

JOURNEY THROUGH THE LIFE CYCLE

OVERVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES AND TASKS.

Purpose of Overview:

- Help put adolescent years in perspective of entire life cycle.

- Helps us remember where the adolescent in your care has come from and where they are heading because **adolescence is a time when the person is doing just this himself/herself, looking back at what she has achieved, looking back at relationships with parents and family in particular, and looking ahead to life as an independent adult.**

Erik Erikson's model looks at human growth and development in terms of stages throughout the life cycle - from birth to death:

- It presumes that **all this development occurs in the context of relationships**, to other people, starting first with the mother and the infant and expanding outwards to relationship to the whole family, friends and society as the person gets older.

- **AT EACH STAGE THERE IS A PARTICULAR TASK OR EMOTIONAL ACHIEVEMENT TO BE MADE.**

- **Each stage and task builds on the one before it. If the child or young person has been able to achieve the task of the earlier stage he is better prepared and more able to cope with the task of the stage he is in because what went before is fairly secure** - N.B. Like a house – what one is building or working on now will be stronger and stand up to storms if the foundations are firm.

- Important to remember this when thinking of the teenagers in your car. All of them will probably have come from disrupted family situations. They may not have experienced normal, healthy attachments, they may have been abused and neglected, they may have experienced many separations, losses, changes of foster home, i.e. broken relationships, and therefore may have had **difficulty achieving the tasks of earlier stages -so many will be dealing not only with the specific tasks of the adolescent stage but will be struggling to deal with those of earlier stages.**

- **So an awareness of the various tasks achievements you would expect the young person to have made and to be dealing with currently, I hope will be helpful to you in knowing how to respond to him as an individual.**

N.B. Particular stages correspond only roughly to particular ages but are a rough guide to the emotional tasks the child or young person is dealing with.

Another useful guide as to the emotional tasks can be behavior e.g. the two year old who is always saying "no" and wanting to feed himself is trying to achieve a sense of autonomy or a sense of himself as an individual with some control over what he does which is entirely appropriate for his age and stage.

ERIKSON'S STAGES AND TASKS

(1) Infant (0 - 1 year) Trust vs. Mistrust

- **Trust** is the base/foundation for healthy personality and way of relating to world.

- Trust develops in context of relationship to mother and the biological needs which dominate the infant's experience. When biological needs (e.g. for food, sleep) are met and discomfort relieved -baby feels good and he develops a sense of his caretakers and the world being good, reliable, dependable - he can trust his needs will be met.

If they are not met in a caring way - if baby hungry too long or if fed and changed erratically - baby feels overwhelmed by discomfort at times and feels threatened -, world and caretakers felt to be unpredictable, undependable and even hostile, i.e. cannot trust.

Achievement of trust helps infant accept new experiences willingly and move on to next stage.

(2) Toddler (1 - 3 years) Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt

- Age when child starts to walk, to want to feed himself, to experiment with what he can do with his body and it's functions, to say "no".

- An age when he has greater control over his own body and functions. As he's experimenting he's developing a sense of being an individual or little person with a mind and will of his own! N.D. This often becomes evident at the time of toilet training.

- Toddler needs to try things needs to be allowed some control if he is to become independent but within safe limits. (Needs to be protected from hurt or injury and crushing defeats.)

If allowed some appropriate control he learns to co-operate (be able to give up control on some things and go along with others) and develops a sense of confidence and pleasure in himself.

If not he can assert his autonomy by being wilful oppositional and withholding and he will doubt himself and his abilities and feel ashamed.

Confidence in himself is important for the next stage of ...

(3) Early Childhood (3 - 5 years) Initiative vs. Guilt

With self confidence the child can take the initiative and try things.

- A period of doing. An active, boisterous time when child pushes out and into things.

- A time of initiation and imagination.

- A time when he starts to test his skills against others at playcentre, kindy).

- A period of sexual exploration - notices differences between girls and boys, may masturbate, develops theories about where babies come from.

- Development of conscience. N.B. With egocentricity and fantasy - tend to think their thoughts and actions cause events. Therefore reassurance needs to be given otherwise may be burdened with self-blame and guilt.

How child's behaviour dealt with important - if receives excessive punishment, efforts ridiculed or mocked, or blamed inappropriately can be crippling.

Initiative will only develop if he is encouraged to try things, take appropriate responsibility, etc. This becomes a sense of I can do -, "I can do things right" and prepares him for the next stage.

(4) Middle Childhood (5 - 12 years) Industry vs. Inferiority

- Developing a sense of worth through realistic accomplishments, thus overcoming a sense of inferiority.

- At this stage - child at school, mixing with other kids. Friends becoming important as do other adult figures like teachers, coaches, sport heroes ... i.e. people child can identify with, measure himself against ... (N.B. Become particularly significant in adolescence.)

- Child wants to be involved in "real tasks" through which he can develop a sense of accomplishment or industry.

Through involvement in real tasks he learns:

- co-operation
- how to lead and how to follow
- how to work.

N.B. Foundation skills for task of finding job in late adolescence.

- Again encouragement is important, efforts need to be noticed achievements rewarded.
- If child faces defeat and censure all the time he ends up not trying or too scared to try, feelings of inferiority and inadequacy.

(5) &(6) Adolescence & Early Adulthood

- (i) Identity vs. Role Confusion
- (ii) Intimacy vs. Isolation

- Main tasks - developing a sense of who he is, what he can do, where he fits in the world rather than feeling confused about who he is.
- Developing close and meaningful relationships with peers of both sexes.
- A time of reworking a lot of the earlier tasks of childhood and carrying them over to life as an adult.
- A time of stormy relations with parents, changing moods ...

(7) Adult to Middle Age Generativity vs. Stagnation

- Developing a sense of leading a productive and useful life at home and in the community.
- Involves the capacity to nurture others rather than becoming self absorbed and overcoming a sense of stagnation.

N.B. Becoming caregivers - reflects task of this stage.

(8) Old Age Integrity vs. Despair and Disgust

- A time of wisdom and acceptance of one's life acceptance of aging, inevitable death, accepting responsibility for one's life and decisions made.
- For those who cannot - (picture of disgruntled, grumpy old person) feeling of despair and disgust.

FOCUSING ON ADOLESCENCE

Early adolescence 10-16

Late adolescence 18-22

- A. **ADOLESCENTS** want information – Give lots of advice in form of beliefs and principles.
- Yess...but... 2 parts, 2 sides to this story, need educational chats – they want information, understanding, interpretation, truth, explanations of the developmental process of life. Where I fit.
 - Let me tell you about friendship...educational reframing
 - Don't give big solutions or expertise though
 - Ask for better behaviors
 - Help them learn to be male and female. Talk openly about menstruation/sexuality/hormones/feelings/grief/loss/adrenaline/boundaries
 - Don't assume they have social skills.
 - Personality types process experiences in different ways.
- B. **ADOLESCENTS** want a SCHEMA – some way to see: to interpret the worlds they are coming into.
- Cognitive maps, D Drawings – pros and cons
 - They live in a pragmatic world – rather than a very deep one – not yet reached the second phase of life – still in ego growth. In second phase of life ego is humbled as it becomes more aware of shadow, pain, death we need a strong ego to cope with the shadow which is constantly building up through life.
- C. **ADOLESCENTS** who exhibit defiant, rebellious behaviour give a clue that there is unfinished business back in the playroom.
- Significant change has to work at the deeper level to be effective. Reinterpreting the past with truth is a good place to begin.
 - A disaster motivates great growth if you handle the experience well.
 - Great loss brings catalytic change. The shadow is building up to midlife all the time. It humbles the ego, breaks it and remakes it with depth and maturity.
 - Culture says success is measured by more. Christians endure suffering because it makes them strong. If we have developed a strong ego we will cope with the shadow side better.
- D. **ADOLESCENTS** are in transition: An adolescent is in transition between a child and an adult. S/he is learning to individuate, to become their own person.
- They are full of raw potential.
 - Don't necessarily want to enter the adult world...this sets up a dissonance.
 - On the one hand I want the perks of adulthood...independence, freedom, money, choices...but I don't want the responsibilities, hard work or to stop playing.
- E. **ADOLESCENTS** need social skills, help with facilitating these and lots of reassurance.
- Power issues-Assertiveness training may be helpful
 - Help them to have meaningful conversations. Conversation helps them to think.
 - Thinking aloud helps us reflect alone.
 - Deep conversation where one is really heard settles the soul and brings contentment.
 - Conversation heals; it is essential for mental health. Emerging adults today have fragmented conversations on the internet and cell phone.
 - Inviting adolescents to tell their stories and really listening is the greatest gift you can give. Helping them listen to one another in a group is equally an art and an imperative.

F. **ADOLESCENTS** may feel overwhelmed with bigness of life – searching for direction

- Who am I?
- Who will I become?
- They are full of raw potential.
- The task is to put myself into context with the world.
- Crossroads - clarify options and values - which way?
- Draw the magnificent you.
- Label your strengths and weaknesses
- Help normalise conflicted personalities. Part of me wants – and part of me wants that– draw the two parts.
- Where am I in conflict? Name the areas. Talk about shadow – help people to embrace it: death included.
- Help them to have their own opinion.
- Know how to think?
- Discern who's right?
- Discern what's truth?
- Know what you like and what you don't and declare it. Record insights – this helps them find grounding.

H. **ADOLESCENTS NEED AFFIRMATION AND VALIDATION –**

Who am I? So often confused and unconcrete

- What makes us grounded as young adults roots us for life.
- Praise brings the inner world together.
- Everything is normal – adolescents worry because they don't know and they're afraid to ask parents/significant others.
- Build EGO Strength
- Have belief in them – admire them.
- Validate qualities and strengths
- Help them clarify their options and rights and responsibilities
- Values training