

Human development



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INTRODUCTION This assignment is going to outline the key aspects of adolescent's development and what problems adolescents have to deal with as they grow and what risk factors are involved. It will also look at key issues faced during the three stages of adulthood and will define stress and grief. A situation will be explained that I observed as an officer and there will be an explanation on how police can work more effectively within a community.

PART ONE KEY ASPECTS OF ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT As children grow into adolescents they go through many changes in their development. These include physical, personal, cognitive and social changes. All of these changes go into making the adolescent and forming the young adult they eventually become.

Children start to go through physical changes. Breasts start to form and grow on young girls with the assistance of a hormone called Estradiol, and Testosterone assists the young male genitalia start to develop and grow more. These hormones are spread throughout the body by being released from the endocrine glands, into the bloodstream. As these changes take place, so do others.

Growth spurts, pubic hair forms and of course, for some maybe earlier than others, a girl's first menstrual period and a boy's first ejaculation (which may not be noticed). According to Santrock (1999), these hormonal and body changes occur, on the average, about 2 years earlier in females (10 years of age) than in males (12 years of age), (p. 338). While these physical changes take place, so do personal changes. The adolescent starts to wonder who they are, what they are and where they are going. With these personal changes comes decision making. As written by Santrock

(1999), the decisions begin to form a core of what the individual is all about as a person ??“ what is called identity, (p. 372).

If the right decisions are made for that individual, then they will feel successful in themselves and will go on to the next stages of development with confidence in their own identity. Another key aspect in adolescent development is cognitive development. An adolescents thought??™s, according to Santrock (1999), becomes more abstract, logical and idealistic, (p 339). No longer are their thoughts set firm, they are now able to examine their own thoughts, others thoughts of themselves and where they want to be in the world. Some may become religious and others may think more philosophically.

Cognitive development can be viewed as an adolescent??™s changing view of themselves. Social development is said, according to Bird & Drewery (2000), was considered by David Elkind (1976) to have a negative side: he postulated a new kind of egocentrism in adolescence, (p 156). His view states that adolescents are selfish and troublesome.

Everything the adolescent does they imagine as being watched by others. They look upon themselves as being in the spotlight, and find it very hard to see another??™s point on view. The view that nothing can hurt them, lingers and therefore they take risk, such as; no contraception during sex and drug/alcohol experimentation. Unfortunately, social development in adolescence brings with it many problems that they have to face and deal with, making growing up more of a challenge for them.

PART TWO PROBLEMS OF ADOLESCENCE CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR Youth criminal offending and behaviour is of major concern in New Zealand. As the years go on there is an unwanted increase of, more violent and serious crimes committed. According to Claridge (2003), in 1992, there were 59 serious assaults by youth offenders; last year there were 125. Similar trends follow for homicides, aggravated robbery and violent sexual assaults. Total violent crimes committed by teens increased from 239 in 1992 to 359 in 2002. Often youth offenders come from families that have many problems and are unable to cope. Some factors contributing are, substance/alcohol/drug abuse, mixing with antisocial peers, their environment, poor supervision, abuse and neglect and their own needs/wants that may lead to crime.

Fortunately many of these can be changed with intervention and help but there are other factors that cannot be changed, such as, their age, gender, prior offences/convictions and when they first committed an offence. This is why early intervention and assistance is needed before the youth goes on to commit offences as an adult. **SUICIDE** Suicide amongst adolescent in New Zealand has become a major problem for our country. New Zealand is said to have one of the highest rates amongst industrialised (OECD) countries.

Abuse, low income, alcohol/substance abuse, depression, peer pressure and psychiatric problems are contributing factors. Young and old people attempt suicide because they feel they have no other way out, indicating the lack of support they feel. Adolescent's attempts are more likely to end in hospitalisation, whereas, adult attempts are most likely to succeed in death. New Zealand has implemented a Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy.

According to Youth suicide figures (2002) for the year 2000, In the year 2000

the total number of suicides among New Zealanders aged 15-24 years was 96 (18.

1 per 100, 000 young people), down from 120 in 1999 and 140 in 1998. This is the lowest total number and rate since 1986 when there were 91 suicides (15. 6 per 100, 000 young people). This has not solved the problem, but shows a definite reduction in numbers. EATING DISORDERS Adolescents seem to have a very inaccurate view of their own body image and many consider themselves overweight.

This is more common in girls, but can occur in boys. This concern in body image often leads to dieting (sometimes encouraged by parents) and in turn can lead to eating disorders, Anorexia nervosa and Bulimia. This problem can be caused through, family discord, poor self image caused by societies influences, media influences and glossy magazines. Unfortunately, in this western society, people consider beauty as being young and thin. Depression can set in and contribute to eating disorders if young people start to consider themselves??™ unattractive. Self esteem needs to be lifted in the young and society needs to show that thin is not considered the most beautiful by all.

PREGNANCY In today??™s society youths become more sexually involved at younger ages. Puberty is occurring at younger ages and also sexual experimentation, which can lead to pregnancy. Naturally, with development, bodies change and so to do feelings and urges to have sex. Education and openness of sex is the key to reducing unwanted pregnancies.

Knowledge of risks, including pregnancy, STD??™s and contraception needs to be present. Unfortunately though, as Durkin (1995) quotes Zelnik and

Kantner (1979), many subscribe to the adolescent fable that “it won’t happen to me” (p583), and when it does they are surprised. Many do not look into the consequences until they have to, and then it is too late.

DRUG/ALCOHOL ABUSE Drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana are a few of the substances out in society that adolescents have easy access to. Using these substances can be a natural part of growing up in today’s society. Many of these substances lead to the use of more dangerous drugs such as “E” (ecstasy) and “P” or “Ice” (methamphetamine).

Sadly, these newer drugs need only a couple of tries and the person using becomes hooked and has a need for more. Peer pressure, transition into adulthood and family relations can contribute to using drugs and alcohol. According to Durkin (1995), Parents may act as role models, and in cases of serious alcohol dependency may well be less competent and less involved caregivers, (p 577). This can increase the need for using alcohol/drugs as a problem relief, thus not fixing the cause of the problem, nor the problem itself.

PART THREE KEY ISSUE FACED DURING STAGES OF ADULTHOOD Early, middle and late adulthood are the three stages people go through in adult development. Each stage, like childhood and adolescence, carries its own issues and conflicts. New aspirations, directions, new families, coping with stresses and death are all parts of adulthood and growing old.

EARLY ADULTHOOD Marriage is one issue faced in early adulthood, and if marriage is not entered into, a long-term relationship, resembling marriage, generally exists.

With marriage come changes and adjustments. These changes are not always for the best. According to Birch (1997), for some couples this change

is for the worse though for others marital satisfaction is maintained or increased throughout life, (p 225). Along with these changes, adjustments and marriage comes parenthood, another issue faced in early adulthood, for some. Becoming a parent can bring major adjustments and changes to a person's life. To care for, teach and keep secure, someone so little, can bring many new challenges. Some cope with these challenges better than others and this can affect marriages also. Birch (1997) quotes Reibstein and Richards (1992), many studies have indicated that marital satisfaction tends to decrease with the arrival of the first child (p 229).

For others, the relationship will be strengthened. MIDDLE ADULTHOODAs people get older they begin to become more aware of, and sometimes depressed, about their lives and the changes taking place, physically and psychologically. This is the time where aging is more noticed and children leave home. It can also be perceived as the time where self acceptance is more prevalent and life is looked upon with verve. These two different views are dependant on how a person perceives their own life and self. Life stresses will affect the health and psychological well-being of an individual.

The higher the stress levels the greater incidence of health problems, making the transition into late adulthood a little harder. Unemployment is another issue faced in middle adulthood. As Birch (1997) cites Entine (1977), Middle-aged and older adults, once unemployed are likely to remain so for up to 70 per cent longer than younger workers, (p 237). With the loss of a job, financial security will drop, family demands will become harder to reach and saving for old age will be tough.

LATE ADULTHOODLate adulthood is the last stage of a person's lifespan. It is a time in one's life where they have to start to think about issues such as, retirement and death and dying. Retirement can bring feelings of less importance, from being a useful citizen and contributing to the community to suddenly no longer being needed or of any use. The loss of income and financial independence also arises, but it must be remembered that, many look forward to retirement, especially if financial security is not of concern. Death and dying is a definite issue of late adulthood.

Sanrock (1999) states, Kubler-Ross (1969) divided the behaviour and thinking of dying persons into five stages: denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance, (p 556). Any of these stages can be reached in any order, depending on the person. There is not a set pattern to follow. Coming to terms with death can be more difficult for some than others and therefore sensitivity and care is of great need when helping the elderly to prepare. Death is something we all must come to terms with, as eventually, for all, it is inevitable.

PART FOUR**STRESS AND GRIEF AND****SITUATIONS OBSERVED AS A POLICE OFFICER**Stress can be defined as a person's negative psychological and physical reaction to an incident or event that has taken place. It is something that disturbs the normal balance of our psychological and physical health, including our ability to cope with such situations. Grief is described as the process people go through when dealing with and adjusting to any great loss. This can include death of family members, loss of jobs, or failing an exam. Everyone deals and copes differently, with stress and grief. I have found, in my job, even the most minor of incidents can have just as much of

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an effect on people as major incidents can. While working in the prisoner watchhouse one day, a man was brought in.

This man was to travel to Auckland to go to his father's funeral. He was brought to the police station because he was drunk and the bus company would not take him, he was to be detoxed. He was not coping well and had been on a drinking binge for two days straight. When brought into the station, he was punching and kicking doors and walls, which could have ended in arrest. He was really tense and angry, and said he wanted to hurt someone. He needed to calm down, and so we used his father's funeral as a way of keeping him relaxed. We kept reminding him, if he did not calm down, the bus company would not take him and he would not get to the funeral. We almost had to treat him like a child, but this seemed to work.

He appeared to be in a form of denial. He was talking as if he was going to visit his father, when in reality he was going to his funeral. Even though he was drunk, I could see how sad and hurt he was. Through his anger he was crying a lot. He was confused and couldn't understand why the bus would not take him and even though he displayed lots of energy, he had a very weak physical demeanor and was definitely lacking in energy. He was going through many of the normal reactions of stress and grief, denial, displacement, and regression.

These are all defense mechanisms in coping with stress. Emotionally he was sad, hurt and lonely, and physically he was weak and lacked in energy.

Cognitively he was confused and partially in disbelief, and behaviour wise, he was crying and was very restless.

The best thing that happened for him, this day, was the officer who dealt with him. He could have been arrested, but wasn't. PART FIVE HOW AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE ISSUES OUTLINED HELPS POLICE WORK MORE EFFECTIVELY WITH THE COMMUNITY Having the best understanding possible, on how people develop and grow and how people relate to stress and grief, is the best way for police officers to work better within a community. As with the previous situation, the officer dealing with the man whose father died, obviously had a really good understanding of and was able to recognize the signs and symptoms of stress and grief he was showing, and dealt with him appropriately. Sometimes the job is difficult as police officers have to be able to deal with different reactions, and extract information, a lot of the time, from people who are too stressed to think straight. Officers must be careful when dealing with people under stress.

They have to be able to weigh up the emotional well-being of the person involved with the need to come to a conclusion, considering that their well-being must always come first. Understanding the issues and problems, adolescents deal with while growing, helps police to understand why they do the things they do. Adolescents and police can work together better if they understand each other better, the same goes for adults. This understanding will also help in the whole community working together to support and help each other to find solutions and to solve youth and community problems. Understanding human development and stress and grief, can help in taking the right approach, to getting the results required, and keeping everyone communicating and co-operating. There must also be an understanding of

different cultural views. In New Zealand there are many different cultures, each having their own way of dealing with death and post mortems??™.

According to the Royal New Zealand Police College, (2000), Maori custom dictates that the deceased must be accompanied all the time, to be kept spiritually ??? warm??™ until the burial. Therefore, a post mortem and keeping a body for an extended period of time in the hospital mortuary is extremely upsetting (p 53). This shows how extremely careful and quick police must be in notifying the coroner for the quick release of a body.

Officers must also be able to understand themselves, this will enable them to know when they can cope with a client or not. There are times when other agencies will need to be called upon to help, for example, Victim Support or doctors, or maybe even another family member may be of better help. All in all, professionalism and sensitivity are big factors when dealing with stress and grief. Officers may have to deal with intense anger or maybe lots of gratitude, each situation will be different and reactions will not be known, until arrival.

CONCLUSION All people, at some stage of life, will experience some form of stress or grief. Recognition and acknowledgement of symptoms can sometimes be difficult to read as people react and express emotions differently. Police officer must learn to adapt and react to each incident, differently. In all cases, there must be compassion and understanding. The way to do this is to, understand, learn and gain knowledge of human development through the different stages of life and what feelings there may

be, during these stages. An offence or incident must not just be reacted to; it must be looked at and considered. REFERENCES Santrock, J. W.

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