

PROBLEMS OF ADOLESCENCE

**COURSE: CLINICAL ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION
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ADOLESCENCE

Problems of adolescents

The problem of adolescence is by no means an easy topic to discuss not withstanding that it is so to speak an every day thing. It is often said that the teenage years are the “best years of ones life”. Life for many adolescents is a painful tug of war filled with mixed messages and conflicting demands from parents, teachers, friends, family and oneself. Growing up—negotiating a path between independence and reliance on others—Is a tough business.



PROBLEMS OF ADOLESCENTS

BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS

Adolescence is a time for developing independence. Typically, adolescents exercise their independence by questioning their parents' rules, which at times leads to rule breaking. It is common for once loyal children to begin to grumble when asked to carry out some chores at home and to respond in harsh words when been rebuked by their parents. This is often a challenging time for most parents. Some parents and their adolescents clash over almost everything. In these situations, the core issue is really control—adolescents want to feel in control of their lives and parents want adolescents to know they still make the rules.



BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS

During adolescence, the frequency and severity of violent interactions increase. Although episodes of violence at school are highly publicized, adolescents are much more likely to be involved with violence (or more often the threat of violence) at home and outside of school. Many factors, including developmental issues, gang membership, access to weapons, substance use, and poverty, contribute to an increased risk of violence for adolescents. Of particular concern are adolescents who, in an altercation, cause serious injury or use a weapon. Because adolescents are much more independent and mobile than they were as children, they are often out of the direct physical control of adults. In these circumstances, adolescents' behavior is determined by their own moral and behavioral code. The parents guide rather than directly control the adolescents' actions.



UNWANTED PREGNANCY AND SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES (STDs)

This is as much a problem for the male adolescent as it is for the female but generally, the girls stand a greater risk of this. Due to the development of secondary sexual characteristics following adolescence, teens feel a great push to explore and experiment with their bodies. Teens often equate intimacy with sex. Rather than exploring a deep emotional attachment first, teens tend to assume that if they engage in the physical act, the emotional attachment will follow. Most sexually active adolescents are not fully informed about contraception, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases, including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. As a result, many fall victims of unwanted pregnancies as well as STD's. Because adolescence is a transitional stage in life, pregnancy can add significant emotional stress.

DRUG AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Substance use among adolescents occurs on a spectrum; from experimentation to dependence. Unfortunately, teenagers often don't see the link between their actions today and the consequences tomorrow. They also have a tendency to feel indestructible and immune to the problems that others experience. Alcohol is the biggest culprit in this regard. Teens have access to it at parties, can obtain it from older friends who are of legal age to buy it, or may simply raid their parents' liquor cabinets. Moreover, unlike drug use, the moderate use of alcohol is considered perfectly acceptable in most adult social circles. Teens see their parents enjoying a cocktail after work or having a glass of wine at dinner. Drinking comes to represent a very sophisticated and adult thing to do, after all, mum and Dad do it...why shouldn't I? Using alcohol and tobacco at a young age has negative health effects. While some teens will experiment and stop, or continue to use occasionally, without significant problems. Others will develop a dependency, moving on to more dangerous drugs and causing significant harm to themselves and possibly others.

Teenagers at risk for developing serious alcohol and drug problems include those: with a family history of substance abuse, those who are depressed, those who have low self-esteem, and who feel like they don't fit in or are out of the mainstream.

The majority of adults who smoke cigarettes begin smoking during adolescence. If an adolescent reaches the age of 18 to 19 years without becoming a smoker, it is highly unlikely that he will become a smoker as an adult.




DRUG AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Teenagers abuse a variety of drugs, both legal and illegal. Legally available drugs include alcohol, prescribed medications, Inhalants (fumes from glues, aerosols, and solvents) and over-the-counter cough, cold, sleep, and diet medications. The most commonly used illegal drugs are marijuana (pot), stimulants (cocaine, crack, and speed), opiates, heroin, and designer drugs (Ecstasy). Drug use is associated with a variety of negative consequences, including increased risk of serious drug use later in life, school failure, and poor judgment which may put teens at risk for accidents, violence, unplanned and unsafe sex, crime and suicide. Parents can prevent their children from using drugs by talking to them about drugs, open communication, role modeling, responsible behavior, and recognizing if problems are developing.

PROBLEMS OF ADOLESCENCE

Stress and depression :Stress and depression are serious problems for many teenagers. A 1986 study in High Schools in Minnesota, in the US showed that although 61 percent of the students are depressed and seem to not to handle their problems in constructive ways, 39 percent suffer from mild to severe depression. These young people often rely on passive or negative behaviors in their attempts to deal with problems. (Garfinkel, et al., 1986). Stress is characterized by feelings of tension, frustration, worry, sadness and withdrawal that commonly last from a few hours to a few days. Depression is both more severe and longer lasting.



PROBLEMS OF ADOLESCENCE

Young people become stressed for many reasons. The most common of these are: Break up with boy/girl friend, Increased arguments with parents ,Trouble with brother or sister ,Increased arguments between parents , Change in parents' financial status , Serious illness or injury of family member , and Trouble with classmates. In addition, Children from single parents or broken homes are subjected to a near harrowing experience which brings about Stress and Depression. These stress inducing events are centered in the two most important domains of a teenager's life: home and school. They relate to issues of conflict and loss. Loss can reflect the real or perceived loss of something concrete such as a friend or money, and it can mean the loss of such intrinsic things as self-worth, respect, friendship or love. Young people respond to stress and depression by exhibiting much more anger and ventilation; being passive and aggressive. They yell, fight and complain just about every thing. Drinking, smoking and crying more often- especially the girls- are other popular signs. They are also less inclined to do things with their family or to go along with parents' rules and requests. Ultimately, most young people will develop and assume the responsibility for their own protection and peace of mind. But during the years of learning and practice, parents, teachers and helping adults need to be aware of the signs and patterns that signal danger.

PROBLEMS OF ADOLESCENCE

BULLYING

This is a huge problem that exists among adolescents though it is often neglected in this part of the world. Bullying is the act of intentionally causing harm to others, through verbal harassment, physical assault, or other more subtle methods of coercion such as manipulation. Bullying in school and the workplace is also referred to as peer abuse. In colloquial speech, bullying often describes a form of harassment perpetrated by an abuser who possesses more physical and/or social power and dominance than the victim. The harassment can be verbal, physical and/or emotional. Every day thousands of teens wake up afraid to go to school. Bullying is a problem that affects millions of students of all races and classes. Bullying has everyone worried, not just the kids on its receiving end. Yet because parents, teachers, and other adults don't always see it, they may not understand how extreme bullying can get. Studies show that people who are abused by their peers are at risk for mental health problems, such as low self-esteem, stress, depression, or anxiety. They may also think about suicide more.

Bullies are at risk for problems, too. Bullying is violence, and it often leads to more violent behavior as the bully grows up. It's estimated that 1 out of 4 elementary-school bullies will have a criminal record by the time they are 30. Some teen bullies end up being rejected by their peers and lose friendships as they grow older. Bullies may also fail in school and not have the career or relationship success that other people enjoy. Some bullies actually have personality disorders that don't allow them to understand normal social emotions like guilt, empathy, compassion, or remorse. Such teens need help from a mental health professional like a psychiatrist or psychologist.



PROBLEMS OF ADOLESCENCE

SCHOOLPROBLEMS

The School constitutes a large part of an adolescent's existence. Difficulties in almost any area of life often manifest as school problems. School problems during the adolescent years may be the result of rebellion and a need for independence. Less commonly, they may be caused by mental health disorders, such as anxiety or depression. Substance use, abuse, and family conflict also are common contributors to school problems. Sometimes, inappropriate academic placement—particularly in adolescents with a learning disability or mild mental retardation that was not recognized early in life—causes school problems. ***Particular school problems include fear of going to school, truancy, dropping out, and academic underachievement. Problems that developed earlier in childhood, such as attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and learning disorders, may continue to cause school problems for adolescents.***



PROBLEMS OF ADOLESCENCE

Between 1% and 5% of adolescents develop fear of going to school.

This fear may be generalized or related to a particular person (a teacher or another student) or event at school (such as physical education class or bullying). The adolescent may develop physical symptoms, such as abdominal pain, or may simply refuse to go to school. School personnel and family members should identify the reason, if any, for the fear and encourage the adolescent to attend school. Adolescents experience many more problems which are central problems of adolescence. The factors are: Peer pressure and the Media. Peer-Pressure is a term describing the pressure exerted by a peer group in encouraging a person

to change their attitude, behavior and/or morals, to conform to, for example, the group's actions, fashion sense, taste in music and television, or outlook on life. Peer pressure can also cause people to do things they wouldn't normally do, e.g. take drugs, smoke etc.

PROBLEMS OF ADOLESCENCE

Other Problems of Adolescence Stage

Sex Problems:

We have read that all the aspects of adolescent development are basically conditioned by physical changes. The onset of puberty gives the physical excitement never experienced before. The adolescent reacting to these experiences is excited, often without realizing what is happening to him. Some react with pleasure or excitement and some others experience shame, disgust, confusions, anxiety and guilt. They may lead to sexual maladjustment.



PROBLEMS OF ADOLESCENCE

Emotional Problems:

Heightened emotionality is a major problem of adolescence. Adolescents experience excessive emotion and they do not have sufficient control violence. Excitability and anger may find expression in its destructive form may lead to law and order problem. Emotion of love, suspicion, jealousy, frustration and revengefulness are very common among adolescents. Thus emotional immaturity is a major problem of adolescence.



PROBLEMS OF ADOLESCENCE

Social Problems:

Every society has its own customs and traditions, which it wants to maintain. Every individual has to follow these social values but often the adolescents think all these are out dated and they are not willing to obey. This leads to conflicts. Physical development has many social implications. Sexual development necessarily includes heterosexual orientation and they want to take part in social activities with the opposite sex. The denial of this desire often makes them discontented and restless. Thus, a number of social problems disturb the adolescent.

PROBLEMS OF ADOLESCENCE

Educational Problems:

The environment of the school is also not conducive to meet the interests of the students. Defective method of teaching, curriculum, examination, repressive measures adopted by school, unattractive condition of the school campus are largely responsible for creating frustration among the students.



PROBLEMS OF ADOLESCENCE

Problem of Leisure:

Lack of proper recreational facilities or having nothing to do in their free time leads the adolescents to involvement in some unsocial and criminal activities. Their thoughts and attitudes may turn to be destructive and create serious problem for the society.

