Cognition through the lifespan essay sample

Technology, Development

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One of the most fascinating facets of psychology is cognition and its development over the lifespan. Cognition is a vital part to our development as humans, and individuals. There are cognitive milestones that each person meets, some of which help us achieve numerous goals later in life. It can be something as simple as a child beginning to understand the concept of object permanence, or as complex as an adult continually developing their ability to think logically and abstractly. Whatever ages an individual may be cognition is constantly evolving. There are different elements of cognition associated with each age, and there are things that parents and individuals can do to encourage prosperous cognitive development in children, as well as themselves.

When it comes to cognition, children and adults are as opposite as night and day. According to Fergus Craik and Ellen Bialystock, authors of, " Cognition through the Lifespan: Mechanisms of Change," children begin life in the sensorimotor stage of cognition . This coincides with Piaget's stages of cognitive development. The first few months of their lives are dedicated to reflexes and circulatory responses. As the child grows, they begin to experiment with their surroundings, testing object permanence, and early representational thought. At the age of three, they move into the preoperational stage, where they begin experimenting with conservation and egocentrism. The child's cognition does not allow them to understand the viewpoints of others at this time; they are incapable of abstract or hypothetical thought. By seven, the child begins concrete operational

thought, where cognition allows the child to begin understanding mental operations. They still have difficulty thinking hypothetically but are able to empathize with others through reversibility. Finally, the finally cognition stage begins at eleven, and is called the formal operational stage. Children grow into adults who can think logically and abstractly. Cognition becomes fully developed over the lifespan during this stage, which lasts until death, according to Daniel M. Bernstein and his associates .

The cognitive processes are based on age, as cited in the book, " Development through Life: A Psychosocial Approach," written by Barbara Newman and Philip Newman . Younger individuals, such as children typically under the age of five, lack the emotional depth to apply reversibility to their actions. Therefore, the cognition needed to recognize empathy is non-existent. Similarly, a child of ten does not have a fully developed prefrontal cortex, making it impossible for them to consider the hypothetical consequences of their present actions. This cognition cannot exist until the brain develops further. Though the formal operational stage of cognition begins around the age of eleven and lasts until death, many see a decline in cognition as they age . Middle-aged individuals will often be seen at the height of their cognitive skills between the ages of 28 and 60, depending on the individual, as stated by Merele Olser, Kirsten Avlund, and Kyle Mortensen, authors of, " Socio-Economic Position Early in Life, Cognitive Development and Cognitive Change from Young Adulthood to Middle Age." As the individual enters old age, speed and processing skills slow down, inhibiting the individual's cognitive abilities. They are no longer able to assess situations, emotions, or environments in the same way that they

could in previous years.

There are some suggested ways to help improve cognitive development in children, as well as the elderly. Studies published in Trends in Cognitive Science suggest that pretend play, eating habits, and exercise will boost a child’s cognitive performance. Hand clapping, singing, and interactive story telling has been proven to improve motor and cognitive skills in children as they age into college students Reading books to children also improves their cognitive skills . There are also several ways to improve cognitive skills in the elderly. Diet changes, walking, and weight training have shown to improve the decline in memory loss and cognitive decline in the elderly. Brain exercises, such as reading, crossword puzzles, word searches, and riddles also help stimulate the brain. Relaxation exercises also showed promise in slowing the decline of cognitive failure

In sum, cognition through the lifespan is fascination. It begins developing from the second we are born and, though it begins to deteriorate, it does not end until we die. We are constantly taking in the information from the world around us and using it to create a context that helps us function. Many of these cognitive developments are considered milestones, without which we would not be able to understand object permanence, empathy, or abstract thought. Logical reasoning is an essential part of making adult decisions; this is all a part of cognitive development. Creating a healthy environment is important for cognitive development. Parents should be sure to nurture children’s cognitive skills and the elderly should take the time to tend to their declining cognition, as well.

References

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