

# Adolescents discovering their identity through physical, cognitive, emotional, an...

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Adolescents Discovering Their Identity through Physical, Cognitive, Emotional, and Social Development Student name BSHS/342 Instructor's name Adolescents Discovering Their Identity through Physical, Cognitive, Emotional, and Social Development The Changing Years Even though children go through physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes during their adolescence years not all react the same way to these changes. Throughout these years adolescences ask " Who am I? "(Vander Zanden, 2000, p. 360). Biological changes occurring during this period of life affects children's physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development. These changes cause the children's way of thinking to change in relationship to others as well as to themselves (Vander Zanden, 2000). Physical Development The onset of puberty occurs in this time of life. Puberty is the beginning stage into adulthood but children must go through many changes through the journey. Adolescences oftentimes find this stage of development dramatic. Females may find this time more dramatic than males. " Girls who have been advanced in physical maturity since the prenatal period, reach puberty, on average, two years earlier than boys" (Berk, 2010, p. 363). Both male and female adolescences experience growth spurts through this time frame, which is the first outward sign of the onset of puberty. Hormone levels increase in both males and females. Female begin to develop breast and pubic hair begins to grow. This is the time females normally start their menstruation cycle. Males develop pubic and facial hair at this time. Male's penis and testes begin to enlarge also. The male voice becomes deeper as he advances in puberty. Females are normally done growing physically by age 16 whereas males continue growing physically until around age 17 1/2

(Berk, 2010, p. 363). Factors such as physical health, environment, and heredity play a role in the development of children and the onset of puberty.

**Cognitive Development** Not all changes that occur during the adolescent years are visible. Throughout the adolescent years teen's hypothetico-deductive reasoning and propositional thought process improves (Berk, 2010, p. 383). With the improvements of hypothetico-deductive reasoning and propositional thought process, adolescents develop the capability to think about the world and those who occupy it with them. They also develop the ability to face challenges in a new and powerful way. As the thought process improves so do the adolescent's attention and speed of thinking increase. A new awareness of thought, known as metacognition will also increase. This new awareness leads "to new insights into effective strategies for acquiring information and solving problems" (Berk, 2010, p. 385). The new insights can have positive and negative effects for the teens. Even though they may be more self-aware they do not always consider alternatives in solving problems, or they may ignore the consequences of their actions leading to greater issues.

**Emotional and Social Development** As children's metacognition improves so does their awareness of what others think about them. They become concerned about their physical appearance and their status in their peer group. Oftentimes, adolescents allow peer pressure and their need to fit-in as their guidance in making decisions. These decisions can cause problems for teens or lead them away from trouble. As new challenges and opportunities appear so do new emotions the teens were unaware of before. Parents, authority figures, and peers will provide stronger cues on what are acceptable behaviors and what are not. The chosen clique

of the teens will oftentimes influence whether they choose an acceptable path during this time in their lives (Nawaz, 2011). Along with peer pressure the challenge of dealing with the increase level of hormones can also influence teens into making bad decisions. Many teens become sexually active, which can cause a new set of challenges for them. The emotional explosion sexual activity brings can lead into teen mental disorders such as depression, eating disorders, and an array of other psychological disturbances. This might be the most important time adolescents need parental guidance in their development (Nawaz, 2011). Peer Relations and Influences of the Media According to Kingery, Erdley, & Marshall, 'peers have a strong influence on other adolescents' motivation toward academic performance and achievement. They also influence the attitude others hold toward other peers. These influences can help or hinder grade advancement, which can decide achievements well into adulthood" (2011). Adolescents need to feel accepted and supported by their peers. Without this acceptance and support adolescents may have difficulties with their socializing and their emotional state may suffer. Without peer acceptance and support in a clique adolescents may experience bullying or become bullies. Oftentimes bullies are adolescents looking for acceptance and acting-out when they do not receive it. This is also a time when many adolescents experience anxiety and depression, which may follow them into adulthood (Kingery, Erdley & Marshall, 2011). Research has shown adolescents who have high quality friendships throughout their childhood enter into adulthood with a reassured of security, which leads to a higher level of self-acceptance and self-esteem (Nawaz, 2011). Media sources also influence adolescent development.

Research has shown sex, substance use, and violence shown through the media can have adverse effects on children's behavior. The media portrays unrealistic portraits of what males and females should look like, act like, and be like. It gives children misinformation and leads them into believing falsehoods. The media portrays smoking and drinking as cool, and cool people have premarital sex. The media also stereotypes entire groups of people causing children to draw the wrong conclusion about entire races (Durkin, 2001). Not all media sources are bad influences on children. Some television shows, movies, and magazines teach children proper behaviors. The trick is to expose children and adolescents to these types of media. Positive media influence can aid in the proper social and emotional development in them. The Rite of Passage A number of social scientists have suggested that few people make the transition from childhood to adulthood more difficult than Western nations. Adults expect adolescence boys and girls to stop acting like children, yet they are not treated like men or women. They are told to "grow-up," but parents treat them like dependents, and supports them economically. Society view adolescents as irresponsible and untrustworthy. These conflicting expectations cause identity crises among many American and European teens (Vander Zanden, 2000). Many Nonwestern societies make the period of adolescence considerably easier. They ease the shift in status by providing puberty rites/rites of passage by initiating ceremonies socially symbolizing the transition from childhood to adulthood. For example, adults in some African and Middle Eastern countries subject adolescents to various rituals and ceremonies, some of which are physically and mental harmful to the children. Many youth are willing to

endure the pain and humiliation of the rituals to receive the status into adulthood. Western societies do have some noticeable rituals marking the entry into adulthood. One such example is the Jewish tradition of Bar Mitzvah for Jewish males and Bat Mitzvah for Jewish females. Some see the ability of securing a driver's license at 16, ability to vote, and the ability of entering the military as rites of passage. Earning a high school diploma is also seen by some as a rite of passage. The act of high school graduations gives adolescents a sense of belonging because graduation occurs with a group of peers. This group activity builds strong personal and community bonds in some instances. Graduation also brings a sense of freedom and newly found responsibility. Even with these rituals these are rather mild versions of the rites of passage in comparison to other societies (Vander Zanden, 2000). Three phases occur with the rites of passage; separation, initiation, and reintegration. Separation is the withdrawal from one's current status into another status. Initiation is applying the changes from the shift of status. Reintegration is completing the changes from the shift in status and reentering society as an adult. The rite of passage is an essential milestone in the life of an adolescent. The milestone aids in a healthy development of adolescents. A healthy development will aid in the person's functioning ability in adulthood (Vander Zanden, 2000). As adolescents experience the rites of passage, they realize their dreams of adulthood are becoming a reality. They will be responsible for their own choices. This reality can become overwhelming for some, but a sign they are entering adulthood without the ability for turning back. Overview In a person's life there are many milestones. One significant and recognizable one is the transition from

childhood into the adolescent years. Children face many physical and biological changes at this time in life. Cognitive development improves as does social interactions. Peer association plays a major part in a teen's development. Some of these associations are healthy, and some are not. Acceptance and support of peers can influence the path an adolescent takes in life. The lack of acceptance can cause emotional scares for an adolescent throughout their teen years and possibly into their adulthood. Media influence also plays a role in the development of adolescents by influencing their own self-perception, and their views of what they and others should be like. A true sense of independence develops in a person's life with the rite of passage. This is also when most chose the path in life they want to take. Many adolescent believe this is the time the can answer the question " Who am I, " but they need to realize their journey of life has just begun.

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