

Free low self-esteem in adolescence term paper example

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Psychology

Adolescence is indeed one of the most fruitful and controversial periods of person's existence. The spring of life brings new unique experiences, it helps to develop and strengthen personal, professional and academic skills and qualities which will impact the further life of an individual and influence the choices that he or she is going to make in adulthood. This period is also a very tricky one. The system of values and behavioral patterns at this age are still fragile and not entirely established. Therefore this is a point of bifurcation of some kind, and if something goes wrong, the whole further life may be seriously compromised. One of the traps that an individual may face in adolescent years is the issue of low self-esteem.

It would be incorrect to say that there are kids and teenagers who are completely free from issues with self-esteem. People at this age are not yet certain about their potential and relative capabilities, and therefore tend to question themselves. Such doubts are a natural element of growing up, however in the most severe cases low self-esteem, pessimism and lack of faith in her- or himself may lead to complete confusion and social and personal degradation. Due to this fact we can identify the issue of low self-esteem as unmotivated (or poorly subjectively motivated) sense of inferiority and inability of handling the challenges of life. No matter if such feeling was provoked by external circumstances or internal train of thoughts, it is also subjective. It is possible to determine whether a young person has low self-esteem, but no one would say that he or she should have low self-esteem

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due to various factors.

The reasons that provoke low self-esteem among people in adolescence may be of various nature. These may include but of course are not limited to poor health, low status, insufficient social skills, bullying, exposure to violence and so forth. The consequences of developing low self-esteem may be catastrophic and lead to serious psychological complexes which will be catastrophic in adulthood. People with low self-esteem are not usually successful in life, be it in professional area or in family. In a manner of speaking, it is a vicious circle - adults with low self-esteem treat children and other dependents poorly and inadequately, take a passive position in life, and their children inherit these traits from them, therefore making this process literally perpetual. The duty of an individual is to break this cycle and provide a better future to her- or himself as well as to the generations to come. Besides, it is also believed that low self-esteem may lead to various questionable or even illegal activities, be it consumption of drugs or commitment of crimes.

There are many books and articles devoted to the issue of low self-esteem in adolescence, both descriptive and analytical by nature. It would be reasonable to have a brief look at some of them (especially those published within the past few years, as the importance of actual and up-to-date information should not be underestimated), define their distinguishing features and compare the different views on the problem of low self-esteem in adolescence.

The first book I would like to mention was originally written many years, and was recently reissued and reviewed. This is " Schoolgirls: Young Women,

Self-Esteem and the Confidence Gap” by Peggy Orenstein. This is a popularized research of a specific category of teenagers – namely schoolgirls of various ages. The author is analyzing the process of growing up within the contemporary system of school education. There are main areas of interest within this work: girls within families, girls at school and internal relation among girls. I would describe the tone of the research as moderately pessimistic. Mrs. Orenstein describes the issue of low self-esteem as a consequence of the existing paradigm of education and pedagogy, which fail to compensate the gap between the growing and developing minds and indifferent and somewhat cruel reality. The way to improve the situation requires joint efforts of public institutions, educators as well as parents and general public.

The second research was taken in the form of a nationwide survey of 8-12 graders across the USA and was later published within the article by Jerald Bachman in 2011 under the title “ Adolescent Self-Esteem: Differences by Race/Ethnicity, Gender and Age”. As it may be inferred from the title, this research is dealing with the issue of low self-esteem regarding various groups of students on the basis of their gender, age and racial affiliation. The main hypothesis of the author is that certain groups of the adolescent are more prone to generation of complexes based on low self-esteem than others. This theory was indeed proved by the results of the survey – younger students tend to be less confident than senior ones, female students normally (but not without exceptions) appear to have subjectively lower self-esteem than their male peers, and representatives of certain ethnicities appear to feel weaker and more helpless than others (certain Asian students

would be a fit example here). While the author seems to explore the topic in depth and appears to be quite confident about results of the survey, he nevertheless does not provide any specific advice towards fixing the situation with low self-esteem among pupils, therefore making this article a valuable statistical source, but not a strongly analytics one.

The third research, which was performed by Unni K. Moksnes and published in 2010 under the title “ The association between stress and emotional state in adolescents: The role of gender self-esteem” is a more complex one. The author is not limited by mere description of the research conducted, but also reveals analysis concerning interdependency of such psychological conditions as stress, self-esteem, anxiety and depression. The author determines strong positive correlation between these conditions among the research pool (in this case the respondents were from Northern Europe), however the issue of causation appears to be much more complex. It is clear to the author that these conditions are interrelated, however it is yet to be discovered which one is emerging originally and gives start to others, if it is possible to determine at all.

There is an attempt to find an explanation to the logical sequencing of psychological conditions in the next work published in 2010 - “ Self-Esteem Development From Young Adulthood to Old Age: A Cohort-Sequential Longitudinal Study” by Ulrich Orth. This research, although not entirely dedicated to the topic of adolescence, is nevertheless extremely important, as it shows poll results, according to which most of respondents addressed to the period of their teenage years as a source of certain complexes relevant to low self-esteem. This issue is proven to be a strong influencing factor and

success predictor for the rest of human life. The ones who managed to overcome the subjectively insufficient self-esteem at an early age, on the other hand, demonstrated much better performance. The author emphasizes the significance of individual efforts in struggle with low self-esteem starting as early as possible.

Finally, a similar article from 2012 was considered, written by Richard W. Robins and Keith F. Widaman and titled "Life-Span Development of Self-Esteem and Its Effect on Important Life Outcomes". The general concept of this article resembles that of Ulrich Orth, however it has one significant difference. The authors introduce the compensatory behavioral mechanism, which is used by certain individuals who originally developed a low level of self-esteem in adolescence in order to make up for subjective feeling of helplessness and weakness. Such people may perform quite in quite the opposite way rather than they were expected to due to the paradigm of their previous personal development. These exceptions, however, although being numerous by nature, only justify the rule - low self-esteem may, and in most cases does so, cripple human lives starting from the youngest age.

The works mentioned above share certain similarities. They all address the issue of low self-esteem as a serious one, which has long-lasting personal and social negative consequences. Although each of these articles and books researches various aspects of the phenomenon across different groups of people, it is acknowledged by almost all of them that the problem may be and should be handled by various authorities as well by the person her- or himself. It is undoubtful that low self-esteem in adolescence is a serious public and individual issue and should be fought and resisted in the most

efficient and concise manner.

In the conclusion, however, I would like to ask a question: is the issue of low self-esteem in adolescence purely negative by nature? Although it, when present in excessive amount, most certainly has primarily destructive impact on the present and future activities, a certain portion of a reasonable doubt, some self-questioning may be quite useful, especially in the green years. In a manner of speaking, those who do not lack self-confidence are likely to become overconfident and also make certain mistakes which might have been avoided otherwise. Due to this it would be logical to admit that although permanently low self-esteem has mostly negative effects on personal development, social skills and further success in life, reasonable self-doubt from time to time may be useful and contribute to building up realistic expectations about self and further career. It may be also considered to be an efficient mechanism of social evolution, and while being used timely and in proper proportions, may bring certain positive effects to an individual.

References:

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