

Individual and Family Dev weekly paper due March 7th

Dr. Wells

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My first point has to do with how adolescence stage of development is enlarging the parameters from 10 years of age and lasting till 25. The age for adolescence is starting earlier and extending longer. I know young adults are living with their parents longer these days. The “emerging adulthood” period the book speaks of is being delayed and is lasting longer than in my generation. Many of my friends have had their adult kids return to live with them for a time after college. This failure to launch could be due to economic downturn of not having a good job waiting for them after college could play a part in this. The psycho-social stage in this age group is the formation of their identity. I think when counseling this age group, you would need to keep in mind that self-esteem could suffer through not having the desired dream job after finishing college, and, as a result, not being able to buy a home. Many in this age group are renting instead of buying as their parent’s did at this age. My son just told me he read an article where many millennials are deciding to not have as many children, or are opting to wait to have children until they feel they can afford them. This generation has had a delay in fulfilling their identities because of the pandemic and the state of the economy. It is interesting to me that this generation is facing different problems than my generation faced, and with-it different psycho-social problems.

My second point is about the adolescent brain development. I found it fascinating that in adolescence the brain is still developing and the “use it or lose it” idea refers to the

neuroplasticity and connections being expanded or not. The book emphasized “unused skills and thinking patterns are lost” if not encouraged and used. It is important at this age to let the kids try new things. It is a time of creativity and growth in the brain. All learning through the lifespan is beneficial, but during this period it is especially important. This age group, in particular, the book says their brains are wired and more receptive to make new neural connections. So, let them play piano, learn a language, or discuss new ideas, and by so doing you are also increasing the communication between the right and left hemispheres of the brain. So much more has been discovered about the brain since I studied nursing in the 90s. As a therapist, if an adolescent client is having substance abuse problems it not only increases risk taking behavior, but also hinders how their brains develop. The book said cannabis can decrease development of the frontal lobe where executive functioning of the brain happens. Smoking a joint for an adult is different than an adolescent smoking a joint. The joint is not going to do the damage or hinder growth like it will on the brain of an adolescent. Adolescents think of themselves as adults, but biologically they really are not. They think if my parent is drinking beer or wine or smoking pot so can I. Modeling good behavior is so important, because they will call you out on being a hypocrite at this age. I had a teenager I know from experience.

My last point has to do with spirituality in adolescence. Our book, *Journey Across the Life Span*, cited a study that showed that teens with a connection to spirituality had less problems with substance abuse. The book explained, this is the time where teens are looking for their own answers to life, and don't just want to adopt their parent's beliefs. Even teens raised in a Christian home will test the limits and explore. I think it is so important for teenagers to not just rely on their parent's faith, but find their connection to Jesus on their own. I

remember when our two kids started to lose interest in the church. We realized we had to make a connection to Christianity with the real world. My husband and I led an outreach with youth group to do a powerful drama called, Toy Maker and Son, that was allegory about the Father sending the son, the rebellion of the Satan, and the redeeming love of God. It gave the kids a purpose and helped them activate their faith in evangelism. With the drama we took the kids to other countries where they could see that everyone does not live like we live exposing them to new cultures. We also learned songs in a different language. It helped solidify their identity as Christian, and live out their own faith by sharing their faith with others. I think with teenagers you have to give them something to do. Don't just talk your faith what are you doing. They had to go beyond the four walls of the church and experience themselves. I think Alliance University trips to other countries is not only crucial in faith, but also in development of the brain by exposing them to new cultures and languages.