

CHILD AND ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT: CHALLENGES OF ADOLESCENCE

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I. Introduction

Adolescence has been known as the period of major change in a person's life. Known to be a stage where rapid changes occur in biological, psychological and social development of an adolescent, it is a period which he is transitioning from childhood to adulthood. Subsequently, Geldard (2006) explained that adolescence is a time in a young person's life where they move from being dependent from their parents to independence, autonomy and maturity. Hence, the young individual starts to move from being in a family group, the basic unit of society, becoming a part of a peer group that would guarantee him greater attraction to the people around him.

An essential part of a person's life is being connoted in adolescence. However, here comes the principle of individual differences, where each person is different. Each adolescent individually experiences changes and growth among themselves at different pace. Some move to adolescent phase quicker and more smoothly than their fellows. Some have parents who supported them all throughout each and every undertaking they have, while some experience this period of their life alone. Some adolescents prefer to be at home with their families, while some want freedom from the constant guidance of their parents. It is, thus a challenge for adolescents especially when they feel being alone in a crowd, and no one is there for them.

Each person is capable for growth. It is inevitable in an in human life. Whereas, adolescence is the age of change. An adolescent may experience changes in himself physically, emotionally, socially or in any aspect that would certainly challenge

him, and becomes vulnerable to some habits that, when left unnoticed, would become a problem in his adult life. It is not an easy life at period of their lives. Behavioural problems may sprout, but teachers, the people around them, and especially parents should help their children in overcoming those various challenges they are about to face. Thus, the only way to deal with this is know the adolescents more through constant conversations and random talks, and inculcate values necessary in facing this challenging time of their lives.

II. Presentation and Discussion

Adolescence, as it is said, brings forth a lot of challenges to a person. In this course of his life, he needs to be aware of the following challenges and how to cope up with them.

Biological Challenges

Adolescence begins with a well-defined maturation event in a person's life called puberty. It has been known as the transitional period between childhood and adulthood, which growth spurt happens, secondary sex characteristics appear, fertility is achieved and evident psychological changes take place.

Puberty happens to everyone, however the rate of changes vary from one person to another. The normal range of puberty is ages 8 to 14 in females and ages 9 to 15 in males, with girls typically experiencing physiological growth characteristic of the onset of puberty two years prior to boys. Pubertal maturation is largely controlled by complex interactions among the brain, the pituitary gland, and the gonads, which in turn interact with environment wherever the person is. Moreover, some studies suggest that brain growth continues into adolescence, including the proliferation of the support cells, which nourish the neurons, and myelination, which allows faster neural processing. Hence, these changes in the brain are connoted to stimulate cognitive growth and development, including the capacity for abstract reasoning and critical thinking.

Some research also revealed that adolescence is a time for carrying out crucial developmental tasks: becoming physically and sexually mature; learning skills needed to carry out adult roles entrusted to them; gaining increased autonomy from

parents; and realigning social ties with members of both the same and the opposite gender. These studies commonly underscore the highly valued importance of this part of the life course in establishing social skills beneficial in interacting with other people. For many, such skills are further developed through peer-oriented interactions wherever the person is, that are distinct from both earlier child-adult patterns and later adult pairings.

Sexual hormones are also released during puberty that affect a person's emotion. Mood changes, commonly termed as well as "mood-swings" are evident, which can leave impacts on relationships at home with parents and siblings, community or at school which could affect how he deals with others socially.

Many adolescents are confronted with pressure to use alcohol, cigarettes, or other drugs and to initiate sexual relationships at earlier ages. This could be attributed to the peers an individual has, putting himself at high risk for intentional and unintentional injuries, unintended pregnancies for females, and infection from sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Countless individuals also experience a wide range of painful and debilitating mental health problems.

Cognitive Development

Piaget's theory on social development commonly believes that adolescence is a time in a young people develop cognitively from concrete operational stage to formal operations. In this stage, adolescents are able to deal with various ideals, concepts and abstract theories that could provoke his way of thinking. However, it takes an ample time to develop confidence with these "need to be acquired skills". Thus, learning through success and failure has always been a part in the challenging life during adolescence.

Adolescents in this stage are also known as egocentric. They tend to become self-conscious, thinking that they are always subject in the eyes of others and behaves appropriately in the midst of other people. Moreover, adolescents also tend to live and imagine themselves living in a private world, thinking that they are invincible and

hurt-free to the challenges around them. This could be attributed to their age. It is a part of a complex process where they know themselves better during the turbulent times of their lives.

Adolescents on this stage need to be understood by the people around them. They should have someone who believes in them, understanding and knowing how they feel and think to situations around them. Here comes the crucial role of teachers, peers and especially their parents.

Psychological Challenges

Since adolescence is the period from childhood to adulthood, adolescents must be able to cope up in this stage of their life. A new version of themselves starts to appear. Rules will change, more responsibilities or tasks may be assigned unto himself, and a standard has been set, where his behavior needs to be maintained wherever he is. The sense of accountability is expected to be carried out by him in the sight of his parents, siblings, teachers and those people around him.

During adolescence, the process of individualization takes place. It involves the relative independence from his family relationships. There is a weakening ties to objects and people who happened to be important to that person previously. There is also an increasing societal expectation on him, capacitating him to assume the role of an adult in meeting the challenging demands of the society.

Lack of attention to the mental well-being of adolescents, in a key phase of socialization, may lead to mental health consequences that may remain throughout life. Specifically, it can be claimed that proper psychosocial development of an adolescent is attributed with sound academic performance, physical health and adequate and healthy social, emotional, and psychological well-being. This ultimately contributes in reducing the risk of psychosocial and behavioral problems, violence, crime, teenage pregnancy, and misuse of drugs and alcohol. Detection of psychosocial dysfunction in the early adolescence can be fruitful for the quality of life of the individual.

Adolescents are on journey in this stage of their life. The road towards self-discovery is also inevitable in this stage. They continue to adjust to the new

experience they had, as well to the various challenges happening to them biologically, cognitively or psychologically.

III. Suggestions

Facing the challenges brought forth by adolescence has never been easy. This can be stressful and anxiety-provoking on the part of an individual. In order to experience a crisis-free adolescence, there are some practical suggestions as to how to overcome this turbulent period for most people.

Know your values

The values are always what a person believes in, whether what he thinks and feels is right or wrong, and what he considers and believes that is most important to him. Decision-making has always been affected by the values he has. A person acquires it from a couple of sources, such as his parents, friends, and from the people around him and even his religion. An adolescent must establish his own set of values in making challenging decisions in life.

Draw up a plan for your life

Many successful people set targets for themselves and are often goal-oriented. An adolescent must have a plan of what he wants and how to go about achieving it. As it said, never wait till you get to the bridge before looking for ways to cross it – he, therefor needs to decide ahead what he wants to be by the time he reaches his 20s, 30s, and even 50s.

Have a role model

A role model is someone that an adolescent admires and respects; someone he looks up to and wants to be like. Thus, it is a must for adolescents to choose a role model and deal with problems the way their role model do if he/she were faced with a problem same as yours. However, it is not ideal to choose a certain TV star as role model, because real-life is not always what we see and depicted in movies.

Make decisions

Decisions pertaining to one's career, sex, drugs and alcohol are usually some of the toughest decisions a person will have to deal as an adolescent. Before he makes decisions, he needs to have adequate facts about each choice and think properly about them. Weighing the pros and cons; and discussing available options with his parents, a trusted friend or adult are examples in this type of suggestion.

IV. Recommendations

There are a lot of things to do for adolescents in this era of their lives. It is highly recommended for them at this stage to be assertive, in a way that they can express whatever they want to say without hurting others' feelings. Attributes that connote assertiveness include honesty, speaking for themselves, and communicating their feelings. Adolescents must avoid aggressiveness, which shows lack of concern for other people's feelings.

Learning a skill is also recommended for adolescents at this stage. There is a special feeling when one has a skill. These skills, in return, will fetch some money and give some measure of independence to someone. However, an adolescent must be ready to meet and cope up with countless disappointments. He must be equipped to work as hard and as long as the situation demands.

It is also a must for adolescents to believe in themselves. Many people are successful today because they keep on believing themselves despite the numerous challenges in his adolescence. This is a stage where goal-settings are met, and believing in themselves will always spell a difference. It is also by constant believing that one has to rise from a difficult situation he has, and achieves success despite this. Hence, growing up into adulthood is all about making decisions, whether good or bad. These are all part of our human existence. Whatever challenges the adolescents are about to face, they will certainly take each and every challenge and turn it into success.

Challenges, as it is said, is inevitable. Its existence could either build or destroy someone. The life of an adolescent is really challenging one. However with all the suggestions and recommendations given, he will gradually be able to cope up with all of it and meet the challenging demands expected from him by the society.

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