

INTRODUCING THE 21ST CENTURY

Teenager

Allen Jackson
and
Dwayne Ulmer

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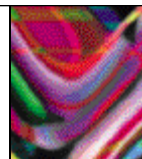
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Preface

Have you ever just watched and listened to the teenagers in your group as they enjoy being together? As a parent, have you sat back and enjoyed watching and listening to your teenager(s)? If so, you are well aware of how they differ from one another as well as how they are similar. If not, you are encouraged to do so during your next session, or stop now and go enjoy your teenagers.

God has truly blessed you with the opportunity to teach and/or parent 21st-century teenagers. You have the timeless opportunity to influence the leaders of tomorrow as you guide your teenagers during these important years. In fact, the teenagers in your group or home today will take Jesus Christ to a world you will never know. God is using everything you are doing with them to guide your teenagers to build spiritual concepts that will last their lifetimes. They will let God minister through themselves to their world with these spiritual concepts.

Why should you take the time to watch and listen to your teenagers? They are sending you messages and signals that help you understand the way God made them. God created each one of them in His image and to glorify Him. The more you understand them, the more you understand their Creator. In this sense, teaching and parenting teenagers is an act of worship that is pleasing to God.

In addition, God is teaching you how to teach and parent your teenagers. He has given you these teenagers as gifts with the promise to guide you to be the best parent and/or teacher. That is what this book is about. It is designed to be a tool for both parents and teachers in understanding the common characteristics and needs that God gives all teenagers. This book also provides insights and suggestions in accepting and helping teenagers deal with various life situations in which they might find themselves. Through prayer, God will help you understand each unique teenager and his unique life situation.

When you understand your teenagers individually the way God created them and their life situations, you are truly able to let God use you in their lives. For example, when you accept that teenagers are sensitive, you will know to teach them in ways that allow them to stay in their comfort zones. God made them to be sensitive, so why would you get upset when a teenager gets upset over something trivial from your perspective? With this understanding, carefully plan learning opportunities that will avoid making a teenager feel uncom-

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fortable. Consequently, effective teaching and parenting are based on a positive understanding of the way God created teenagers and their life situations.

The Authors

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Appreciation

Many thanks to the group of Southern Baptist leaders of teenagers who designed and guided the development of this resource:

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Dwayne Ulmer, LifeWay Christian Resources (Sunday School)

Suggestions for Ways to Use This Resource

As you read, consider your own teenagers. You will not find pictures of teenagers in this resource because we want to provide you with an inexpensive tool for developing your teaching skills. We also want you to think of your teenagers. To enhance your experience with this book, take pictures of your teenagers as a group, then individually. Lay the pictures on the table nearby as you read this resource. As a parent, you probably have many pictures to use for this purpose.

As you read, apply the discussion to each teenager. How does the information relate to him or her? Use the discussion to prompt a desire to know more about each teenager. As you reflect on each discussion, you will find questions to guide your reflection, headed by YQ.

In order to meet your needs as parents and teachers, you have choices as to how you will engage this resource. Some of you have access to the Internet and enjoy learning from electronic media. Others of you prefer print material that you can see, touch, and smell. In addition, as a church leader, you may want to consider using this resource in bits and pieces instead of giving your teachers the entire resource at one time. Whatever your approach, select one or

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more of the following options for using this resource:

- 1. Online:** click on www.youthscape.com/understanding.asp for a free online copy of this resource.
- 2. Download:** click on www.youthscape.com/understanding.asp to download the resource at no cost. You are welcome to make copies for others in your church or school. Or print out specific articles as you need them.
- 3. Text:** A text is available for \$5.95 plus shipping. Call 1-800-458-2772 to place an order. Please allow three weeks for printing and shipping.

Leadership Development Resource Series

This resource is part of a series of leadership resources designed to equip teachers and parents as they let God use them in the lives of teenagers. The information you will explore in this resource answers the “**who**” and “**why**” questions. Who do we teach? Why do we teach the way we do? The “**what**” question will always be answered with the Bible. The Bible guides us in becoming Christlike in all that we do and say. It is our source of information that leads us to our living Lord.

The resources listed below help teachers and parents learn “**how**” to teach teenagers. They are the basic teaching books that provide information about the teaching methods that work well at home and at church. You will also find below the resources that answer the “**when**” and “**where**” questions regarding teaching teenagers. These are the administration resources for the various ministries that assist parents in guiding their teenagers to God. In addition to this resource and the Bible, additional resources are listed below and are available by calling 1-800-458-2772:

Parents

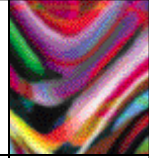
Living with Teenagers magazine

Parenting by Grace: Discipline and Spiritual Growth

Acteens®

Teaching Youth: Leaders, Lessons, Lifestyles (Teaching)

WMU How-to: Acteens (Administration)



Five Steps to the Great Commission: A Study of the WMU Tasks
(Ministry and Evangelism)

Challengers

Leading Challengers, Second Edition (Administration)

Go! Challengers Edition (Teaching)

Youth Roman Road Training Packet (Ministry and Evangelism)

Discipleship Training

Teaching Youth Leaders, Lessons, Lifestyles (Teaching)

Intentional Student Discipleship (Administration)

Share Jesus Without Fear: Youth Reaching Youth (Ministry and
Evangelism)

Sunday School

Teaching Youth: Leaders, Lessons, Lifestyles (Teaching)

“The Inside Line” (Ministry and Evangelism)

Youth on ActionSM

Teaching Youth: Leaders, Lessons, Lifestyles (Teaching)

Youth on Mission: Transformed, Vol. 4, 5, 6 (Administration)

Five Steps to the Great Commission: A Study of the WMU Tasks
(Ministry and Outreach)

One More Thought . . .

As you use this resource, resist the temptation to compare the teenagers.

Development in all areas has a wide range for what is considered “normal.”

This wide range means teenagers will develop skills at their own rates and in their own ways. The more you understand each teenager, the more effective you will be as a parent and teacher for each individual. Enjoy!

For Starters

When you turn on your computer and begin to search the Internet, you start by opening your browser, connecting with your Internet Service Provider (ISP)—unless of course you are fortunate enough to have access to a T-1 or better line or digital modem or cable modem. Yikes, I am overwhelmed already. There are simply too many concepts, definitions and procedures involved with truly understanding computers. However, I quickly understood that if I opened the browser and started searching I could learn lots of usable things fairly quickly.

Adolescents are like computers. The concepts, definitions, and procedures involved with understanding them must be infinite in number and similar to translating Egyptian (for a non-Egyptian) in complexity. They don't come with detailed instructions as to booting them up (or out), placing meaningful information on their hard drives, or cleaning up the programming when it becomes fragmented. Teenagers are humans, ever changing and growing. Guiding and teaching them is far beyond digital data and processor speed.

Understanding either computers or adolescents requires a place to start, one that is not overwhelming. Since my expertise with computers ends with the first sign of trouble in a program, I will stick to adolescence, and even in my chosen field I feel inadequate. As a youth minister, volunteer youth worker, youth speaker, and youth ministry professor, I hope that I can at least get some preliminary understanding out in the open for parents, youth workers, and teachers. You probably won't read anything that you did not already know or suspect. Perhaps the arrangement of the information and the suggested applications to parenting and ministry will prove helpful.

As a youth worker and a parent, I can identify with Charlie Shedd, who has written a number of books on the family. Dr. Shedd said that before he was married he had a wonderful lecture entitled "How to Raise Your Children." When he began working with families who had children, he changed the lecture to "Some Suggestions to Parents." After he was married and had his first child, he changed the lecture to "Feeble Hints to Fellow Strugglers." Then, as his other children came along, he finally stopped giving the lecture altogether. This resource was written for the fellow strugglers who strive to understand adolescents so that they might minister the love of Christ to them.

So let's start by opening the browser. This online resource is written in browser format, so that if you see a definition or concept in blue, you can click the word, and the browser will take you to additional information that may be related to that word or concept. Then you may either keep reading from that place or click the "back" button to return to your previous place. For example, if you wanted to go right to some "Big Questions" circulating about adolescents and their development, you could click on "Big Questions" and go straight to that section to whet your appetite. You would then have the option to click the "back" button on your browser to come back and finish reading this section. Or not.

Be sure to let us know when you discover glitches in one of two areas: the resource did not work like it was supposed to, or there was not enough information on the topic. Either glitch can be corrected if we know about it.

Hopefully, the electronic browser format of this resource will facilitate a few other things as well. You can travel at your own pace, hyperlinking to the glossary or to other chapters as you desire to explore a topic a little further. Some of you are more widely read than I am. If you will contact me (ajackson@nobts.edu) or LifeWay, maybe the addition of new information and the deletion of obsolete information can be done more quickly—in a way that would do justice to the changing landscape of adolescent development. I will continue to admit that I am not an expert—merely one who has worked with and studied adolescents for a few years. It is a goal of this resource that further study and discussion would be initiated among various groups of folk who love, parent, and minister to teenagers.

One more hope that I have for this resource is that it will be for you a sort of index to mile markers. I am also aware that occasionally the pace of life is so fast and that our youth are growing up so quickly that we lose sight of where we (and they) are—somewhat like a long car trip where you have been driving so long that you have lost track of how long you have left to go and even if you are "making good time." Plugging in to the prevalent research while still anchored to biblical wisdom may help to give you a sense of the boundaries of the normal. Happy traveling!



Introduction

The purpose of *The 21st-Century Teenager* is to provide information on the developing teenager for youth workers and parents. In general terms we are trying to describe the sequence of what happens to a teenager from a developmental point of view. Admittedly, more comprehensive resources exist in abundance. See the bibliography for some of them.

Before going any further, let's recall the difference between adolescents and adolescence. While they sound the same, and are related at many points, the differences are worth noting. Adolescents are the teenagers. It is a collective term (singular is adolescent) used to describe persons who are in the age group (both chronologically and developmentally) called adolescence.

Adolescence is the term used to describe the time in life between the onset of puberty (sexual maturation) and the full acceptance of adult responsibility. Some thinkers believe that adolescence is a creation of this century. Sociologist-historians occasionally give credit to G. Stanley Hall and Jean-Jacques Rousseau for either discovering or inventing adolescence (Kaplan 1984, 19). Others have chimed in, claiming that adolescence is a 20th-century invention. It makes some sense to envision that in America the gap between childhood and adulthood has at least widened and perhaps been created. As the 19th century wound to a close, it was likely that a teenager would become a husband or a wife shortly after puberty. The new couple would begin a life that was patterned much like the one that they observed as children. In the last hundred years or so, adolescence has widened as puberty has come at earlier ages. With the industrialization of the United States and the general move from the family farm to the cities, the acceptance of adult responsibility has come later. Instead of three to five years of "adolescence" prior to marriage, the 21st-century teenager can expect anywhere from 15 to 20 years! In other words, if there had been a youth department at church in 1901, it would have included children only through about age 15.

From a youth ministry point of view, a 20th-century inventionist view also makes sense. Ministry to and programming for adolescents has come of age, in both church and secular settings. The age group considered "in bounds" for youth ministry has lengthened with the years as well. Public school systems have

increasingly respond to increasing enrollments in elementary schools by placing sixth graders with seventh and eighth graders in middle schools. In many instances youth ministers are now given responsibility for collegiate ministry as a part of their work with adolescents. The section of this resource entitled “A Brief History of Adolescence” explores this notion in a bit more detail.

When adolescent development is discussed, the lens is often “the big five” of human development—spiritual, physical, mental, social, and emotional. Picture the equalizer on a sound board or stereo. It looks like a bar graph with the bars constantly moving up and down. Adolescence (and every other age group) is similar. Each aspect of development (the big five) is a bar on the graph, fluctuating rapidly at times and appearing stationary at others.

Who Is This Resource For?

The person who is studying spiritual development of adolescents may ask questions like:

- When can a person knowingly accept Christ as Savior?
- Does the realization of the seriousness of sin grow with age?
- Does increasing abstract thought contribute to the understanding of theology?
- How much repetition is needed to ensure comprehension of spiritual truths?

The person who is studying physical development may ask questions like:

- What is puberty, and when does it happen?
- Does early or late maturation affect the teenager?
- What physical development is to be expected and when?
- Are sixth graders adolescents, and when should we tell them about the changes that will take place in their bodies?

The person who is studying mental or cognitive development may ask questions like:

- Does the move toward abstract thought explain why my preteen asks so many questions?



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Do the stage theories of adolescence really explain the move toward adult thought?

Is intelligence measured by one number or by several different measurements?

How do youth learn? Is learning ability related to spiritual maturity?

The person who is studying social development may ask questions like:

How do we protect youth while acknowledging their growing need for independence?

How do we help with peer relationships?

What about courting, dating, romance, sex, and intimacy?

How do we mediate the turbulent world of adolescence, which now includes homosexual issues, media influence, violence, gangs, raves, and Internet culture?

The person who is studying emotional development may ask questions like:

Does personality change with adolescence?

Are there truly differences in adolescents in different cultures?

What does emotion have to do with discipline? What about stress and anger in a seemingly crazy culture?

How do hormones affect emotions and relationships with parents, siblings, and peers?

YQ: What questions would you add to this list?

Big Questions

Hiding behind the categories above are some general questions about adolescence. One such question (probably one of the biggest) that fits into this section is the issue of “nature versus nurture.” In other words, the question is posed, “Which is more influential—our genetic makeup (nature) or the environment in which we are raised (nurture)?”

Nature is generally thought to include the inherited characteristics of an individual that are for the most part unmodifiable or unchanging (internal forces). Persons who hold to an extreme nature position would claim that all behavior is inherited. *Hereditarians* are persons who embrace the nature position.

Nurture involves the assumption that the experiences of an individual in an environment (external forces) shape one’s personality. The extreme nurture position asserts that all behavior is learned. *Environmentalists* are those who embrace the nurture position. There are three areas with regard to nature/nurture:

Temperament—What makes a child shy or outgoing? We can describe inborn traits or an innate disposition. However, environment and training can modify these tendencies. A child’s future is influenced by a combination of their genetic code and how parents and teachers react to their genetic inheritance.

Intelligence—The same two factors—heredity and environment—generally combine to form one’s intelligence. Research has been based on examples found in twins, with adopted children for comparisons. Genetics provides the potential, but training determines the extent to which the potential is reached.

Sex role—This is a controversial subject. Evidence supports influence from both areas, biological and environmental.

While there is little value in going deeply into the nature-nurture argument here, you can probably see where an awareness of the issue will help you further investigate circumstances surrounding individual teenagers with whom you work.

Other similar questions may be asked. Whenever we study adolescent development, some issues seem to circulate over and over. Here are a few more



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of them. You probably have others. Note that further discussion continues in other sections of the resource for some of them.

Is there any validity or relevance to the often-discussed differences between the generations? Are teenagers today (millennials) different from baby boomers or generation X'ers were when *they* were teenagers?

Is it unbiblical for Christians to refer to psychology to explain human behavior?

Are adolescents the same around the world?

Does adolescence have to be a volatile, turbulent time?

With regard to the development of a teenager, what is normal? Or, developmentally, where should teenagers be?

Are there significant gender differences regarding development?

YQ: From your experience are you a hereditarian or an environmentalist?

Developmental Summary

Besides the above issues, youth leaders and parents are interested in the differences between early, middle, and later adolescence. Perhaps the following summary will be helpful (Jackson and Johnson 1996, 25-28).

Early adolescence (12-13)

Physical

Changes are rapid and dramatic.

Stamina is lacking; tiredness and short attention span are common.

They may be awkward; hands and feet are large in proportion to rest of body.

They begin to show physical signs of sexual maturation, with the emergence of secondary sexual characteristics.

Girls are usually more mature than boys, entering puberty up to two years earlier.

Most have superhuman appetites.

Intellectual

They want to see proof and are less willing to accept others' opinions (particularly parents).

They begin to think abstractly but usually view issues in terms of black or white answers by looking at alternatives and consequences.

They grow in their ability to make decisions based on personal values.

They make decisions that often are idealistic and sometimes overly optimistic in expectations.

Emotional

They begin to develop personal identity and sense of self.

They are self-conscious and egocentric but gaining more confidence.

They are enthusiastic.

They are still dependent on parents, but their desire for independence is increasing.

Fluctuates between friendly and moody

They express a positive sense of humor.



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Social

They place great value on same-sex peer acceptance and want to fit in with the crowd.

They attach to a few close friends and are often cliquish.

They can be overcritical and have unrealistic expectations.

They begin to be interested in the opposite sex (girls develop interest earlier).

They are most comfortable in small groups of trusted friends of the same sex.

They experiment with appropriate behaviors and test limits.

Spiritual

They are generally receptive to making a decision about a relationship with Christ.

They are more able to make genuine commitments.

Their spiritual views usually mirror their parents' spiritual views.

They are beginning to develop personal values.

They respond to others' needs and are more aware of social issues.

Middle Adolescence (14-15)

Physical

Physical changes have slowed for girls; boys may still be changing rapidly.

Advanced development of secondary sex characteristics takes place.

They develop an intense sex drive (particularly males).

They are active and energetic.

They tend to experiment with alcohol or drugs.

Intellectual

They become capable of more complex and abstract thoughts.

They can ask deep questions.

They are usually extremely interested in pop psychology and "self-help."

They often question illogical arguments.

They are more analytical and critical of belief systems.

Emotional

- Their ability to form personal relationships increases.
- They are less egocentric; they learn how to give of themselves.
- They often enjoy arguments.
- They feel an intense need to separate from their parents.
- Their self-assurance can mask deep-felt insecurities and self-doubts.
- They seek recognition for being good in some activity.

Social

- Their focus moves from same-sex friendships to opposite-sex relationship.
 - They date in groups.
- They stay with their established circle of friends.
- They may join a group with social beliefs or values that differ from parents.
- They sometimes rebel against persons in authority.
- They may become protective of personal possessions.

Spiritual

- They search for what the Bible says about what is or isn't OK.
- They may experience guilt about relationships with or thoughts about the opposite sex.
- They may experience frustration with the desire to stop some behavior and their apparent inability to do so (like pornography or masturbation).
- They often pray for forgiveness.

Late Adolescence (16-18)

Physical

- Their physique is almost fully developed.
- Most have reached adult height.
- Boys have caught up with girls developmentally.
- They express a strong interest in personal health.
- They may fall victim to eating disorders.
- Some are sexually experienced.



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Intellectual

They become increasingly involved with their future.

They begin to focus on career choices.

They recognize that current decisions influence their future.

They develop the ability to consider many options at once and can process possibilities.

They make better and more mature decisions.

They might be able to resolve conflicts with judgment.

Emotional

They feel confidence and security with their own identity.

They are sometimes sentimental.

They can put others' needs ahead of their own.

They recognize the need to take more personal responsibility.

They are usually friendly toward family.

Social

They desire meaningful relationships with others, including (and especially) the opposite sex.

Dating is frequent.

Personal relationships show increasing commitment; many date one partner exclusively.

Some are sexually active.

Driver's license and graduation will be rites of passage.

Most work part time, resulting in discretionary income.

Spiritual

They show ability to demonstrate strong commitment to a relationship with Christ.

Moral and spiritual values are tested and challenged.

They understand and care about how others feel and think.

They become interested (and sometimes obsessed) with life after death.

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They ask questions and express doubts about their spiritual life (assurance of salvation).

They may rededicate their life at camps or retreats repeatedly.

They are increasingly able to apply spiritual principles to life and are able to grasp deeper spiritual concepts.

YQ: Consider each teenager in your home or group. How do these statements apply to him or her? What are the implications for the way you relate to and minister to him or her?

As you add questions, remember that you are surrounded by other youth workers and youth parents who will help you. You may say, “But I am in the middle of nowhere!” But you are also able to connect online. If we don’t keep asking the questions, we will lose sight of the difference between the cultural factors in adolescence that change by the minute and the unchanging love of the Father for this and every generation of adolescents. Thanks for coming along for the ride!



A Brief History of Adolescence

Biblical and Historical

“I was born at a very early age.” Hokey as it is, the opening line of my testimony gives a cue that history is relative. The concept of a history of adolescence is also relative; it can be assumed that there have always been adolescents. So a history would have to go all the way back to the Garden of Eden. (This brings up an interesting theological question to add to the now-famous, Did Adam have a navel? This study suggests a companion question: Were Adam and Eve ever teenagers, or did God create them as adults?)

Theological rambling aside, the question of how long adolescents have existed as a group is one we should cover. Phil Briggs, esteemed professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary is fond of pointing out that Jesus was an adolescent. The way that we know that for sure is that the first word we know Jesus spoke was the word *why* (ta-dum).

VISIT TO JERUSALEM

Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast; and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it, but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day’s journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him. Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You.” And He said to them, “Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house?” But they did not understand the statement which He had made to them (Luke 2:41-50).

A Brief History of Adolescence



While we don't know whether Adam and Eve were ever teenagers, after they began to have kids, there have been persons that were chronologically the age we call adolescents or teenagers. In the Bible we can certainly identify persons who were teenagers and/or who acted much like our modern view of adolescents. Daniel Aleshire (1982, 11-13) identified some of these precocious biblical youth.

David, a "man after God's own heart" and a great warrior was young when he had his famous confrontation with Goliath. David had brought provisions to his older brothers who were at the front lines. Goliath was considered to be insurmountable, and rich rewards had been promised to the man who could defeat him. In 1 Samuel 17:26-29, the interchange between David and his brothers is not unlike one you may have heard in your home. Notice the last two sentences:

Then David spoke to the men who were standing by him, saying, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?" The people answered him in accord with this word, saying, "Thus it will be done for the man who kills him." Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab's anger burned against David and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your insolence and the wickedness of your heart; for you have come down in order to see the battle." But David said, "What have I done now? Was it not just a question?"

The great warrior Samson is known for his adolescent silliness and hormonal rages. Mary was probably a teenager when she gave birth to the Christ child. At least a couple of the disciples were very young. Psalms and Proverbs have much to say about the "young man," which lead us to the conclusion that puberty is not a new problem (Ps. 25:7; 71:5,17; 88:15; 89:45;



A Brief History of Adolescence

103:5; 110:3; 127:4; 129:1-2; 144:12; Prov. 1:4; 2:17; 5:18). Of course, the one that keeps coming back to me is the admonition in Psalm 119:9: “How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word.”

YQ: Study the verses listed above. In the space below list the words found in these verses that describe adolescents.

Rites of Passage

So teenagers have been around for a long time. And teenagers have always been “adults in progress.” People who study people have always been fascinated with the mystery of when children become adults. Many cultures have rites of passage which mark the entry point into adulthood. Rites of passage are ceremonies or rituals that mark an individual’s transition from one status to another, especially into adulthood (Santrock 1998, 281-82). Such ceremonies range from teeth filing, body painting or piercing (or other forms of mutilation) in some primitive cultures to temporary banishment (i.e. a “quest”) in others.

In America religious ceremonies like the Jewish bar mitzvah or the Catholic confirmation are formal rites of passage. Other formal rites of passage include high school graduation, getting a driver’s license, or getting married. Informal rites of passage in our culture can include first date, first job, or the first time to stay at home alone. Unfortunately, a rite of passage that has gained popularity in the past few decades is sexual intercourse. Statistically, more than 70 percent of adolescents have their first sexual experience prior to their 18th birthday (Santrock 1998, 281).

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I am getting ahead of myself. The question returns: Have adolescents been around for a long time? Consider some not-so-contemporary quotes:

I see no hope for the future of our people if they are dependent on the frivolous youth of today, for certainly all youth are reckless beyond words. . . . When I was young, we were taught to be discreet and respectful of elders, but the present youth are exceedingly wise and impatient of restraint.—Hesiod, 800 B.C.

The children now love luxury; they show disrespect for elders and love chatter in place of exercise. Children are now tyrants, not the servants of their households. They no longer rise when elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company and tyrannize their teachers.—Socrates, 470-399 B.C.

The young people of today think of nothing but themselves. They have no reverence for parents or old age; They are impatient of all restraint; They talk as if they alone know everything and what passes for wisdom in us is foolishness in them. As for girls, they are foolish and immodest and unwomanly in speech, behavior and dress.—Peter the Hermit, A.D. 1083

These quotes probably sound like a business meeting at your church to discuss the fact that the church van wasn't cleaned up after the trip to the water park. Obviously, the opinion of adults about persons of an adolescent age have been around for a long time. But lest this become a gripe session or a trip down memory lane, allow me to fast-forward. The English word for *adolescence* has only existed since the fifteenth century (Kaplan 1984, 44). Some writers see the pattern of adolescence (progression that leads from childhood to adulthood) in the middle ages.

Indeed, the code of chivalry with knights and maidens was a time in which “a young boy might progress from page at age seven to squire at age



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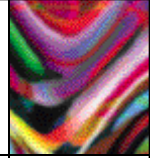
fourteen to virtuous knighthood at age twenty-one. Similar progressions were observed in the initiation of novitiates into the church and in the progression from apprenticeship to journeyman to master craftsman in the guild system” (Kaplan 1984, 51).

Near the end of the nineteenth century, a man named G. Stanley Hall suggested that adolescence was a transition in which “storm and stress” were necessary in order for a child to become a healthy adult. In other words the struggle was essential. Others have disputed his conclusions. (Hopefully many of you had a relatively stormless and stressless adolescence.) Hall was helpful in pointing out that many “little things” can seem like “big things” to an adolescent in whose world everything is changing. Hall and others recognized that adolescence also represented a “moratorium” where the consequences of behavior did not need to be as severe as they would be in adulthood.

YQ:What are the rites of passage in your family, church family, and community?

Secular Trend

Some social thinkers have observed that adolescence has reinvented itself in America in the 20th century. In the United States at the end of the 19th century, the typical 14-year-old boy lived on his father’s farm, anticipating that in the next few years he would claim a parcel of land, marry a local girl (who would have been somewhere between 13 and 16 years old), and imitate the life he had observed growing up. Marriage generally occurred when the groom was 15-17 years old. Incidentally, the average age of puberty was between his 15th and 16th birthday.



YQ:What is the average age of puberty in your community today? _____

Adolescence: 20th-Century Invention

In the first few decades of the 20th century, a subtle shift began to take place. Individuals and families started moving in substantial numbers to the cities. The industrial revolution produced machines that made farming less labor intensive, so large families were not needed purely for extra hands. As people moved to the cities, they worked in factories. Even young children could be found operating (sometimes dangerous) machines. In the years that followed, at least five factors combined to lengthen the period of time called adolescence, in effect creating a class of pre-adults (Cobb 1998, 26; Bakan, 71). In no particular order, they are:

Puberty has been occurring earlier by three to four months per decade since the mid 1800s. In the mid 1800s, the average age for menarche was 15.5-16.5. Now the average age in U.S. is 12.5. Another effect is that people grow larger. Males average an inch and 10 pounds heavier than their fathers. Females grow 1/2 inch to an inch more than their mothers and weigh about 2 pounds more on average. Perhaps due to better diet and health care, the average age for puberty in boys has moved from 14-16 years old in 1900 to 12-14 years old in the late 1900s.

Marriage is coming later. In the late 1800s the average age at which a couple married was somewhere between 14 and 16. *USA Today* recently reported that the average age at which people in the U.S. get married is 23 for women and 25 for men.

Child labor laws were enacted in the early 20th century as the move to the cities placed children at risk due to long hours around dangerous machines.

Another motivation was that adults needed the jobs as the industrial revolution continued to produce labor-saving machinery.

Compulsory education laws were introduced for children between 6 and 18 both federally and in many states. Prior to the 20th century, children may or may not have attended school, depending upon the need for labor in the fields. With child labor laws taking children (and adolescents) out of the



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work force, schools were opened to accommodate and educate. The first public high school opened in 1875. (See youth ministry timeline below.) The juvenile justice system was created in response to the notion that adolescents were not helped if they were punished on the same scale as adults. Some authors suggest that adolescence was a time of moratorium in which consequences for negative actions (as well as the finalizing of adult decisions) should be suspended (or at least the pressure diminished) until adulthood. Separate legal proceedings were introduced, which were intended to allow corrective measures instead of punitive ones.

Side effects of the reinvention of adolescence in America linger today. The period of time between puberty and adult responsibility is lengthening. The emergence of youth ministry, also in this century, provides a helpful reference. Since you are already weary of all of this history, I will simply present a timeline taken from my youth ministry class notes (sources include Senter 1992 and Ross 1989).

YQ: How have these factors affected your experience with teenagers?

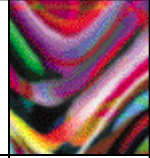
Historical Timeline in Youth Ministry

Early foundations—Characteristic of the era was the function to get children off of the streets and to teach them to read, to cope with the decreasing emphasis on child labor. Early emphasis was still on children, as most teenagers still entered the work force relatively early. See 1875 for important change.

1780 Robert Raikes' Sunday School in England

1824 American Sunday School Union formed in Philadelphia

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- 1848 Evidence of youth ministry at FBC Rochester, NY, and 1858 at FBC, Troy, NY
- 1851 Young Man's Christian Association; 1858, YWCA—Purpose was to help rural Christian youth retain their faith as they began to move into the cities. Methodology was through providing a place where young people could meet with friends, study the Bible, be trained as teachers, read, relax, and have prayer meetings.
- 1875 Birth of the public high school. Senter cites this as the end of the Early Era, because as public education recognized that adolescents were in need of formal education (instead of entering the work force), churches would have to follow suit.
- 1905 G. Stanley Hall coined the term *adolescence* in a book of the same name
- Society era**—Characteristic of the era was response to the question, how can the church shelter and keep young people who have committed themselves to an active faith?
- 1881 Francis Clark founded the Society for Christian Endeavor. Primary goal was to reinforce the desire of young people to grow in their walk with God—to strengthen their Christian Endeavor. High accountability. Movement spread internationally; more than 50,000 attended the Boston convention of 1895.
- 1887 Clark resigned his pastorate to work full-time with Christian Endeavor.
- 1889 Epworth League (Methodist)
- 1891 Westminster League (Presbyterian). On April 22, 1891, a national Baptist young people's organization was formed which became the Baptist Young People's Union in 1895 (Ross 1989). Intent was to embrace Baptist youth groups, both emerging and established (like Christian Endeavor Societies, which were present in many Baptist churches); all societies were urged to subscribe to *The Young People at Work*, the Baptist national publication, in order to provide continuity with regard to Baptist distinctives. From this point on, denominational allegiance became primary.
- 1893 Walther League (Missouri Synod Lutheran)

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1895 Luther League (Lutheran)

1925 Scopes Monkey trial brought an end to what Senter called the “period of accountability” in youth ministry. Credibility of the Bible was in question, with the essence of youth ministry in danger.

Fellowship era—Characteristic of this era was the emergence of both church-based youth ministries and parachurch clubs. In Southern Baptist churches youth work included primarily, if not exclusively, the youth director and the youth. A gap developed between the youth program and other programs of the church (even Sunday School). Time period dominated by full calendars and sometimes disconnected events.

1930 Sunday evening fellowship meetings began to replace youth societies. Local churches began to take charge of all church-related youth activities. Massive shift as 39 major denominations formalized this change. Change occurred as basic emphasis of youth ministry shifted from nurturing the faith of young people to training in churchmanship.

1933 Evelyn M. McCluskey founded the Miracle Book Club in Portland, Oregon. Storytelling and Bible Exposition. Mother of parachurch movement. Jim Rayburn (Young Life) and Al Metsker (Youth for Christ) were both teachers of Miracle Clubs, but they eventually proved too far out on the edge for McCluskey because they wouldn’t use her materials. They would soon have other ideas for clubs.

1934 Evangelistic rallies birthed the Youth for Christ Movement. Slogan “Youth for Christ” first began being used in the late 1930s in conjunction with evangelistic meetings. Jack Wyrzten and Jim Rayburn both had a form of these rallies, though Rayburn’s were called “Young Life Campaigns” and featured higher percentages of youth in audiences.

1935 Beginning of what Senter called the “teens telling teens” movement. Incarnational strategies involved youth attending club meetings in homes (McCluskey’s idea).

1937 First full-time Southern Baptist youth minister in Third Baptist Church, St. Louis.

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1938 First Youth Week, where students were spotlighted and given significant responsibilities in the church, including preaching, directing music, teaching in Adult Sunday School.

1941 Young Life founded. Jim Rayburn used a different strategy than had been used before.

Leader centered

Evangelism focused—Missionary effort to win unsaved teenagers.

Not primarily a Bible study.

Messages had conversational approach, unlike fiery sermons.

Emphasis on relational contact work. Earning the right to be heard.

Other club movements followed.

1946 Youth for Christ Clubs

1949 Phil Harris was named professor in youth education at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

1950 Common for all large and many medium-sized churches to have a youth director. Often, youth director was responsible for activities for entire church.

I will stop here because the point is to show the development of a class of people called adolescents, not the development of youth ministry as a discipline. Thus adolescence as we know it is both a description of a place in the life span and a social invention. Dan Aleshire said it best: “God makes persons. Cultures and societies make certain persons into adolescents” (Aleshire 1982, 25).

YQ: Consider approaches and activities used in the your ministries in your church. Review the history outlined here to find the historical roots. With which era does your ministry today have more in common?



Spiritual Development

A quote that I believe has been attributed to Og Mandino goes something like this: “We aren’t human beings. We are humans becoming.” WOW! It is easy to see development in the other of the “big five” categories of maturation, but how do we quantify spiritual growth? We can celebrate the first steps of a baby or the first shave of an adolescent (physical development), but can we measure spiritual “firsts”?

I would answer—*definitely*. But measuring spiritual growth is unlike measuring physical growth or cognitive (mental) growth. My children both have graduated marks on the door facing of their bedroom doors, signifying their change in height from one year (month, week!) to the next. What would the spiritual comparison be? A mark for a decision in Vacation Bible School? Another mark for baptism? Another for a testimony in church following a mission trip? What about a choir solo? Aren’t those markers in spiritual development?

Again, *definitely*. Anything that is not growing is not natural. So in this section we will explore the spiritual development of teenagers. But first, a disclaimer. With physical development, and possibly mental development, the changes are predictable with regard to sequence. In other words, during the teenage growth spurt we know the body will lengthen beginning with the legs, then the arms, then the trunk. It may not happen at the same age with every adolescent, but the sequence is relatively stable.

On the other hand, spiritual growth does not necessarily follow conversion—at least not at any predictable speed. That is what makes describing spiritual development a little like trying to hold a raw oyster (sorry, my Louisiana roots are showing). A look at some of the adults in our churches may lead one to believe that growth toward spiritual maturity can be slow, and perhaps even optional. In addition, persons come to Christ as Savior at different points in their lives. Therefore, a person celebrating their first “spiritual birthday” may be 8 years old or 48 years old. What we will try to do here is describe some of the traits of adolescent spiritual growth and to tie them in with development in other areas.

Spirituality is not a minor story with today’s adolescents. The May 8, 2000 edition of *Newsweek* included an article entitled, “Searching for a Holy Spirit.” The poll cited in the article indicated that “78 percent of adolescents said

their religion was important to them, but only half said they attended services regularly, a figure that has declined since the 1970's" (p. 62). The article went on to confirm what youth workers have already witnessed: youth are interested in spiritual things, but "rather than seek absolute truths in doctrine, they cross denominational boundaries. . . . In place of strict adherence to doctrine, many teens embrace a spirit of eclecticism and a suspicion of absolute truths" (p. 62).

Keep in mind the "big five" of adolescent development. The spiritual dimension influences all the others. In Luke 2:52, we have the description of the Jesus' development. In the Introduction, we looked at this chapter of Scripture as the one where Jesus and His parents had a bit of a misunderstanding. At the end of the day, however, Dr. Luke summarized the experience by describing "Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."

Typically, preachers and youth ministers have broken this verse down as follows:

Wisdom—mental development

Stature—physical development

Favor with God—spiritual development

Favor with men—social/emotional development

We can have some fun with a closer look. The Greek word for "favor" is the noun *charis*, which means "grace." It can mean "grace or graciousness as seen in a person" or "grace on the part of a giver" (from the electronic version of *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985). Here the text suggests both kinds of grace. Jesus is seen as having received the grace of God, but He also reflects that grace to the world around Him. That's not a bad definition of spiritual maturity. Other biblical stories reflect the spiritual development of our heroes. Without sermonizing, allow me to show the relationship between spiritual development and other types of development through the lens of some great Bible stories.

Physical Development and Spiritual Development

In 1 Kings 19:4, Elijah was exhausted. He had just fired up the people and the prophets of Baal in the great prophet bowl of Mt. Carmel. Now his spiritual

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resources seemed depleted, and he is in despair. Only after God ministers to him does he press on.

In 1 Samuel 16, we are told that God saw something inside of a young shepherd named David that others could not see. I don't know of a more vivid account of "two steps forward and one step back" with regard to spiritual maturity than David's life. He was a giant killer (Goliath) and a lady killer (adultery with Bathsheba) in just a few short years. A comparison of 2 Samuel 11 and Psalm 51 show the struggle that resulted in spiritual growth.

Daniel's physical choices in Daniel 1:1-20 reflect that he had matured spiritually. Rather than allow themselves to be given new names, consume foreign food, and eventually bow to a foreign god, Daniel and his friends drew upon their spiritual training in Israel to take a stand against King Nebuchadnezzar.

Another classic story is that of Joseph, found in Genesis 37—50. Joseph was a young man whose spiritual maturity allowed him to avoid some serious physical mistakes (see Gen. 39) and endure some pretty tough times. I suppose you could call Joseph the "father of true love waits"!

Cognitive Development and Spiritual Development

Solomon is known in sacred and secular literature as a wise man. His proverbs are famous, and his wisdom is legendary. Yet in 1 Kings 4:29-34, we are told that his wisdom comes from the Lord. Peace and safety for the whole nation are attributed to the ability of Solomon to discern situations and make wise judgments.

Apparently, in Elisha's day, there was no such thing as a moratorium! OK, I threw this one in to lighten up a bit. In 2 Kings 2:23-25, some adolescents were making fun of Elisha's lack of follicle development (he was bald). Look up this Scripture to issue a warning to your youth about messing with old preachers.

Timothy was advised by Paul to take to heart the lessons he had learned from his family. In 2 Timothy 3:14-17, one of my favorite passages, Paul tells him to keep doing the things that he has *learned* and *become convinced of*, seemingly indicating a difference. Cognition does not always produce conviction!

In November 1999, I attended the Texas Baptist Youth Minister's Conclave in Arlington, Texas and heard George Barna make a startling state-



ment. He said that the focus on adolescence as the prime age range for Christian conversion was misplaced. His study had shown that the majority of conversion experiences took place when children were between the ages of 4 and 13. In fact, only 4 percent of Christians made that decision when they were teenagers. (See the Barna Web site for his methodology at [.](#)) In the back of my mind, I thought that the abstract thinking phenomenon that I suggested (that Elkind and others suggested) a few paragraphs back might come into play. I was right.

Following the release of the full report, some youth educators, led by Rick Lawrence of *Group Magazine* wondered if the findings told the full story. With Rick's permission, I have reprinted part of the article that appeared in the July/August 2000 edition of *Group*.

In our March/April issue, I told readers that I think Barna's analysis and suppositions are ripe for rebuttal. Since then we've partnered with Professor Dave Rahn of Huntington College and the Youth Ministry Educators organization to come up with our own small-scale research project to learn more about the role of youth ministry in Christian conversion. We designed a seven-question survey that youth ministry professors gave to 369 Christian students on 10 campuses across North America.

Draw your own conclusions from the results, but just because I can, I'll throw in my two bits. . . ."

The percentage of Christians who say they first committed their life to Christ when they were children is slightly lower than Barna's survey number—but the breakdown generally matches his findings.

Three-quarters of our respondents said they came to faith in Christ over a long period of time, belying the moment-in-time conversion stereotype that dominates our thinking about evangelism. Nine out of 10 say they, indeed, had a crucial recommitment experience that was as significant as their conversion. And two-thirds of these folks said their experience happened when they were teenagers. Outreach trips, crises, big events, and camp experi-



Spiritual Development

ences top their list of recommitment experiences.

Four out of five said they've "really questioned" whether they were truly committed to Christ. And for most (54%) that time of great doubt came during their teenage years. Who helped them through those doubts? Friends, family members, and youth pastors.

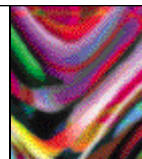
When we asked these Christian college students who or what has been the biggest influence on their present commitment to Christ, youth leaders topped the list. In short, Barna's stats infer that many people come to Christ because they were part of a churchgoing family when they were children. But the key recommitment time—when they *fully embraced or owned* their faith—came when they were teenagers.

Moral Development and Spiritual Development

A close cousin of spiritual development is moral development. The words *morals* and *values* are used to describe the criteria by which choices are made with regard to behavior in the context of the larger society. The discernment of rightness or wrongness of actions or reactions in various circumstances faced by adolescents is a reflection of their morality.

Moral development is about process. The decision that all adolescents make is, "How will I decide?" Three arenas of moral decision making are thoughts, behaviors, and feelings. Several writers have discussed moral development in teenagers (see Appendix A for this discussion).

For Christians, it is not enough simply to measure the values of the current culture and make judgments concerning our actions based on consequences or lack thereof. Without God in the picture, describing a process of moral reasoning digresses to "what if I don't get caught" or "nobody got hurt so what does it matter?" Value judgments become highly situational and may even depend on the strength and affinity of the relationship between the parties in question. What about a biblical concept of morality, where persons engage in an action or refrain from an action purely because of a relationship with a living God? Spiritual transformation is where a teenager (or an adult) places a "God filter" in his or her life.



Like the filter in a coffeemaker, everything that gets into the brew has to pass through the filter. A popular phrase among adolescents in the latter part of the 1990s summarizes the notion that a spiritually transformed adolescent would determine his or her our actions by asking, “What would Jesus do?”

Spiritual Transformation and Spiritual Development

In *Teaching Youth: Leaders, Lessons, Lifestyles*, I wrote of a conversation that I had with the coauthor of the book, Richard Barnes. While I may seem to be playing semantic games between *spiritual development* and *spiritual transformation*, if you are a parent or a youth worker, you will understand my questions. The paragraph from the book was as follows:

Last summer at the LifeWay Conference Center at Ridgecrest, my coauthor Richard Barnes said something that I cannot get out of my mind. He pointed out that our kids—pardon me the young men and women that are in our classes—are for the most part, very capable of making real life connections between the biblical truths that are discussed and experienced during the “encounter” part of the lesson. His question haunted me . . . “then why don’t they?” Like many adults, they are able to separate the cognitive application of the Scripture from it actually having any lasting impact on their lives.

Our conversation made me think about the teenagers that anyone reading this can picture.

I am thinking of those teenagers who seemed to know all of the right answers when they were in Sunday School. They went on the mission trips and attended youth camp. Yet as young adults, they are not walking with the Lord. Contrast a young man whose name is Billy. Billy had a pretty rough hand dealt to him. His father left the family when Billy was two years old. His mother married and remarried, leaving Billy to be raised largely by his grandparents.



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Today, Billy is a minister of youth having a tremendous ministry. He never wavered from his walk with the Lord. What happened with Billy that did not happen with the other teenagers. “Why?” was his life transformed while the lives of some other youth apparently were not? (Barnes and Jackson 2000, 82)

Let’s take the spiritual/cognitive a step further (because this is the heart of what we do in youth ministry!). According to a paper based on Philippians 2:12-13 and developed by LifeWay Christian Resources, “Spiritual transformation is God’s work of changing a believer into the likeness of Jesus by creating a new identity in Christ and by empowering a lifelong relationship of love, trust, and obedience to glorify God” (Willis 1998, 6). For the Christian, transformational learning is not just a change in behavior but also a change of the “heart” of the learner.

Scripture commands believers to love God with all of their hearts (Mark 12:30). The concept of “heart” in the Greek encompasses the whole of man as the emotions influence the individual parts (Snyder 1994, 26). William Yount further argued that spiritual or biblical transformational learning is the process by which students move beyond living libraries of biblical facts to students who think biblically, who consider real-life problems and decisions. He argued that knowledge is a process, not a product (Yount 1996, 201). The goal of Christian learning is Christlikeness. It is a balance of the thinking, feeling, and doing components of learning and a dependence on the Lord day by day (Yount 1996, 272).

The biblical view of learning champions the essentials of motivation to grow in Christlikeness through the power of the Holy Spirit, examination of God’s Word to discover Bible truths, and personal application of the biblical truth to demonstrate obedience to God (Hanks 1991, 43). “If the effects of education in the church are to be permanent, they must transform how students relate to problems, themselves, God, and others” (Snyder 1994, 26). Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:18, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”



Spiritual transformational learning, then, is different than secular transformational learning. Though there are some areas in which the concepts overlap, the key difference lies in the underlying power to change and the end result of that change. Most of what limited writing there is on spiritual transformational learning is in the area of adult education, especially as it relates to the church. But spiritual transformational learning can also take place in teenagers. By examining the key developmental aspects of the teenagers that lend themselves to the potential of spiritual transformational learning.

Youth teachers, when they give special attention to developmental stages of youth, can more effectively teach youth in a way that lends itself to spiritual transformation in their lives. Teachers, facilitators, mentors, parents, peers, and youth leaders can have a tremendous impact on the teenager's spiritual transformational learning process, especially as they establish a relationship with the teenager that is built on integrity, trust, and example.

YQ: Take several minutes to reflect on what you have just read. List the implications for your parenting and ministry actions. What changes do you need to make to become more intentional than you are now in guiding spiritual development with your teenagers?



Physical Development

Jim Minton, my youth ministry professor in seminary, used to say, “More physical changes take place in adolescence than at any other time in the life of a human, except in the first 18 months.” The physical changes are the most widely acknowledged indicators of the transition from childhood to adulthood.

The more I observe adolescents, the more I agree with Dr. Minton. Although infants lack the self-awareness to reflect on their metamorphosis, adolescents are able to ponder their predicament with great anxiety (Stevens 1985, 53). Rapid development is taking place in almost every arena of the body. Skeletal growth is dramatic (just ask any jeans-buying mom). The respiratory and cardiovascular systems get caught up in the growth spurt, with dramatic increases in the heart and lungs. Recent research has shown that even the brain is still developing in adolescence. Skin is changing, body proportions are changing—and needless to say, minds are changing. It’s safe to say that adolescents change their mind almost as often as adolescent girls change clothes (just kidding). For an overview of the physical changes that take place during early, middle, and late adolescence, see the Introduction.

Much of the change is because the hormones in the body which have to do with sexual maturation have reported for duty. Hormones are highly specialized substances secreted by one or more glands of the endocrine system. Glands are organs that stimulate parts of the body to respond in specific ways. It is probably more accurate to say that the brain inhibits puberty before adolescence than it is to say that it stimulates puberty at adolescence. The hormones kick in, causing massive growth spurts and the initiation of the sex drive, which causes all kinds of physical (and emotional) changes. A student’s weight will fluctuate, and girls are especially conscious of this change. The rapid physical development may also bring on a kind of clumsy movement or overall awkwardness (Boshers 1997, 84).

An interesting sidebar to the discussion of puberty is the phenomenon known as the secular trend. The secular trend is the downward shift in age of puberty that has been occurring over the past hundred years or so, with the greatest changes taking place between the mid 1800s and the mid 1900s (Cobb 1998, 104). It represents a change in timing and effect of puberty, with the following noticeable traits:

Puberty begins earlier—has been occurring earlier by 3 to 4 months per decade since the mid 1800s. In the mid 1800s, the average age for menarche was 15.5-16.5. Now the average age in the U.S. is 12.5.

Adolescents grow faster (data from 19th century and earlier is slim). In 19th-century Britain, females reached adult height at about 21. Adolescent girls today stop growing by about 16-18. British males continued growing into their mid-twenties. Adolescent boys today reach adult height by 20-21.

People grow larger. Males average an inch and 10 pounds heavier than their fathers. Females grow 1/2 inch to an inch more than their mothers and weigh about 2 pounds more on average

Historical tidbits—The decks of the flagship of the United States navy, the USS *Constitution* (war of 1812) were only 5 feet 6 inches tall. Antique armor and clothing are likewise much smaller in scale. I like this one best: The seats at the La Scala opera house in Milan, Italy (circa 1776) are 13 inches wide. The average seat at a stadium in the United States today is 24 inches.

Puberty

Puberty, as stated earlier, is that implosion of mischievous hormones which alters the human body with a pace second only to the first 18 months of life. Physically, several things are happening that may stimulate development in other areas, such as the emotional, cognitive, and social. The endocrine system begins escalating its production, circulation, and regulation of the level of hormones in the body. *Puberty* is the term generally used to describe the beginning of the endocrine activity. See the discussion on the growth spurt that follows for more detail.

There is a gap between the onset of puberty for boys and girls. Roughly defined, puberty is *the distinct event marked by the achievement of reproductive maturity, the completion of sexual development, when females can bear a child and males can impregnate a female*. The beginning of menstruation signals puberty for females (menarche). Girls reach puberty on an average of two years



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before boys. The range for the onset of puberty for girls is 10-13 years of age as a norm, with extremes being from 9 to 18 (Rice 1999, 97). Some breast development usually precedes the first menstrual cycle which is generally accepted as the signal that puberty has begun.

Generally, the ejaculation of mobile sperm signals puberty for males (spermarche). For boys, the average age is 12-14, though the extreme range could be 10-16 years. The beginning of puberty in males is much harder to pinpoint; however, many writers use the initial growth of the testes and scrotum or the first nocturnal emission (wet dream).

For youth ministers the gender maturity gap has social implications. Boys do not “catch up” with girls in terms of physical maturity until about age 16. For cultural as well as physiological reasons, adolescent girls seem to be far ahead of their male peers in emotional maturity. They tend to be more expressive in their feelings and more responsive to the needs of others. The growth spurt, the change of body shape, the appearance of secondary sexual characteristics, and the development of the reproductive system (all of which are running slightly ahead in females) all demand great emotional resources and the ability to adjust. Whether the changes are sudden or drawn out over many years, the effects are deeply felt (Stevens 1985, 5).

Early Versus Late Maturers

Besides the two year “gender gap,” another consideration for youth workers is the “early-on time-later maturing” phenomenon. Though it has been said, many times, many ways (sorry), in adolescent development, a principle worth repeating and remembering is, *timing of development may vary, but sequence is relatively unchanging*. Some teenagers mature early in the expected chronological range, while others are “on time” or late. When you combine the gender gap with maturity gaps, the potential ministry opportunities become apparent. Here are some bullet points you may use as discussion starters with either youth or parents.

Early Maturing Boys (Advantages)

- Appear more adult—adults sometimes give preference in opportunities for leadership
- More attractive to peers and adults
- More popular
- Achieve more recognition

Early Maturing Boys (Disadvantages)

- May feel pressure to commit to life goals and choices prematurely
- Sometimes adults place unrealistic expectations, especially regarding athletics
- Tend to be somber, less spontaneous, more submissive, and less flexible
- Occasionally awkward with their size

Early Maturing Girls (Advantages)

- More popular with girls and boys
- Enjoy prestige once they are comfortable with body changes
- Eventually develop more social competence (deal with more situations earlier)
- Develop more self-confidence

Early Maturing Girls (Disadvantages)

- More likely to get “hit on” by older boys or men
- May be introverted and experience more emotional conflict as a young adult
- Are more likely to smoke, drink, be depressed, have an eating disorder, and request earlier independence from parents (Santrock 1998, 96)

Late Maturing Boys (Advantages)

- Have more opportunity to explore roles
- Continue to focus on development of “other than physical” abilities
- Have more stable identity in young adulthood
- Less pressure to live up to expectations of others



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Late Maturing Boys (Disadvantages)

Might have lasting impressions of ridicule
 Social skills may not come naturally
 More pronounced difference in prestige among working class
 May feel “invisible”

Late Maturing Girls (Advantages)

Prepubescent body is more likely to be tall and thin, the “American fashion ideal”
 Possible advantage in early teen years
 More likely to receive adequate information on menarche from parents and peers
 Less likely to be self-conscious about their bodies

Late Maturing Girls (Disadvantages)

May try to compensate for physical immaturity through promiscuity
 Sometimes slower to develop social competency and confidence
 Parents may be slow to recognize them as “emerging adults”

Be careful not to make more of the timing of maturity than is necessary. Because parents can be obsessive about making sure that their adolescent is “normal,” the preceding chart may provide a resource for advising parents concerning their teenager.

Other factors can affect the rate at which growth begins or proceeds—diet, exercise, psychological stress, and even altitude. Females who are under stress generally begin to menstruate earlier while athletes usually begin later. It is believed that body fat percentage is the trigger for the menstrual cycle. Some researchers have discovered that menarche cannot start until the body weight is about 105 pounds or until body fat is about 17 percent; this has implications for runners and anorexics.

Growth Spurt

The growth spurt takes place somewhere near the beginning of puberty. Easily recognizable but hardly predictable, the dramatic changes in stature and body dimension sneak up on parents and youth workers. At the onset of puberty the person still looks much like a child. By the end, just six or seven years later, that same person looks much like an adult. Boys can grow an average of about 4.1 inches a year, while girls average about 3.5 (Steinberg 1996, 24ff). Beginning at about 11 for girls and 13 for boys, a summary of the events of the growth spurt is as follows:

- Lengthening of trunk; legs are already adult length
- Lungs double in capacity
- Heart doubles in size
- Increase in muscle to fat ratio

During the growth spurt, males develop larger heart and lungs, higher systolic blood pressure, thicker muscles, and more red blood cells as compared to their female counterparts. These differences may increase activity level in males and decrease that of females during adolescence (Cobb 1998, 95).

Gender Differences

When the feedback loop is fully active, the visible changes which differentiate men from women begin to appear. The emergence of the characteristics which indicate that boys are becoming men and girls are becoming women is called sexual dimorphism. The best way to explain the concept of sexual dimorphism is that it is the fork in the road between childhood and adulthood. Prior to the growth spurt, preteens are somewhat asexual; the differences between the external physical appearance of boys and girls are relatively few. The visible gender differences that accompany the growth spurt are the result of the emergence of secondary sex characteristics, primarily initiated by the endocrine system. The primary sex characteristics are the differences in the reproductive system itself (ovaries and testes). The secondary sex characteristics and the approximate age of emergence are listed in the table below.



SECONDARY SEX CHARACTERISTICS (AND RELATED OCCURRENCES)

Male

11.5-13

Height spurt begins

Beginning growth of reproductive organs, some pubic hair

Eruption of second molars

13-16

Growth of pubic hair

Growth of hair under arms

Facial hair

15-17

Heavy growth hair on body

Considerable growth of larynx

Change of voice by octave

Considerable thickening of muscles

Widening of shoulders

Increase in perspiration

Oil- and sweat-producing glands, acne

Female

8-13

Growth of breasts

Growth of pubic hair

Rapid height growth

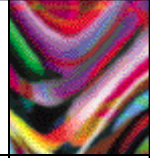
Eruption of second molars

10-16

Menarche

Growth of hair underarms

Physical Development



- Light growth of hair face
- Light growth hair on body
- Slight growth of larynx
- Moderate lowering of voice
- Slight thickening of muscles
- Widening of hips
- Increase in perspiration
- Oil- and sweat-producing glands, acne

In addition to the visible signs of emerging adulthood, other systems are at work as well. The circulatory system is growing, with the weight of the heart nearly doubling. Arteries don't grow nearly as much as the heart, as the arteries were more closely the size of an adult (which is why blood pressure for children is low). The respiratory system is growing also. Lungs grow rapidly during adolescence, coming close to doubling in capacity. Testosterone (an androgen) gives greater muscular structure, which is partly responsible for girls being bypassed by boys athletically; estrogen encourages fat production. Also, the lungs in females do not develop as fast or end up as large due to the smaller size of the rib cage.

It is no surprise to any grocery-buying parent that the digestive system is now raging out of control. The stomach grows, the appetite increases, and metabolism (the body's ability to process food) is at an all-time high. Metabolic rate peaks at around age 20. There are implications here for the benefits of proper exercise and nutrition. The proper amount of exercise for adolescents:

- Builds physical fitness
- Helps with weight control
- Promotes psychological and mental health
- Improves intellectual performance

Five common nutrition deficiencies in adolescents are:

- Insufficient calcium
- Insufficient iron
- Insufficient protein



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Insufficient vitamins (esp. A & C)

Insufficient thiamin and riboflavin

As adulthood looms for the adolescent and poor exercise and nutrition catch up, the body mass gets more difficult to change when the rapid metabolism of adolescence shuts off!

The nervous system is also becoming more refined. The discussion of the brain will be taken up in the section on cognitive development, but new research is interesting. Remember that physical development is controlled by the central nervous system and regulated by the endocrine system. The hypothalamus gland could be considered to be a nervous system agent as it keeps the endocrine system in check. Otherwise the central nervous system has little growth in adolescence. Nerve endings may become more refined, but relatively no new growth.

Physical Development and Youth Ministry

Before this article becomes an amateur biology lesson, let's move our focus to the ministry application of all the information you have just read. Aleshire said, "Fortunately, youth do not need to know about these hormones for them to be effective, nor do youth leaders need to be able to pronounce their names in order to be competent guides and helpers for youth!" (Aleshire 1982, 39). Youth workers and parents need to keep in mind that the physical changes are the centerpiece of the adolescent experience and ministry opportunities abound.

Maybe a little information about sweat glands and an introduction to a can of deodorant would help the confidence and social skills of an eighth-grade boy. Perhaps an understanding of the incessant need of an adolescent to have a body image that is acceptable to peers will help youth ministers as they consider biblical topics to discuss. Body characteristics considered as important are the media-driven images of what is beautiful or handsome. It could even be that the youth ministry would help remind parents that adequate information about the changes taking place can make all the difference in the world to a teenager. The adolescent who faces the violent changes of puberty armed with information as to what is about to happen with his or her body is much more likely to transition smoothly to adulthood (Rice 1999, 102).

Physical Development



As a part of ministry to parents, it may prove helpful to stress that timing may vary, but sequence of development is reasonably constant. Parents may be grateful for resources and information as to how to help their teenager navigate the rapid physical changes that are inevitable with the onset of puberty. An awareness of the tremendous emotional swings that can result from the influx of hormones could also be beneficial in ministry. Finally, I quote Dr. Aleshire whose words in 1982 are still appropriate:

Physical changes make some youth feel unlovable. . . .
[They] make the world seem less predictable and dependable than it once was. The call to faith, the love of Christ, and the integrity of scriptural truth are predictable and dependable. Youth need to be encouraged to continue to believe these long-term truths in the midst of constantly changing short-term feelings. . . . Youth leaders can help youth with each of these feelings, and acquaint them with the resources of the Christian faith for dealing with human fears, anxieties, and frustrations (Aleshire 1982, 43).

YQ: Consider your teenagers and their physical development. Which ones are early maturing? Which ones are late maturing? Are any of your teenagers experiencing problems with their self-image related to their maturing bodies? Identify ways parents and teachers can partner to help teenagers physically mature to adulthood.

Cognitive Development

On an airplane going into Albuquerque last summer, I ended up sitting next to a man who works at a laboratory where technology is used to examine brain development and brain activity. I took the opportunity to ask him about some new research I had read concerning the mental processing of adolescents as it relates to the biological development of the brain itself. While he was not really willing to speculate as to the implications of such research, he confirmed that new technology allows us to see the development of the brain in ways we have not had before.

If you are already thinking, *This belongs in the “physical development” section of this book*, you are probably right. I promised back there that if you would link to this section, you would get to read all about it. In addition, you may see more detail, especially about emotional regulation in the article about emotional development.

New research has challenged the assumption that the brain was fully developed by the time that the skull reached adult size. With the ability to use Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) technology to observe growth, scientists have concluded that the teen brain is far from mature. It is instead, a work in progress. According to *U.S. News and World Report*, online edition, the neural wiring is not completely in place until most people are near 20 (<http://usnews.com/usnews/issue/990809.nycu/teenbrain>, accessed 9/1/99).

As physical development is more about sequence than timing, it stands to reason that different parts of the brain develop on different timetables. According to researchers the last part of the brain to develop is the part that involves making sound judgments and self-regulating emotional reactions. Without drawing this out, two systems are active in our brains when we are placed under stress or have to make a decision. The limbic system is deep in our brain and is associated with instinctive reaction, particularly to fright or elation or to other sudden stimuli. The prefrontal cortex, located in the front lobe of the brain is the regulator (*U.S. News* called it a “mental traffic cop”) of such emotion. The prefrontal cortex is what develops last.

In other words, the ability to have a gut reaction is already wired in full, but the ability to discern, handle ambiguous information, coordinate conflicting

signals, or calm down emotions is still under construction. Adolescents can watch multiple screens simultaneously, but they cannot keep track of multiple thoughts and cannot recall past experiences instantly in order to factor them into a present decision. They “may also have trouble organizing several tasks, deciding, for example, which to do first: call a friend, wash the dishes, or read the book for a report that’s due in the morning” (www.usnews.com).

So what does the development of the brain have to do with mental development? It gives some handles to what youth workers have long suspected: our role is critical in helping teenagers navigate the journey from childhood thinking to adult thinking. Paul wrote that “when I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things (1 Cor 13:11). The child thinks in terms of what is seen and held, and the adolescent is beginning to think in the adult world of possibilities, potentialities, “what if?” theoreticals, and “might be.”

A giant step in mental development for the adolescent is the ability to deal not just with the immediate and real but with the possible and abstract. Problem solving is enhanced because the teenager is able to approach a problem by imagining all the possible solutions and thinking through each possibility. These adolescents are able to engage in introspection and think about their thoughts. They pick up the ability to do both inductive and deductive reasoning (Rice 1996, 38). During adolescence, teenagers learn to think differently in five areas (Steinberg 1996, 71):

They become better able to think about what is possible than limit their thought to what is real.

They become better able to think about abstract issues (potential and hypothetical).

They think more about the thinking process.

Their thinking tends to be more multidimensional rather than being limited to single issues.

They are more likely than children to see things as relative rather than absolute.

Intelligence in adolescence is not just an increase in quantity of thought



but an increase in quality. Youth begin to think in abstract terms. They can comprehend broad truths from all humankind and deal with wild and absurd possibilities. They may, however, occasionally suffer from mental overload. They want to go deeper, but their mind freezes up. They also occasionally suffer from critical idealism. In other words they may tend to be too idealistic and not realistic enough in their thinking. Since they enjoy thinking about thinking, they tend to develop egocentricity where they spend too much time thinking about what everyone else might be thinking about them. Early in this process adolescents tend to be clumsy in their decision making. They begin to think of so many alternatives that they make poor decisions (Black 1991, 102-03).

In developing a worldview, abstract thought is significant in the process of spiritual transformation. Specifically, the spiritual decisions adolescents make in the course of a youth ministry may reflect the journey into abstract thought. The recommitments they make along the way may be because they are able to commit more of themselves (for example, True Love Waits) as their cognitive ability provides a framework for deeper commitment.

Recall also that most adolescents see conversion not as a point in time but as a process that may take years. As their base of experience grows and their ability to process information with greater sophistication increases, they can comprehend that God is more than a storybook character or a cosmic grandfather. Their cognitive growth enables their spiritual growth. Adolescents now are able to appreciate God through the metaphors in Scripture without being confused about the reality of redemption. As they experience the living God, they solidify their faith commitment. As Paul wrote, they are working out their salvation with fear and trembling (see Phil. 2:12).

Intelligence Testing

Intelligence Tests (or IQ tests) are some of the most widely used assessment tools in the world of education. If you have taken an Iowa Test, a California Test, an SAT, an ACT, or any other state or alphabet combination, then you have taken a form of an intelligence test. The actual goal of an intelligence test is to measure mental age against physical age. So your IQ score would be

figured on the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Mental Age}}{\text{Chronological Age}} \times 100$$

Simply put, an IQ test is a mathematical formula that expresses a relationship between chronological age and mental age. The difficulty comes with the measurement of mental age.

IQ testing is not without controversy, especially when it is the sole assessment used to determine whether a person gets into a program or school. Guy Lefrancois said that intelligence is “among the most nebulous but highly prized of all human characteristics” (Lefrancois 1981, 156). As measured by IQ tests, intelligence is related to the portions of the brain that have to do with abstract reasoning, verbal and numerical ability. A single agreed-upon definition of *intelligence* does not exist.

The first IQ test was devised by Alfred Binet, a French educator. Revised by a Stanford University professor, the test became known as the Stanford Binet intelligence test, and it measured verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, abstract/visual reasoning, and short-term memory (Rice 1999, 151). The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Test defined *intelligence* as “the global and aggregate capacity of an individual to think rationally, to act purposefully, and to deal effectively with his environment.” Others describe *intelligence* as “the ability to adapt to the environment or the ability to profit from experience” (Lefrancois 1981, 158). Using the above definition, animals are intelligent (and in fact, the dolphin has a better brain weight to total body weight and may be more intelligent than humans). The problem that many have with IQ tests is the perception that a single number indicates how smart a person is or isn't.

Critics point out that it is possible for a person to have numerous abilities, all of which cannot be measured by reading for comprehension and solving arithmetic problems. In addition, IQ tests fail to take into consideration particular differences that fluctuate with individuals. No allowance is made for environment or culture. Most convincing in the argument against IQ tests is that



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they only measure performance and not potential. For our purposes, remember that the labeling produced by an IQ score can have more impact than whatever quality intelligence is supposed to describe.

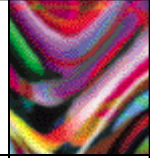
Multiple Intelligences

Howard Gardner is a psychologist/educator from Harvard University who proposed that intelligence was more than merely a measure of aptitude in reading and math. He believed that intelligence was more than one aggregate score; rather it is a combination of “intelligences” possessed by an individual. Gardner was first known for his writing in the area of creativity, but he introduced the concept of multiple intelligences in *Frames of Mind: the Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, published in 1993.

Gardner identified seven intelligences (summarized well in Ann Sullivan, “Making Theories of Intelligence Work for You,” *Youth Ministry Update*, June 1995). In 1996, Gardner added another “intelligence” called “naturalist” and is considering one called “existentialist,” a philosophic slant that may or may not ultimately be considered a separate intelligence. He had several criteria for inclusion as an intelligence including presence of child prodigies, idiot savants (mentally challenged persons who excel at one particular ability), and people who have suffered damage to a particular part of the brain (Cobb 1998, 169).

Gardner’s intelligences may be summarized as follows (Santrock 1998, 149; Rice 1999, 150-51; additional information adapted from ([www.http://surfaquarium.com](http://surfaquarium.com) accessed 8/6/00; www.igs.net/~cmorris/naturalistic accessed 8/6/00).

Verbal/linguistic—Students with this talent speak comfortably and fluently and learn new words and expressions easily. They also memorize verbal materials such as poems much more easily than other students do. They will demonstrate strength in the language arts: speaking, writing, reading, listening. These students have always been successful in traditional classrooms because their intelligence lends itself to traditional teaching. Such students are often drawn to careers such as attorney, comedian, editor, historian, interpreter, journalist, lawyer, librarian, manager, novelist, orator, philosopher, playwright,



poet, politician, proof reader, psychotherapist, public speaker, public relations person, reporter, sales people, secretary, social scientist, storyteller, supervisor, talk show host, teacher, technical writer, translator, or writer.

Mathematical/logical—Students with this skill organize objects and concepts well. Using a microcomputer, for example, comes easily, as does mathematics. These students display an aptitude for numbers, reasoning, and problem solving. By the way, this is the other half of the traditional indication of the single view of intelligence. Possible careers that would attract mathematical/logical persons include accountant, analyst, banker, biologist, bookkeeper, chemist, chess player, city planner, computer programmer, economist, engineer, financial service, inventor, investment broker, lawyer/paralegal, logician, mathematician, mechanic/mechanical engineer, microbiologist, pharmacist, physician, programmer, records clerks, researcher, scientist, statistician, tax accountant, or technologist.

Visual/spatial—These students literally can find their way around. They know the streets of the neighborhood better than most children their age do, and if they live in the country, they can find their way across large stretches of terrain without getting lost. They enjoy symmetry, like puzzles, and can play “pictionary” well. A spatial student might be attracted to these careers: advertiser, architect, artist, builder, carpenter, cartographer, chess player, coach, commercial artist, computer specialist, craftsperson, decorator, dentist, draftsman, engineer, fashion designer, film editor/director, furniture restorer, geographer, geometrician, graphic designer, guide, hairdresser, industrial design, interior designer, inventor, landscape architect/designer, makeup artist, mechanic, navigator, outdoors guide, painter, photographer, pilot, sailor, sculptor, seamstress, set designer, sign painter, surgeon, surveyor, tailor, or urban planner.

Bodily/kinesthetic—Some students (including my son!) experience learning best through activity: games, movement, hands-on tasks, building. These students were often labeled “overly active” in traditional classrooms where they were told to sit still! They excel at learning that involves body, balance, and agility. This child is sensitive to the internal sensations created by body movement. As a result, he or she finds dancing, gymnastics, and other activities requiring balance easy to learn. A kinesthetic child might end up in a



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career like acrobat, actor, actress, aerobic teacher, architect, assembler, athlete, ballet dancer, building trade person, carpenter, choreographer, clown, coach, commercial artist, construction worker, craftsperson, dancer, drama coach, engineer, equestrian, gymnast, inventor, jockey, juggler, magician, manual laborer, massage therapist, mechanic, mime, physical therapist, physical education teacher, pianist, rodeo rider, sculptor, stunt people, surgeon, or trainer.

Musical/rhythmic—These students not only play one or more musical instruments, but they also sing and discern subtle musical effects. Usually musical talent also includes a good sense of timing, or rhythm. They enjoy a story that has organized parts (movements). Music/rhythmic students learn well through songs, patterns, rhythms, instruments, and musical expression. They could be drawn to a career as band member, choir director, conductor, composer, critic, dancer, disc jockey, figure skater, instrumentalist, instrumental instructor, manager, music critic, musical performer, music teacher, music therapist, professional performer, promoter, recording technician, rock group member, singer, songwriter, sound engineer, teacher, or violinist.

Interpersonal—A student with interpersonal skill shows excellent understanding of others' feelings, thoughts, and motives. Social encounters come easily. Students who are noticeably people-oriented and outgoing do their learning cooperatively in groups or with a partner. Interpersonal students may find themselves in a career such as business person, chess player, childcare worker, clergy person, coach, community organizer, consumer service advocate, counselor, homemaker, manager, mediator, nurse, politician, probation officer, psychologist, psychotherapist, public relation promoter, receptionist, recreation assistant, religious leader, salesperson, secretary, social leader, social director, social worker, teacher, therapist, travel agent/counselor, waiter, or waitress.

Intrapersonal—A student with intrapersonal skill has a good understanding of his own feelings, thoughts, and motives. Again, social encounters come easily. These students are especially aware of their own values and ideas. They may tend to be more reserved, but they are intuitive about what they learn and how it relates to themselves. Intrapersonal people may end up as consultant, counselor, creative writer, entrepreneur, guru, leadership trainer, philosopher,

psychiatrist, psychologist, psychotherapist, researcher, sage, self-employed person, spiritual counselor, therapist, or writer.

Naturalist—In 1996, Gardner added as an intelligence those students who love the outdoors, animals, and field trips. More than this, though, these students love to pick up on subtle differences in meanings. This child has a sensitivity to the world of nature—living things. Naturalist intelligence involves ability to value the environment. More than an interest and more like a skill, Gardner defines the naturalistic intelligence as an ability to recognize and classify elements of the natural world. Naturalist persons may be employed as animal handler, anthropologist, astronomer, biologist, botanist, chef, environmentalist, landscape artist, navigator, park ranger, sailor, veterinarian, weather tracking specialist, zoo keeper.

If you got somewhat bogged down in all of that “intelligence,” close your eyes and picture your class or group of teenagers, your family, or any other group of kids that comes to mind. The majority of teaching that is done in youth ministry teaches to the verbal and visual intelligences. If some kids just don’t plug in, perhaps it is because they are smart in a way besides with words.

When thinking about different types of intelligence, remember:

Everyone has some of all the intelligences, and most persons have strength in two or more.

The intelligences do not cancel one another out; they work together.

Gardner did not suggest multiple intelligences to leave anyone out but to show teachers and learners that everyone has something to contribute but the key to unlock the potential may vary.

Information Processing Strategies

One other aspect of cognitive development that wakes up during adolescence is the use of information processing strategies. Processing strategy emphasizes progressive steps when an adolescent receives, perceives, remembers, thinks about, and uses information. One way I have illustrated information processing strategies lately is to think about the way that most people deal with e-mail.

When we open our inbox, we scan the mail we have received. We immediately

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delete some of it; we mentally postpone reading some more; and we immediately read what we decide is most important for the moment.

An adolescent receives a piece of information, chooses which if any of the input he will deal with, interprets the meaning of the message, considers his response, and reacts accordingly. Information processing matures with abstract thought of adolescence in four basic ways (Siegler cited in Cobb 1998, 165):

Speed information is processed

Use of strategies

Discerning what one needs to know

Knowledge or the stored information used to filter new information

Creativity

One other dimension of cognitive development that is of interest to those of us who work with teenagers is creativity. In a way creativity is an information processing strategy. As adolescents have the freedom to think, combined with newfound abstract thinking, fueled by technology that exposes them to a wide range of ideas, creativity emerges as a byproduct.

In my youth education classes, we introduce creative thinking by asking the class as a whole to list all of the possible uses they can think of for a brick (thanks again to my mentor Jim Minton). Once the list is written on the board, we try to see if any categories of uses can be identified. So anything that uses a brick for construction is called “building” and anything that involves pounding or beating is called “tools” and anything that sounds aggressive is labeled “weapons.”

The exercise helps us to see the major aspects of creativity:

Fluency—Number of different responses (total uses of a brick)

Flexibility—Shifts from one class of response to another (number of categories)

Elaboration—Use of details to work out an idea (You should hear some of the stories—like using a brick for a blanket heater by heating it in a fire before placing it at the foot of a bed.)

Originality—Unusual responses, occurring less than 5 percent of the time (like using a brick to save water by putting it in your toilet tank).

The reason creativity is valuable for adolescents is that it gives them another tool to deal effectively with all of the information coming their way.

Creative adolescents (Cobb 1998, 461-62):

Enjoy risks that come with uncertainty.

Tolerate disorder.

Welcome people and ideas that are different from theirs.

Do not assume that roles exist, and, if they do, they should not interfere with creative thinking.

Are reflectively spontaneous.

Are analytically intuitive.

Are good at association.

In order to facilitate creative thinking, those who work with teenagers should encourage persistence, challenge ability to combine things, allow adolescents to challenge assumptions, support independent decision making and applaud insightful observations or questions.

Eugene Roehlkepartain wrote of the dangers of youth ministries that do not provide a thinking environment. Research shows that youth who experience a thinking environment are twice as likely as those who are spoonfed knowledge to say that faith is the “most” or a “very important” influence in their lives. Thinking environments expect youth to take time thinking through issues, asking tough questions, and thinking for themselves. Teenagers need to be encouraged to look at the world differently (Roehlkepartain 1994, 53). Bo Boshers of Willow Creek Church adds, “We need to give our students and leaders permission to perform their mental gymnastics in order to mature intellectually into adulthood” (Boshers 1997, 86).

YQ: Does your home and/or church encourage thinking? Identify teenagers in your home and/or church who are not plugging in. What are their strengths in learning (musical/rhythmic, intrapersonal, etc.)? What can you change in order to plug these teens into the church family?



Social Development

My wife had some hanging plant baskets in our carport in New Orleans. Imagine my surprise when I was getting in the van one morning and one of the hanging baskets made a cheeping noise. Since I do not believe in talking plants, or in this case cheeping plants, I investigated. A momma bird had built her nest, moved into her hanging plant basket condominium, and laid an egg! The really sad part of the story is that momma decided to run away from home and leave the egg behind.

The bird family didn't turn out the way it was designed. The design for a bird life span is that they point their empty beaks toward the sky for their momma to drop in worms. After awhile, the babies get stronger, their wings develop, and it is time for adolescence. If the little ones are reluctant to leave the nest, momma pushes them out of the nest, forcing them to fly on their own.

Human babies also grow up, point their empty mouths toward mom, and ultimately move towards independence. The positive side of the move to independence is that adolescence provides a time during which teenagers are trying out new structures and abilities while still being in the care of their families. I am not naive to the fact that many parents have abandoned their role as have other institutions that should be concerned for the welfare of the adolescent (Hersch 1998).

Socialization

Nancy Cobb (1998, 195) wrote that a major story in the socialization of adolescents into their culture is the renegotiation of relationships as teenagers move to adulthood. Particularly in regard to their families, adolescents experience:

- New awareness of who they are.
- New awareness of who their parents are.
- New awareness of their social worlds.

Tony Campolo (1989, 51-67) described the shift from the viewpoint of a sociologist:

Shift is from parents to friends as primary group.

Primary group (defined: small circle of friends, family, or associates who interact with a person on a daily basis) provides reference points

and establish the patterns with which a young person will deal with culture. Personal identity and behaviors are involved.

Primary groups can be positive. And they can be manipulated (in a nice sort of way).

General pattern is for primary group to be family, then friends, then back to family after teen years.

Alfred Bandura and others have pointed out the strength of imitation, identification, and modeling in the socialization of young adults. Rather than focusing on the rewards and punishment of other behavioral theories, social learning theory emphasizes that people learn by watching one another and observing the consequences of their actions (imitation), ultimately taking on some of the actions (identification). The importance for youth ministry is that the process of imitation is so powerful that the formation of positive relationships must be a priority (Anthony 1992, 84). Acknowledging the migration toward peer relationships during adolescence, the wise parent will take an involved stance with regard to the friendships their teenagers are forming. Benson (et al. 1995) identified a number of supporting persons (teachers, other significant adults) who contribute to the success of an adolescent.

Growing Need for Independence

The world outside the human nest is often full of uncertainty. Mary Pipher, author of *Reviving Ophelia*, gave a lecture in New Orleans a couple of years ago. I attended the lecture, and one of the things that she said stuck with me. She said, “We have always had dysfunctional families. It used to be that we dumped them out into a fairly functional culture. This is no longer true. Families are still dysfunctional, but now the culture is as well.”

Aleshire points out that “moving out of the security of a family into a world of peers is frightening” (1982, 95). Pipher suggested that adolescents push away from the protection of their family at the time in their life when they need that protection the most (1994, 23).

Adolescent independence is expressed as teenagers begin to distance themselves emotionally from parents and move toward friends (Cole & Cole

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1993, 583, cited in www.personal.psu.edu/faculty/n/x/nxd10/adolesce.htm, accessed 8/7/00). The importance (self-perceived) of friendships for adolescents increases. Friends provide affirmation, security, and a sense of identity (Aleshire 1982, 95). During adolescence peer friendships increase in their importance.

However, teenagers are still actively seeking their parents' approval and do not want to come across as trivial or childish. Because of this, adolescents are more likely to be open with their friends than their parents, discussing such issues as dating, sexuality, personal experiences, and common interests (Savin-Williams & Berndt, as cited in Feldman & Elliot, 1990).

Adolescents in the United States move into secondary schools that are generally larger than elementary schools, and they are more mobile than younger children. Therefore, they have a greater opportunity to associate with peers (Cole & Cole 1993, cited on PSU Web site). Demands for autonomy accompany the new friendships. They question their parents' authority. The major decision of adolescence is who will decide. Conflict arises when children decide that they should have a vote in what they can and cannot do (Allyn & Bacon 1994, cited on PSU web site, www.personal.psu.edu).

Friendships During Adolescence

In my classes I enjoy brainstorming about movies that depict friendships. Movies like *My Girl* and *My Best Friend's Wedding* always get mentioned. I think a classic is *American Graffiti*, which shows a 1962 version of adolescent friendship patterns. I remember thinking, *It seemed simpler then*. Admittedly, it wasn't. A television show which depicted the give-and-take of adolescent friendships during the 1990s, *My So Called Life*, lasted only a season or two before it went off the air. A student speculated on the reason: "Who wants to watch a show that reminds us of the pain of real life?" A new "documentary" called *American High* covers some of the same ground, but in viewing an audience obsessed with "reality TV," the newer show appears to be doing better.

Same-sex friendships are extremely important, particularly in younger adolescents. Self-disclosure is the desired experience—sharing emotions, support, intimacy, and advice. Girls are more likely to express friendship by



talking and sharing their feelings. Though more pronounced in younger adolescence, girls desire (Cobb 1998, 256-57)

Trust.

Emotional support.

Mutuality.

Confidentiality.

Loyalty (challenged when friends begin to date).

In later adolescence girl friendships focus more on personalities. Some intensity is gone, but intimacy continues to develop. Boys are likely to develop emotional closeness through sharing activities like sports. In early adolescence friendships are almost exclusively same sex. Boys look for someone with whom they can do things. They show little interest in personality as long as activities are compatible. Even in late adolescence boys rate same-sex friendships as more valuable than those with girls.

With regard to peer groups, surprisingly few gender differences exist in peer interaction patterns. Perhaps the most pronounced is the tendency for females to focus on the relationship while males focus on the activity. An example (attributed to Carol Gilligan, cited in Cobb 1998) is that girls who are playing and have a disagreement will go their separate ways to protect the relationships so that they can play again another day. Boys who get into an argument make more rules and keep playing. Boys value the game more, while girls value the friendships more.

Peer groups have recently been shown to provide surrogate family support (gangs). The role played by peers in adolescence is critical. Relationships with peers during the adolescent years imitate later adult relationships in social relationships, in work, and in interactions with members of the opposite sex. Teenagers who do not learn how to get along with others by the time they reach adulthood are likely to face obstacles in years ahead.

Since adolescents spend twice as much time with peers than with parents or other adults, the lack of supervision in peer groups is significant. While the phenomenon we call “peer pressure” is influential, the notion of the reluctant teenager being pressured into at-risk behavior by friends may be too simplistic.



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Self-selection may be at work. Adolescents probably select their closest friends because they have similar interests. It is more likely that the pressure to engage in at-risk behavior is partly due to adolescents' hanging around friends that will influence them because they want to try out a specific behavior.

As an example, consider a music study we did here at the seminary last year. My students surveyed teenagers to see if the type of music they listened to was related to their behavior. The results showed a connection between teenagers listening to heavy metal music and antisocial behavior, which was no real surprise. It is not known, however, whether the behavior is a result of the music or if anti-social teenagers prefer a certain type of music (Terrell and Jackson 2000).

The influence friends bring about may be direct or subtle. The perception that "everybody is doing it" may be more influential than the reality. For example, a young person may think that everyone is smoking or everyone is sexually active and may therefore feel pressure to try those behaviors (www.stills.nap.edu/html/risks_opportunities/ch2.html accessed 8/7/00). The specific areas in which "peer pressure" is likely to be felt include body image, clothing style, choice of social activities, sexual activity, and involvement with alcohol or drugs (Mueller 1999, chapter 7).

Dating, Sex, and Courtship

Of all of the activities adolescents get involved in (hanging out at the mall, working, talking on the phone, going to school, participating in extracurricular activities), it is likely that dating, romance, and intimacy with the opposite sex eventually take center stage. The reasons adolescents date are varied (Powell 1989, *The Dating Book*, 10):

- Recreation
- Status
- Social relationships
- Intimacy
- Sexual/physical contact
- Companionship
- ID



- Curiosity
- Get out of the house
- Free food
- Companionship
- Shock
- Premarriage
- Be like everyone else

Adolescents date in ways other than the typical, “one on one, pizza and a movie” evening. Casual or “friend” dates, group dates, and dutch treat (meet at the mall) situations are becoming much more common.

The practice of dating has come under scrutiny in recent years. Proponents of dating among adolescents say that it helps to develop care, foster social skills, and enhance self-esteem. Opponents, many of whom favor the alternative called courtship, believe that godly parents can teach their children to commit to “emotional abstinence” when the dating years approach. They feel that the pressure to date, the pressure to be involved sexually within dating relationships, and the hurt caused by the cycle of breaking up are too high a price for the benefits gained from dating.

Martha Ruppert (2000, 24), whose writing is representative of a number of authors who recommend “kissing dating goodbye,” describes the practice of dating for both believers and nonbelievers:

For many unbelievers, marriage is not even the long-term goal of dating; dating means getting to know someone and having sex with that person until boredom or conflict sets in, then moving on to the next partner. And for Christians, “going steady” means “cleaving then leaving” over and over with several romantic partners, rather than “leaving and cleaving” with one God-given partner (2000, 24).

Ruppert further suggests that dating is dangerous because:

- It can damage emotions.
- It stirs passions.
- It can cause misplaced priorities.



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It damages friendships.

It divides parents and children.

It threatens marital happiness.

Ruppert makes a strong case for the hurt that has been caused by the out-of-control industry known as dating, pointing out the breakdown of healthy inhibition and modesty (2000, 80). She advocates biblical courtship, which involves social engagement only as friends (brothers and sisters in Christ). The family is to be the center of the decisions about close friendships, and activities with those friends are filtered through the close relationship between parents and teenagers.

Though other writers would describe Ruppert's approach as unrealistic in today's society, it is widely accepted that dating is a common source of tension between parent and teenager. Common arenas are age at which dating begins, whom an adolescent is allowed to date, and the choice of activity on a date. Proponents of supervised dating also advocate parental intervention.

For example, if an adolescent wants to start dating at age 12, and a parent feels that he/she is not ready, then the parent may suggest the following (Autumn Oswald, "Issues of Adolescent Dating," www.psu.edu accessed 8/9/00):

To go to a movie with a group of friends including both boys and girls.

Explain that this would be a good idea because the adolescent will be able to be with same sex friends also.

To go out on a date with a friend, either of the same or opposite sex.

To date casually in an area where other people will be around, so that the adolescent does not end up in an awkward, or even dangerous situation.

Whether we choose to espouse and teach biblical courtship or to help our teenagers navigate the waters of dating, Ruppert's advice seems helpful (2000, 15):

Teach them diligently.

Win and keep their hearts with love.

Pray.

Media Influence, Gangs, and Homosexuality

A few other social issues deserve our attention. Media influence and media literacy are cultural issues but demand response by Christian parents and youth workers because of their effect on moral, spiritual, mental, social, and emotional development. The New Mexico Project for Media Literacy (www.nmmlp.org) is an excellent resource. Organizations that are concerned are the Center for Media Literacy (www.earthlink.net/~cml) and the Center for Parent Youth Understanding (www.cpyu.org). The incessant drive for popularity as well as the youth gang (see more about gangs in the chapter on families) are similarly cultural and also well documented in other places.

Homosexuality issues have been in the media lately. Sexual orientation is part cultural and part developmental, with the biological argument coming and going. Teenagers who believe that they are gay are creating campus clubs, holding demonstrations, or quietly living out a lifestyle that cannot line up with God's Word. It is not the purpose of this chapter to deal extensively with this topic, but good information is available. For godly parents and youth workers, our task is to help males learn about masculinity and females about femininity. Postmodern schools may take a different view.

As a case in point, consider that the May 15, 2000 *U.S. News and World Report* contains an article by John Leo entitled, "Coercion on Campus." The article reports that Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts, expelled an evangelical group from campus. A student tribunal, with full backing of the university, said that the Christian group violated the campus antidiscrimination policy when they refused to let a member of the group assume a leadership position because she was openly bisexual. The group refused, saying that they cannot have a leader who does not embrace their religious beliefs.

YQ: Reflect on the friendship patterns among your teenagers. How are they similar to what is described here? How do they differ?



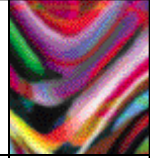
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The grandfather of the study of the developing adolescent is G. Stanley Hall. He is credited with many early ideas that form the basis for the field of adolescent development. Hall felt that adolescent development was a mirror of the development of the species. More significantly, Hall believed that the development of the adolescent was controlled purely by biological forces, occurring in a universal pattern, regardless of environment or nurture (Rice 1999, 25). One of his earliest phrases, and one that still gets a lot of print, is the notion that adolescence necessarily involves what Hall called “Sturm und Drang” or in English, “Storm and Stress.” He suggested that the turbulent times of adolescence are inevitable, that the best thing parents can do is to batten down the hatches and get ready. Survival of the teen years is the goal, both for parents and for adolescents.

One interesting twist was provided by Arnold Gesell, writing in the early 20th century. He suggested that the emotional roller coaster in adolescence followed a “good year/bad year” pattern which was relatively constant from adolescent to adolescent. Rebellion and moodiness characterized the bad years while cooperation and relative pleasantness characterized the good. Good years were the even ages and bad years were the odd ages. His thoughts were appealing when a parent could say, “Aha! That explains why junior seems to have had a personality transplant since his last birthday!”

Biology Versus Environment: The Truth Is in the Middle

In contrast, writers like Margaret Mead have countered the biological explanation for the emotional ups and downs of adolescence by suggesting that the family and culture context had everything to do with the ride. Mead was a social anthropologist who pointed to the idea that social institutions, economic patterns, habits, rituals, and religious beliefs vary from culture to culture (Rice 1999, 45), and so the pattern of storm and stress is not necessarily predictable. Rebuttal to Mead’s work has followed with one writer suggesting that all of Mead’s work with Samoan teenagers was a hoax, the result of a joke that the teenagers played on Mead as she studied them (see Cote, J.E. *Adolescent Storm and Stress: An Evaluation of the Mead-Freeman Controversy*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1994).



Hopefully, you scanned the background above and came to the correct conclusion that extreme positions for explanation of adolescent emotional behavior are not helpful. A combination of physical factors and environmental factors is most helpful in understanding the mood-swinging adolescent. Recent research on brain development (see physical development) contributes to the idea that the emotional wavering as teenagers try to make a decision is due to the fact that the part of their brain which has to do with judgment is not fully developed. On the other hand, the discussion on early and late maturers also gave us something to think about when we consider the emotional development of adolescents. If a young person is ahead or behind peers in physical development, the social interaction related to coping with an out-of-sync body contributes to emotional condition as well.

Nowadays most parents, youth workers, and even theorists who ponder adolescents do not feel like the storm and stress are a given. The hormonal explosion of the growth spurt undoubtedly contributes to the emotional condition of an adolescent. The often unstable family situations in the lives of some teenagers absolutely add to the moodiness. Neither can media influence, the volatile culture (cultures!), and the fast-paced world of school and friendships in which teenagers exist be discounted as factors in the equation. The emotional roller coaster of adolescence is a combination of all of the above.

Personality

Another dimension in the study of emotional development has to do with personality. As adults, we try to figure out whether our personality or leadership style is dominant, influencing, steady, or conscientious. Are we a “high D” or a “low I,” and if so, how does that affect our interaction with other people? I personally like the younger version of the personality temperament, as presented in the delightful children’s book, *The Treasure Tree* by Trent and Smalley, in which four best friends (a lion, an otter, a golden retriever, and a beaver) who have the same birthday, each receive a gift from Wise Old Owl. The point of the story is that each must use their own abilities, and they learn to appreciate their own personalities as well as those of their friends. Whether adult or child, we



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benefit from knowing the role of personality in our emotional development.

While admittedly oversimplified here, remember that personality encompasses most of what this whole development story is about, but briefly, personality has to do with:

- Temperament (shy or outgoing)
- Learning style
- Language
- Sex role (masculine or feminine)
- Relational style
- Identity

A Word About Mood Swings

Anyone who works with youth is keenly aware of the large mood swings in teenagers. They tend to go from one extreme to another in just a few hours or even minutes. Experts who study adolescent behavior classify most of this as age-appropriate, normal, typical, and expected behavior of individuals in the adolescent cycle of life. Mood swings are not the key to understanding teenagers. Emotional developmental tasks relate to and are centered in this conflict raging in the lives of teenagers seeking to find out who they are apart from their parents (Rowley 1990, 49-50). Boshers notes, “Mood swings are not uncommon for teenagers. Mood swings are closely related to the physical and social changes teenagers face during adolescence. Also, their preoccupation with their developing identity can cause emotional turmoil” (Boshers 1997, 87).

Adolescents have not yet mastered the ability to balance anxieties and the frustrations of life. Many struggle with this well into adulthood. The teenagers’ coping mechanisms, however, are not yet firmly in place. The wisdom of experience is not there to offer reassurance and solace (Stevens 1985, 61). Many teenagers appear unstable emotionally as they make the transition from thinking and acting like children to facing the pressures of being a mature adult. They are looking for a safe place to find themselves (Boshers 1997, 88). A value is something that has worth and is desirable. A task of youth ministry is to help youth develop a value of themselves and who God is in



them. They must feel good about who they are before they are able to value other people, beliefs, and principles (Ross 1989, 60).

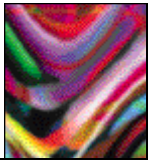
Emotions Gone Wrong

Many topics could be listed here, including delinquency, anger, stress, suicide, runaways, depression, and even hyperactivity. Some of the emotional disorders have physical roots, but many of them are a result of mismanaged or dysfunctional emotional development. Rice (1999, 399) said, “Sometimes adolescents who are emotionally upset turn outward, expressing pent-up emotions through various forms of acting-out behavior: truancy, aggressive behavior, promiscuity, theft, assault, rape, even the destruction of one’s own life or that of another.”

Eating disorders are another manifestation of emotions gone wrong. An estimated 20-30 percent of all teenage girls suffer from some sort of eating disorder; 90 percent of all eating disorder cases reported are female. More of an issue with women, females are more likely to think that they are overweight when they really aren’t. Most agree that the root of eating disorders is self-esteem. Many with eating disorders are good students. The two major types of eating disorders are anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa.

Anorexia, literally “a nervous loss of appetite,” was first diagnosed in 1689. It involves an extreme preoccupation with weight, which quickly escalates into urgency to lose more weight. Weight loss is accomplished by fasting, excessive exercise, or laxatives. The typical anorexic is 12-16 years old when symptoms show. Symptoms may include irritability, perfectionist attitude, introverted personality, emaciated appearance, cold hands and feet, dry skin, thin head hair with a downy fuzz eventually appearing on other parts of the body, and the interruption or cessation of menstrual cycle.

Bulimia, “an insatiable appetite,” is commonly known as the binge-purge disease, eating large amounts of food at a time followed by expulsion by various means. Vomiting by means of gagging with fingers or by taking drugs to induce nausea is combined with use of laxatives. Sometimes bulimics chew food and then spit it out. Symptoms may include fluctuating body weight (bulimics are rarely emaciated like anorexics), rapid or irregular heartbeat,



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Introducing the 21st Century Teenager

broken blood vessels in the face, bags under the eyes, loss of tooth enamel because of gastric juices in the mouth, and the interruption or cessation of the menstrual cycle (Tan Flippin, "Eating Disorders: A Teenage Trend of the 90's," *Youthworker Update*, 3, 9. Flippin cited *Love Hunger* by Minrith and Meier, K. L. Nagel and Karen Jones, "Predisposition Factors in Anorexia Nervosa" in *Adolescence* 27, 106).

Responding to Emotional Hurt

Some of the emotion is connected to hormones, while some of it is connected to their surroundings. In adolescence there is a predictable quest for identity, and the solving of the identity crisis is a significant struggle with many subplots. It is common for adolescents to respond to the emotional storm by shifting into neutral to avoid making decisions until their emotional maturity catches up.

Youth ministers, parents, and volunteer youth workers are extremely important in assisting in the navigation of adolescent emotions. If significant adults understand the wide range of normal emotion, they can more easily recognize when a teenager has strayed outside the norm and is in need of additional help. Learning to love, learning to feel, learning to channel anger and disappointment are all part of the "storm and stress" of adolescence. But adolescence need not be a dark period of storm and stress. Many adolescents who are nurtured by family and faith community emerge from the emotional tornado having had a rather enjoyable experience.

YQ:What about the emotions of your teenagers? Identify specific teenagers who are struggling with mood swings and emotional disorders. How can you minister to them?

Research has repeatedly affirmed that adolescents are most likely to develop into healthy, happy, and productive adults when they are supported by a caring family (see Benson et al. 1996). Healthy families, identified by the presence of communication, respect, and time/involvement of parents in the lives of their teenagers, create a positive environment characterized by nurturing and mutual respect. As previously discussed, even in healthy families, adolescence is a time when most teenagers move away from parents and toward their peers for preferred social interaction.

Despite their pleas (even demands) for independence, adolescence is a time when many young people continue to need more parental attention (Pipher 1994). Teenagers pull away from their folks at the time they need them the most for guidance. They need a parent or other responsible adult to listen and respond to them as they shape their ideas, set goals or even try out new identities. And they still need to be taught ethical behavior and the appropriate ways of handling conflict with others. Parents who offer this type of support to their adolescent children can provide powerful protection against the possibility that they may engage in at-risk behavior, become social outcasts, or suffer from depression (http://stills.nap.edu/html/risks_opportunities/ch2.html accessed 8/7/00).

Nouveau Families

George Barna, in his book *The Future of the American Family*, alerts us to the obvious. The American family has changed. The phrase Barna used was, “the Cleavers don’t live here anymore” (1993). His description of living arrangements considered to be families points out the reality of family life in America. Barna’s researchers asked persons if they considered various living arrangements to be a family. As the living arrangement described grew further away from the “two parents, two kids, a white picket fence, and a dog” family constellation, the more reluctant people were to call it a family. Here is part of the chart Barna (1993, 31) presented:

Living Arrangement

Married couple living with their children

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Married couple living with their children from a previous marriage

A man and woman who are married but do not have any children

An unwed, never-married mother living with her children

A divorced father living with his children

A man and woman who live together for a long time but are not married,
raising children together

An unwed, never-married father living with his children

A man and a woman who live together for a long time but are not married

A group of unrelated adults who live together and consider themselves
a family

Two lesbian women living with children that they are raising

Two gay men living with children that they are raising

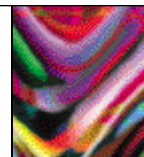
Two lesbian women committed to each other and who are living together

Two gay men committed to each other and who are living together

Predictably, in the 1992 survey, the percentage of Americans who considered a particular living arrangement to be a family ranged from 98 percent who affirmed the first and most “traditional” as a family to only 20 percent who agreed that the last one was a family. If you are reading these words, the chances are that you would also find difficulty calling two homosexual adults living together with a child a family. For the child, however, it is the only family he or she knows. When we as the body of Christ consider ministry to adolescents from nontraditional living arrangements, we will do well to remember that few of them chose that particular arrangement, yet it provides the only nurture they have known. Nouveau families need Jesus too.

In addition to the varied family constellations described by Barna’s nouveau families, societal factors have ripped at the fabric of the North American family. Another of George Barna’s books, *Frog in the Kettle*, was cited in Michael Anthony’s work on ministry foundations:

People of the United States and Canada are experiencing a change in social attitude toward the family system. Some of these changes



include: extensive revisions in divorce laws, individual rights elevated above family rights, unmarried men and women adopting children, marriage no longer being the primary goal of young people, single parent father homes, remarriages creating blended families, parents having only one child or choosing to have none at all, both parents working, and children whose parents have been divorced. What we once considered the “traditional family” reflects only 7 percent of U.S. households (Barna cited by Judy K. TenElshof in Anthony 1992, 185).

Many of these changes have occurred within a generation of the current adolescent. In the past 30 years, the divorce rate is up (though within the past few years, the trend has been encouraging) as is the number of single parents and the proportion of families living in poverty. The national average for divorce has leveled off at about 50 percent; nearly half of all marriages ended in divorce. About a quarter of all births were to unmarried women. The net result has been that nearly 25 percent of all children live with only one parent, usually the mother, a rate double that of 1970. Overall, between 50 and 75 percent of all children today will reside in a single-parent home before age 18, spending an average of 6 years with a single parent. These changes have transformed the nature of family life, as well as the experiences of adolescents (www.stills.nap.edu accessed 8/7/00).

In addition, the peripheral support for children has eroded. Extended families, once located nearby, are left behind when young and mobile couples move away to start their careers. Neighborhoods have likewise become more enclaved. One parable compares the sidewalks constructed in the 50s and 60s in neighborhoods which connected houses with one another to the sidewalks of the 90s and 2000s which connect the house only with the driveway!

Divorce has added an even more challenging dimension to the problems of today’s families. Children from divorced families must confront the emotional stress of a breakup—the often prolonged time preceding and subsequent to divorce proceedings—in addition to conditions associated with single parent-



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hood. Many of these children experience elevated levels of depression and anger and declining school performance and self-esteem. Children of divorce experience a range of stresses of greater magnitude than children in two-parent households. When custodial parents remarry, children often experience another stressful transition, which appears to be especially difficult for adolescent girls. Despite these changes in the structure and composition of families, it remains the case that the family remains an extremely important influence on adolescents, and having a positive and warm relationship with parents remains one of the most important predictors of healthy, secure development during the adolescent years (http://stills.nap.edu/html/risks_opportunities/ch2.html accessed 8/7/00).

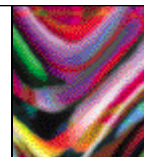
Family Life Cycle

Just as each individual progresses through a series of developmental stages over the course of a lifetime, families have a life cycle as well. As we minister to families in our churches, maybe it would be helpful to consider where an individual family is in their life cycle (Turner and Helms 1995, 523). A human begins as an embryo, and a family begins with a single person. The person grows up in a nuclear family, which shapes the way they will conduct themselves in whatever future family they become. A common listing of developmental stages in families looks something like the following. I added the definitions for clarity.

Family of origin—Each of us grows up in some sort of family. It may not be a positive situation. It could be a family composed of biological parents, adoptive parents, or even friends within a gang. Regardless of the makeup of the family, we are profoundly shaped by our experience.

Pre-family/singleness—Sometime in late adolescence, the “playing house” games take on a more serious tone as young adults realize they are nearing an age where marriage is an option if not an expectation. The relationships they have with friends of both sexes are the proving grounds for communication, problem solving, and commitments.

Dating/courtship/marriage—For some the decision is a matter of which of a number of close friends will become a spouse. For others the decision is whether to pursue marriage at all. For yet another group the question is, am I



capable of the kind of commitment to stay with anybody for the rest of my life? At this stage in the emerging family, the picture will either be a traditional one of a young married couple or one of a single adult seeking intimacy in other ways. I do not mean to imply that single adults are promiscuous. Intimacy may be found in close friendships or even in working relationships.

Pre-children—The young couple may or may not be deliberate about this stage of the family life cycle. Perhaps they will choose to have children right away, perhaps any attempted birth control didn't work, and perhaps they either birthed or conceived children prior to marriage. The length of time between the altar and the delivery room can have an effect on the maturity and stability of the emerging family. Awareness of the circumstances of the pre-children family will provide many ministry opportunities.

Children in the house—I will let you use your imagination as to the needs of parents with newborns, parents with infants, parents with toddlers, parents with preschoolers, and parents with gradeschoolers. This resource is about parents with adolescents, and I hope it has been established that there are significant needs for parents with teenagers. Apply the same rationale to the identification of ministry for parents with children of any age.

Empty nest—The impact of the children leaving home has a different effect on different parents. One speaker I heard said that it took him about 15 minutes to adjust to the reality that he and his wife were alone at home again. Another parent refuses to change anything about the room of the young adult who used to live there for fear that the post-adolescent will take that as a sign that he is no longer welcome. Further complicating this time of life is the statistic that the first months after the nest empties are ripe for the possibility of divorce. The family life cycle is altered at any stage when divorce happens, but the effect on a recently launched young adult can be devastating.

Grandchildren—Like a good library book, the best kids are the ones you can check back in when you are through with them. Not really, but the testimony is common that adults enjoy the children of their children immensely. The reward of a legacy combined with the potential of more leisure time generally contributes to a delightful time in the family life cycle.

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Retirement—Assuming good health and a graceful exit from the work force, retirement is a significant milestone in the family. It goes without saying that if health issues immediately correspond with retirement, then the expectation of more leisure time is somewhat clouded. A less-than-optimum exit from the work force may also serve to lend a sense of despair in retirement years. Retirees are generally excited about ministry that shows an awareness of their life stage.

Widowhood—Admittedly, the death of a spouse can come at any time during the family life cycle. The stereotypical picture of the widow or widower is that of an older person who simply outlived their spouse by few or a lot of years. This may make a nice linear picture, but like divorce, the age of the widow may suggest appropriate ministry for the family.

Before you begin to wonder if I have left the subject of adolescent development, think with me for a moment about how the circumstances above affect an adolescent. If you recall all of the other ways they are developing (physical, cognitive, spiritual, social, emotional), the stage in the family life cycle impacts the development of the individual. In fact, at times the family life cycle may seem to trump the development of the individual because family stage almost defines the person. The cognitive, social, and emotional composition of an individual could vary greatly depending on whether he or she is an oldest child, middle child, youngest child, or only child. Ah, siblings. . . .

Siblings and Adoption

Physical development is not affected greatly by the presence or absence of siblings. Social, cognitive, and emotional development may be impacted by the family constellation. The circumstances surrounding one's entry into the family are intertwined with emotional development. An adopted child conjures up images of their "real" family as soon as they understand the concept of adoption. Remember the abstract thought which accompanies adolescence. The constant speculation and usually a desire to meet birth parents is possible because of the ability to think in possibilities.

Some writers have suggested that the order in which children are born has something to do with the personality of the child, even into adulthood. They

believe that the position in family shapes the personality, impacts the interactions, and at least partially determines the temperament of the child. “Every child is born into a different (unique) family” is the rationale. The family and parents are not the same; changes affect family dynamics.

Behavior is influenced by birth order. It may be important for parents to be aware of the birth order, push beyond birth order, and engage all children in interaction. For a complete discussion on birth order, see the writing of Kevin Lehman, *The Birth Order Book*; Alfred Adler, who is generally credited with being one of the first to suggest that birth order was significant; or Frank Sulloway, *Born to Rebel*. If you are curious about the discussion, here is a taste:

First Borns: Characteristics of Oldest Children

- Leadership
- Competitive
- Rule follower
- Mimic adult behavior
- First-born sons differ from first-born daughters

Middle Children: Characteristics of Middle Children

- Peacekeepers
- Nonaggressive
- Problem solver
- Compromise broker

Youngest Children: Characteristics of Last Born

- Class clown
- Free spirited
- “That’s not fair”
- Wants to be center of attention

Parenting Styles

The peculiar style in which parents raise their children has been described in

Family Development

terms of:

Rules—Which rules, how are they made, and how are they enforced?

Decision making—Is it shared with both parents and/or children?

Conflict resolution—How are problems negotiated and solved?

Cobb (1998, 201-02) cites Diana Baumrind's research that suggested four parenting styles:

Authoritative parents are both responsive and demanding. They are warm and nurturing, actively listen to their children's plans and dreams. They assert authority and consistently enforce standards. They value responsibility and independence.

Authoritarian parents are demanding but less responsive than authoritative parents. They consistently enforce the rules and stress obedience, respect for authority, and traditional values. They engage in little give-and-take with children and value obedience over self-reliance.

Indulgent parents are responsive to their children, though without the demands of the authoritarian parent. Discipline is infrequent and inconsistent, with value placed on being friends with offspring. They exercise little power over adolescents' decisions.

Neglectful parents are neither responsive nor demanding. They are detached and uninvolved as if their teenagers are an unwanted burden. They set few limits and require little responsibility. They place value on not being inconvenienced by their children.

Obviously, the preferred style is the authoritative one. While the adolescent weighs in with opinion and input, the parent retains the veto. If we look objectively at each of the styles, we will probably agree that few parents are clearly one style or the other and that there is some of all of the styles in most parents. The true value in mentioning parenting styles is threefold. First, we acknowledge that our default pattern is usually the one that *our* parents used on us. Second, we acknowledge that in a two-parent family it is possible for the husband to come from and therefore default to a different style from his wife. Third, the style is a product of variables that we can learn to change, namely communication, discipline, and conflict resolution.

Sadly, when a parent does not know how to parent, the result is usually abuse. I would go so far to say that all mismanaged parental anger is abuse. A *USA Today* article reported that teenagers take the biggest share of verbal abuse on the part of parents (Marilyn Elias, "Teens Take Brunt of Parents' Verbal Abuse" *USA Today*, 15 August 2000, 7D). One-third of parents of adolescents admitted that they had called their teenagers "dumb or lazy or some other name like that" in the past year; the same number had sworn at their youth, and about 20 percent had threatened to kick a teenager out of the house.

Ministry to Families

Judy K. TenElshof penned an important reminder as to the role the church can play in helping families of a new century cope with the pressures of a fast-paced modern life. "Since it has been demonstrated that dysfunctional families tend to produce dysfunctional families in the next generation, it is imperative that the church ministers to families in a way that corrects their deficits" (writing in Anthony 1992, 193). She contended that four essential areas can be addressed as churches minister to families.

1. *Preparation* involves helping families prepare for the next developmental stage in the family life cycle. Parents of adolescents can be warned about the pitfalls that lie ahead.

2. *Enrichment* means that churches might provide information and even mentoring in various family life issues that spread over the life cycle. Parents of teenagers often welcome a chance to get together and discuss boundaries, curfew, and discipline.

3. *Equipping* ministry involves assisting each family member in carrying out his or her roles within the family. Teenagers can be affirmed as persons who contribute to both the family and the body of Christ. Men's ministry and women's ministry are often seen as means to equip husbands and wives to wholeness in their roles.

4. *Remedial* family ministry means the church has a plan of intervention to assist families who are struggling (Anthony 1992, 195-97).

Appendix A

Analysis of Research on Moral Development



Jean Piaget described the decision-making process in terms of *morality of constraint* and *morality of cooperation* (Rice 1999, 296). Constraint is where a teenager would decide to do something because of external control. Cooperation is where a teenager would decide to do something because of internal control. The move from value judgments based on external control to internal control is a natural and necessary part of spiritual development in adolescents.

Let me illustrate. Right now I am bigger than my 11-going-on-12 preteen son. I can make him do what I want him to do as long as I am close by. OK, I am just kidding about the being bigger part. It has more to do with the fact that he is close to home when he is not in school. He doesn't have to weigh for himself whether the action is right or wrong—at this point in his life. His mother and I “help” him with the appropriate viewpoint because we are nearby (external control). As he moves through his teenage years, he will spend increasing amounts of time away from home. He will have to judge the rightness or wrongness of the situations and decisions that he will face based on the resources at his disposal. What we have taught him and what he knows of God's Word will be the measures he will use to make his decisions. The control has moved from external to internal. The adolescent who would be regarded as advanced in his or her moral development recognizes the perspective of other persons involved in a situation, acknowledges their rights and needs, and responds appropriately (Rice 1999, 298).

Another writer, Lawrence Kohlberg, saw moral decision making in light of a “justice-orientation” or via the individual's ability to weigh the rightness or wrongness of a situation by comparing the outcomes with cultural expectations. He is famous for using stories with moral dilemmas to diagnose a particular level in moral development.

The most famous of his stories is the Heinz dilemma, a story of a poor man whose wife was sick. A druggist who invented the cure had placed a high price on the medicine, one the poor man could not pay. After trying to beg and borrow to get the drug, the poor man broke into the druggist's store and stole it. Was he right or wrong?

Kohlberg, building on some of Piaget's initial work, was the first to

Appendix A

begin to investigate the ethical aspect of developmental psychology. Until his research this moral dimension was a missing ingredient in the field. Kohlberg proposed three “levels” of moral development, labeled *preconventional*, *conventional*, and *postconventional*. The word *convention* refers to the normally accepted view of the morality of an issue by the larger society. He discovered that most adolescents are in level two of three levels in moral development known as the *conventional level*.

In his three-level, six-stage model of moral development, the first level, the *preconventional level*, relates mostly to children. Within the conventional level, which has two stages as do the other two levels, younger teenagers become interested in how they should behave. This first stage is known as the *good boy, good girl orientation*. Teenagers at this stage are concerned about winning the approval of their peers and certain significant adults. Doing what pleases others is the core of their moral reasoning. As these teenagers become middle and late adolescents, they are generally found at the second stage of the conventional level. Kohlberg identified this stage as a *law and order orientation*. Youth at this stage recognize the need for social order, and they accept some responsibility for doing their part in keeping such order. They recognize that all rules have limitations but to have no rules leads to chaos. They may even attempt to change what they feel are unjust rules (Kohlberg 1980, 15-98).

It is possible that some teenagers in late adolescence reach the first stage of the third level, the *principled level*, of moral reasoning. This first stage is called the *social contract orientation* and defines morality as respect for the rights of others and the honoring of agreements and contracts between people. Behavior is more than something that is motivated because everyone feels good as a result. Behavior at this level is centered on principle whether or not one receives personal gain. In Kohlberg’s opinion, few older youth (or adults) go beyond the social contract orientation. Those doing so would reach the *universal ethical principle orientation*. This level would be the goal of most Christians—Christlikeness. At its essence this stage defines morality on the basis of behavior that is centered on an abstract principle such as the Golden Rule. The whole process is based on a justice orientation (Rowley 1990, 52-53).

Criticism of Kohlberg's theory has come particularly from the perspective of his hierarchy of moral development. A closer investigation of the levels of moral development reveals some holes in the logic. Rice notes that "it is not true or fair to say that the higher the stage, the greater the level of morality (Callahan and Callahan 1981). Stage 6 reflects liberal and radical political reasoning. Does this mean that liberals are more advanced morally than conservatives? There is little basis in empirical fact to conclude that this is so" (Rice 1999, 302).

Carol Gilligan also reacted to the justice-centered orientation of Kohlberg's ideas. Gilligan suggested that males and females develop with different orientations toward moral issues. She said that only males develop from a justice (fair) orientation while females adjust from a caring (meeting needs) orientation (Dusek 1996, 124). She proposed that women may be more concerned with care for others and sensitivity to feelings. While men focus on preserving rights and rules, women may emphasize responsibility to human beings (Rice 1999, 303; Cobb 1998, 491). Critique of Gilligan's "ethic of care" also questioned whether females were universally different from males or if the differences noted were more due to situation (Cobb 1998, 495-97).

Following in the research of Piaget, David Elkind suggested that the adolescent's enhanced cognitive capability sets the stage for a profound change in personal religious development. These capabilities enable them to generate theories, establish a personal worldview and a personal theology, and comprehend underlying reasons for their faith (Ratcliff and Davies 1991, 89). Many youth still maintain an image of Christian faith as a belief in abstract doctrines irrelevant to daily lives. But in actuality they are beginning to understand that it is much richer; it is relational. Faith is a gift from God that requires a choice on each person's part to engage in a relationship with Christ (Boran 1996, 19-20). From a pragmatic standpoint, it is my belief that this new ability to deal with abstract thought that leads to a number of "rededication" decisions at youth camps and retreats. A preteen who has accepted Christ as Savior may not begin to question the validity of that decision until adolescence. With the ability to think in possibilities, the emerging adult may wonder if the earlier decision was genuine.

Although Christian education benefits from viewing secular perspectives, these must always be intentioned with biblical perspectives.



Appendix B

The Influence of Glands During Adolescence

The growth spurt is kicked off by the hypothalamus gland, a pea-sized gland in the base of the brain (Aleshire 1982, 39) and part of the body's endocrine system. (It also regulates eating, drinking, and sexual desire.) The endocrine system consists of the ductless glands (secrete hormones directly into the bloodstream) and the structures in the central nervous system which regulate the release of hormones. The hypothalamus is the endocrine system's alarm clock with regard to puberty. It matures in late childhood, bypassing the snooze button to activate the pituitary gland (also located at the base of the brain).

The anterior lobe of the pituitary gland is the master gland in the body, because it regulates the feedback loop (Cobb 1998, 90). The hypothalamus gland secretes a hormone called GnRH which tells the anterior pituitary to manufacture gonadotrophic hormones which signal the gonads to produce androgens (masculine hormones) and estrogens (hormones that cause feminine traits). One important pituitary hormone (and one that has made the news in athletic circles) is the human growth hormone or HGH. The pituitary gland, then, kicks off the growth spurt which begins around 11 and a half years old for girls and around 14 and a half for boys. This period of phenomenal growth lasts only a short time. (Many parents tell of their adolescents growing four to six inches in height during a summer.) The growth spurt usually shuts down by the 17th birthday for girls and the 19th birthday for boys. By then they have reached 98 percent of adult height. Other glands which come into play in the feedback loop are the:

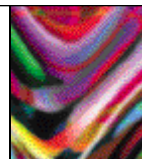
Thyroid—Located at the front of the throat, it is directly related to metabolism.

Parathyroids—On either side of the thyroid glands, these glands control absorption of calcium, which directly relates to the development of bones and clotting of blood.

Adrenal glands—Located above each kidney, they generally provide unusual strength in times of stress or athletic activity.

Gonads—Testes in males, located in the scrotum, produces testosterone, which stimulates the beginning of the secondary sexual characteristics. In females, the ovaries are located in lower abdomen and produce estrogen, which

Appendix B



stimulates the emergence of the secondary sex characteristics. In females, progesterone aids in pregnancy and controls menstrual cycle. Estradiol is another female parallel to testosterone.

During the growth spurt changes occur in body fat. Subcutaneous fat is the fat below the skin as opposed to intramuscular fat, which is the fat inside the muscles (marbling in the meat you buy at the grocery). In preparation for childbearing (and much to the dismay of most), girls develop more subcutaneous fat, while boys add more muscle mass.

Another external change common to teenagers is acne. This occurs when the skin's sebaceous glands are active and produce oils at a rate faster than the skin's pores are able to open. The ducts of these glands become plugged and infected, resulting in acne. Acne is a problem for many youth, and it can affect their self-esteem and emotional development in a number of ways (Boshers 1997, 84).

One more system is changing that may further help in understanding the 21st-century teenager. The counterpart to the endocrine system is the exocrine system. Recall that the endocrine system secretes inward, into the bloodstream. The exocrine system secretes from glands to bloodstream through ducts and eventually through the skin. The merocrine glands are sweat glands that occur on all skin areas other than armpit, genital, and anal regions. Sweat from these glands is generally without odor. The apocrine glands are the sweat glands found in the armpits, genital, and anal regions. When the apocrine glands mature during puberty, the odor of sweat changes significantly. A preteen baseball team that comes into your kitchen for water before resuming the game smells like wet carpet. The sweat that comes from the same team a few years later would produce an ammonia-like body odor that would not be permitted in your kitchen!

A final set of exocrine glands that bears mention is the sebaceous gland, oil-producing glands in face, neck, and upper back and affecting complexion. They cannot be controlled, but if they become clogged, they can cause acne.

Appendix C

Research on Mental Development

Jean Piaget understood that children in different age groups have different thinking patterns. Piaget suggested some important principles for understanding the shift from concrete thinking (child) to abstract thinking (adult). He taught that cognitive development is the combined result of environmental influences and the maturation of the brain and nervous system. He observed four cognitive developmental stages in people, moving from concrete (what I see and hold is what exists) to abstract (I can think in terms of the possible and theoretical).

The first two, sensorimotor and preoperational, are the stages where children function. At about age seven, children move into what Piaget has identified as the concrete operational stage. You might observe that an eight- or nine-year-old can understand that “nine times five” is the same thing as “five times nine” or that a short bowl can actually hold as much liquid as a tall pitcher. You may even notice that they have the ability to consider that there are other people in the universe besides themselves (and you are also correct that the adolescent years bring on a sort of a “relapse” into egocentrism).

Preteens begin to overcome the deficiencies in preoperational thought such as egocentrism and irreversibility and start to think logically about concrete things. Piaget suggests that about age 12 youth move into the early stages of abstract thinking and what is called the formal operations stage. They can begin to understand abstract concepts such as social justice and rational, aesthetic, or social ideals (Piaget 1972, cited in Rice 1999, 136-38). Doug Stevens also suggested that further investigation shows not all people reach this fourth level of mental sophistication or only make use of it in certain settings. The key factor in being able to think abstractly (and that is a good thing!) is an environment that encourages thought and creativity. Otherwise, apart from such prodding and practice, the capacity may remain unrealized (Stevens 1985, 55).

David Elkind (cited in Rice 1999, 140-41) was helpful in making adolescent egocentrism a bit clearer. In considering egocentrism, and its affect on adolescent behavior, you may recognize characteristics of some teenagers that you know and love. You may even recognize your own voice (in a fit of honesty, I heard my voice calling from my adolescence!):

Idealism-messianic complex—“There is nothing I can’t do, nothing I

can't fix. Why would my friends need counseling when they have me?"

Egocentrism—"What do you mean, I am not the center of the known universe?" The main difference between the egocentrism of children and adolescents is that adolescents are fully aware of their selfishness. They just consider it an entitlement.

Personal fable—"I am the only one that has life as hard as I have it. All of my friends get to stay out until four in the morning, going wherever they please, with whomever they want. I am an island, and you don't understand me."

Imaginary audience—"When I walk into a room, all eyes are on me. Will they like my clothes? Will they like my hair? Will they notice the zit on my forehead that I have tried to cover with layers of cosmetics? Will they notice me at all?" The reality is that other adolescents in the room are just as consumed with egocentrism, but the perception of an individual adolescent is as powerful as reality.

Pseudostupidity—Stupidity on demand as well as the inability to let the obvious be obvious. "No, I didn't actually think you would mind if 16 of my friends rode in the car with me to the movies." Elkind formally defined it as "the tendency to approach problems at much too complex a level and fail, not because the tasks are difficult, but because they are too simple" (cited in Rice 1998, 140).

David Elkind has interpreted this new development in thinking as "thinking in a new key." The adolescent adjustment resulting in worldview is one of the major developmental tasks people will ever face. These new mental powers become a new filter that brings about a transformation in the way teenagers react to their new physical appearances. This heightened sense of self-awareness and enhanced self-consciousness is not just a product of physical and bodily changes but also a response to the qualitative difference in thinking. These new intellectual structures not only produce a new type of thinking but are a precondition to advanced thinking and related concepts such as personality development, identity development, moral reasoning, and religious commitment (Elkind 1984).

Although Christian education benefits from viewing secular perspectives, these must always be intentioned with biblical perspectives.



Appendix D

Emotional Development: Identity Formation

One of the most helpful ways to look at the issue of emotional development is to view it through the lens of identity development. I did my doctoral dissertation in this area because I was curious as to how much we in youth ministry actually paid attention to the developing identity when we planned our youth programming. The theory I chose to explore was that of Erik Erikson (1902-92), a teacher and author who proposed that an adolescent's emerging identity was a combination of biological and social forces. Erikson taught at Harvard and Berkley. He was not satisfied with Freud's explanation that our personalities (identities) had to do with sex. Erikson studied people to discover the major changes that should take place during each part of one's life. He believed that individuals go through stages of personality development, where each stage has its own crisis, which must be worked through successfully. Erikson also believed that each particular stage of life was exactly the right time for clicking in the particular puzzle piece of identity that was meant for that stage. Though development occurs in the same set sequence for all, each stage consists of a unique developmental task that confronts individuals with a turning point (crisis) of increased vulnerability and enhanced potential (called the epigenetic principle).

A physical illustration of this principle would be that a child who learns to walk somewhere between 9 and 18 months is built physically for learning to walk (low to the ground, thick legs, etc.). Likewise in the development of the identity, a person is faced with a crisis. If the conflict of the stage is resolved successfully, a positive quality is built into the personality—otherwise the ego is damaged (Erikson 1994). The resolution of that crisis gives the person the chance to make a change that can be positive and helpful or that can be negative and limiting for the future development of that person.

Erikson identified eight phases of development in terms of conflicts that must be resolved during each particular phase. Every phase involves a crisis that can be resolved by achieving some level of competence. Phases one through three relate to infancy and childhood. Phase four, known as industry versus inferiority, relates to older children. Phase five, identity versus role confusion, relates mostly to adolescents; and phase six, intimacy versus isolation, relates to older adolescents or young adults. The remaining two stages

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relate to middle and late adulthood. The phases throughout life show the possibilities involved with solving that particular crisis:

1. *Trust versus mistrust* (infant)—A sense of trust requires a feeling of physical comfort and minimal fear and apprehension about the future. The ability to trust or not to trust will be made during the first year of life. Hope is the desired outcome of crisis, which prepares the individual for the next step. If not, the person may develop an attitude of “why care?”

2. *Autonomy versus shame and doubt* (toddler)—After gaining trust in their primary caregivers, infants begin to discover that their behavior is their own. They realize their will and assert their independence, or autonomy. If infants are restrained too much or punished too harshly, they are likely to develop a sense of shame or doubt. The kitchen can become a place of self-exploration. Will is the desired outcome.

3. *Initiative versus guilt* (preschooler).—As preschool children encounter a widening social world, they are challenged more than when they were infants. Active, purposeful behavior is required to meet challenges. When children are asked to assume some responsibility (bodies, behavior, toys), responsibility begets initiative. Negative resolution results in children who are irresponsible and made to feel guilty about it. Erikson would say to let the irresponsible child succeed! The successful child is able to stay with things; parent may be constantly telling the child, “No.” The difference is the parent has provided a place of exploration. Purpose is the desired outcome.

4. *Industry versus inferiority* (grade school-preteen)—With initiative come even more experiences. Energy is directed toward mastering knowledge and intellectual skills. This is a period of imagination, discovery, and enthusiasm about learning. Inferiority is possible when a child develops feelings of incompetence and unproductivity. Erikson believed it to be the role of teacher to push children to accomplish things that one would never have thought of by oneself (Erikson 1968, 127). Competence is the desired outcome.

5. *Identity versus role confusion* (adolescent)—Individuals are faced with finding out who they are, what they are all about, and where they are going in life. They will explore different roles and paths within those roles. If

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they are not allowed to experiment, negative identity resolution is possible. Fidelity is the desired outcome.

6. *Intimacy versus isolation* (young adult)—Young adults face the task of forming intimate relationships with others who are separate from their immediate families. *Intimacy* is defined as “finding oneself yet losing oneself in another, the ability to share oneself.” Love is the desired outcome.

7. *Generativity versus self-absorption* (middle adult)—The chief concern is to help a younger generation in developing and leading useful lives. Youth worker and mentoring implications are involved in the positive resolution. Negatively, the feeling of not contributing anything worthwhile to the next generation results in self-absorption or stagnation. Care is the desired outcome.

Ego integrity versus despair (senior adult)—In the twilight of life people need to look back on life and feel that it was worthwhile. “I did some things right and some wrong, but it was all good. It was a good ride.” Wisdom is the desired outcome.

Erikson suggested that one primary function of adolescence with regard to personality development is to provide for a time of moratorium. As a child in “time out” suspends play in order to process (usually as a result of a disciplinary action), the adolescent delays assuming adult roles. Decision making is put in “time out.” Erikson identified an identity (emotional development or personality) crisis subplot going on within adolescence. During this time adolescents wrestle with their own set of crises to resolve. You can easily spot your teenager in the crises Erikson identified:

Time perspective versus time diffusion, time identity—Teenagers have no clue about time, as seen in a lack of understanding for duration (how much time passes) or punctuality (being on time). The task is to develop a stable concept of time. Negative resolution is to hope that time will stand still to avoid problems or that time itself will make them go away.

Self-certainty versus apathy, confidence identity—Adolescents need small successes so that they can develop confidence with regard to who they are or who they can be. Lacking this confidence, adolescents react as if they are unconcerned.

Role experimentation versus negative identity, social role identity—

Youth workers and parents are usually alarmed when their student comes home with an earring or green hair. Sometimes in the quest to discover who they can be, adolescents find assuming negative roles more comfortable. Often adolescent moratorium is long enough for these roles to work out and result in positive adulthood—but not always.

Anticipation of achievement versus work paralysis, vocational identity—Up to 20 hours of part-time employment is healthy for teenagers to discover the “world of work.” Other avenues are mission trips or ministry responsibility, but the idea is to focus energies toward productive ends while rejecting inactivity. Dealing with this crisis can aid in vocational choices and the potential to “earn their keep.”

Sexual identity versus bisexual diffusion, sexual identity—This crisis deals with identifying with an appropriate sex role and rejecting bisexual tendencies. (See earlier discussion in social development chapter.) An adolescent who is experiencing the explosion of hormones needs clear role models to learn appropriate masculinity or femininity.

Leadership polarization versus authority diffusion, leadership identity—It is possible to lead, it is possible to be led. This crisis helps adolescents develop a willingness to understand their leadership potential and step up to leadership when it is appropriate. Youth ministries are key places for this competency to develop.

Ideological polarization versus diffusion of ideals, religious (or values) identity—In our pluralistic society it is more important than ever to help students grasp a biblical worldview. In a culture with so many choices, many options conflict with biblical values. The need in adolescence is to arrive at a belief system.

The central task in phase five is the development of a sense of identity. Identity for adolescents is not so much a discovery as a commitment to the potential of whom one can become (Black 1991, 86). According to Erikson, the search for identity neither begins nor ends with adolescence. Identity clarification is a lifelong process that has roots deep in childhood. The community and

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culture help mold it. Erikson emphasized that the teenage years are a normative crisis, a normal phase of increased conflict characterized by fluctuation of ego strength. He believed there must be an integration of all converging identity elements and a resolution of conflict that he divided into seven major parts:

1. Temporal perspective versus time confusion—gaining a sense of time
2. Self-certainty versus self-consciousness—believing in oneself
3. Role experimentation versus role fixation—experimenting with roles
4. Apprenticeship versus work paralysis—trying out occupations
5. Sexual polarization versus bisexual confusion—determining male and female roles
6. Leadership and followship versus authority confusion—deciding whom to follow
7. Ideological commitment versus confusion of values—determining something in which to believe (Erikson 1994)

In identity formation, Erikson stressed the importance of developing a vocational identification (see 4) and a personal philosophy of life (see 7). The formation of a vocational identification requires adolescents to come to grips with talents, interests, and abilities—either to prepare for college or to enter into the work force. Developing a philosophy of life (worldview) including political (social) and religious (personal) provides the teenager with a frame of reference for evaluating and coping with life's events (Dusek 1996, 29). A well-developed identity has two major components: continuity of self and an integration of self. The continuity of self refers to seeing self as remaining fairly consistent from day to day. This would characterize people who have fairly consistent goals, values, and social beliefs from day to day. They don't wake up each morning with a different agenda. Integration of self means a person is comfortable and can identify with various roles they may play—son, student, brother, athlete. It means persons are able to switch in and out of those roles easily (Dusek 1996, 29-30).

Although Christian education benefits from viewing secular perspectives, these must always be intentioned with biblical perspectives.

Appendix E

Family-based Youth Ministry



A little over a year ago, I collaborated with a student to write an article for the periodical *Youth Ministry Update*. The main premise of the article was the question, is youth ministry in Southern Baptist churches family-friendly? At issue is the too-common image of the mini-van pulling up in the parking lot of the church on Sunday morning. The members of the family place a time-out on whatever they have been arguing about (the devil knows it's Sunday morning). Individual family members pile out of the car to head for their separate, yet age-appropriate places of instruction, only to be completely reunited later that night after a day of Sunday School class, worship service, deacons meeting, youth choir, discipleship, and miscellaneous fellowships. Activities rule the day.

The current model of youth ministry employed by most church and parachurch organizations is an adult-intensive model of youth ministry. Adult volunteers steer the youth ministry, sometimes under the leadership of a paid youth minister. These adults have passion and commitment for youth ministry and have made the model work for the past 40 or so years. The adults, often in consultation with youth, place various activities and programs on the church calendar so that at various times during the week, Mom or Dad bring their youth back to the church for youth activities. Families can (and often do) worship together. Youth ministers deliberately plan youth activities to coincide with churchwide schedules so that parents can avoid additional chauffeuring duty. Still, relatively few activities intentionally place parents and teens together in a setting that emphasize the family relationship in order to foster spiritual development, even if the spiritual goal is simply to have fun together. A more typical picture is for the adult role to be one of teaching, food service, or crowd control. For many youth ministries this continues to be the model of parent-youth interaction.

If the portrait above is accurate, youth ministry today runs on a parallel track with the crisis in the American family. Unintentionally, youth ministries can isolate teenagers from their families. Not enough attention is given to the diverse needs of varied family structures (single-parent, blended, economically disadvantaged). A new model in youth ministry has been suggested by Mark DeVries (1994), Merton Strommen (1996) and others. Described as Family-Based Youth Ministry, these models propose an alternative to age-separated

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programming by suggesting that families should do youth ministry *together*. An extreme implementation of such a model would involve (as DeVries did with his Nashville group), the disbanding of the traditional youth meeting in favor of involving parents in all youth ministry programming.

One of the strengths of the church is the intergenerational aspect of congregational life that allows for a community of faith to participate in the developmental journey which has been the focus of this resource. The strength of the church is diminished when adolescents are sequestered in adrenaline-filled youth meetings, only to have to leave the youth ministry upon high school graduation for a style of “doing church” that is perceived as less exciting.

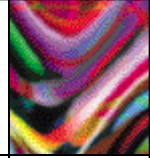
A key to understanding DeVries’ strong argument for family-based youth ministry is found in clarification of his definition of *family*. DeVries includes the extended family comprised of the church congregation. Anecdotal confirmation came in a retreat with volunteer youth leaders. One youth worker told of an unusually good perception of the youth ministry by the adults due to the “card ministry.” The youth in the church had begun to write cards of encouragement to senior adults, which opened lines of communication and initiated some positive intergenerational relationships. DeVries affirmed such relationships. “Absolutely. The extended church family is valuable as surrogate, especially for youth who are in single-parent families.” (DeVries 1994; followed up by interview).

In 1996, Merton Strommen founded the Youth and Family Institute at Augsburg College in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Dr. Dick Hardell serves as the executive director. Augsburg now offers a bachelor’s degree in youth and family ministry. According to Dr. Strommen, the program was started due to demand from churches. Unlike the combination staff positions, which added responsibility without training, Augsburg’s is an integrated degree, equipping youth and family ministers for a position in which youth and family are treated as one. The core values of the program are (Parks 1998):

Families are the primary unit of faith and values formation.

Congregations have significant roles in strengthening families and supporting them in their nurture of faith and values in children and youth.

Appendix E



Communities are the larger context of faith and life.

Children, youth, and parents are best served by partnerships among families.

In the same vein as DeVries' model, the degree program at Augsburg seeks to train ministers to integrate rather than isolate teenagers in the church context. According to Dr. Hardell, "The ministry of youth and family will not focus on the slice of pie but will recognize that youth and family are a pie in themselves" (Clark 1998).

It is not as easy to implement family-friendly youth ministry as simply declaring that "we love families now." Back in the chapter on social development, we talked about the social draw of the peer group. A latent tension exists between family-based youth ministry and age-separate or age-appropriate youth ministry. Developmentally, teenagers are beginning to separate from their parents, and healthy parents are helping their youth to leave the nest. Adolescent individuation is the emotional pulling away from parents in order to forge a unique sense of self. In addition to historical and theological factors, which suggest that individuation (and maybe by implication, age-specific youth ministry) is healthy, the differences between adolescents and adults have been well documented from the sociologist's point of view. It is no myth that in many instances youth prefer their peers to adult company. At what point, though, have adults given up their powerful influence by assuming that teens rarely, if ever, want to be with their families?

Youth ministers should assess their calendars to see which events are actually unfriendly to families. When a lock-in ends at 7:00 a.m. on Saturday morning, and parents have to get out of bed to come get their kids, one could make a case for family unfriendliness. Additionally, the question should be asked, "How can we program to make the most of what families are supposed to be?" What incredible dynamics might come about if youth are working side by side with their parents on a mission project or if the parents do not have to rely on second-hand reports of the awesome things that God did at youth camp? While the total disbanding of age-separate programming is unrealistic, many youth ministers are increasingly open to the possibility of family-friendly



Appendix E

events. The Bible study curriculum released by LifeWay Christian Resources for Fall 2000 features a plan whereby all family members study the same biblical themes (and in most cases the same passages) in their age-graded classes. The curriculum designers hope that the plan will facilitate conversation between parents and teenagers about the truths of God's word.

Chap Clark and Pam Erwin have given eight suggestions as a starting line for a family-based youth ministry (Rice and Clark 1998, 49-52).

Consider family times and needs when scheduling youth events.

Avoid assuming the role of parents.

Try not to make parents look bad.

Keep parents informed.

Encourage and offer support for families.

Refrain from undermining parents' judgment or authority.

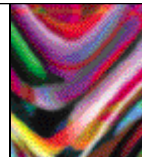
Include families in youth events.

Connect teenagers with the extended church family.

For the most part these are self-explanatory. DeVries, Ross, and Dunn and Senter offer practical suggestions in the implementation of family friendly ministry. (See Ross, *Life Changing Events for Youth and Their Families* for suggestions in addition to the many that Mark DeVries gives in his book.) Ministry with youth and families will likely be the youth ministry story of the new millennium.

Glossary

A-B



Adolescence—the period of time in a person’s life beginning with the onset of puberty and ending with the full acceptance of adult responsibility. In years, that could be anywhere from age 10 on the low end to about age 25 on the other end.

Adolescent—one who is in the developmental period called adolescence. A young person in the midst of major biological changes leading to sexual maturity. An individual in the “in between” phase between childhood and adulthood.

Adolescent psychology—that branch of psychology concerned with the developmental period labeled adolescence. A study of the changes (interests, attitudes, behaviors) that occur between childhood and adulthood, of the rites of passage, and of the developmental forces that account for these changes.

Adrenal glands—ductless glands, located just above the kidneys, that secrete androgens and estrogens in both men and women. More famous for their secretion of adrenaline, especially during times of physical or emotional stress or excitement.

Androgens—a class of masculine sex hormones produced by the testes and, to a lesser extent, by the adrenal gland.

Anorexia nervosa—an eating disorder characterized by an obsession with food and with being thin. Literally, “nervous loss of appetite.” If untreated, it can be fatal.

Asynchrony—refers to development that is not in sequence where certain aspects of physical growth or certain functions reach adult status prior to others.

Autonomy—independence or freedom.

Big five of adolescent development—the five developmental areas which are critical in the life of a growing adolescent. Picture a bar graph with five bars—physical development, mental (cognitive) development, social development, emotional development, and spiritual development.

Biological definition of adolescence—physically, the development of the body has shifted into “high gear,” usually signaled by puberty and/or the growth spurt.

Glossary B-C

Body attitude—our emotional reactions to our physical selves; how we feel about our body images; or **body image**—the ideas that each of us has concerning the physical characteristics of our bodies; what we think we are like physically.

Bulimia—an eating disorder characterized by binge-eating episodes and purging. Literally, “insatiable appetite” followed by purging by forced vomiting or laxatives.

Child abuse—may include not only physical assault of a child but also malnourishment, abandonment, neglect, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse.

Cognition—the act or process of knowing. Usually refers to the mental or intellectual processes.

Cognitive—having to do with the mental functioning of humans, including those activities involved in perception, problem solving, information processing, understanding, and logical thought processes.

Cohort—group of people born during the same historical period or experiencing the same historical influences. Includes, but is not synonymous with, peer group.

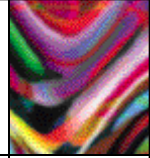
Compulsory education laws—legislation that makes attending school mandatory for children and adolescents until they graduate or reach a minimum age, generally 15-16 years of age.

Conscience—the organized totality of religious or social prescripts and values that govern individual behavior. Picture the good angel sitting on your shoulder.

Courtship—a formal process of interaction, between male and female adolescents with the express intent of leading to marriage. It involves parental approval and is characterized by the adolescent couple spending time with both sets of parents. Alternative to contemporary dating.

Creative—an adjective that may be used to describe people, products, or a process. The term *creativity* generally refers to the capacity of individuals to produce novel or original answers or products, organize concepts in a different way, or demonstrate flexibility in thought.

Glossary C-E



Culture—the collective term for the customs, traditions, beliefs, or values of a group of people, usually defined by demographic factors (geography, age, etc.). Includes the usual expectations for behavior as well as explicit and implicit rules that characterize a group of people. Alternately, a culture may be viewed as that group of people that is characterized by similar mores, traditions, beliefs, and so on.

Cultural relativism—variations in social institutions, economic patterns, habits, mores, rituals, religious beliefs, and ways of life from one culture to another

Depression—an affective disorder that may take any of three major forms, all of which are characterized by a disturbance of mood; the three forms are major depressive disorder, dysthymia, and adjustment disorder with depressed mood.

Developmental tasks—specific skills, knowledge, or functions individuals have to acquire at a particular stage in life in order to move on to the next stage with a degree of competence and health.

Early adolescence—period between the ages of 11 and 15, generally junior high school, beginning with puberty. Characterized by changing gender roles, more autonomous relationships with parents, and more mature relationships with peers.

Early maturers—adolescents who begin pubescence earlier than is average for their gender.

Ego—generally referring to self. Primary aspect of basic personality structure, according to Freud.

Egocentrism—the failure to realize that one's perspective is not shared by others. In its simplest sense, the inability to take another's point of view. See also personal fable.

Emotion—refers to feeling, or affective, aspects of human behavior and includes such human feeling as fear, rage, love, and desire. Controlled by limbic region of brain.

Emotional abuse—may include constant screaming at the child, calling him or her foul names, giving constant criticism and putdowns, making fun,

Glossary

E-I

constantly comparing the child with siblings, ignoring the child, and refusing to talk or listen to him/her.

Endocrine system—the system of the body that includes the glands that produce hormones and those parts of the nervous system that activate, inhibit, and control hormone production.

Family—a social unit consisting of one or more persons, generally charged with the production and rearing of children.

Feedback loop—the complex interaction between glands of the endocrine system and the hormones they secrete into the bloodstream. Feedback refers to the timing of secretion and the cessation of secretion at the proper time.

Gender—a person's biological sex.

Gender identity—a person's internal sense of being male or female. We are born male or female, but we are socialized masculine or feminine. See also gender role.

Gender role or sex role—the outward manifestation and expression of maleness or femaleness in a social setting.

Growth spurt—a sudden increase in the velocity of physical growth; an important feature of adolescent development, occurring approximately two years earlier for girls than for boys, resulting in dramatic changes in height and weight.

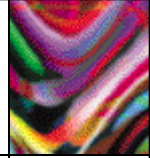
Hormones—literally “I excite,” hormones are biochemical substances secreted into the bloodstream by the glands of the endocrine system. Hormones are the messengers in the feedback loop.

Human Growth Hormone—pituitary hormone that regulates growth. Athletes have misused HGH to get bigger and stronger.

Hypothalamus gland—pea-sized area of the brain that controls timing of puberty. It also controls eating, drinking, hormone production, menstrual cycle, and sexual response.

Identity—the part of one's personality of which one is aware and is able to see as a meaningful and coherent whole. A role specifying that certain activities leave objects or situations unchanged. For adolescents the sum of who they consider themselves to be.

Glossary I-M



Identity formation—in adolescence, the process of bringing together elements of childhood with emerging adulthood into a new whole; involves individuation.

Imaginary audience—expression for the adolescent’s representation of all who are assumed to be intimately concerned with the adolescent’s behavior and self. “Everyone is watching me.”

Individuation—the process of developing a set of attitudes and beliefs that are distinct from those of one’s parents.

Intelligence—commonly a single number that identifies a level of smartness. More formally, the ability to profit from experience and adapt to one’s surroundings. Controversial practice of measurement by intelligence tests.

Juvenile—one who is not yet considered an adult in the eyes of the law. Confusing designation considering the many ages at which one becomes an adult (driving, military service, purchasing alcohol, adjudication in the adult court system).

Late adolescence—generally ages 16 to 19 (and occasionally beyond), organized around the central task of achieving an identity, in which adolescents integrate their sexuality into their relationships, prepare for a vocation, and fashion a personal set of beliefs.

Late maturers—individuals who undergo physical changes leading to sexual maturity at a later age than is average for their gender.

Maturity—the age or state when one is considered fully developed emotionally, socially, intellectually, and spiritually.

Menarche—a girl’s first menstrual period, occurring during pubescence.

Metabolism—the rate at which the body uses food and oxygen.

Morality—refers to the ethical aspects of human behavior; tied to an awareness of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors (according to a peculiar culture); linked to what is often called the conscience.

Moratorium—a “time out” during adolescence in which the consequences of some behavior is temporarily suspended. Erikson’s term for that period during adolescence when individuals are free to experiment with a variety of different roles in their quest to achieve adult identity.

Glossary N-S

Nature versus nurture—the interaction of heredity and environment, the discussion of which is more influential—genetics or environment. An old psychological argument concerning whether genetics or environment is more responsible for determining development.

Peer pressure—experienced pressure to think and act like one’s friends; often associated with negative behavior.

Personal fable—the feeling of being special, even invulnerable. Elkind’s description of the aggregate of fantasies that adolescents invent concerning their importance, power, attractiveness, strength, etc.

Pituitary gland—an endocrine gland located beneath the hypothalamus that is part of a feedback system regulating the hormonal control of puberty.

Pluralistic society—a society in which there are many different competing standards of behavior; one of the roots of postmodernism.

Pseudostupidity—the inability to see the obvious by making a simple task more complicated than it is; sometimes a strategy used by adolescents to avoid consequence or responsibility.

Puberty—broad term used to describe the onset of adolescence. Specifically, puberty is the sum of the physical growth processes, including the growth spurt and hormonal activity that result in maturity or the ability to reproduce and bear offspring.

Rites of passage—significant events which predictably signal or accompany a life stage in a particular culture. Some are formal (driver’s license or marriage), while even more are informal (first date, first job). Sometimes ceremonies mark the transition from one life stage to another.

Secular trend—puberty has been occurring earlier by 3 to 4 months per decade since mid 1800s. In mid 1800s, average age for menarche was 15.5-16.5. Now the average age in U.S. is 12.5. Another effect is that people grow larger. Males average an inch and 10 pounds heavier than their fathers; Females grow 1/2 inch to an inch more than their mothers and weigh about 2 pounds more on average.

Self-esteem—conscious, cognitive perception and evaluation of one’s self which make up a person’s impression or opinion of him/herself. Also

Glossary

S



self-image or self-concept.

Sexual abuse—generally a more powerful person exerting inappropriate behavior toward a less powerful one; may include very suggestive language, use of pornography, fondling, petting, masturbation, exhibitionism, voyeurism, oral sex, or full vaginal or anal intercourse.

Sexual dimorphism—the physical differences that distinguish adult males and females. The “fork in the road” in early adolescence where the distinctive appearance of the specific gender becomes apparent.

Social cognition—how people think and reason about their social world as they watch and interact with others; their understanding and ability to get along with other people.

Spermarche—a boy’s first ejaculation of seminal fluid.

Spiritual transformation—term used to describe a process whereby spiritual development is on a steady and progressive track.

Strum und Drang—a German expression sometimes used as a description of adolescence, meaning literally “storm and stress,” descriptive of the turbulence, turmoil, and frustrated idealism sometimes assumed to be characteristic of adolescents.



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Note to the reader—This general youth ministry bibliography is updated continually. Some resources are listed in multiple categories. If you do not see a resource that you know should be on this list, please e-mail me at ajackson@nobts.edu, and I will add it. Thanks

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Group Study Guide

Purpose: To provide participants with the opportunity to reflect on what they read in this resource, converse with one another, and apply the information to the teenagers in their homes and groups at church or school.

Objective: Through reflection and conversation, participants will develop an understanding of the teenagers in their homes and their groups at church or school. With this understanding they will be able to transform their methods to match the needs and characteristics of their learners.

Participants: This plan is for parents, teachers, leaders, coaches, and ministers who relate to teenagers, grades 7–12.

Sessions: This plan can be used in a variety of settings including retreats, planning meetings, and conferences. The suggestions are generally designed for one-hour sessions, but you are encouraged to adapt it to meet the needs of your group. For example, you can easily adjust the suggestions to fit a 15-minute training segment during a planning meeting.

Also feel free to use the sessions in any order. As a group, decide the order of sessions. A conclusion exercise to the entire study is located at the end of the session titled “Family Development.” Use this exercise at the end of your last session.

Approach: This plan is designed for discussions based on what participants have read in this resource. The convener serves as facilitator of the discussion. Group members participate by sharing their reflections or thoughts concerning what they have read. The exercises enable the participants to identify implications for applying the information to their groups of teenagers.

Room Arrangement: Tables and chairs arranged in a square is preferable so that participants can see one another. If tables are not available, arrange chairs in a circle.

Session: Introduction

Preparation

- Gather paper and pencils or copies of class or group rolls for the participants.
- Order copies of the book *Introducing the 21st-Century Teenager* (allow three weeks for delivery) or download the contents page and the Introduction. Make copies.
- Provide name tags if the participants do not know one another.

Reflect and Practice

1. As participants arrive, distribute copies of the class/group rolls or ask them to write down the names of the teenagers in their class, group, or team. Guide them to keep this list with them during the group discussions so that they can consider how the information is true of the individuals in their groups.
2. Distribute copies of this resource or the contents page to the participants.
3. Ask your participants to share what they would like to learn about the teenagers in their homes and groups at church. Refer them to the questions on page 13 under “Who Is This Resource For?” As a group, determine the order of sessions the group will discuss. Refer them to the contents page. Each session covers one area of development.
4. Ask your participants to form three groups according to the age of the teenagers in their groups: Early Adolescence (12-13 years), Middle Adolescence (14-15), and Older Adolescence (16-17). Ask the groups to read the developmental summary for their age group on pages 17-21 to determine implications for their ministries.
5. As a total group, compile the lists of implications on a marker board or a large sheet of paper. Ask, “What actions should we consider to plan our ministries to fit the characteristics and needs of our teenagers?”
6. Encourage the members of your group to read before each session the article to be discussed during the session. The group experience will be enhanced by individuals’ reading the article to prepare themselves for the discussion. Have a time of prayer to give each person an opportunity to make a commitment to



understand the teenagers in his or her group. Remind your participants to read the article for the next session.

Session: A Brief History of Adolescence

Preparation

- Gather paper and pencils.
- Gather a marker board and markers or large sheet of paper with markers.

Reflect and Practice

1. Open the session with fellowship and prayer.
2. Ask participants to compile the list of words they found in the Bible verses listed on pages 23-24. Write them on a marker board or a large sheet of paper. As a group, analyze the list. Ask, “Do these words apply to our teenagers?”
3. Evaluate the rites of passage your participants listed on page 26. Ask, “Are we needing to do more in regard to recognizing the life transitions of our teenagers?”
4. Ask your participants to place a checkmark beside the historical events they knew about before reading them on pages 28-31. As a group, list on a marker board the historical events since 1950 that have implications for teenagers today—for example, the invention of the television and computer. Ask, “What are the implications?”
5. Close the session with a prayer for the personal concerns and needs of your participants. Remind your participants to read the article for the next session.

Session: Spiritual Development

Preparation

- Write each of the major characteristics on an index card: Physical Development, Cognitive Development, Moral Development.
- Gather a marker board and markers.

Reflect and Practice

1. Begin the session with fellowship and prayer.
2. Divide participants into three small groups. Give each group one of the index cards. Ask each group to reflect on what they read about the area of development on the card (refer them to pages 33-37) and prepare a creative way to engage the total group in conversation about the area and spiritual development. Identify easy-to-use ways of using the area of development in learning activities with teenagers.
3. Let each small group make a presentation and facilitate the discussion. Give each group a time limit as appropriate.
4. Refer participants to pages 37-39. Ask, “What can we do to ‘transform how students relate to problems, themselves, God, and others’?” List ideas on the marker board.
5. Conclude the discussion by asking, “What about our teenagers? Do we have teenagers who are not being spiritually transformed?”
6. Close the session with a prayer for teenagers who are struggling spiritually. Remind participants to read the article for the next session.



Group Study Guide

Session: Physical Development

Preparation

- Gather paper and pencils for participants to use during the session.

Reflect and Practice

1. Open the session with fellowship and prayer.
2. Distribute the paper and pencils to the participants.
3. With their books open to pages 42-44 or a copy of the article, ask participants to consider silently the characteristics of early maturers and late maturers with their specific teenagers in mind. For example, What percentage of the teenagers in your group are early maturers? What is the typical physical growth of the teenagers in your group?
4. As a group, look through the gender differences to see if your teenagers differ from the general statements made on pages 45-48. Are any teenagers experiencing physical problems? If so, are the parents aware of the problems? If not, how can you minister to these parents?
5. Discuss ways parents and teachers can work together to minister to the physical changes in teenagers. Plan a strategy to make it happen.
6. Close the session in a season of prayer for the physical growth of all of your teenagers. Remind your participants to read the article for the next session.

Session: Cognitive Growth

Preparation

- Tape a large sheet of paper to the focal wall in your meeting room. You will need a marker.
- Cut out of a magazine a picture of a teenager.
- Collect four boxes that will nest inside one another and colorful wrapping paper. The smallest box needs to be large enough for the magazine picture to fit inside.

- Make three photocopies of this page. Cut out each of the following paragraphs:

A. My Mom says: “Turn that music off. You can’t do your homework with that noise distracting you.” Now my room is quiet. All I can think about now is what TV program I hear coming from the living room. What is my brother doing in his room? I wonder what Mom is making for dinner? It sounds like she is cooking something on the stove. Maybe it is tacos. They are my favorite! Mom yells from the kitchen, “No dinner until your homework is finished.” Oh yeah, I’m supposed to be doing my homework.

B. My teacher insists that we sit still in class and repeat memory verses. I cannot do it. I knew the verses. I practiced them many times. The kids laughed at me. My teacher said I should have been paying attention. I was!

C. Another worksheet! I hate worksheets. I’m always the last one to finish. I hate being last. Why doesn’t Mrs. Clark just ask me to tell the Bible story to my friends? “What did you say, Mrs. Clark? Finish my worksheet? Yes, Mam.” I hate worksheets!

- Place the magazine picture in the smallest box and wrap it. Place this box in the next sized box with paragraph C on top. Wrap it, then place it in the next size box with paragraph B. Proceed with this process until you have one large wrapped box. Be sure to place the paragraphs on top of the enclosed boxes where the participants can easily find them.

Reflect and Practice

1. Begin the session with a time of fellowship and prayer.
2. Pick up the wrapped box. Say, “Inside each box we will discover a clue to help us understand how teenagers learn.” Ask one of the participants to unwrap the large box and read the enclosed paragraph. Ask, “What kind of learning environment do you believe this teenager prefers?” (This teenager likes to have music in the background to help him concentrate.) Facilitate a group discussion about learning environments in light of multiple intelligences (pp. 54-57).
3. Hand the next wrapped box to another participant to unwrap and read the



Group Study Guide

enclosed paragraph. Ask, “How do you think this teenager prefers to take in information?” (This teenager likes to move while she learns. She is a kinesthetic learner.) Let the group discuss ways teenagers take in information in their groups. Use pages 54-57 as a guide.

4. Ask another participant to open the next box and read the enclosed paragraph. Ask, “Does this teenager prefer creativity?” Facilitate a discussion about ways to use creativity. Refer participants to pages 58-59 as a guide.
5. Hand the last box to a volunteer to open it to discover the picture. Say, “As we have unwrapped the boxes and discussed learning, we have more clues than we had before about our teenagers. With a partner, share your observations about your teenagers that help you understand how God uniquely created them.
6. Ask, “Why is the ability to think in abstract terms important?” (Faith and spiritual growth depends on this skill.) “How can we encourage the development of abstract thought with our teens?” (pp. 58-59)
7. As a group, develop a strategy or plan to use to create a thinking environment in your home and church.
8. Close the session with prayer for the teenagers in your groups. Remind your participants to read the article for the next session.

Session: Social Development

Preparation

- Hang a large sheet of paper on the wall or use a marker board. With a marker write the heading “Difficult Situations” at the top.

Reflect and Practice

1. Open the session with fellowship and prayer.
2. Facilitate a discussion about the friendships among the teenagers in your groups. Ask, “Do your teenagers fit the characteristics in this article?”
3. Continue the discussion by asking participants to identify any peer groups—clubs, cliques, or gangs among your teenagers. If so, are these healthy or destructive?

4. Ask, "How can parents and teachers guide healthy social development among our teenagers?" Let the group identify practical ways they can start using immediately. Ask, "Do any of our teenagers face difficult situations?" List these on the large paper or marker board. Ask, "How can we help our teenagers deal with dating?" Discuss specific ways your group can minister to these teenagers.
5. Close the session with prayer for the social development of your teenagers and the difficult situations some of them face at school, church, and home. Remind participants to read the article for the next session.

Session: Emotional Development

Preparation

- Make one photocopy of this page. Cut out the following small group assignments.
 - A. Review the paragraphs on **personality** on pages 69-70. Write a case study describing the implications of how one of the following affects emotional development: temperament, learning style, language, sex role, relational style, or identity.
 - B. Review the paragraphs on **mood swings** on pages 70-71. Write a case study describing one way a teacher copes with mood swings among teenagers.
 - C. Review the paragraphs on **emotional disorders** on pages 71-72. Write a case study describing how parents and teachers partnered with each other to help a teenager with an emotional disorder. Be ready to lead the group to develop an effective approach to guiding teenagers with emotional disorders.
 - D. Review the paragraphs on responding to **emotional hurts** on page 72. What are ways a teacher or a parent responded to you during your childhood? Be ready to share one or two of your stories with the total group.
- Gather paper and pencils for your participants.

Reflect and Practice

1. Begin the session with fellowship and prayer.
2. Organize participants into four small groups. Give each group an assignment sheet and a piece of paper and pencil for the recorder. Ask them to complete their assignment for the total group.
3. At the appropriate time call the group together and ask Group A to share their case study without identifying their selected factor. Ask the rest of the participants to guess which factor they have just described in the case study. Facilitate a brief discussion about the implications regarding the various emotional development factors on teaching teenagers in your church or home.

Ask Group B to share their case study. Discuss ways to use the awareness of these mood swings at church and at home.

Ask Group C to read their case study to the participants and lead a discussion in developing a better way of reaching teenagers with emotional disorders. Let participants reflect on the implications of the emotional disorders of the teenagers they teach at church and at home.

Ask Group D to share one or two stories about responding to emotional hurts. Identify ways the teachers can work together to respond to the teenagers in your church and homes.
4. Conclude this session by asking participants to look at their class roll they received during the first session. Ask, "Based on what we have discussed during this session and your experience, how can you help your teenagers grow emotionally?"
5. Close with prayer for the emotional needs of your participants. Remind your participants to read the article for the next session.

Session: Family Development

Preparation

- Before the session ask one or two of your participants to be prepared to share a personal experience they have had with families of teenagers in their groups.
- On the marker board, write the developmental stages in families (pp. 76-78).

Reflect and Practice

1. Open the session with fellowship and prayer.
2. Ask the participant(s) you enlisted to share their experience with the group.
3. Invite others to share their experiences.
4. Say, “Turn to pages 73-74. Consider the families of the teenagers in your group. Write names of your teenagers beside the living arrangement that describes their families.” Discuss the implications for your ministry.
5. Do the same for developmental stages in families (pp. 76-78). Determine a percentage of your teenagers who have families in each stage. Develop a strategy or plan of action to follow in helping your church minister to families.
6. Ask your participants to find a partner to evaluate their parenting and leadership styles with teenagers (pp. 79-81).
7. Close the session with prayer for the parents of the teenagers in your groups. Remind your participants to read the article for the next session.

If this is your last session, spend a few moments reflecting on the experiences participants have had with this study. Ask, “What difference has this experience had on the way you teach and minister? What actions can we take to encourage our church family to be more intentional in ministering to teenagers and their parents?”

Close with a concert of prayer where teachers and leaders verbalize the names of teenagers in their groups at the same time. Open the prayer time for specific requests and concerns about understanding teenagers in your church and community.

