

Adolescents, Families, and Communities

Laurie Ewert-Krocker
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Where is my happy, universe-loving son/daughter, and who is this sulky, dark stranger you replaced him/her with?

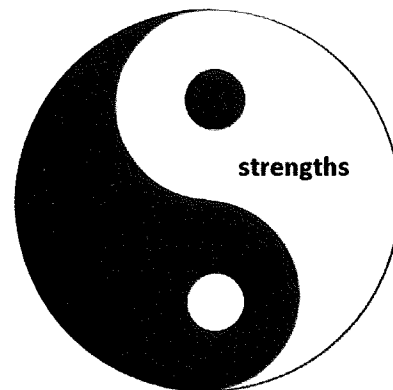
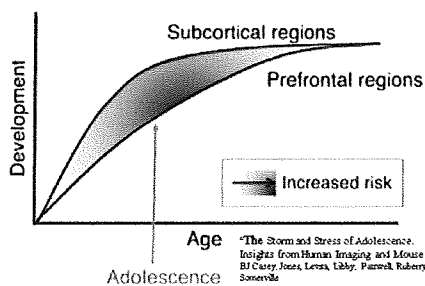


Characteristics of Adolescents

- A time of evaluation and change
- A sense of insecurity
- A time of identity formation and clarification of values including gender identity
- Attachment to peers and membership in a group—essential to healthy development
- A push for autonomy from parents
- Cognitive abilities like formal abstraction and critical thinking develop gradually throughout adolescence—and are not applied in all areas at once
- New critical thinking skills require practice and motivation

- Revision of Piaget:
 - Early formal operational thought—an excess of assimilation as the world is perceived too subjectively and idealistically
 - Late formal operational thought—a testing out of new ideas and reasoning processes against helpful experience
- Vygotsky: Learning happens in a social context; it is situational and collaborative
- Environment counts (Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems): The environment, social interactions, and experiences available to adolescents significantly shape their ways of thinking and acting since the hard-wiring of the brain is not finished.

Emotional Response vs. Rational Response



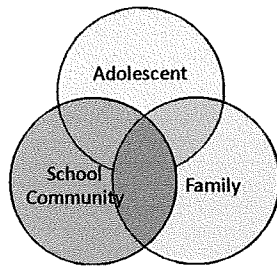
Vulnerabilities

- Rapid physical growth—awkwardness
- Rewiring of the brain—disconnectedness
- Frontal cortex under development—lack of judgment
- Emotional development ahead of rational thought—emotional reaction and decision-making
- Inability to read facial expression cues—miscommunications and overreactions
- Hormonal surges—distractability

Strengths

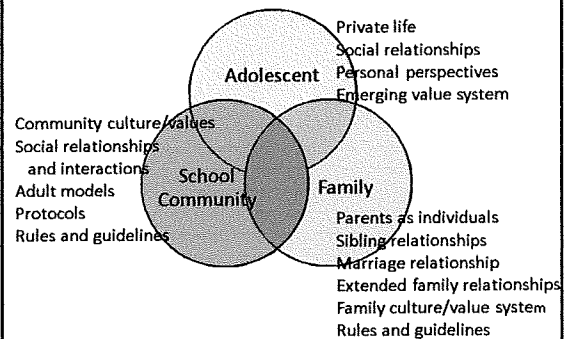
- Rapid physical growth—new physical abilities
- Rewiring of the brain—opportunity for brain construction
- Frontal cortex under development—productive risk-taking for positive change
- Emotional development ahead of rational thought—compassion and commitment to others
- Inability to read facial expression cues—invitation to communicate in order to bond
- Hormonal surges—*joie de vivre*

The Intersection of Cultures



Different Contexts

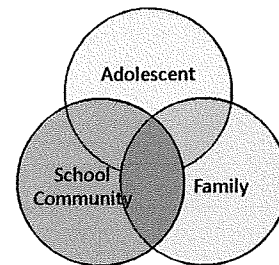
The Intersection of Cultures



3 Different Contexts

- Recognize that your context is only part of the picture
- Maintain and express respect for the other two contexts
- Communicate, communicate, communicate
- Communicate from an "I" perspective—**share** perspectives and observations
- **Work toward trust**

Build Trust



Listen and acknowledge perspectives

The Dialogue

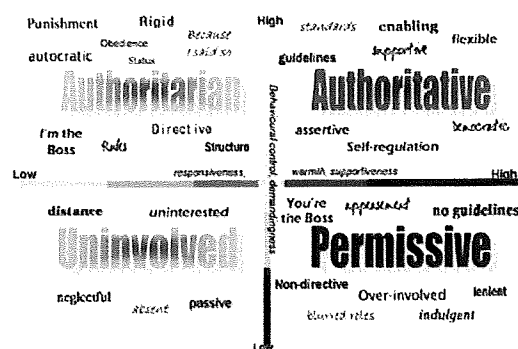
- Here's what I observe/see/think
- Here's what I know/have read about/ have researched
- Here's what I am concerned about
- Here's what I think would work
- Here's my (our) bottom line/boundaries and here's *why*

The Dialogue

- What do you observe/see/think?
- What do you know/ have read about/ have researched?
- What are you concerned about?
- What do you think would work?
- Can we work on a plan that works for all of us?

BUT—we are still the adults and will make final decisions when safety, well-being, and core values are at stake.

Parenting Styles



HOT ZONES

- Technology
- Chores and personal responsibility
- Social relationships/interactions
- Academic performance
- Sleep, food, exercise
- Sexual activity
- Access to dangerous substances

Montessori Principles for Adolescence

- Awareness of developmental characteristics
- Observation
- Purposeful Work
- Contribution to the Community
- Role of the Individual in the Context of Society
- Side-by-Side work of the Adult
- Independence
- Preparation for Adult Life



Consistent cultures between home and school result in the most effective growth and maturity

What is Maturity?

Core Strengths Needed to Succeed in Principal Adult Roles:

- Citizens
- Marital Partners
- Parents
- Friends
- Workers and Colleagues

(Douglas Heath, *Fulfilling Lives*)

What Adult Maturity Looks Like

- Openness; lack of defensiveness
- Tolerance and acceptance of others' differences
- Dedication and commitment
- Understanding, respect, empathy
- Adaptability and self-confidence
- Caring and compassion
- Honesty and integrity
- A sense of humor
- Androgyny—balance of male and female strengths

Portrait of a Montessori Graduate

- Confident, self-assured, self-aware
- Empathetic, compassionate, kind, caring, aware of others' needs
- Introspective, questioning, inquisitive, open
- Eager to learn, never-ending quest for knowledge, love of learning
- Accomplished, capable
- Critical thinkers, intelligent speak intelligently, independent thinkers

- Creative
- Self-motivated, internally motivated
- Comfortable in their skin, comfortable with adults, not afraid to voice an opinion
- Social, able to work cohesively with people of all ages and personalities, harmonizers, good citizens

Good Reads

- ***Escaping the Endless Adolescence: How We Can Help Our Teenagers Grow Up Before They Grow Old***, Joseph Allen and Claudia Worrell Allen. 2009
- ***The 6 Most Important Decisions You'll Ever Make: A Guide for Teens***, Sean Covey. 2008
- ***Teach Your Children Well: Preparing for Authentic Success***, Madeleine Levine. 2012
- ***The Teen Years Explained***. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
http://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/center-for-adolescent-health/publications_resources/teen-years.html

