

Psychological & Behavioral Changes of Adolescence

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Objectives:

- By the end of this lecture, you will be able to:
 - Know the adolescence definition.
 - Know the physical changes in adolescence.
 - Know the behavioral changes in adolescence.
 - Know the emotional changes in adolescence.
 - Know the cognitive changes in adolescence.
 - Know the social changes in adolescence.

Adolescence

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines **adolescents** as those people between 10 and 19 years of age.

The great majority of adolescents are, therefore, included in the age-based definition of "**child**", adopted by the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, as a person under the age of 18 years.

Other overlapping terms used in this report are **youth** (defined by the United Nations as 15–24 years) and **young people** (10–24 years), a term used by WHO and others to combine adolescents and youth.

Adolescence

Adolescence is a period of global & pervasive changes and not a matter of developmental crisis.

Most of adolescents pass through it smoothly.

Averagely, it expands between 12 & 20 yr of age.

The period of adolescence lasts till the individual becomes a young man or woman.

"My 15 year old son..."

" My 15 year old son, Saif, is rude, won't talk at dinner, wants to just hang out in his room, won't share any information with us, cares more about his electronics than anything, becomes irrational when we confront him, hogs the bathroom, is highly emotionally reactive, and has lied, snuck out and smokes cigarettes sometimes and violated our internet rules."

"A website on drug abuse cited these warning signs:

- withdrawal
- moodiness
- increased family conflict
- argumentativeness
- over-reactivity to criticism
- sloppiness in appearance
- spending time isolating in room
- poor attitude
- disrespect
- loss of interest in family activities."

"Does my son have a drug abuse problem?"

Context of adolescent development:

- Family
- Peers & friends
- School
- Media

Teen Brain NASCAR Metaphor

- **Big engine**—maturing bodies, independence-striving
- **Poor Driver**—immature PFC and judgment
- **Faulty Brake system**—immature inhibitory mechanisms in PFC
- **High octane fuel**—hormones

Physical Development

AT YOUR AGE, TOMMY,
A BOY'S BODY GOES
THROUGH CHANGES
THAT ARE NOT ALWAYS
EASY TO UNDERSTAND.



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- Puberty
- Primary sexual characters
- Secondary sexual characters
- Increased hormonal release
- Fast & disproportional growth
- Health status.

Psychological consequences of physical changes:

- embarrassment
- sensitivity to criticism
- social isolation
- sadness
- irritability

Cognitive Development

- IQ & special talents
- Attention span & concentration
- Perception & deep meanings
- Memorizing
- Day-dreams
- Thinking
- Idealism
- Independence.
- Identity.

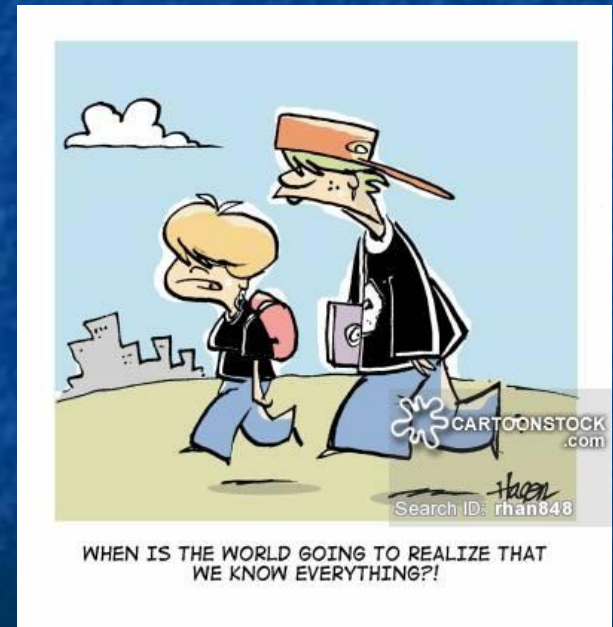


Table 2.1

Piaget's Four Stages of Cognitive Development

Stage	Description	Age Range
Sensorimotor	An infant progresses from reflexive, instinctual action at birth to the beginning of symbolic thought. The infant constructs an understanding of the world by coordinating sensory experiences with physical actions.	Birth to 2 years
Preoperational	The child begins to represent the world with words and images; these words and images reflect increased symbolic thinking and go beyond the connection of sensory information and physical action.	2 to 7 years
Concrete operational	The child can now reason logically about concrete events and classify objects into different sets.	7 to 11 years
Formal operational	The adolescent reasons in more abstract and logical ways. Thought is more idealistic.	11 to 15 years

Social Development

“The conflict between the need to belong to a group and the need to be seen as unique and individual is the dominant struggle of adolescence ”

Jeanne Elium

Social Development

- Social relationship during adolescence
- Relationship with parents
- Relationship with peers



Emotional development

- Extreme & inconsistent
- Impulsivity & recklessness
- Anger & easily provocation
- Looking for self-assertion
- Authority resistance
- Critical comments
- Love & romance.



"My 15 year old son..."

Remember Saif's "warning signs":

- withdrawal
- moodiness
- increased family conflict
- argumentativeness
- over-reactivity to criticism
- sloppiness in appearance
- spending time isolating in room
- poor attitude
- disrespect
- loss of interest in family activities."

In the context of positive reports about functioning in family, school, extracurricular activities, emotional/social life, Saif is likely experiencing normal adolescent development.

Take homes

- Remember your own teen vulnerabilities—it will enhance your empathy
- Normal adolescent development is usually messy—so you'll hear about messy behaviors and see them too—even when they are healthy!
- A comprehensive teen, parent, and social system review is the only way to evaluate many of the problems you are consulted about (e.g. drugs, depression, etc).
- Most morbidity and mortality among adolescents has psychosocial/behavioral components, so focusing just on “medical issues” is not an option.
- Because teens are vulnerable, fascinating and challenging, they can be among your most rewarding patients when you connect with them in a genuine way!

In summary,

- Assess the “big picture” of a teen’s life
- Appreciate that diversity includes many domains
- Find something in the teen to appreciate
- Be curious
- Remember your own vulnerable teen moments
- Be authentic, humble and sincere