



ESSENTIALS OF LIFE-SPAN DEVELOPMENT

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PHYSICAL AND COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY ADULTHOOD

11

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- The transition from adolescence to adulthood
- Physical development
- Sexuality
- Cognitive development
- Careers and work

THE TRANSITION FROM ADOLESCENCE TO ADULTHOOD

- **Emerging adulthood:** Transition from adolescence to adulthood
 - Occurs from approximately 18 to 25 years of age
 - Characterized by experimentation and exploration
 - Appears in cultures where assuming adult roles and responsibilities is postponed
- **Key features**
 - Identity exploration, especially in love and work
 - Instability, self-focused, and feeling in-between
 - Age of possibilities, in which individuals have an opportunity to transform their lives

THE TRANSITION FROM ADOLESCENCE TO ADULTHOOD

- Markers of becoming an adult
 - Holding a full-time job
 - Economic independence
 - Taking responsibility for oneself
- Transition from high school to college
 - Top-dog phenomenon
 - Movement to a larger, more impersonal school structure
 - Increased focus on achievement and assessment
 - Interaction with more diverse set of peers

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Physical performance and development
 - Peak physical performance typically occurs between 19 and 26
 - Muscle tone and strength usually begin to show signs of decline around age 30
 - Lessening of physical abilities in 30s
 - Body's fatty tissue increases in mid- to late 20s

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Health
 - Emerging adults have more than twice the mortality rate of adolescents
 - Few chronic health problems
 - Increase in bad health habits, inadequate sleep
 - Eating and weight
 - Obesity - Linked to increased risk of hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease, mental health problems
 - Exercise
 - **Aerobic exercise:** Sustained exercise that stimulates heart and lungs
 - Exercise benefits both physical and mental health

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Substance abuse
 - Reduced drug and alcohol use by mid-20s
 - Binge drinking increases during college years
 - Reaches peak around 21-22 years of age
 - *Extreme binge drinking* – 10 or more drinks in a row
 - Problems of binge drinking:
 - Missing classes
 - Physical injuries
 - Trouble with police
 - Unprotected sex

SEXUALITY

- Sexual activity in emerging adulthood
 - Most individuals are sexually active and unmarried
 - Patterns of heterosexual behavior:
 - Males have more casual sexual partners
 - Females report being more selective
 - Casual sex is more common in emerging adulthood than in late 20s
 - “*Hooking up*” – non-relational sex
 - “*Friends with benefits*” – friendship and sexual intimacy without exclusive romantic relationship

SEXUALITY

- Sexual orientation and behavior
 - Heterosexual attitudes and behavior
 - Americans fall into three categories:
 - $\frac{1}{3}$ have sex twice a week or more, $\frac{1}{3}$ a few times a month, and $\frac{1}{3}$ a few times a year or not at all
 - Married (and cohabiting) couples have sex more often than non-cohabiting couples
 - Most Americans do not engage in kinky sexual acts
 - Adultery is the exception rather than the rule
 - Men think about sex far more often than women do

SEXUALITY

- Sources of sexual orientation
 - Sexual orientation as a continuum
 - From exclusive male–female relations to exclusive same-sex relations
 - Some individuals are bisexual – attracted to both sexes
 - Women are more likely to change sexual patterns and desires than men
 - More likely to have sexual experiences with same and opposite sex, regardless of identification as heterosexual or lesbian
 - Sexual orientation likely a combination of genetic, hormonal, cognitive, and environmental factors

SEXUALITY

- Attitudes and behavior of lesbians and gay males
 - Many gender differences that appear in heterosexual relationships occur in same-sex relationships
 - Lesbians and gays experience life as a minority in a dominant, majority culture
 - Development of bicultural identity

SEXUALITY

- **Sexually transmitted infections (STIs):** Diseases contracted primarily through sex
 - HIV
 - Virus breaks down and overpowers immune system
 - Leads to AIDS
 - Effective strategies for protecting against HIV
 - Know your risk status and that of your partner
 - Obtain medical examinations
 - Have protected sex
 - Do not have sex with multiple partners

FIGURE 11.6 - SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

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STI	Description/cause	Incidence	Treatment
Gonorrhea	Commonly called the “drip” or “clap.” Caused by the bacterium <i>Neisseria gonorrhoeae</i> . Spread by contact between infected moist membranes (genital, oral-genital, or anal-genital) of two individuals. Characterized by discharge from penis or vagina and painful urination. Can lead to infertility.	500,000 cases annually in U.S.	Penicillin, other antibiotics
Syphilis	Caused by the bacterium <i>Treponema pallidum</i> . Characterized by the appearance of a sore where syphilis entered the body. The sore can be on the external genitals, vagina, or anus. Later, a skin rash breaks out on palms of hands and bottom of feet. If not treated, can eventually lead to paralysis or even death.	100,000 cases annually in U.S.	Penicillin
Chlamydia	A common STI named for the bacterium <i>Chlamydia trachomatis</i> , an organism that spreads by sexual contact and infects the genital organs of both sexes. A special concern is that females with chlamydia may become infertile. It is recommended that adolescent and young adult females have an annual screening for this STI.	About 3 million people in U.S. annually	Antibiotics
Genital herpes	Caused by a family of viruses with different strains. Involves an eruption of sores and blisters. Spread by sexual contact.	One of five U.S. adults	No known cure but antiviral medications can shorten outbreaks
AIDS	Caused by a virus, the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which destroys the body’s immune system. Semen and blood are the main vehicles of transmission. Common symptoms include fevers, night sweats, weight loss, chronic fatigue, and swollen lymph nodes.	More than 300,000 cumulative cases of HIV virus in U.S. 25–34-year-olds; epidemic incidence in sub-Saharan countries	New treatments have slowed the progression from HIV to AIDS; no cure
Genital warts	Caused by the human papillomavirus, which does not always produce symptoms. Usually appear as small, hard painless bumps in the vaginal area, or around the anus. Very contagious. Certain high-risk types of this virus cause cervical cancer and other genital cancers. May recur despite treatment. A new HPV preventive vaccine, Gardasil, has been approved for girls and women 9–26 years of age.	About 5.5 million new cases annually; considered the most common STI in the U.S.	A topical drug, freezing, or surgery

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- Piaget's view:
 - Adolescents and adults think qualitatively in the same way
 - Individuals consolidate formal operational thinking during adulthood
- **Postformal thought:**
 - Reflective, relativistic, and contextual
 - Provisional
 - Realistic
 - Recognized as being influenced by emotion

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- Creativity
 - Early adulthood is a time of great creativity for some people
 - Most creative products created in the 30s
 - Declines in creativity depend on field involved

CAREERS AND WORK

- Developmental changes
 - Career decision-making becomes less idealistic
 - Choosing a major or specialization in college
 - By early to mid-20s, many have completed education/training, enter full-time occupation
 - From mid-20s on, individuals often work hard to ascend career ladder and improve financial standing

CAREERS AND WORK

- Finding a path to a purpose
 - Consideration of purpose is missing in young adults' achievement and career development
 - Only 20% of 12-22 year olds have a clear vision of where they want to go in life
 - Students focus only on short-term goals
 - Don't explore the big, long-term picture of what they want to do in life

CAREERS AND WORK

- Impact of work
 - Influences on financial standing, housing, how time is spent, where people live, friendships, and health
 - Identity defined through work
 - Most individuals spend $\frac{1}{3}$ of their lives at work
 - Disappearing long-term careers in many sectors
 - Stressful working conditions
 - Workers' changing expectations about workplace

CAREERS AND WORK

- Work during college
 - Changing number of college students who hold jobs
 - Working can pay or help offset some costs of schooling
 - But can also can restrict students' opportunities to learn

CAREERS AND WORK

- Occupational outlook
 - Shifting number of job openings as economic conditions change
 - U.S. government-published *Occupational Outlook Handbook* updates job projections every 2 years
 - Jobs that require college degrees among highest-paying
- Unemployment
 - Produces stress regardless of whether the job loss is temporary, cyclical, or permanent
 - Linked to physical and mental problems, marital difficulties, homicide

CAREERS AND WORK

- Dual-earner couples
 - Special challenges in balancing work and family life
 - Adaptive strategies to coordinate work and manage family
 - Gender equality strived for, but inequalities still persist