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Human Growth and Development

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## **Unit 2 -Early Childhood Essay Questions**

### **Required Question**

The physical and psychological changes that occur in early childhood are very significant in shaping the development of the child's future. These stages are critical to the baby so the parents need to be their every step of the way to guide their child to success.

From kicking and squirming, to holding objects, crawling and standing, the development of fine and gross motor skills starts in the early years. The fine motor is the smaller muscle groups for example wrists, feet and toes and the gross motor are the large muscle groups for example the arms and legs. At this stage, infants also develop hand-eye coordination. They will begin to reach and grab for toys as well as be able to participate in some basic arts and crafts and even be able to work out simple tasks such as turning the pages of a book. These activities are all encouraged as it allows the infant to practice hand-eye coordination as well as fine and gross motor skills so they can improve and get to grips with it more easily.

Psychological development refers to 'the development of human beings' cognitive, emotional, intellectual, and social capabilities'. In early childhood infants begin to understand the use of language. They can comprehend words some months before they actually speak. By their fourth

year most children can speak in adultlike sentences and have begun to master the more complex rules of grammar and meaning. However, we have to remember that every child is different and it will take some children longer than average to develop physically and psychologically and others shorter than average.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Question 1**

The two main reasons as to why there is so much variation in the height of children is due to genetics and environmental factors. Scientists estimate it is about 60-80% due to genetics and 20-40% due to environmental factors. My initial thought when reading this question was that height variations were hereditary and that you were tall if your parents were tall or short if your parents were short. Although this is often the case, it isn't always. Medical conditions and hormonal deficiencies can also contribute.

Genetics is the primary make up of your height. Your own height is said to end up somewhere based upon the average height of your two parents. However, this isn't true for every individual and I am actually taller than both my mum and my dad. Aside from genetics, there are other factors to consider that can determine a person's height, especially during childhood and adolescence.

Nutrition is a key contributor to a person's height. Ensuring you get adequate nutrition during your growing years is critical in human development, including your height. A diet based on whole, nutritious foods will allow you to grow up to the height your genes might dictate. On the other hand, a poor diet could lead to you being shorter than your parents. Although nutrition does have an impact on your height to some degree it isn't huge. For instance if I ate the perfect diet with all the correct nutrients and my parents were both small I would still be relatively small.

Not every child has access to healthy foods. Children from low socioeconomic backgrounds may lack nutrients in their foods and eat insufficiently which in turn can lead to them being a shorter height. Also gender plays a role in height variation. Boys tend to grow slower than girls at first due to differences in puberty.

During puberty, hormones are essential for regulating body growth. These include thyroid hormones, human growth hormones, and sex hormones such as testosterone and estrogen. Any abnormalities in these hormones could alter growth as well as your overall height. Rarely, hormonal disorders can contribute to being taller than normal. Congenital abnormalities could also be a factor. Some conditions present at birth may dictate a person's height. For example, achondroplasia (dwarfism) is a rare bone growth disorder that runs in families. This would lead to a person being much shorter than the average height.

Overall although genetics are a huge indication of someone's height they are not the only thing that can determine it. There are many other factors which I have included above.

#### **Question 4**

The leading cause of death amongst toddlers is accidents which are unintentional injuries. Although accidents happen and it's just part of life there are ways in which you can attempt to prevent them. For instance, overall care from your parents can help to reduce the chances of toddlers getting hurt as by caring for your child to a very high level it is harder for them to find themselves in places they shouldn't be and doing stuff they shouldn't be doing which could potentially lead to an accident. For example, if the mom or dad of the toddler rarely leaves their child's side it is much harder for an accident such as getting hit by a car to occur. Having said this, the most caring parents in the world could still be affected by accidents.

High levels of parental care can also prevent illness as by feeding your child the correct foods and taking the correct precautions such as vaccinating them, they are less likely to get diagnosed with an illness. This care doesn't just stop at what the parents do for their child it also includes other material factors such as the house they are living in. Damp houses can cause illness amongst toddlers and breathing difficulties which can lead to death.

Not only are there factors which parents can control to some degree but there are also factors leading to illness and death which are completely out of everyone's control. This includes birth defects, infectious diseases, including pneumonia, diarrhea and malaria, along with preterm birth, birth asphyxia and trauma, and congenital anomalies. These alongside accidents are the leading causes of death for children under five. These are unable to be prevented and are often

hereditary meaning that they run in the family. It is so sad and difficult to comprehend that globally 3.9% of all children die before reaching the age of five.

### **Question 13**

Every child is of course very different but in terms of language development there are some general milestones that the average child goes through in order to improve their understanding and speaking.

Between the ages of 6-12 months, your child should be saying their first words and making sounds which just sound like nonsense at the start. These are usually just constant letters with popular choices being m,b or d. As the child starts to develop and reaches the age of 1-2 years, they will begin to expand their vocabulary by using one to two word phrases for example 'more milk.' At the age of 2-3 years old children should have around 50 or more words in their vocabulary, be able to combine two or more words in statements, and ask simple questions. At this age you can begin to have short conversations with your child but at times it can make little to no sense at all!

In terms of understanding, at the age of 6-12 months, your child should be able to start responding to their name and understand the meaning of 'no'. They will start to use language through physical movement rather than actual speech for example lifting their arms up when they want to get picked up. By the age of 2-3 years, children should be able to participate in pretend play and understand actions such as eating or running.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Question 21**

The four main parenting styles are permissive, authoritative, neglectful and authoritarian. Each parenting style has different effects on children's behavior and can be identified by certain characteristics, as well as degrees of responsiveness and demandingness.

The permissive parent is very much child driven and rarely gives or enforces any rules. They overindulge the child to avoid the risk of potential conflict typically going through great lengths to keep their children happy sometimes at their own expense. They are high in responsiveness and low in demandingness. They communicate openly and usually let their kids decide things for themselves rather than giving them direction. Permissive parents are more likely to take on a friendship role rather than a parenting role with their children. Children with permissive parents tend to take advantage and 'get away' with more stuff meaning they misbehave more. They also demand the best of everything such as having the latest gadget as the parents will give them what they want whenever they want.

The authoritative parent is high in responsiveness and low in demandingness. They set clear rules and expectations for their children. They communicate frequently and listen to and take into consideration their children's thoughts, feelings and opinions. They allow natural consequences to occur, for example their child fails in a math test because they didn't study for it

but they use these opportunities to help their child reflect and learn. Authoritative parents are nurturing and supportive by guiding their children through open and honest communication to teach values and reasoning. Children with authoritative parents tend to be self-disciplined and think for themselves. They are more structured and have a strong emotional attachment to their parents to a degree in which they can confide in them with any personal issues.

A neglectful parent is low in responsiveness and low in demandingness. They let their children fend for themselves and give little nurturance, guidance and attention. They often struggle with their own self-esteem issues and have a hard time forming close relationships. It is referred to as an uninvolved parenting style as neglectful parents have limited engagement with their children and rarely implement rules. They can also be seen as cold and uncaring but not always intentionally, as they are often struggling with their own issues. Children with neglectful parents often fall behind in school, have poor social skills and low self-esteem.

An authoritarian parent has high demandingness and low responsiveness. They enforce strict rules on their children with little consideration of their feelings or social, emotional and behavioral needs. Communication is mostly one way from parent to child and the parent often says 'because I said so' when the child questions the reasoning behind something. This parenting style uses stern discipline which is often justified as tough love. Parents using this technique attempt to always be fully in control. Children with authoritarian parents are often more introverted, quiet and shy. This is because they don't really get to voice their opinion at home so they are not used to engaging openly in conversations.

### **Question 24**

As a mother, one of the biggest decisions you have to make after having a child is whether to continue working or take a break to stay at home and care for them. In the past the mother played the caregiver role and would stay at home and be a housewife. In today's society it is much more common for the woman in the house to work as women are more career driven than they used to be. There are many pros and cons of being a working mother.

Even if working mothers can't attend to their child full time there are still many advantages they play in their child's development. Firstly, working moms become positive role models for their children. It shows that working for a living is not gendered and especially for daughters it is crucial for them to see first hand that women can work as hard and often as men. It can be argued that working moms raise more independent children since they teach their children how to do chores on their own which allows them to develop a strong sense of responsibility at an early age. Another advantage is a research finding that claims that working mothers are less prone to depression. In addition, working moms have stories to tell outside of their personal life. They have the opportunity to extend their circle with their colleagues. This could be to go on work outings and bring along their children so therefore spending quality time with their family and colleagues in one.

Alongside advantages also comes disadvantages. Working moms are more tired and stressed. This is because they have to work for nine hours to come home to restless children who need

their attention. This stress can make them more prone to health issues. Having the same daily routine with little to no rest can put a mother's health at risk, which can result in more problems. The most common argument against being a working mom is that they are missing out on the lives of their children. They miss out on their child's first words, steps and other moments which they will never get back. As well as this, working moms may also have less time for the family as they have such busy schedules.

In my opinion, I think that being a stay at home mom is better as you get to see your child grow first hand however I do also appreciate that some families cannot afford to function without being dual earned.

### **Question 25**

Dear Friend,

I am so sorry to hear that you are going through a divorce. I just wanted to let you know that you are not going through this alone and I am and always will be here for you if you have any questions, need help or just want someone to talk to. In terms of the welfare of your children, I want you to know that it is going to be okay and although at the start it may be hard they will be able to adapt to the changing circumstances well. Each year millions of children around the globe face family disruption and in many countries divorce rates are rising so it is not uncommon for them and many children of similar ages to them will be facing the same thing.

Parental conflict before, during and after a divorce can have harmful effects on children. Having said that, the child's best interests are usually at the heart of both the parents so even if they aren't speaking to each other directly they share the same consensus in wanting to do what's best for their children. Unfortunately with divorce many fathers drop out of their children's life completely. This may not be the case for you but I just want you to be aware of this being a situation you may be placed in so you can prepare for the worst outcome. If that does happen, your children may suffer the double disadvantages of the psychological loss of a parent, and the loss of financial support but we can face this problem if it comes to it.

Don't worry in particular about the ages of your children during the divorce itself because children of all ages are sensitive to parental divorce and at no age are they immune to the negative effects. Although divorce is bad at any age, at least your children are very young so may not remember it fully when they are older.

I am going to make you aware of some of the effects this divorce may have on your child. This is not by any means to scare you more just to prepare you for what is to come so it can be greeted correctly with love and reassurance. Your children will display a range of emotional and behavioral reactions in the following months. They may regress, display anxiety and depressive symptoms, appear more irritable and experience problems in social relationships and school performance. They will probably react differently from another but this is okay and expected. The best thing you can do to your children is to let them know that they are not responsible for the separation, that they are loved by both their parents, and that their needs will be met in some

form or another. You need to try your best to achieve a balance between acknowledging and accepting the expression of negative feelings on the one hand, and providing clear, consistent rules and structure on the other.

I am so sorry about this- I really am. I know you are so strong but please do let me know if there is absolutely anything I can do for you at this time. I will be here for you every single step of the way and I assure you it will all work out okay in the end so please do not worry.

Love from Tess xx

### **Question 28**

Levels of television consumption is an ongoing debate in today's society. Watching TV is becoming increasingly popular but there is little research and findings in the long term negative impacts of watching it in large amounts. There are many pros and cons of watching television.

Television is cheap and an easy source of entertainment. It keeps people entertained for long periods of time. There are channels that are exclusively educational so people can learn new information about the world that we are living in. It can provide a way for people to realize dreams or goals that they didn't even know existed and push them in the right direction for a greater future ahead. Television can increase social surrogacy. This is a psychological term meaning it can make people feel less lonely. It can fill the shoes of absent family members or friends. It can also bring people together through global events such as the world cup or an award

show where everyone can be united to support and discuss thoughts and feelings on a particular topic.

On the other hand, there are also many cons to watching television. The violence, crime and sex depicted on television shows can have negative impacts on young, impressionable children. They can copy bad influences which they have seen on the screen. Watching too much television can also be bad for your health. It is said that more than 3 hours may contribute to behavior problems, sleep difficulties, health issues, and lower grades. It can also turn you into a very antisocial person and can be a huge waste of your time which could be spent doing something more productive such as working or a social engagement. Also, some people fear that television brainwashes people into consumerism with advertisements of food and alcohol and others claim television can be addictive.

I think that television viewing by young people should be regulated to some degree but capped to 5 hours a week maximum. This is to allow time for children to interact with their friends and realize that there is more to life than just sitting in a room watching a screen. I also believe that television shows should be more strict on awareness for children to ensure that everything they watch is educational and nothing is inappropriate for their age.