

DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS OF ADOLESCENCE

SEPARATION

- Adolescents reject their parents and families while they acknowledge their dependence upon them.
- Learning to make decisions requires experiencing mistakes as well as successes, for the mistakes are often the more valuable learning experiences.
- Parents must be aware of areas in which adolescents may be permitted to fail.

IDENTIFICATION

- Begins with defining “who one is not” and from this investigation gradually a sense of self emerges
- Process usually involves identifying with esteemed role models and “trying on” their traits and personalities. Adolescents commonly go through stages of portraying others’ personalities.
- Adolescents should be encouraged to test themselves but reasonable goals should be set and their performance compared to appropriate standards.

PEER RELATIONSHIPS

- Acceptance into a peer group is a requirement for achieving independence and separating from one’s family.
- Parents are less able to choose their adolescents’ friends for them.
- Peer approval, peer rejection and peer pressure are central determinants of adolescent behavior. Parents can help adolescents in both selecting appropriate peers as well as more objectively assessing the influence of peers on their behavior.

EMERGING SEXUALITY

- Adolescents today are faced with conflicting and paradoxical expectations generated by our culture.
- Despite the proliferation of sex education programs and a permissive media, most adolescents are surprisingly deficient in their sexual knowledge.
- Youth cannot divulge their ignorance, for to do so would be viewed as a definite sign of immaturity of social ineptness and thus is to be avoided at all costs.

DEFIANCE OF AUTHORITY

- Stage where everything their parents say is wrong and everything parents do is embarrassing for them.
- Even benevolent authority must be challenged from time to time by adolescents if they are to develop a sense of autonomy
- An overly permissive environment can lead adolescents to act out in search of limits, whereas a more authoritarian approach leads to defiance in search for independence.
- Normal adolescence inevitably involves situations where adolescents attempt to defy conventional authority by trying to overpower or outmaneuver their

parents or other authority figures. It is not the occurrence of these events which is significant but the manner in which adolescents attempt to exercise power which is crucial.

