

Childhood vs. adolescence

Psychology, Child Development



Childhood vs. Adolescence Michigan State University 12/04/12 Childhood vs. Adolescence Development stages of a human life can be broken up into three categories: physical, emotional and cognitive. The environment that each person experiences these changes in creates a unique individual. The first stage of life, that covers birth to approximately 12 years of age, is referred to as childhood. Adolescence, the second stage of life, is experienced during the ages of 13 to early 20's. The way each person experiences these two stages of life vary with the environment and the implications societal norms set within these environments. Physical development is physical growth of the body. During childhood, physical growth includes gross motor, which are the big muscles, and fine motor, which help gain control of the body. Physical growth patterns start with gross motor development and then fine motor development occurs. At approximately one year old, a baby can walk by itself. By the age of three, a child has shown sufficient growth by sitting, walking, toilet training, using a spoon, scribbling, and sufficient hand-eye coordination to catch and throw a ball. Around age five a child's fine motor skills are obvious and the child can perform actions like scribbling. From age five to approximately age 12, huge developments are not apparent and the child's skills are simply refined. While many physical developments, like growing taller, are concrete; the amount of vertical growth heavily depends on a child's diet. Socioeconomic status is a big contributor to physical development because if the child's parents do not have the money to provide essential food to the child, the child will not grow as tall as they could be (Eitzen, Zinn & Smith, 2011). Cognitive development is a crucial period in children during the ages of birth

to five years old. During this period, protein and an adequate diet are essential for full brain growth and development. Children in Ethiopia have smaller brains because of malnutrition during this stage of development. Cognitive development is responsible for a child's ability to exchange thoughts and feelings, so not having full brain development affects the child's life chances. Like physical growth, cognitive development slows down during middle and late childhood. The area of the brain growing is for language and communication and more concrete relationships. Children cannot feel empathy; the child's brain only allows them to be selfish. Sharing and helping others is encouraged, but a child cannot physically understand the importance of this until adolescence. Emotional development involves a child's awareness of its own feelings. They learn how to control their reaction to how they feel in a given situation. These developments combined with their environment determine the child's personality. Around age six, a child goes to school for a full day and for the first time spends more time with peers and teachers than its caregivers. Children learn to build relationships that will be the building blocks for healthy adult relationships in adolescence. Adolescent development starts at approximately age 13 and goes into the 20's. The period of adolescence is referred to as "growing up", or in my opinion the period of time where youth conform to societal norms. Adolescents often rebel during this period and eventually learn that it is easier to conform to society's support rather than rebel and be unaccepted. In-groups and out-groups are terms often used to describe this. An in-group is the group individuals strive to be included in, whereas the out-group is the group the individual is currently in. Physical development during adolescence

is also known as puberty. The changes males experience include: production of sperm, facial hair, lower voice, and muscle growth. Females grow wider hips, produce estrogen, menstruate, and grow bigger breasts. The onset of puberty differs across gender and begins earlier in females. Because of the many bodily changes, teens often have body image dissatisfaction because they do not match society's ideal look. Girls often have eating disorders, and boys often use steroids. Puberty is a natural process meant for reproduction. Being skinny, or buff is socially constructed and can interfere with production. Women are not strong or healthy enough to nurture a child and steroid use lowers sperm production. Cognitive development changes refer primarily to prefrontal cortex growth. This part of the brain is responsible for sound decisions and judgment. (Wormer, 2011). However some adolescents physically develops faster than their brain growth, and some may have faster brain growth than their physical development. This can explain the rebel behavior many adolescents go through. " Society has often recognized the immaturity of youth by imposing legal restrictions on younger people. Modern developments in neuroscience can now explain the reason for some of the rash behavior associated with youth. " (Wormer, 2011). Emotionally, adolescent girls face inner conflicts. The patriarchal society makes a lot of their emotional abilities seem unacceptable. " In adolescence girls may discover that the abilities they rely on to repair relationships (articulating feelings, being honest) are socially unacceptable. Adolescence for them is an initiation into silence, culturally scripted and enforced. When they express themselves spontaneously, their remarks are often construed as rudeness or insensitivity to people's feelings. " (Wormer, 2011). For boys, emotional

development is suppressed. Boys are taught to ignore their feelings, or at least not talk about them, and are humiliated if they cry. “ The Macho Paradox by Jackson Katz (2006) considers the epidemic of violence against women as a male issue and the socialization of boys to discount all aspects of the feminine and to associate power and dominance with manhood.

"(Wormer, 2011). Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development is one of the best-known theories of personality in psychology. Erikson's theory describes the impact of social experience across the whole lifespan.

Childhood and adolescence are stages one through five. The first stage, Trust vs. Mistrust, is from birth to 18 months. Children develop a sense of trust when caregivers provide reliability, care and affection. A lack of this will lead to mistrust. The second stage, Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt is from age two to three years old. Children need to develop a sense of personal control over physical skills and a sense of independence. Success leads to feelings of autonomy, failure results in feelings of shame and doubt. The third stage, Initiative vs. Guilt, is from ages three to five. Children need to begin asserting control and power over the environment. Success in this stage leads to a sense of purpose. Children who try to exert too much power experience disapproval, resulting in a sense of guilt. The fourth stage, Industry vs. Inferiority, is the last stage in childhood and is from ages six to eleven. Children need to cope with new social and academic demands. Success leads to a sense of competence, while failure results in feelings of inferiority. The stage of adolescence is called Identity vs. Role Confusion. This is when teens develop a sense of self and personal identity. Success leads to an ability to stay true to yourself, while failure leads to role

confusion and a weak sense of self (Eitzen, Zinn & Smith, 2011). The environment they experience it in heavily influences development from childhood through adolescence. In a male dominated society, males and females experience these different as well. While physical, emotional, and cognitive development is predetermined, societal norms determine the amount and quality each individual experiences. Childhood is from birth to puberty, and adolescence starts at puberty and continues into adulthood. Childhood is mainly composed of selfish thinking, while adolescents understand others and how they feel. References Eitzen, D. S., Zinn, M. B., & Smith, K. E. (2011). *Social problems*. (12 ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon. Wormer, K. (2011). *Human behavior and the social environment*. (Second ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Childhood vs. Adolescence Jessica Zeni Michigan State University SW 310 Dr. Hall 12/04/12