

# Childhood

In this chapter, you will learn about:

- a baby's beginnings
- how a child develops physically, cognitively, socially, and emotionally
- the influences of friends and family

A "wild boy" was found living alone in the woods of southern France in 1799. Though he looked about 10 or 11 years old, he couldn't speak or understand language. He preferred to trot on all fours rather than to walk. Though he learned some words, he was never able to master language or social skills. Was it the lack of family and society that stunted his development?

A new belief took hold at the turn of the twentieth century: children need nurturing environments to grow properly. They need someone they can trust to keep them safe, to love and support them.

During childhood, play is work. The world is a learning laboratory. Everyone is a teacher. Each child is a melting pot of genetic and environmental influences, and though the exact amount of each is still debatable, the blend results in a unique individual.

## Developmental Psychology: The Study of Change

Maybe your parents kept a record of your milestones of growth: smiled at two months old, sat up at six months, said “mama” at seven months, walked at a year, had a first friend at 15 months, were potty trained at two years, and on and on. These are the details that seemingly only a parent can fully appreciate. But psychologists too have put a magnifying glass to the thousands of changes that take place as infants grow into children, who grow into adolescents, who grow into adults. The result is a field of study called **developmental psychology**.

The study of human development can be broken down into **four** major areas:

### 1 Physical Development

The actual growth of the body, its sexual development, the use of its muscles, and the changes in the brain and sensory organs (sight, hearing, taste, and smell) are called **physical development**.

### 2 Cognitive Development

The changes in the way we think, reason, learn, acquire language, and use knowledge are called **cognitive development**.

### 3 Social Development

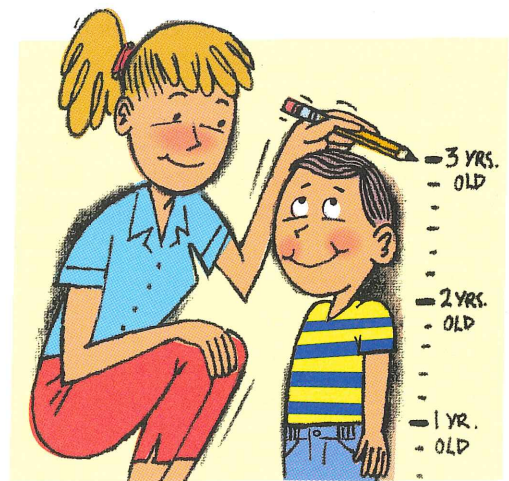
The changes in how we relate to other people and develop our own sense of self are called **social development**.

### 4 Emotional Development

Changes in feelings and emotions and the development of personality are called **emotional development**.

A child’s development is an interactive process that occurs in the mostly predictable steps of **maturation**. Heredity and environment interact continuously throughout our lifetimes. Similarly, as a child physically grows up, the development of his or her emotional life, development as a social being, and cognitive development all interrelate. Just because someone is maturing physically, however, it does not mean that emotional maturity proceeds at the same pace.

Childhood growth occurs in stages that are broken down by age group: prenatal, infants (birth to 1½ years), toddlers (1½ to 3 years), preschoolers (3 to 5 years), school-age children (6 to 11 years), and adolescents (12 to 20 years). Some predictable changes occur within each age group, though there is individual variability.





## Life Begins

We refer to a baby's entrance into this world as the miracle of birth. It is certainly a dramatic entrance! From a fertilized egg—no bigger than the head of a pin—emerges a functioning baby. Miraculous as it may seem, the birth of a child is actually the result of a steady process of development that occurs before birth, a nine-month process of **prenatal development** that can be divided into three-month segments called *trimesters*.

### Prenatal Development

- \* **The First Trimester.** During this time the fertilized egg, holding genetic information from the father (23 chromosomes) and the mother (23 chromosomes), grows from what is called an *embryo* (which looks like a tadpole) at 8 weeks into a *fetus* three to four inches long—about the size of a fist. It has formed (though not developed) all of the major organs of the body.
- \* **The Second Trimester.** During this time the fetus starts to move. The gender of the baby is determined at the time of fertilization, but now the fetus is visibly a boy or a girl. By the end of the sixth month, it is fully formed but only about 14 inches long.
- \* **The Third Trimester.** The baby grows larger and puts on weight until at 40 weeks it is considered “full term,” generally weighing about six to nine pounds. The lungs have matured, and the baby is ready to be born.

## The Newborn

Safe in the womb one day, the next day the baby has to breathe on his or her own, maintain body temperature, get used to new sights and sounds, and learn to make his or her needs known. Though equipped with instincts to survive, the baby is rather helpless and depends on the parents for safety, warmth, hygiene, food, and love.

The newborn's development during the first year can be seen in the chart on page 192. The timing of the stages varies from baby to baby, however, and some even skip a step. For example, some babies never actually crawl; they go from dragging themselves across the floor to walking. But almost all children go through most of these changes in behaviors and skills.

The development of these behaviors and skills depends largely on the growth and maturation of the infant's central nervous system. The brain develops rapidly from just before birth and continuing through the first three years of life (and even into adolescence). Science is just beginning to understand how the nerve cells and the trillions of synaptic connections in a child's brain are organized in those first three years so that a child learns to talk, to read, and to solve problems.

For the first few months of life, the lower areas of the brain—the brainstem and midbrain—control most of a baby's activities: breathing, digestion, sleeping, and wakefulness. Newborns, for example, sleep an average of 16 hours a day; by six months old, they sleep 13 to 14 hours and, by age two, 11 to 12 hours a day.

First-Year Milestones			
Timeframe	Physical Development	Cognitive Development	Social-Emotional Development
<b>1–3 months</b>	Sleeps most of time; range of focus increases; begins to lift head slightly.	Has survival reflexes but is uncoordinated and fairly helpless; central nervous system still developing.	Not sociable; cries a lot; depends on nurturing behavior from adults.
<b>4–6 months</b>	Repeats actions; can focus on distances; begins reaching; rolls from back to stomach; sits up with support.	Starts cooing, playing with sounds; listens intently; can coordinate use of hands, eyes, ears, and mouth; by sixth month, uses hand as a tool to reach things.	Smiles a lot; laughs; responds when spoken to; prefers parents and siblings to others.
<b>7–8 months</b>	Starts exploring; crawls or somehow propels self forward; bangs and shakes objects; claps hands.	Understands simple words, own name; stays on a task for more than a few seconds; may say first meaningful word; interested in cause and effect, such as pulling a string to move a toy.	May have fear of strangers.
<b>9–10 months</b>	Pulls to stand; may even walk while holding onto something; can climb on stairs and furniture.	Remembers short sequence of events; out of sight is no longer out of mind.	Starts to show affection; is more of a partner in play such as peekaboo and pat-a-cake; recognizes self and mother in mirror.
<b>11–12 months</b>	Explorations continue with increased mobility; may begin to walk; may bring spoon to mouth.	Solves simple problems; understands more words; may say first words; develops sense of humor; remembers things that happen.	Uses verbal and nonverbal ways to get attention and approval from caregivers; develops strong relationship with primary caregiver.



## Born to Perceive

Babies are born with all their senses functioning, though these senses develop over time. Newborns can see, although they focus best at 8 to 14 inches away, the perfect distance to see mom's and dad's faces. Their range of focus is better by three months old. Over the next several months—as they interact more with the world—they will follow movement and people with their eyes. As they gain greater control over their bodies and develop hand-eye coordination, they can reach for and grasp dangling objects and eventually are able to grab them.

A baby's ability to hear begins in the womb. Human voices and music from those months may even seem familiar. Soothing tones help infants stop crying. They begin to coo and babble, sounds that will soon evolve into real words.

From birth, babies prefer sweet tastes. They cry or turn away if given something bitter or sour (as something poisonous might taste). Touch is very important to babies; they like to be wrapped snugly in a blanket and to be hugged.

Though in many ways newborns are helpless, their new world is not a confused blur, nor are their minds blank slates. In 1961 Robert Fantz, M.D., showed that newborns prefer to stare at real faces or patterns with clearly defined edges and high contrast—such as white stripes on black—rather than at colors. These preferences lay the groundwork for the visual stimulation infants seek and set the stage for their later explorations.

## Survival Instincts

Researchers are growing more aware of how sensitive these seemingly helpless beings are to their environment. A newborn's reflexes ensure survival. The gag reflex helps a baby spit up mucus from the mother's womb so he or she can breathe. The sucking reflex enables the infant to get nourishment. If you touch the cheek of a newborn, he or she will turn in that direction in an effort to locate mother's breast. A newborn will startle in response to a loud noise or a sudden change in position and grasp your finger if you stroke the palm of his or her hand.

When they are first born, babies tend to be cross-eyed because they have little control over their eye muscles. As they get older, their eye muscles develop and, by the time they are six months old, they have developed the ability to perceive depth.

## Attachment and Temperament

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The birth of a baby is the beginning of a love affair between parent and child that lasts a lifetime. Studies show that something about the physical appearance of babies fosters attachment to them. Shown pictures of babies, with their cute faces, chubby cheeks, and large round eyes, adults react physically—their hearts beat faster and their eyes dilate. Even babies are interested in other babies!

## Emotional Bond

**Attachment** is the term developmental psychologists use to describe the emotional bond between infants and one or more adults, usually parents or primary caregivers. Attachment is a security blanket. It allows infants to venture out and explore, returning to the adult as a safe haven. It is a building block for later relationships and for the development of the child's personality.

Fathers can respond just as sensitively to their children's needs as mothers, though it is most often mothers who provide the physical care—soothing, feeding, and holding their infants. When distressed, babies turn to the person who satisfies their needs.

Most infants display a secure attachment: a balance of exploration and play with the desire to remain near their mothers or caregivers in an unfamiliar setting. Through various studies, secure attachment has been linked to confidence, successful relationships with friends, and doing well in school. It can even override the effects of an unstable home environment. According to a 1996 report of the National Institute on Child Health and Human Development, secure attachment is not affected by being in child care more than 20 hours a week.

Some infants, however, resist separating from their mothers, are anxious in unfamiliar settings, and may even strike out at their mothers when they are reunited after a separation. Some children even actively avoid

their mothers when upset, readily separate from them, and are friendlier to strangers. A very small number of infants approach a reunion with their mothers after separation with blank, even depressed looks.

These different forms of attachment were first described by Mary Ainsworth in 1962 and have been verified or built upon by psychologists since then. Ainsworth also found that the quality of a child's attachment depends on how sensitive the parent is to the infant's need for contact and comfort. Mothers who are depressed or addicted to drugs, for example, do not always attend to their children's needs, and these children may develop an insecure attachment to their mothers.

Children with no attachment at all—such as babies left in orphanages who were rarely picked up or responded to—do not learn to cope with the stresses of everyday life.

## The Roots of Personality

Sarah is an easy-going baby, quick to smile and not at all bothered if her mother brings her to a crowded, noisy restaurant or puts her in a new swing at the playground. Ben has been loud and often irritable since birth. He sleeps irregularly and cries if brought into a roomful of new people.

Every child is born with a certain **temperament**: an individual style of responding to events or situations. This includes how sociable, irritable, emotionally responsive, distractible, adaptable, and active a child is. Some see temperament as



a biological—perhaps even genetic—root from which grows a person's personality.

The modern study of temperament began in the 1950s with Alexander Thomas and Stella Chess's New York Longitudinal Study. They followed 100 children from infancy through early adulthood to see if individual differences influenced the way the children developed through life. Besides identifying three temperament types (easy, difficult, slow to warm up), they examined "goodness of fit": the extent to which a child's temperament fits with the values, expectations, and style of the child's family. How sensitively a parent responds to a child's needs (and thus how well a child attaches) can depend on the child's temperament and the "goodness of fit."

Temperament tends to persist over time, though it is not necessarily unchangeable. Jerome Kagan at Harvard University, for example, has studied inhibited children (shy, timid, and cautious) and uninhibited children (bold, sociable, and outgoing). He found that three-year-old children who were extremely inhibited were more likely to be inhibited as adults than three-year-olds who were sociable. But he has also found that many children who began life with one of these tendencies changed their behavior as a result of experience. Successful social interactions can reduce shyness, while constant stress or rejection may make an uninhibited person shy.





## Physical Development

Your parents may have made marks on the wall every year to plot your growth in height. You couldn't wait to be taller! Growth in height and weight are the most obvious measures of physical development. Growth can occur gradually over time or in sudden spurts. You may even remember as a child waking up with pain in your legs—"growing pains"—as your body adjusted to quick growth. Each person grows at his or her own rate to a height influenced by both genetics and nutrition. After learning to walk, a child is literally off and running.

- \* **Toddlers** (about 1 to 3 years) are still a little top heavy and take quick short steps; they "toddle" in the walk for which they are named. As the proportion of fat to muscle and bone changes, their bodies become leaner. A major physical milestone in these years is bowel and bladder control, which enables them to be potty trained.
- \* **Preschool children** (3 to 6 years) pick up speed, running, chasing, and climbing. They start to master the fine-motor skills necessary to cut with scissors, color and paint, and zip up a jacket. As their center of gravity lowers, they can begin to balance. They can throw and catch balls—not an easy feat since you have to watch and time exactly when to close your arms around a ball!
- \* **Ages six to nine** show continued steady physical growth, though at a slower pace. With increased strength and muscle coordination, boys and girls can play more complicated sports such as basketball. Rates of growth vary considerably

by preadolescence. Some children's bodies mature more quickly than others, with children becoming noticeably taller and going through puberty at age nine or ten, while others might not experience these changes until a few years later. Children become self-conscious at this age, and how they feel about themselves fluctuates widely.

## Cognitive Development

The baby in the high chair is a magician and a scientist. Baby throws down a spoon and mother picks it up; baby throws it again and mother picks it up again, maybe with a scowl on her face this time. What will happen if baby does it again?

Words, baby also discovers, have magical powers. "Mama," says the child, and mother appears to give care. "Ba-ba," says the child, and father offers a bottle of milk. Baby's first learned words serve immediate needs, much as an English-speaking adult learning Spanish for travel might start with the words necessary to get a hotel room or a meal.

Dramatic gains in cognitive ability occur in school-age children (6 to 12 years). By second grade they can add and subtract, are proficient readers, and tell jokes. Their play no longer has to be supervised. By fifth grade, children pay attention to details, organize the information they are learning, think more logically, and understand situations with increasing objectivity. With the support and encouragement of parents and teachers, children become competent and confident.

## Approaches to Understanding

It is not easy to understand children's cognitive or intellectual development, particularly when children are young and can't tell us what they know or think. Developmental psychologists focus on how babies and toddlers use language and how their visual perception changes as they increasingly prefer complex images. Psychologists also watch how toddlers and preschoolers play, becoming skilled at pretending and playing different roles.

Information-processing theories—an approach first used to study the adult thought process—have influenced the study of cognitive development in children as well. These models assume that the mind is a system for storing, processing, and responding to information, much like a computer.

But the theory most profoundly influencing education and understanding of changes in a child's thinking has been Jean Piaget's stages of cognitive development.

### Jean Piaget

The Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1896–1980) observed that children have different levels of understanding at different ages. They don't think the way adults do. And their response to a situation depends on their level of understanding at that point in time. Ask a three-year-old girl, whose thinking is still self-centered, what her mother wants for her birthday, and she is likely to say a doll. She can't yet understand that another person has different desires from her own.

Piaget theorized **four** stages of cognitive development:

#### 1. Sensorimotor Stage (birth to 2 years).

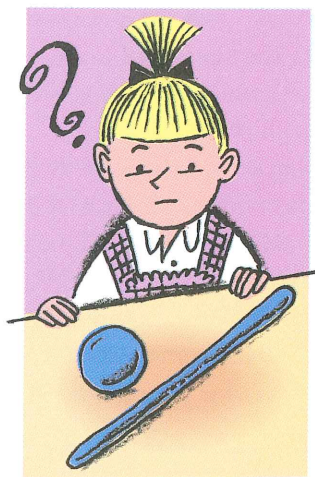
Children learn to coordinate sensory and motor activity; explore their bodies; manipulate objects; and begin to understand that people and things exist even if they can't see them.

#### 2. Preoperational Stage (2 to 7 years).

Children use language and try to make sense of the world; test thoughts; have a self-centered view of the world; and start to classify objects and learn to count.

#### 3. Concrete Operational Stage (7 to 11 or 12 years).

Children collect things and use logic to solve problems. A Piagetian experiment illustrates this stage: A child is shown two equal balls of clay and watches as one is rolled out into a snake. A preoperational child will think the two balls now have different amounts of clay, but the child who has mastered concrete operations will know that they have the same amount despite the change in shape.





**4. Formal Operational Stage (12 years to adult).** Children use abstract thinking; can form hypotheses without physically moving objects and test them mentally; and can think about thinking.

Russian psychologist Lev Vygotskii, a contemporary of Piaget, criticized Piaget's theory on the grounds that it represented the child as intellectually on his or her

own, working things out through his or her own actions. Vygotskii felt that culture, society, and adults were important to the development of a child's thoughts. Though much of Piaget's theory has stood the test of time, increasing evidence since the 1970s suggests that some of the methods Piaget used to test children may have led to underestimating some of their abilities.



### **Paying Attention to ADHD**

Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is so common it is sometimes referred to as the common cold of psychiatry. More than 2.5 million children have been diagnosed with ADHD, and in 10 to 50 percent of the cases, the symptoms continue into adulthood. Children with ADHD have trouble paying attention, they act and speak impulsively, and they can't seem to sit still. They usually have normal intelligence yet have trouble in school and in relating with other children.

There have been disputes among experts and parents about ADHD. Some claim that ADHD is overdiagnosed and that too many children are taking medication to treat it. Some experts question whether ADHD even exists. Recent research has come a long way in answering

these questions. A brain scan, for example, is now being investigated as a tool to help in the diagnosis of ADHD.

Although the exact cause is not known, it is now thought that ADHD involves the disruption of the neurotransmitters norepinephrine and dopamine. It also appears that ADHD has a strong hereditary component.

A large study conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health reported in 1999 that stimulant drugs such as Ritalin were more effective than behavioral therapy for ADHD symptoms. The combination of both drug and behavioral therapy didn't help ADHD symptoms much more than drugs alone, the six-center study found. However, the combination did help treat the other mental disorders that are often seen in children with ADHD, such as depression, learning disorders, anxiety, or defiant behavior.



## Acquiring Language

Hannah, age two, is alone in the kitchen while her mother talks on the telephone. She sees a carton of eggs on the table and happily begins to plop the eggs one by one onto the linoleum floor. Her mother returns and hears Hannah saying to herself as each egg splatters, "No, no, no, bad." She anticipated her mother's response, but it didn't stop her from breaking the eggs!

When Hannah is a little older, words will have enough meaning to stop her before she touches the eggs. The development of thought and reasoning processes depends on learning words and how to manipulate words into language. Words also provide the first key to impulse control and development of a conscience.

Learning language is an immensely complex task, yet children seem to master it in a relatively short period of time. By age five, children have acquired most of the language abilities of an adult—with some rough edges, such as incorrect grammar!

There are two parts to language: what we understand and what we can say. If you've taken classes in a second language, you know that what you can understand often is more advanced than what you can say. This is true for babies learning their native language, too.

Babies in the first year coo, babble, combine syllables, and start saying their first words. They begin to change the pitch of their words, raising the tone at the end of the word as if asking a question. "Mi?" with a raise of tone at the end conveys the question, "Can I have milk?" "Dat?" means, "What is that?"—a question asked

over and over again when babies about 14 to 18 months old realize things have names. Primitive sentences take form at about 18 to 24 months old: "No eat," "Me go," "Me want." These youngsters are learning to use words to communicate.

Children learn a great deal from the responses of the adults around them. When parents answer a child's babbling with "baby talk," the child learns the give and take of conversation: First I say something, you answer, and so on. They get clues about the meaning of words from the context. "Wave bye-bye to grandma," the parent says as grandma leaves the house and gets into her car. The child follows the parent's gaze and learns something new watching grandma drive away.

There are different theories about how language develops. Do children gradually learn to speak and understand language because they learn to imitate sounds and are reinforced for doing so? Or are they born, as linguist Noam Chomsky theorizes, with some sort of innate language acquisition device, a genetically inherited ability to discern grammar, the basic principles of language?

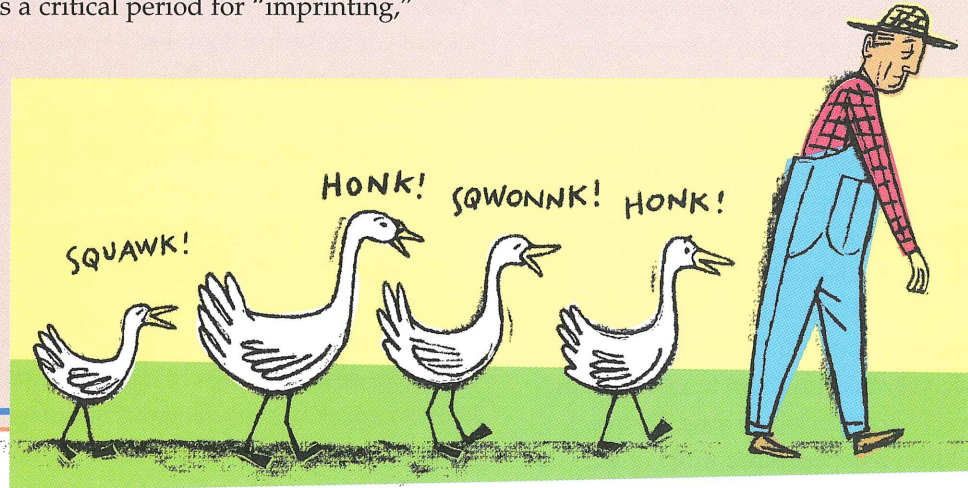
One question key to language acquisition as well as other areas of child development asks whether there are **critical periods**, specific times during development when something is learned or it doesn't happen at all. Eric Lenneberg, for example, agrees with Chomsky that we're born with principles of language, but he believes there is a deadline for applying them. If our first language is not acquired by puberty, it may be too late.



### Lorenz and Imprinting

The study of critical periods in animals led to a search for similar periods in human development. In 1952, animal behaviorist Konrad Lorenz showed that in ducks there was a critical period for “imprinting,”

when the ducks were programmed to respond to the image of their mother. If the mother wasn't there at the critical time, Lorenz demonstrated that the ducklings would follow him or another substitute.



### Isolation

The critical period hypothesis was put to the test when a horrendous case turned up in California in the early 1970s. A 13-year-old girl was discovered who had been locked up alone in a barren room tied to a potty-chair for most of her life, with virtually no exposure to sounds or voices. She could barely talk or walk and was completely uncivilized. Doctors at first were optimistic that with a nurturing environment and loving care she could overcome her nightmarish past.

A linguist who worked with her commented that this girl they called “Genie” wanted desperately to recode her world with words, pointing to objects to get their labels. The words she first learned were different from words babies first learn; she learned words for emotions—*angry*, *sad*, *excited*—and for colors and shapes. She learned to read simple words.

But after a while, her progress slowed and she never really learned to talk. She couldn't seem to put words together in a normal grammatical way; she would say, “Applesauce buy store” for “We need to buy applesauce at the store.”



The same thing happened in the case of the French “wild boy” mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. After early progress, neither child ever completely learned to talk or become “civilized.” Does that mean that they missed a critical period in the development of language acquisition, attachment, and other aspects of child development? Were they retarded at birth or retarded by years of isolation? These cases and others like them provide evidence for, but can’t prove, the critical period hypothesis.

## Social and Emotional Development

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Such extreme cases of isolation do, however, underline the importance of human contact in infancy and early childhood. A caring connection with a parent brings trust, attachment, and nourishment of mind and body. It is the emotional foundation from which self-control, self-esteem, understanding right from wrong, curiosity, and motivation emanate.

Piaget said little about a child’s emotional life, since his focus was on intellectual growth, but he did write that every intelligent act is accompanied by feelings of interest, pleasure, and effort. These feelings provide the motivation that sparks intellectual growth.

A prime example of the way children’s cognitive, social, and emotional development interact is in the way they play.

## Child’s Play

Play has a purpose. It encourages interpersonal relationships, creativity, exploration, and the joy of living. It enhances learning and the use of language. Watching children at play—what they say and do and what they paint or draw—provides psychologists with insights about what is on children’s minds.

A child who pushes a boat around is the captain. The child is in charge and acts out his or her own ideas. The child, not the parents, is in control of his or her play. If there is a new baby in the house, a child may use dolls or stuffed animals to act out his or her feelings. A child can use playtime to explore the natural world by sifting sand from one container to the other. A child can learn how to concentrate by patiently placing one block on top of the other. A child can get pleasure by knocking over the blocks, and he or she can learn to deal with anger when another child knocks them down.

Through play, children gain confidence. Though at 18 months their play is mainly solitary, they like to have other children around them. By three, children play together, learn to get along, take turns, and share. They learn to use words and not actions (such as hitting and biting) to show anger. Play is the magic elixir of child development.

Pretending and imagination are important aspects of playing. Toddlers enjoy sipping tea with a favorite doll or talking with stuffed animals. They make airplane noises while pretending to fly around the



house. Preschoolers love to dress up in costumes or play kitchen or store. They act the part of mommy or daddy going to work and coming home again to see their children. Their play often models the behavior of the adults around them.

A child's first friends often are parents and siblings. They play peekaboo and "this little piggy went to market," and they make funny faces at each other. Friends start to take on importance by age four or five. By the time children start school, they can actively choose with whom they will play. Children usually become less self-absorbed and more social as they interact more with others in school.

### Social Competence

Children learn to give and receive, express their feelings and ideas, and make choices. This helps them develop **social competence**, mastering the social, emotional, and cognitive skills and behaviors that are needed to succeed as members of society.

The social skills and self-confidence needed to form friendships with other children are critical to social competence. Most of the time, difficulties getting along with others are short-lived, but some children have chronic problems forming friendships. Other children find these children's behavior annoying. It might be bossy, self-centered, or disruptive. Such children get angry easily or don't follow the rules of a game. How a child handles the social interaction necessary in games with rules predicts popularity.

Early problems with social competence often predict future problems in school, poor self-esteem, and mental health disorders. It is critical to help children who display such behavior. The ways to help a child develop social competence vary with the age of the child. Methods often include training in social skills, such as how to enter a group, how to be a fair player in games (follow rules, take turns), how to have a conversation, and how to solve problems and get what is wanted without anger.

### Socialization

Play is also a means of **socialization**, in effect introducing a child to the accepted way of doing things in a given society. In the United States, for example, we encourage independence of thought and competitiveness. We start children very young at playing team games, and we cheer them on to win. In a cross-cultural example, the children of Tengu in New Guinea play games that don't end in one team winning; the end of the game comes when the two sides have achieved equality.

Society also influences differences in **gender roles**, which are attitudes and activities associated with each sex. Boys and girls are socialized to play in different ways and with different kinds of toys. Despite a conscious effort on the part of parents and teachers to reduce gender-role stereotyping, boys and girls are treated differently from birth. Girls are treated more gently and encouraged to be expressive and nurturing; boys are encouraged to be more independent, competitive, and outgoing.

There seem to be some inborn differences in addition to the biological sex differences. Boys tend to be more physically active and aggressive, preferring noisy play that requires large groups and spaces. Boys may not play house or play with a doll in the same way as girls do, but when told it is okay, they enjoy dolls, too. Action figures are typically dolls with male cartoon-character themes. Alternatively, girls can be just as rough-and-tumble as boys.

As the roles of men and women have changed at home and in the workplace, many parents and educators have attempted to neutralize socialization along gender lines. Children may see both their mothers and fathers go to work, they may see both parents cooking, cleaning, and shopping for groceries. Yet somehow it is still conveyed to them that there are different expectations for boys and girls.

### Becoming a Moral Person

With so much violence on our streets, in our homes, and even in our schools, never has the issue of how a child learns right from wrong, good from bad, seemed so important. The study of **moral development**, how children develop the system of values on which they base their actions in life, has been a focus of psychologists since Lawrence Kohlberg (1927–1987) expanded on the thoughts of Piaget in the 1970s.

Among several approaches to the study of moral development are the following **three** theories:

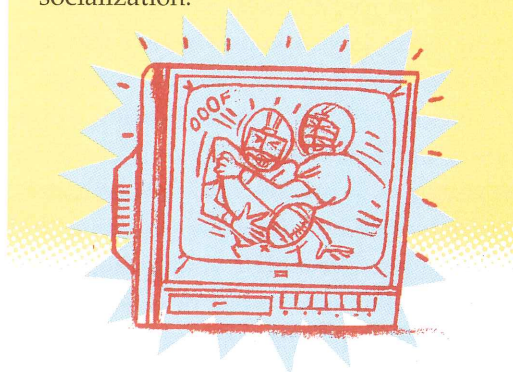
#### Sidebar



#### TV as Teacher

Childhood is disappearing, argues psychologist Neil Postman, as a result of the new media environment: television, rock videos, computers, and film. These media erase the dividing line between childhood and adulthood, exposing young children to adult issues such as sex, illness, death, and war. Children learn from TV, but the lessons are not age-appropriate.

Think of some of the ways that television serves as an agent of socialization.



##### 1. Behavioral/Social Learning Approach.

People develop morality by learning the rules of acceptable behavior; they are born with no moral sense.

**2. Personality Approach.** This theory focuses on how the factors involved in personality development also affect moral development.

**3. Cognitive Development Approach.** This theory focuses on the development of the reasoning powers necessary to be moral.

Kohlberg, a cognitive psychologist, proposed six stages of moral judgment. They start with an emphasis on avoiding punishment and getting rewards, progress to a level where winning approval from friends and conforming to laws and customs is important, and finally advance to a level where a personal moral code is formed.

Kohlberg's work spurred other theorists to fill in missing pieces. Carol Gilligan, for example, pointed out that in western cultures, girls and women may respond to moral dilemmas differently from boys and men, tending to add an aspect of caring as a moral value.

Theorists who study the development of morality differ over the question of whether people are born with any moral sense. Some psychologists believe that the emotions that form the basis of morality are present at birth: empathy, caring, admiration, outrage, shame, and guilt. A child as young as 18 months can show concern when mother is crying by approaching and hugging her. Certainly a young child feels the sting of injustice when he or she cries, "That's not fair." These natural emotions help children define and redefine their values, testing them through other social interactions.

Morality isn't developed in isolation. Children's positive moral feelings need to be encouraged by the adults in their lives and their negative urges need to be redirected. These adults need to be role models demonstrating not just "Do as I say" but "Do as I do." Few children, or adults for that matter, do the right thing all the time. It is lifelong work to be a moral person.

## The Psychological Theory of Development

A profoundly influential theory of how a child develops into a social being was unveiled in 1950 with the publication of Erik Erikson's *Childhood and Society*. Erikson broke with the views of the famous Sigmund Freud that held sway until that time. Rather than seeing a child's development as a series of sexual conflicts, as Freud had, Erikson viewed it in terms of social/emotional conflicts. Erikson, who had studied psychoanalysis under Anna Freud, Sigmund Freud's daughter, saw development as a lifelong process, with significant stages well beyond Freud's emphasis on the first few years of life.

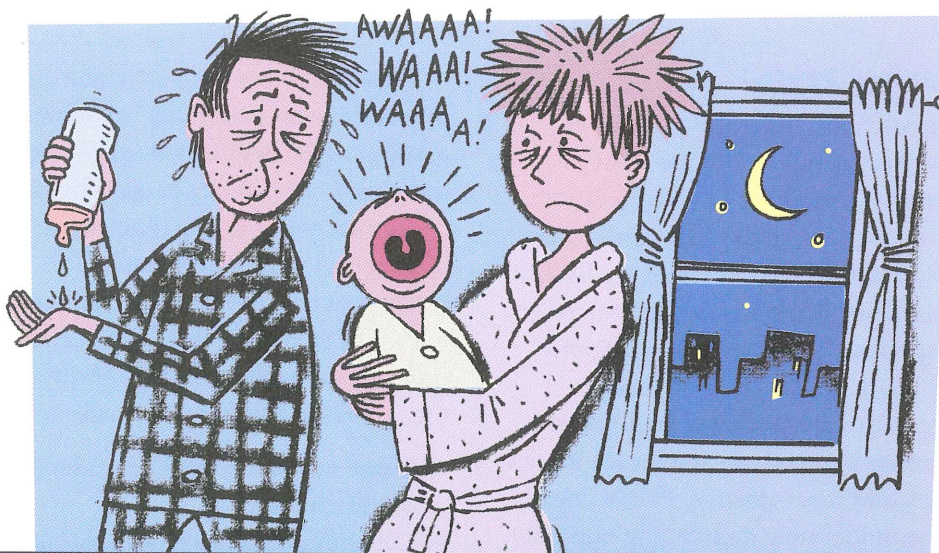
Erikson's psychosocial theory of development consists of eight stages, each focused on resolving a conflict. (See the chart on the next page.)

## The Fabric of Family

The birth of a child is like a revolution in the household. Nothing will ever be the same again. Sleep is disrupted. Everyone is uncertain about what to do. No one appears to be in control, except maybe the new baby, who seems like a tyrant with insatiable needs!

In the best of circumstances, when two parents are involved, it takes a lot of hard work to care, love, and guide this new child. With compromises by all involved—parents, grandparents, other relatives, and siblings—a fabric of family is woven.





### Erikson's Psychosocial Theory of Development

Age	Psychosocial Conflict	Description
Infancy	Trust versus mistrust	Basic needs must be met through trusting relationships or child will learn to mistrust the world.
Toddler (1 to 3 years)	Autonomy versus shame and doubt	Child learns control over body functions and own activities; starts making choices.
Preschooler (3 to 5 years)	Initiative versus guilt	Child actively explores; tests limits of self-assertion.
School age (6 to 12 years)	Industry versus inferiority	Child overcomes feelings of inadequacy; masters new tasks and skills.
Adolescence (12 to 19 years)	Identity versus role diffusion	Adolescent experiences confusion among various role models; solves "identity crisis," a term Erikson coined.
Young adulthood (19 to 25 years)	Intimacy versus isolation	Young adult commits to an intimate relationship and/or career direction.
Adulthood (25 to 50 years)	Generativity versus stagnation	Adult creates something enduring, such as children or work.
Maturity	Ego integrity versus despair	Adult has resolved the conflicts of previous stages; has gained the wisdom and strength to face frailty and death without despair.

## Parenting Style

The parent-child relationship is one of the most important—if not the most important—relationships in our lives. Studies over the past 30 years point to features of this relationship that are linked to a child's psychological development: how responsive the parents are and how demanding they are. The best profile seems to be parents who are responsive—warm, accepting, and are able to see things from the child's perspective. Parents need also to be moderately demanding and offer consistent standards for behavior.

Couples may find they have different ideas about the best way to parent. They may disagree about how much television they should allow, what religion to raise their children in, and how to discipline. Differences are inevitable, and couples must work hard to communicate and nurture their own relationship as well as their relationship with their child.

Many pressures beset families these days: long work hours, fatigue, juggling work and family, endless chores, and so forth. Often relatives don't live close together and aren't available to offer their love and support on a frequent basis.

## Divorce

Half of all marriages end in divorce, a difficult emotional experience for parents and their children. It is likely that you or a friend of yours has had first-hand experience with divorce.

How children react to divorce depends on their age and ability to understand and express what they're feeling. Young children need consistency in their lives and are concerned about losing their home, friends, and contact with both parents.

Psychologist Judith Wallerstein, an authority on the effects of divorce on children, proposes that children of divorce have the following psychological tasks to face:

- \* Come up with a realistic understanding of the divorce.
- \* Get enough distance from the situation to continue with their lives.
- \* Handle their anger.
- \* Deal with guilt (the belief that the divorce was their fault).
- \* Face the fact that divorce is permanent.
- \* Be optimistic that in the future they can have a happy relationship or marriage.

Studies link the effects of parents' divorce with emotional and behavioral problems, school drop-out rates, trouble with the law, and difficulties forming intimate relationships. Yet psychologists also acknowledge that it may be more damaging for a child when a troubled marriage continues.

Another adjustment hurdle after divorce is the remarriage of parents to others. For children, remarriage of parents and the blending of families raises a new set of problems, particularly for young adolescents who are coming to grips with their own changes.



## Death in the Family

Almost every child faces the death of someone close—relative, friend, or pet. In fact, 5 percent of children under age 15 will lose one or both parents. Death means different things to different children, depending on their age, how close they were to the person who died, and the family's religious beliefs.

Just because a small child hardly seems to notice the loss does not mean he or she hasn't felt it. Even school-age children, who understand death, may act as though nothing happened because they are so overwhelmed. Others may have physical symptoms—a headache or a stomachache—or behavior changes, such as not wanting to go to school or letting their schoolwork suffer.

Research suggests that, beginning between ages five and seven, children should participate in the rituals surrounding death, such as funerals. Death should be openly acknowledged and children should see their parents grieve.

## Effects of Poverty

In the United States, money is the key to opportunity. It may not be the key to happiness, but if you don't have enough to put food on the table at the end of the month when the bills are due, this is irrelevant.

Nationwide in 1998, 18.9 percent of all children under the age of 18 were living in poverty, defined by federal guidelines as

an annual income below \$16,660 for a family of four. Many of these children live in single-parent homes, often with never-married mothers.

Poverty affects all areas of a child's life. Children living in poverty are more likely to suffer health problems; poor nutrition; physical, mental, and learning disabilities; lower self-esteem; and more violence and stress in their lives. Poverty is related to both academic failure and extreme delinquency.

## Child Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse and neglect violate all we know about what a child needs to thrive in this world.

Blame it on drugs or alcohol, cycles of poverty, a violent society, or poor parental role modeling. The fact remains that one million children annually are victims of abuse or neglect, usually by parents or a family member.

Children who have been abused often show signs—either right away or years later—of post-traumatic stress disorder, which means they may feel emotionally numb, guilty or fearful; they may relive episodes of abuse; or they may develop depression. Children who were abused tend to abuse their own children. But the cycle of abuse can be broken, as numerous studies have shown. Egeland, Jacobvitz, and Sroufe in 1988, for example, identified

some factors shared by women who had been abused as children but who didn't abuse their own children. These women:

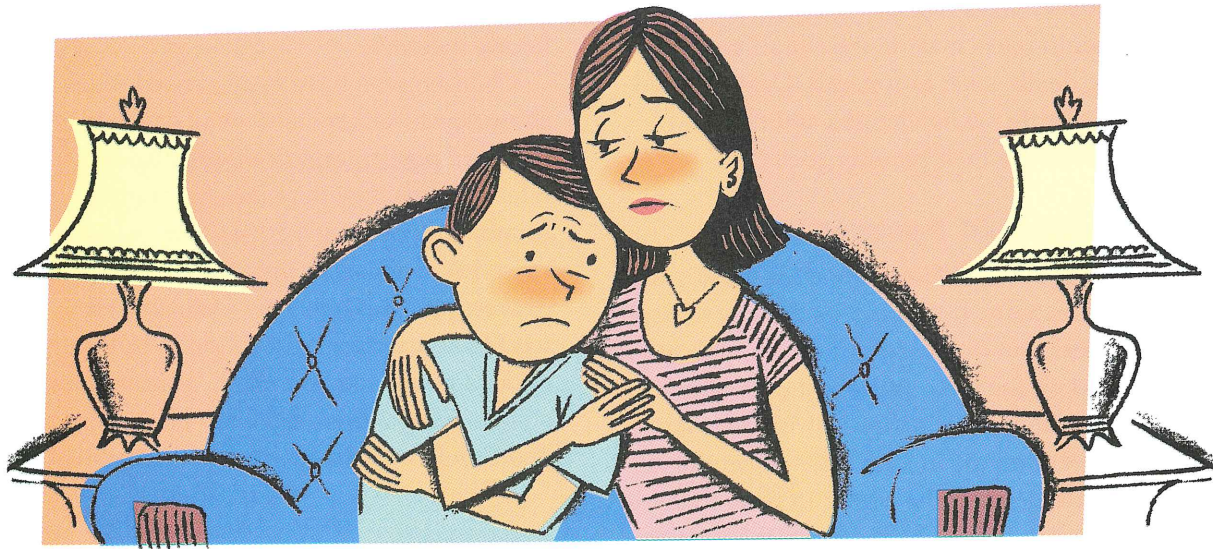
- \* Had emotional support from a non-abusing adult in childhood.
- \* Had undergone therapy at some point in their lives.
- \* Had a satisfying relationship with a mate.

### Resilience

Despite the odds, despite the bad things that can happen to children—abuse, poverty, death in the family, mentally ill or drug-addicted parents—many clearly do all right. They grow up to lead productive lives. Research has shown that most of

us are born with a potential for **resilience**, a protective resistance to the negative messages and events that happen in life.

To tap into this resilience, people need social competence and the problem-solving skills to plan and seek help. It takes an awareness on the part of the child that something really major is wrong, that he or she is not to blame and can have control over his or her environment. It often depends on the presence of at least one caring person: a relative, a teacher, or someone in the community. Resilience ultimately means having a sense of purpose and optimism.





# CRITICAL THINKING



## Can Violence Be Stopped?

Aggressiveness in early childhood is the single best predictor of violent behavior later in life. What can be done to stop it? Read about the issues below and suggest solutions.

### THE ISSUES

Violence in the streets and the schools of our nation appears to be on the rise. Looking through the magnifying glass of the media, we are left each time wondering how a violent incident could have been foreseen and prevented.

Research shows that aggression is a learned behavior that develops through observation, imitation, experience, and rehearsal, according to an American Psychological Association policy paper on preventing violence. Helping a young child to find alternatives to aggressive behavior is an important step in preventing

later violence. Children need role models, emotional support, and strategies to control their anger and frustration and to learn to deal more effectively when conflicts arise with other children. They can learn that there are other ways to get what they want besides aggression.

But is preventing violence as simple as this might seem? What kinds of factors that lead to violent behavior later in life might be left out of this approach?

### THE PROCESS

- 1 **Restate the issues.** In your own words, state the question.
- 2 **Provide evidence.** List different *sources of violence in childhood* and other factors that might lead to violent behavior.
- 3 **Give opposing arguments.** List factors that affect violence that may be *unchangeable*. Consider the evidence about the roots of aggression in the brain.
- 4 **Look for more information.** Use the Internet, newspapers, and books to learn more about *aggression* and *violence* in our society and what can be done to prevent it. Add to your list.
- 5 **Evaluate the information.** Where does the strongest weight of evidence seem to be? Underline these factors in your lists.
- 6 **Draw conclusions.** Write two paragraphs describing your suggestions for preventing violence. Be sure to support your ideas with evidence.

## Chapter 12 Wrap-up

### CHILDHOOD

*Childhood is a magical time. From genetics, influences of family and friends, and life experiences emerges a young individual. Children progress through fairly predictable stages as they grow physically, cognitively, socially, and emotionally. The end result, however, is as different as each of our thumbprints. These are difficult times for families, for some more difficult than others. But most people have the potential for resilience that carries them forward with purpose and optimism to a bright future.*

### Psychology



**attachment**—emotional bond between infants and their parents. *p. 194*

**cognitive development**—changes over time in the way we think, learn, reason, and acquire language. *p. 190*

**critical periods**—times in development when the environment has the greatest impact for specific learning. *p. 199*

**developmental psychology**—field that studies the many changes that occur as an infant grows into an adult. *p. 190*

**emotional development**—changes that take place over time in feelings and emotions and the development of personality. *p. 190*

**gender roles**—expressions of the identity associated with maleness or femaleness. *p. 202*

**maturation**—orderly, predictable process of growing up. *p. 190*

**moral development**—how children develop the system of values on which they base their actions in life. *p. 203*

**physical development**—growth and development over time of the body. *p. 190*

**post-traumatic stress disorder**—

symptoms felt by someone who has experienced or witnessed such traumatic events as child abuse, violence, or war. *p. 207*

**prenatal development**—growth that occurs before birth. *p. 191*

**resilience**—ability to bounce back and do well despite the things that go wrong in life. *p. 208*

**social competence**—mastery of the social, emotional, and cognitive skills necessary to succeed as a member of society. *p. 202*

**social development**—changes in how we relate to others and form our own sense of self. *p. 190*

**socialization**—process by which children learn the beliefs, values, and accepted behaviors of their society. *p. 202*

**temperament**—an individual's style in responding emotionally to situations. *p. 194*