

13. Adolescence

Objectives

- Understand adolescence and how it is defined across cultures
- Explore ways in which biological and cognitive development sets the stage for psychological changes in adolescents
- Examine the social context in which adolescents develop
- Identify challenges and possible crises facing adolescents today

Vocabulary

growth hormone (GH)

growth spurt

identity

peer group

puberty

Background

As the students well know, adolescence is a critical and often confusing stage of human development between childhood and adulthood, the ages between 12 and 20 years. This chapter educates students about the broad developmental changes and social challenges they are facing as they try to discover who they are and to enter adulthood.

The chapter reviews the different phases, changes, and perspectives of adolescence to help orient students to what has become a largely Western phenomenon. Students will discover that American adolescents in particular face considerable difficulties due to America's unique mix of early adult roles, strong work values, and varying social influences.

Students learn about key biological changes such as the "growth spurt" and puberty as well as the natural differences that occur between boys and girls as they develop physically and sexually. Students also discover the cognitive changes that teenagers undergo, such as learning to think in more abstract and "self"-related terms. Students will want to discuss Kohlberg's stages of moral development and the chapter information on how culture, gender, parents, and institutions influence moral development.

Students find more material for discussion as they study the area of adolescent social development, especially the various ways in which family, peer groups, schools, gender differences, and sexuality impact teen growth. They also learn about familiar psychological challenges such as discovering one's own identity while trying to maintain healthy self-esteem.

After studying the typical adolescent "identity crisis," students investigate the major challenges and crises that threaten adolescent growth—substance abuse, delinquent behavior, eating disorders, teenage pregnancy, and suicide. The chapter stresses the importance of learning how to ask for help and finding constructive ways of dealing with hard problems such as these. With this help, hopefully, teenagers can grow into adulthood feeling good about themselves.

Further Resources

Csikszentmihalyi, M. C., and R. Larson. *Being Adolescent: Conflict and Growth in the Teenage Years*. New York: Basic Books, 1984.

Erikson, E. H. *Identity and the Life Cycle*. New York: Norton, 1980.

For Discussion

Review

1. What are three prevailing points of view on adolescence?
2. What four areas serve as a framework for the development of moral thinking by adolescents?
3. What are the four stages in identity development?
4. What are three eating disorders that affect many adolescents?

Critical Thinking

1. Why might children growing up in China or Iran have easier or more difficult adolescent experiences than American teenagers?
2. What was it about your parents, gender, peer groups, school, and culture that most affected your adolescence?
3. In what sort of scenarios do you believe that conflict between a parent and teenager goes from being “healthy” to being “hurtful”?
4. What social, cultural, or familial factors do you think most affect gender identity and sexuality?
5. Of the adolescent challenges and crises examined in this chapter, which do you think is the most threatening problem? the least threatening? Why?

Activities

1. Watch Your Development

Divide students into four groups with each group representing a major area of adolescent development—biological, cognitive, social, and psychological (identity). Have each group research and report on facts, issues, and guidelines for teens to consider in this area of growth.

2. Interviews: Asking for Help

Divide students into groups. Ask each group to find and interview experts in an adolescent problem area such as substance abuse, delinquency, bulimia, pregnancy, or suicidal feelings. Compile a list of community resources in these areas.

3. Internet: Studies in Adolescence

Direct the students to research Web sites that are devoted to adolescence. Challenge them to locate different studies or experiments related to adolescence and to analyze the approaches and conclusions.

4. Special Sources: School Violence

Divide the class into teams and use the library to research one incident of adolescent school violence similar to the Columbine, Colorado, high school shooting tragedy of the 1990s. Have teams consider causes and circumstances of the event, offering suggestions on how this tragedy might have been prevented.

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As you read Chapter 13, write an answer to each question below.

1. What is adolescence and what kinds of factors affect adolescents in America today?

2. What primary biological changes do boys and girls undergo during adolescence?

3. What key changes do children experience in their families, peer groups, schools, and sexuality during adolescence?

4. What is important to realize about the formation of an identity during adolescence?

5. Which of the major crises in adolescent development—substance abuse, delinquent behavior, eating disorders, teen pregnancy, and suicide—do you think is most common at your school? What do you think can be and/or should be done about it?

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Find the best answer for each item. Then circle that answer.

1. Which term describes the active physical growth taking place in early adolescence, which starts at about age 10-1/2 for girls and about 12 for boys?
 - a. growth hormone
 - b. growth spurt
 - c. adolescent maturation
 - d. adolescent evolution
2. What is the time of sexual maturation—the point at which adolescents develop secondary sex characteristics—and are capable for reproduction?
 - a. teething
 - b. budding
 - c. assimilation
 - d. puberty
3. What is the hormone stimulated in early adolescence that controls the growth spurt?
 - a. melanin
 - b. insulin
 - c. growth hormone
 - d. adrenaline
4. What do you call the sense of who one is, what one believes in, and what one values?
 - a. identity
 - b. reconciliation
 - c. morality
 - d. serenity
5. What is the term for people of the same age and social status who influence socialization in important ways?
 - a. target group
 - b. peer group
 - c. target market
 - d. peer market

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Read each description, and write the letter of the correct term on the line.

1. Each is true about American adolescents today, EXCEPT that _____.
 - a. they are achievement oriented
 - b. they experience adult roles earlier than in other cultures
 - c. they show an interest in gender equality
 - d. their transition into adulthood is seamless
2. The early phase of adolescence occurs in _____.
 - a. elementary school, involving motor skill development
 - b. middle school, involving changes due to puberty
 - c. high school, involving identity and career issues
 - d. college, involving intimacy and relationship issues
3. This is NOT a factor involved in adolescent growth and puberty: _____.
 - a. growth spurt and puberty occur together
 - b. genetics and nutrition impact growth
 - c. boys mature earlier, yet more than girls
 - d. physical change rates vary
4. Boys who mature slowly often feel _____ about themselves and their physical changes.
 - a. proud
 - b. satisfied
 - c. ambivalent
 - d. less confident
5. Each is considered a cognitive change during adolescence EXCEPT that _____.
 - a. more advanced thought processes begin
 - b. individuals grow aware of their "inner selves"
 - c. attention and memory diminish
 - d. greater self-awareness often causes anxiety
6. _____ is considered the only parental approach that helps children develop moral maturity.
 - a. Love withdrawal
 - b. Power assertion
 - c. Grounding
 - d. Induction
7. Kohlberg says that adolescents _____.
 - a. develop moral reasoning in stages
 - b. do not develop morally until adulthood
 - c. develop irrational behavior based on age
 - d. are higher moral thinkers than adults
8. This is NOT a characteristic of family change during adolescence: _____.
 - a. teenagers use more advanced cognitive skills to deal with parents and conflict
 - b. adolescents compare families in ideal terms and are disappointed by the reality
 - c. parents usually undergo their own changes
 - d. as a teenager's independence grows, parents react less
9. Influence of peer groups is _____ to encourage positive than negative behavior in adolescents.

a. not likely	c. more likely
b. less likely	d. highly likely
10. This is NOT an accurate statistic: _____.
 - a. one in 200 teenage girls develops anorexia
 - b. each year, nearly 1 million teens get pregnant
 - c. 4/5 of teen fathers support families
 - d. nearly 500,000 teens attempt suicide each year

Essay Question

What attitudes do you think are most healthy for teenagers to adopt during adolescence? Why?