



On Adolescence and its Problems

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On Adolescence and its Problems

- ▶ **The Adolescent Revolt (move to peers, etc)**
- ▶ **Increase in the malignancy of the adolescent revolt**
- ▶ **Casualties increased significantly now (suicide)**
- ▶ **They are more malignant than they were (drugs)**

Sources of Problems

There are five different sources of behavioral problems and symptoms in adolescence:

- 1) Left over from the conflicts of the developmental phases that precede adolescence
- 2) Derived from the intrapsychic conflicts typical of adolescence

Sources of Problems

- 3. Derived from the impact that special environmental conditions have on the internal problems of the adolescence during this stage (developmental interferences). There are two types:**
 - a) Parental developmental interferences (bodily seductive mother or father for example, not wanting them to grow, anxiety about and rejection of their developing sexuality, etc)**
 - b) Social or environmental interferences (changes from generation to generation)**

Sources of Problems

4. Due to peer group pressure
5. Due to conflicts between opposite ego and superego ideals.

What has changed?

- ▶ **The drives (instinctual impulses) have not changed**
- ▶ **The tasks the adolescent must accomplish before reaching adulthood have not changed**
- ▶ **Changes in society and child rearing practices may account for some of the problems:**

What has changed?

- ▶ **Role played by the family organization in development has been gradually undermined, distorted and disrupted (broken marriages, divorces, parents abusing drugs, etc)**
- ▶ **The affluence of present day society. We live by the pleasure principle (buy today pay tomorrow!)**
- ▶ **Child rearing practices too permissive, leading to an inability to postpone gratification, accept substitutes, learning to establish controls, learning to wait etc**

What has changed?

- ▶ Teenagers are allowed by some parents to come and go freely, without supervision either of hours, individuals or groups with which they mix
- ▶ The widespread use of drugs among children and adolescents (sometimes copying parents)
- ▶ The increase in promiscuity generally and among teenagers in particular

What has changed?

- ▶ The increase in sexually transmitted diseases
- ▶ The increase in AIDS (high risk group, high school)
- ▶ All the above aggravated by adolescent omnipotence and at times omniscience
- ▶ During these years, they are an easy prey to the negative influence of the environment and specially of their most disturbed peers
- ▶ Need to move away from parents aggravates all this

What can be done?

- ▶ **Parents need to provide sheltering and support against such negative influences**
- ▶ **Parents need to continue to play the role of ego and superego auxiliaries as required**
- ▶ **This should be done sensibly and with full awareness of the adolescents needs and rights**

What can be done?

- ▶ **Abandonment of the young adolescent to his internal and external struggles for the sake of peace is at best a disservice to them and may lead to very undesirable consequences**
- ▶ **Indifference is always worse than legitimate concern**
- ▶ **Parents confusion about their parental roles is due to their having been subjected themselves to poor parenting (no role models)**

What can be done?

- ▶ **The above becomes a vicious circle going on from generation to generation**
- ▶ **Potential dangers of day care centers**
- ▶ **Adolescents have become a market of billions of dollars. They are constantly assaulted, manipulated and bombarded with inappropriate stimuli by the media**
- ▶ **Still worse they are a market for drug peddlers and the like**

Societal Developmental Interferences

- ▶ All the above constitutes an example of what we call collective or societal developmental interferences
- ▶ Forces in society have organized to exploit these new markets without any concern of the results in the development of adolescents (movies, T.V., etc)
- ▶ Unfortunately, many of these things are spreading down to younger children as well

What adolescents need to master

In the “boiling melting pot” of adolescence many things need to be accomplished:

- ▶ Some attempts at resolution of the conflicts of dependence-independence, adult-child, active-passive and masculine feminine.
- ▶ Better control of pre-genital impulses through repression, sublimation, reaction formation, etc
- ▶ Reasonable controls of genital impulses

What adolescents need to master

- ▶ **Establishment of definite and firm ego boundaries with good mapping of the body-self and the psychological-self to include breasts, vagina, and uterus.**
- ▶ **More definite emotional separation of parental figures**
- ▶ **New binding of loving and sexual yearnings for non-incestuous and sex appropriate objects**

Developmental Tasks of Adolescence

WHAT ARE THE DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS OF ADOLESCENCE?

- ▶ In early adolescence they need to join a community of peers, a second step towards independence with continuing re-evaluation of parents (explain differences with latency)
- ▶ As mentioned, a more definite degree of independence from the primary objects (made difficult now by the length of education)
- ▶ Role of education in the formation of ego ideals, superego and superego ideals

Developmental Tasks of Adolescence

- ▶ **The search for a final identity:**
 - ▶ **Sexual identity**
 - ▶ **Professional identity (sometimes delayed)**
 - ▶ **A personal, individual identity**
 - ▶ **The establishment of a personal moral code**

Adolescent Girls' Development

What about adolescent girls development?

- ▶ Much more complex than boys for socio-cultural and biological reasons
- ▶ Societal roles as assigned until recently are changing rapidly and rightly so but there are consequences such as more delinquency, girl's gangs, more aggression etc
- ▶ Like in males, adolescence brings sexual biological maturity, with pregnancy a possibility

Adolescent Girls' Development

- ▶ Needs to accomplish a basic feminine identification for her possible future role as a wife and a mother. Other roles now i.e professional careers etc
- ▶ Attitude to puberty (breast development etc) and menses
- ▶ Usually, these are prized achievements of puberty with girls comparing size of breast etc
- ▶ At times these changes are frightening, felt as shameful and undesirable

Adolescent Girls' Development

- ▶ **Role of mother's attitude in the outcome of the above.**
- ▶ **Role of the father in promoting femenity or not**
- ▶ **Some times mothers become envious and hostile at the budding femininity of their daughters**
- ▶ **Some people worries about so-called tomboys but most of them develop into sweet feminine women**

What Parents Can Do

What can parents do?

- ▶ **Exercise discreet but necessary caution:**
 - ▶ Do you know where your children are?
 - ▶ Do you know who they are with?
 - ▶ Do you know what they are doing?
 - ▶ Do you see them when they come back in the evening?
 - ▶ Do they look different to you or other family members?
 - ▶ Do you think they were drinking, look high, depressed, or overly excited?

What Parents Can Do

- ▶ **Are they doing well at school ?**
- ▶ **Are you aware of your genetic background?**
- ▶ **Watch for changes in their personality such as:**
 - ▶ **withdrawal, sadness, character changes, isolation from friends or activities, giving away possessions, depression (risk of suicide), failing at school, change of group and friends, money or things missing etc**