

# The difference between human growth and human development



In an attempt to comprehend the factors that influence the evolution of human-beings, it is first important to recognize the subtle difference separating the terms human growth and human development. While these terms are often used interchangeably to discuss human functioning, it should be clarified that these terms are not measured through the same scientific processes. When associated with human-beings, the two dynamic processes are measured differently, in which human growth may be calculated quantitatively through physical change in size, while human development may be measured in the progression of an individual's function and skill (Human Development, 2001). It is with this understanding of the discrepancies separating the two terms, which allows for a true understanding of the growth and development of human-beings to be explored.

In their textbook *Counseling Across The Lifespan*, Juntunen and Atkinson define development as “ systematic and successive changes over time” (2002, P. 23). Through these systematic changes that occur between conception and death, three main areas of development are affected, including changes in: physical development, cognitive development, and psychosocial development. Because of this, researchers throughout time have attempted to create speculations as to how people grow and change. As more data and research has been collected, individuals have designed their own theories to offer different ideas on what people are like and how they will change overtime. While no single theory has yet to be formulated to calculate every aspect of human development, it can be agreed that humans are very complex beings that differ physically, cognitively, and socially. With

this understanding, ultimately, each of these three domains will play a significant role in the overall development of each individual person.

While theorists like Sigmund Freud placed a heavy emphasis and focus on the early events of a child's life, a breakthrough in psychology occurred in that of the creation of lifespan development. Instead of just looking at the first few years of a child's life, a new thought to development placed a large emphasis on looking at all periods of an individual's life. Through the lifespan developmental approach, professionals would view how people change over particular periods of time as a way to rate developmental growth. It is with these ideas that as people make systematic progression through a series of phases, they will continue to move closer to some form of adult status (Smith, 1999, para. 5). Essentially, through the connection between the three developmental domains (physical, cognitive, and psychosocial) and the expectations of each domain at a particular developmental stage (age), a developmental map can be constructed to chart predictable future changes.

Utilizing the interactive website *Discovering Psychology: Life Span Development*, the components of lifespan development can be explored. It is through this resource, that the various aspects of the developmental stage (age) are linked with the anticipated physical, cognitive, and social domains of each individual age group. With an emphasis on childhood and adolescent development, each of the three developmental domains is independently explored through the following periods: infancy and childhood, early childhood, middle childhood, late childhood, early adolescence, late adolescence, early adulthood, and adulthood. It is through the knowledge of the different expectations associated with each developmental age, which <https://assignbuster.com/the-difference-between-human-growth-and-human-development/>

allow mental health professionals to gain an insight on the developmental stages of human-beings.

Taking place from birth-2 years of age, the infancy and childhood period brings a long many important characteristics. As for the biological components taking place, the body doubles in height and quadruples in weight, while the sensory and perceptual abilities develop rapidly. As the cognitive domain is enhanced through the basic structure of language, along with it does the first communication emerge through crying and babbling. By the age of 1, the language skills have progressed immensely, thus by age 2, sentences begin to construct. In addition to language, sensorimotor experiences have led to the awareness of the outside world and mental representations of events. The psychosocial domain develops from basic emotional responses to more complex, self-conscious responses. Other social characteristics involve infants beginning to synchronize with their parent's behavior, as well as an ability to relate to playmates begins to emerge by the end of the period (Life Span Development, 2010).

As children from the ages of 2-6 enter into early childhood, the biological domain is highlighted by the child's brain attaining 90% of its adult weight by age 5. Just as the brain grows, so does the child's coordination and athletic skills improve, as well as their physical strength and body proportions become more adult-like. While the physical attributed begin to stand out, fine motor skills such as writing and drawing, begin to develop much slower. The cognitive developments of these children develop rapidly, in which the language abilities result on average a 14, 000-word vocabulary and extensive grammatical knowledge by age 6. Along with this, the concept of <https://assignbuster.com/the-difference-between-human-growth-and-human-development/>

metacognition forms, which allows the child to think about thought. For the psychosocial component of this age group, this marks the first awareness of gender roles, as well as a desire for independence and control over the environment. In addition, socializing in school encourages thinking about the world outside the home (Life Span Development, 2010).

From the ages of 7-9, children enter into the middle childhood period, which brings about many developmental progressions in the cognitive and psychosocial domains. Just as their language developed rapidly during early childhood, the cognitive abilities of 7-9 year olds are highlighted by the ability to understand logical principles. It is with this, that the memory capacity expands, resulting in increased metacognition- allowing for the organization of own learning. The psychosocial domain is also heavily impacted, in which peer groups become much more significant to the child. Also, an awareness of the outside world increases the awareness of family, political, and economic conditions. While this developmental age results in a significant increase in the cognitive and psychosocial domains, the biological domain is not as heavily impacted. While the growth of the brain begins to slow, so does physical growth, with the exception of slight height spurts (Life Span Development, 2010).

The developmental period of late childhood has a significant impact on 10-12 year olds. As puberty begins to affect the biological domain of many children, along with it can come personality development. It is with this change, that girls' growth spurt begins begin with changes in weight and height, as well as the growth of breasts by girls and enlargement of testicles in boys. With the physical change, cognitive change also occurs in the ability

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to plan ahead and improve memorization. Along with this, logical thought process begins to incorporate abstract thinking, and language skills expand tremendously. Changes in social desires are also highly developed, in which peer groups divide into cliques, gender stereotypes continue to increase, and changes internally and externally (physique, sexuality, cognitive functioning) all challenge sense of self (Life Span Development, 2010).

Perhaps one of the most important periods of the growth and development cycle occurs during the early adolescent stage of life for 13-15 year olds. While biological changes begin to immediately affect male growth in height and weight, girls growth spurts generally begin to peak at this age. Along with growth, at this age girls begin to menstruate and boys begin to ejaculate. For cognitive functioning, formal operational reasoning emerges, allowing for an extended capacity for abstract and scientific thought. With this, thinking becomes more self-conscious, idealistic, and critical, which leads to the ability to grasp irony and sarcasm. From a social perspective, sexual orientation begins to emerge, along with issues of identity that can lead to internal crisis. In addition, another social factor involves a greater emphasis on intimacy and loyalty to friends, as well as an increase in conforming to peer-pressures (Life Span Development, 2010).

From early adolescence emerges late adolescence for teens 16-19 years old. For the biological domain of these late adolescents, the growth spurts of males begin to peak by the end of this period. While growth begins to halt, males typically grow taller than their female peers and develop deeper voices and facial hair patterns. From a cognitive perspective, character development begins to emerge through an ability to integrate and

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understand rules, while being able to utilize this understanding into sense of self. Reasoning is also improved through understanding problems in symbolic terms and the use of formal logic. The psychosocial domain begins to truly blossom during this time developmental period. As sexual orientation continues to develop, so does the first instances of dating begin to play part in developing and maintaining intimate relationships. Along with this, development of identity continues through the influence of personal factors (family, peer relationships, etc), while the importance of cliques begins to fade out (Life Span Development, 2010).

As these individuals exist their teens and enter their twenties, the period of early adulthood takes place through the age of forty. Unfortunately, this stage brings the demise of many biological factors. While physical functioning does appear to increase and peak at about age 30, body shape changes, with gradual weight increases and the development of grey hairs and wrinkles. Along with this, the efficiency of many organ systems also begins to diminish. While physical development begins to decline, cognitive growth ever continues. As the individual grows older they begin to develop a greater sense of wisdom and expertise. With this increase, vocabulary and knowledge also continue to grow through interactions and everyday problem-solving. Just as physical development begins to peak, the psychosocial domain sees a peak in issues of intimacy and identity by age 30. At this age, there is an ever growing need for affiliation to be met by either friends or marriage. With this, also comes a desire to work in a field that allows the person to best utilize their personality and abilities (Life Span Development, 2010).

The final two periods of the life cycle will be discussed as a whole, being middle adulthood for ages 40-65 and late adulthood for ages 65-onward. The major biological developments that occur for these groups involve gradual changes in the appearance of skin, hair, and body type. In addition with age, hearing and vision loss begin to become apparent, as well as reduced activity in brain functions and a reduction in physical size. Just as physical development is impacted, cognitive development becomes equally as affected. While logic involving experience and knowledge of the world increases, intellectual abilities dependent on speed and reaction begin to slow. As the individual grows older, abilities involving receiving information, storing, organizing, and recalling the material begin to decline immensely. With age, psychosocial aspects continue to remain a priority in the lives of the elderly. While satisfaction with life becomes largely dependent on family involvement, individuals rely heavily on their marriage or family to improve enjoyment and broaden their perspective of life (Life Span Development, 2010).

From the perspective of a mental health professional working in a school environment, it would be important to understand these characteristics of human development for many reasons. With the primary goal of education being to continually provide students with the necessary skills and knowledge required to continue to progress, it becomes vital that educators recognize the various internal and external dynamic processes that affect development. With a greater understanding of human development, educational professionals can comprehend the notion that the causes of behavior are not easily explained by one single factor. It is with this, that an



increased understanding of the developmental stages, would allow educators to gain a better understanding of the reasons behind a child's behavior, as well as a greater insight on how the behavior may progress. Through this comprehensive understanding of the complexity of human behavior, ultimately, professionals will be able to provide children with the skills and preparation needed to make the student's behavior as productive as possible (Human Development, 2001).