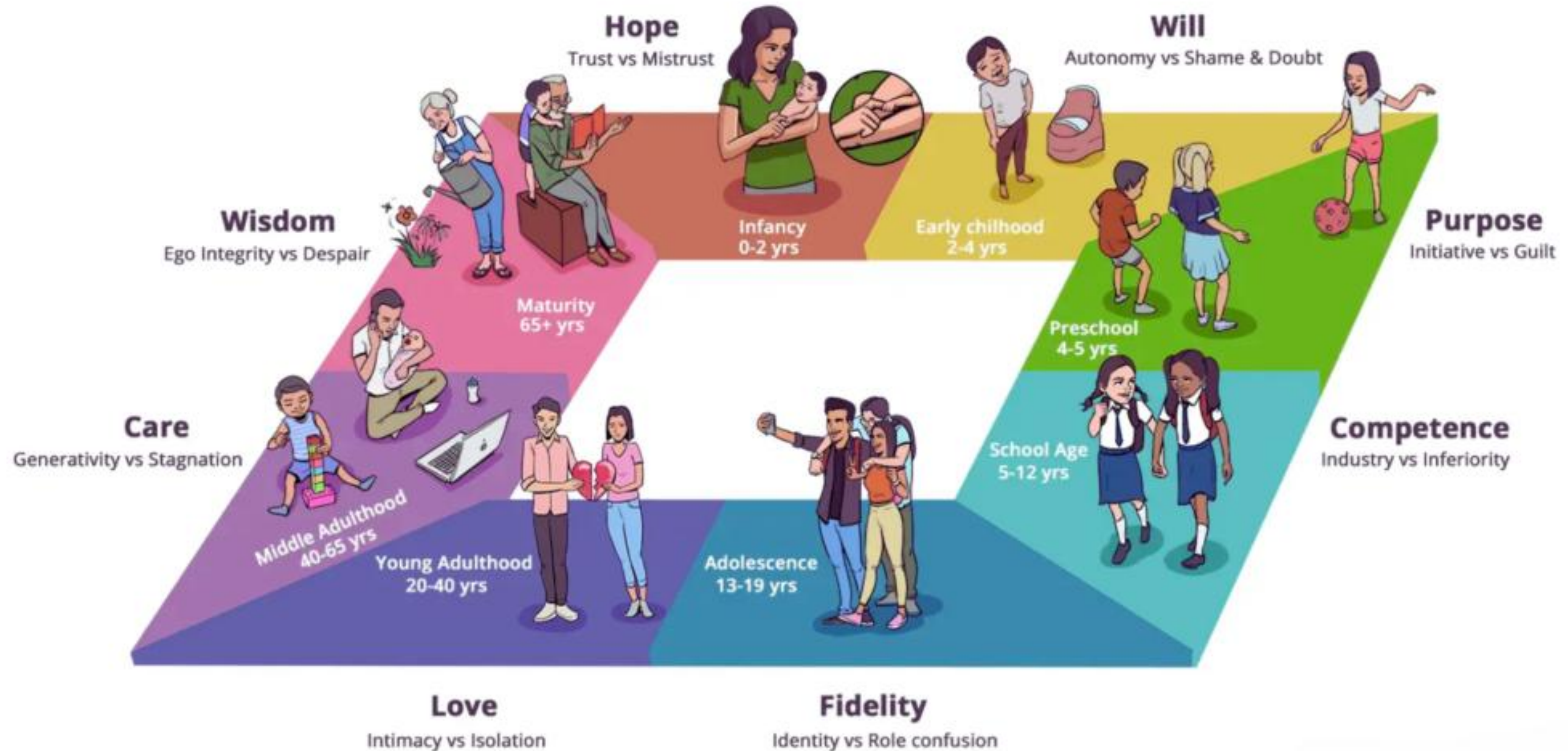
Erik Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development (Orenstein and Lewis, 2022).

## Aims of This Presentation:

- To outline the key principles of Erikson's theory.
- To analyse Amira's difficulties through the lens of the "Initiative vs. Guilt" crisis and its precursors.
- To propose practical, theory-based strategies for her nursery setting.
- To critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of Erikson's theory in this practical context.

# Outline of Erikson's Psychosocial Theory

## ERIKSON'S STAGES OF PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



(Dunkel and Harbke, 2016, Malone et al., 2016, Orenstein and Lewis, 2022))

# Linking Theory to Amira's Situation

Amira's Primary Stage: Initiative vs. Guilt (3-6 years)



To develop a sense of purpose by planning and initiating activities (Spadafora et al., 2024).

**Amira's Struggle:** She is leaning towards guilt – a fear of overstepping or doing things wrong, which inhibits her natural desire to explore and lead.

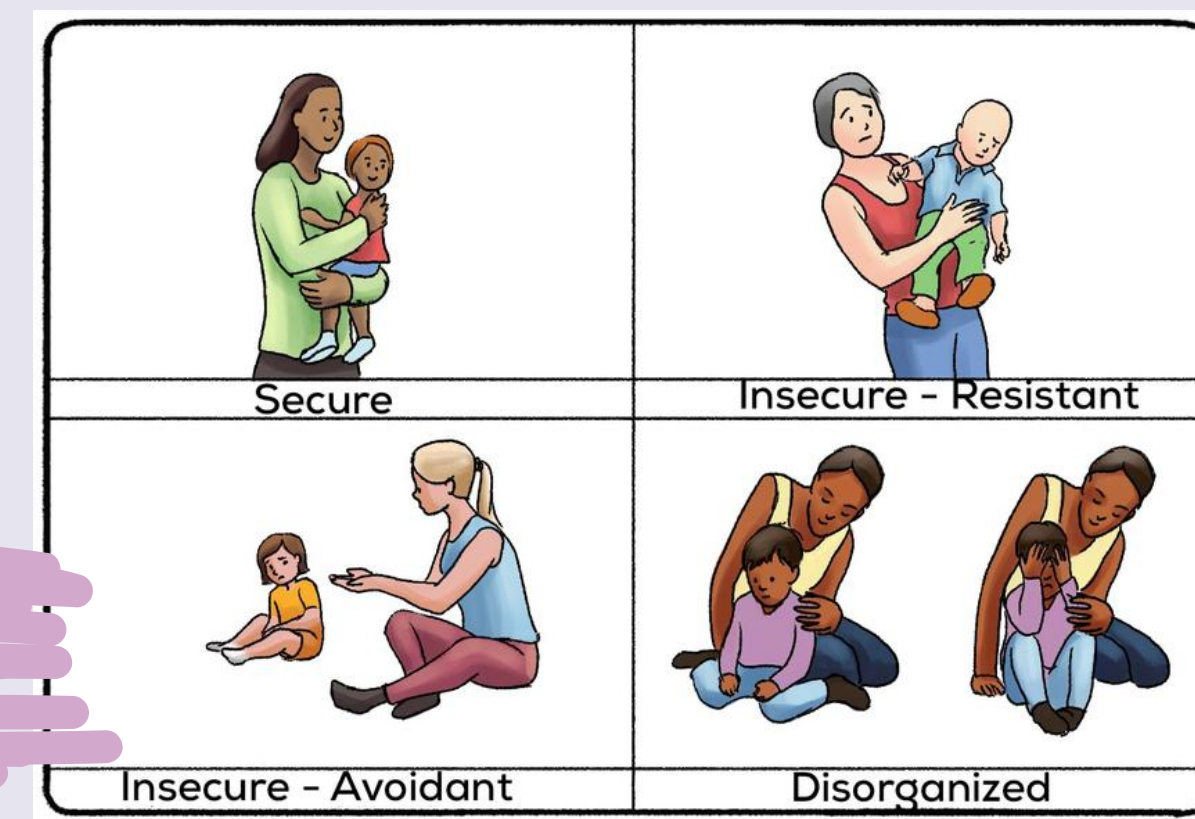
# Linking Theory to Amira's Situation



- Hovers, doesn't join play
- Asks "Is this right?"  
(Orenstein and Lewis, 2022)

## Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt

Revisiting Erikson's Second Stage



- Difficulty with separation  
(Orenstein and Lewis, 2022)

- Gives up easily on tasks
- Reluctance to make choices

(Orenstein and Lewis, 2022)

# Proposed Strategies & Interventions

## To Reinforce Trust vs. Mistrust (Building Security)

### Strategy: Consistent & Predictable Care

- Assign a primary key person.
- Implement predictable routines & visual timetables.
- Use consistent calming rituals at drop-off.

## To Foster Autonomy vs. Shame & Doubt (Building Confidence)

### Strategy: Empower with Manageable Choices

- Offer limited, simple choices (e.g., "red or blue?").
- Praise effort and process, not just the final result.
- Encourage & allow time for self-help skills (e.g., putting on coat).

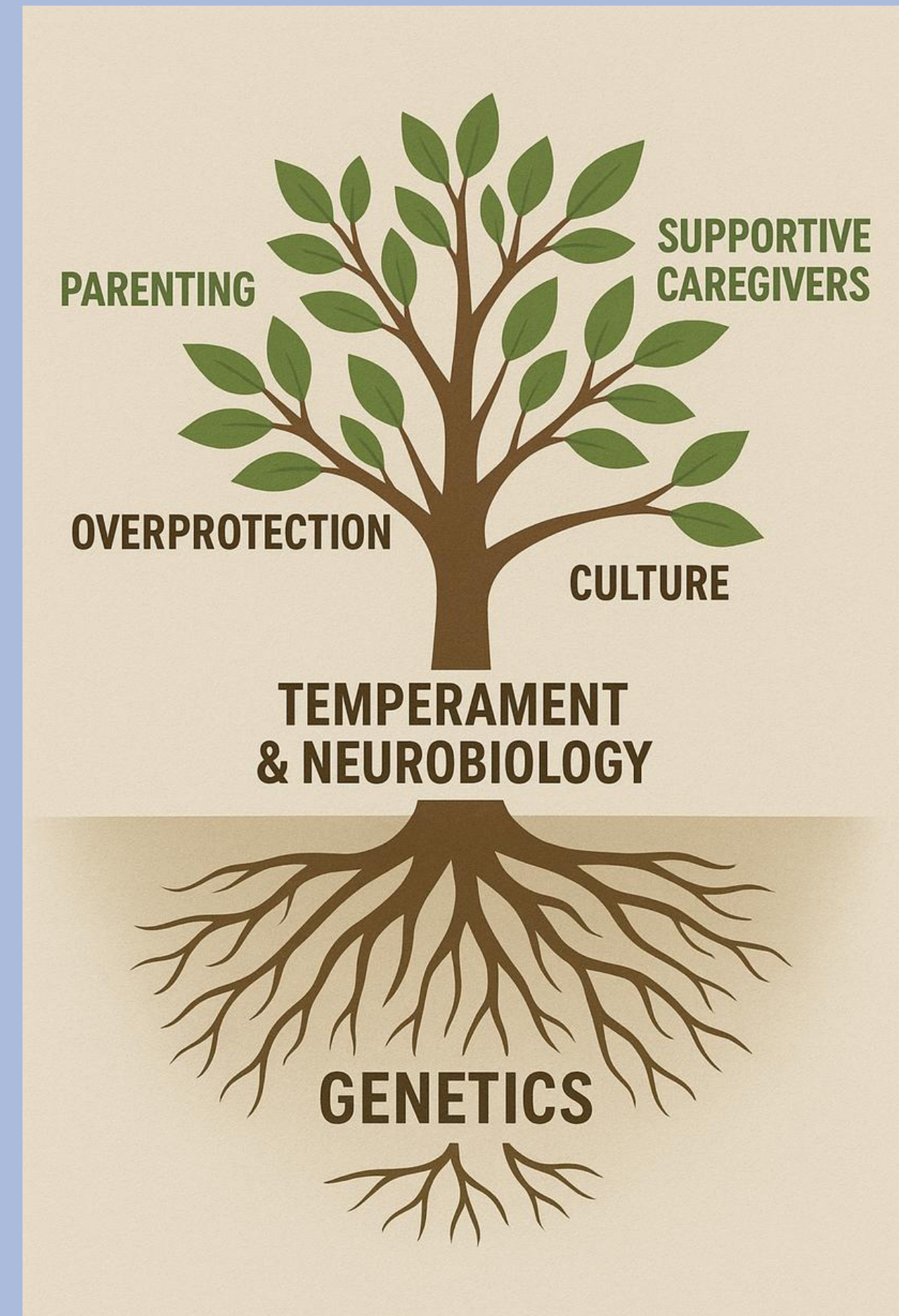
## To Encourage Initiative vs. Guilt (Building Purpose)

### Strategy: Validate Ideas & Encourage Leadership

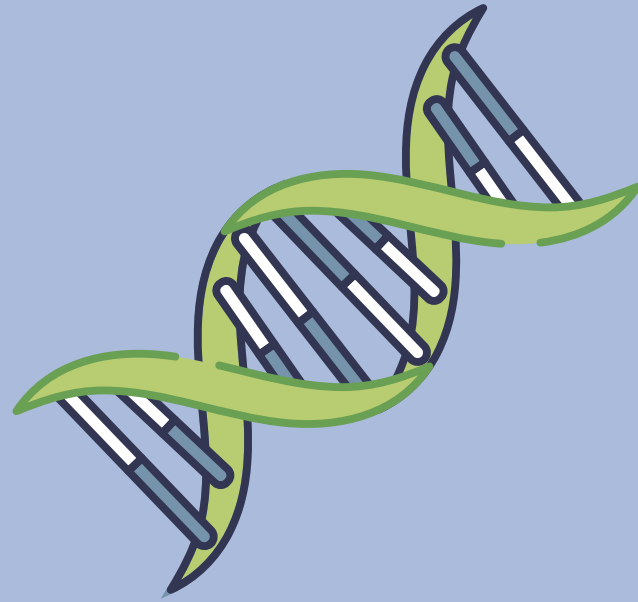
- Use open-ended questions to spark ideas (e.g., "What should we build?").
- Provide leadership roles and responsibilities.
- Create "safe-to-fail" activities with no single right answer (e.g., open-ended art).

# Biological and Environmental Factors

- Roots & Trunk (Biological Factors): Label the roots "Genetics" and the trunk "Temperament & Neurobiology." This is the foundation that is inherent to Amira.
- Branches, Leaves, and Environment (Environmental Factors): Label the branches "Parenting," "Nursery," "Culture." These are the external forces that shape how the tree grows. You could even show one branch being stunted (e.g., "Overprotection") and another flourishing (e.g., "Supportive Caregivers").



# Biological Factors



- **Temperament:** Innately inhibited or "slow-to-warm-up" disposition (Gartstein, Putnam and Rothbart, 2012).
- **Genetics:** Potential familial predisposition to anxiety disorders (Pereira et al., 2024).
- **Neurodevelopment:** Typical maturation of the prefrontal cortex is crucial for emotional regulation (Smith and Pollak, 2020).

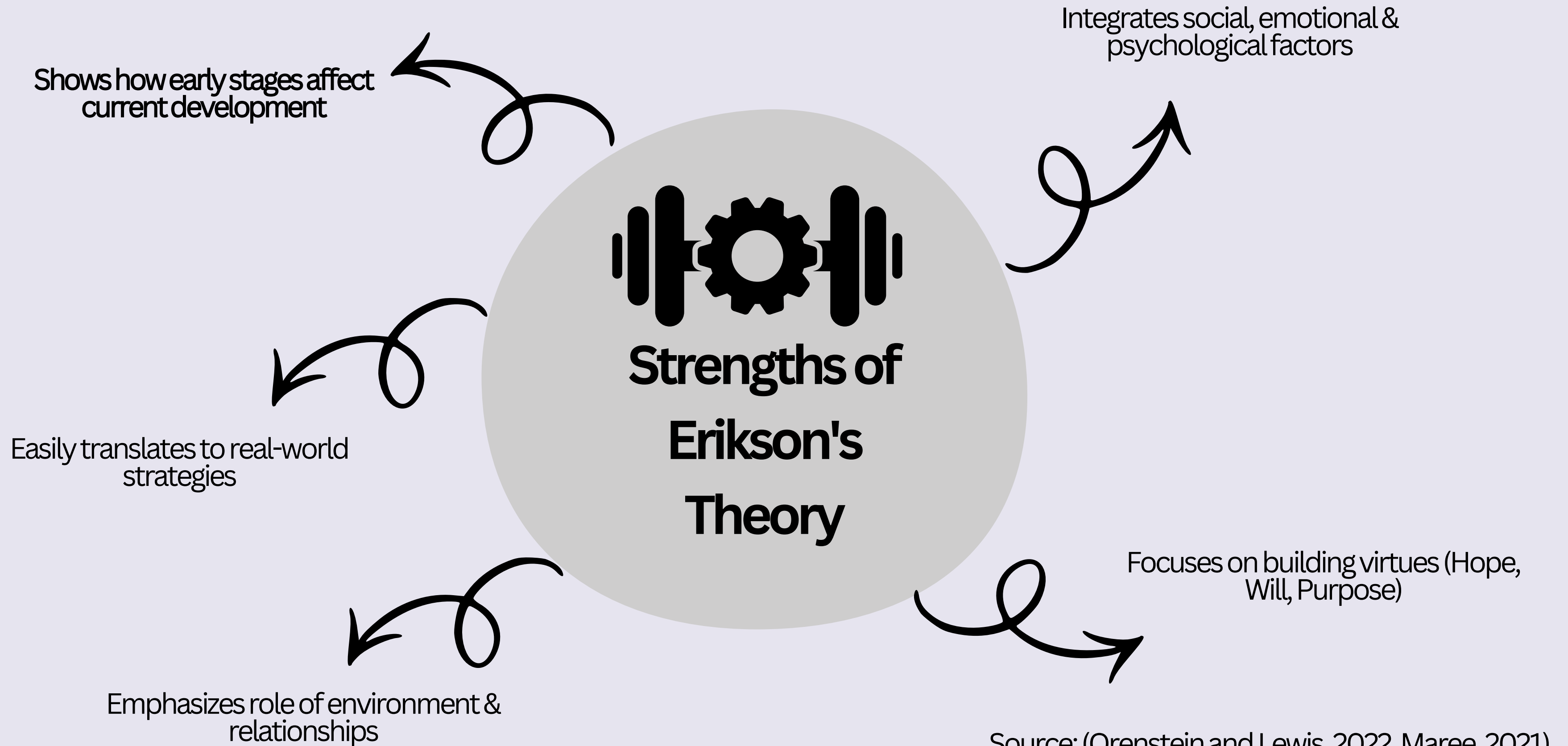
# Environmental Factors



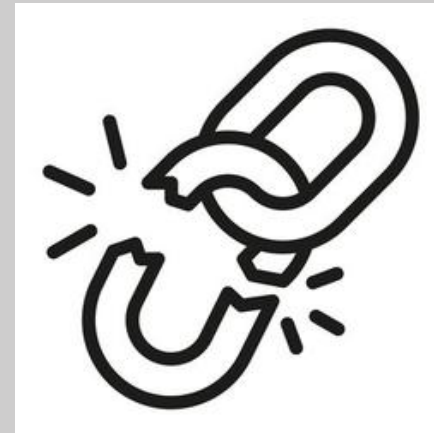
- **Parenting Style:** Overprotective or directive parenting can limit autonomy development (Yan et al., 2020).
- **Nursery Setting:** An over-stressful set up where there is more focus on being right than taking initiative can create feelings of guilt and lack of initiative.
- **Family Background:** Trust can be destroyed by stressful/hurried routines; significant life transitions (e.g., new sibling) enhance insecurity (Yan et al., 2020).
- **Cultural Norms:** One of the cultural values that discourage initiative-taking behavior may be cultural values that focus on being obedient (National Library of Medicine, 2001).



# Strengths of Erikson's Theory



# Weaknesses of Erikson's Theory



## Weaknesses of Erikson's Theory

Abstract ideas, hard to measure or test

Assumes fixed stages, not fluid development

Overemphasizes individualism & autonomy

Assumes typical development paths

Based mainly on male development

Source: (Orenstein and Lewis, 2022, Maree, 2021)

# Conclusion

- Theory Applied: The Psychosocial Development Theory by Erik Erikson (with the focus on the first three stages).
- The greatest challenge that Amira faces is the struggle with the Initiative vs. Guilt dilemma which is influenced by the history in Trust and Autonomy.
- The recommended intervention is a multi-layered intervention that will assist her nursery space to achieve more secure, confident, and meaningful.
- Critical Analysis: The theory is a very useful and comprehensive framework but practitioners must realize that it is not rigid and biased towards a particular culture.

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