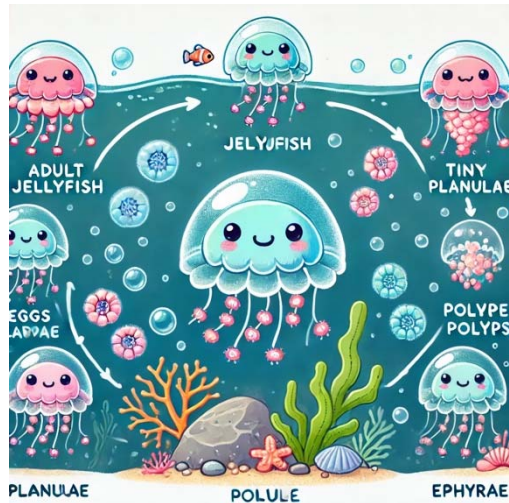


Name _____



The Life Cycle of a Jellyfish

The life cycle of a jellyfish is unique and fascinating. Jellyfish go through several stages as they grow from birth to adulthood. The cycle begins when an adult jellyfish, called a medusa, releases eggs and sperm into the water. When fertilization occurs, tiny larvae called planulae are formed. These planulae float in the water before settling onto a hard surface, like a rock or the ocean floor.

Once attached, the planula develops into a polyp. The polyp looks like a tiny plant and remains fixed in place. It can stay in this stage for weeks or even months. During this time, it starts to grow and prepare for the next stage.

The next phase begins when the polyp forms small buds called ephyrae. These ephyrae eventually break away from the polyp and become free-swimming young jellyfish. At this stage, they are very small and continue to grow as they drift with ocean currents.

As the ephyrae mature, they transform into adult jellyfish, or medusae. The cycle then begins again when these adult jellyfish release eggs and sperm into the water.

Jellyfish can live for a few weeks to several months depending on the species. Some jellyfish, like the immortal jellyfish, can revert to their polyp stage, essentially restarting their life cycle. This ability makes them one of the most unusual creatures in the animal kingdom.