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Adolescent Psychology

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Chapter 13: 1. Explain the biological, psychological, and sociocultural factors that contribute to adolescent problems, and give examples of each. How do issues in these areas of development impact adjustment and daily life for an adolescent.

Adolescence and emerging adulthood are the most enthralling and multifarious transitions in our lifecycle. Scientists who adopt a biological approach focus on factors such as genes, puberty, hormones, and the brain as causes of adolescent and emerging adult problems. Biological factors that contribute to adolescent problems include early maturation. Early maturation is linked to a number of problems for adolescent girls, including drug abuse, depression, and delinquency. For example, if an adolescent or emerging adult engages in substance abuse it may be due to a combination of biological factors (i.e., heredity and brain processes). Peer pressure can be a powerful force, but fortunately, increased awareness has led to numerous resources to help students, parents and educators manage it effectively. For example, Katie normally doesn't drink alcohol when she goes to parties. But her friends are all drinking and she feels pressure to engage in this behavior, even though she'd prefer not to drink.

Additionally, psychological factors that contribute to adolescent and emerging adult problems are identity, personality trait, decision making, and self-control. Developing a positive identity is central to healthy adjustment and academic success in adolescence and emerging adulthood.

Psychological factors would include low conscientiousness and low self-control, for example.

Children who enter adolescence already psychologically and socially vulnerable will probably experience a more difficult adolescent period in challenging social circumstances.

Finally, sociocultural factors that have been especially highlighted as contributors to adolescent problems are the social contexts of family, peers, schools, socioeconomic status, poverty, and neighborhoods. Poor and low-income adolescents are more likely than their more affluent counterparts to be in fair or poor (versus good or excellent) health, may have limitations in their activities, and have had behavioral or emotional problems. Poor and low-income adolescents also are more likely than their peers to be uninsured, have no usual source of care, face financial and nonfinancial barriers to access, and have gone without medical or dental care during the preceding year. Other social factors that contribute to adolescent and emerging adult problems are relationship difficulty with parents and peers.