CHAPTER 4

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Adolescents and their Issues -

4.1. Introduction:

The period of Adolescence has varied dimensions and perspectives. The Medical fraternity emphasizes on the biological and physical changes that occurs in them during this period, especially with regard to sexuality. Whereas psychoanalysts stress on the emotional aspect, emphasizing on their peer influence and their need to belong. The adolescents themselves carry a mixed bag of anxieties, growth, learning, uncertainties and concerns as also exploration and opportunities. This period lays the foundation for a successful career and productive life. This is also relative to the set of values, practices and beliefs the family, community or guides provide them during the growing years.

All of us know that the transformation from childhood to adolescence comprises of a number of biological, cognitive and socio emotional changes. Growth spurts, hormonal changes, sexual maturation are a few of the biological changes. The brain becomes capable of advance thinking. It is also the time when they begin to stay up later and sleep till late in the morning.

The cognitive changes include logical abstract and idealistic thinking. They perceive themselves as unique and invulnerable. The quest for independence, conflict with parents and desire to spend more time with peer can be included under socio emotional changes that the adolescents undergo. Achievement becomes serious business and academic challenges increases. This is also the time for increased sexual maturation which produces greater interest in romantic relationships. They also experience great mood swings.

Negotiating through this transition successfully, requires considerable adaptations and sensitive and caring support from adults. It is said that adolescence begins with biology and ends with culture.

4.2. What is adolescence?

Generally in the society, adolescents are ascribed to physical and hormonal changes. We can actually describe adolescence, as the physical transformation which begins with puberty. It also brings about mental changes in the ability to think multi
dimensionally. It is a period where the ability to think abstractly increases and the child starts growing in the true sense of the word.

Developmental psychologists consider this period where the focus is on change in relationship with parents and peers. A methodical comprehension of adolescences depends on information from different areas like Psychological, Biology, Sociology, Anthropology, Education, and History. Taking all these areas into consideration also it is essential to consider culture, country, while trying to understand adolescence. With all these perspectives, we can still view adolescence as a period of transition between childhood and adulthood. Rapid change in the global scenario is altering the experience of adolescents and posing new psychological challenges. It is presenting new challenges as well as opportunities to this young generation. Cognitive development increases during Adolescence; Piaget describes “adolescence” as a stage of life in which the individual’s thoughts start taking more of an abstract form and egocentric thoughts decreases”. The individual become capable of reasoning in a wider perspective. The thoughts, concepts and ideas developed at this period of life influences one’s life in future and plays a major role in character and personality formations.

4.3. Changes noticed during adolescence:
Changes in brain structure biologically and also increased knowledge, experience and social demands lead to rapid cognitive growth. The age at which particular change takes place varies from individuals to individuals, but the ones discussed below begin at puberty and then continue to develop through adolescents stages.

Improvements in Cognitive ability – Marked changes are seen in their basic thinking abilities like
a) Attention, improvements seen selective attention and also divided attention.
b) Memory- improvements in working as well as long term memory.
c) Processing speed – improves sharply around 15 years of age.
d) Organizing – also improves and they develop strategies to think more efficiently.
Higher order cognitive process such as making decisions, reasoning, thinking critically, thinking creatively and meta cognition which are generally called as executive functioning become strong during adolescence. Adolescence is a time for increased decision making. Reasoning is logical thinking that uses induction and deduction to reach a conclusion. Adolescents improve their ability of reasoning from general to specific as well as specific to general, thus improving deductive as well as inductive reasoning.

Thinking creatively is the ability to think unique and discover solutions to problems exposure to brainstorming session not over controlling and encouraging internal control leads to increased creative thinking in adolescents. Adolescents undergo a transformation in critical thinking like increased speed capacity of information processing, increased content knowledge, increased ability to construct new combinations.

4.4. Meta Cognition and related changes:

One other gain is cognitive ability involves thinking about thinking itself, a process referred to as Meta cognition. Adolescents’ improvement in knowledge of their own thinking patterns lead to a better self-will and more erudition in studying. It is also pertinent in social cognition resulting in increased introspection, self consciousness and intellectualization. A stage of social perspective is reached by the adolescent, taking in which they can understand how thoughts or actions of one person can have some bearing on another person. Critics argue that perspective taking rather than format operational thought is the main factor in the development of adolescent ego centrism. Wisdom or insight and judgment increases between the ages of fourteen and twenty five. During this transition the individual acquires astuteness. With the increase in wisdom and development of ego centrism, develops a need to form personal identities. Wanting to feel prominent in the peer group and having social acceptance gains significance.

Self concept and self esteem are two approaches to understand indentify development. It has been observed that Adolescents give more time and endeavor to their looks as their body undergoes changes.
4.5. What is Self Concept?

It refers to domain specific evaluation of self. It is something that adolescence does very often to form a self-perception and make a critical comparison with their peers. Adolescents make self evaluation in many domains. Academic, Athletic, Physical appearance, called ‘differentiation’ occur as the adolescent recognizes the contextual influences, their own behavior and perception of others. Differentiation results in organization and integration of self concept. Recognition of the self indicates that the adolescent is gaining a sense of continuous overlapping sense of identity.

Self concept refers to the broader dimension of self. The different experiences that the adolescent gather with Family, School, Neighbours, Teachers, Friends, and Peers provide material for self concept. A lot of do and don’ts, right and wrong are enforced upon the adolescents during their growing period. When they interact with the outside world, they receive different vibes from the external world. All these influence the development of self concept. Thus self concept is how one views oneself as an individual. It has a cognitive and emotive aspect. It can also be defined as an understanding of one’s self, your own capabilities and your thought process. One’s own qualities, values, beliefs, feelings and emotions.

The self concept of an individual is always wrapped up in a set of images of good success or bad failure experienced by them. The mental picture you maintain of your strength and weaknesses decides your personality. Many people are guided by their previous failures they have experienced during social encounters and this state does not allow them to come out of their low self concept.

It is absolutely essential to have a strong self concept, which can be built over years because of strong self skills. Self concept affects the capacity to cope with one’s own personal and non-personal environment. If you think of yourself as a competent and successful person, you are likely to manage your problems and difficult situations more effectively. On the other hand if you nurture a low self concept, your capacity to deal with problems gets limited.

A negative self concept limits growth and tends to stall opportunities and enjoyment. You feel incapable of using opportunities and creating success. By maintaining strong or positive self concept, which is an important skill, the good about you is amplified
and you develop self confidence on which a foundation can be laid to build other skills.

Self concept is thus crucial for an individual’s growth and success. As it shapes up during the growing years, it provides a reference and becomes a core of one’s personality. A lot of your reactions, responses get guided by yourself concept. It becomes a basis for understanding the intricacies of the situation in which you find yourself and helps in giving a response to the situation or problem. It becomes your vantage point. It becomes the screen through which you see, hear and evaluate the ecosystem around you. It literally becomes your benchmark.

A strong self concept means one has a realistic view of oneself. A person with a strong self concept has a realistic view of one’s self and is aware of her/his strengths and weakness. This helps and guides one’s action and behaviour.

A weak concept means the person is unsure of one’s self. They lack self awareness. They have a blurred or distorted image of perceiving others and insecurity flows in them all the time. They generally are guarded in expressing their views and are always afraid, that other may disagree with them and this might affect their relationship with others. Because of their lack of confidence and also being unsure of others’ response to them, they are also unable to engage in a meaningful interaction with others.

4.6. The elements of Self Esteem:

The major attribute of identity formation is self esteem. It is one’s thoughts and feelings about one’s self concept and identity. It is the evaluative dimension of self and also referred to as self worth or self image.

It has been researched that self esteem changes rapidly and causes anguish and nervousness at times, but bottom line self esteem remain high across adolescence. Relationships undergo marked changes during this period. Adolescence mark changes in one’s role within a family. When children undergo puberty, there is a remarkable increase in parent – child conflict, which is often on irrelevant issues which adolescence perceive as an attempt to challenge their self image. Arguments often concern minor issues of control, acceptance of clothing and adolescent’s right to privacy. The parent-adolescent disagreement also increases as peer demonstrates great impact on one another.
Siblings also are a source of conflict and also support during adolescence. Interactions with siblings are the first relational experiences that give a shape to their social understanding. They can also act as peers and increase each other feeling of self worth. In spite of changing family roles, the home environment and are parents are still important for these growing adults. Adolescents who share a good relationship with parents are not likely to indulge in various risk behaviors like smoking, drinking, fighting and unprotected sexual intercourse. Also studies relieve that education is better if the parent-child relationships are good.

Self esteem affects one’s daily life and reflects the way you interact with people and establish, as well as sustain relationships. It is also related to our rationale, objective, initiative and risk-taking ability. Self esteem also plays a major role in overcoming fear and willingness to bring about changes as a part of self growth. A person with a high self esteem is not afraid to admit mistakes and is always ready to take corrective actions which are necessary. Self esteem is not something, a person is born with. It is developed with their interaction with family, friends, teachers, peers, colleagues and others – who in turn very subtly, enforce life skills through different situations. This self esteem is dynamic and can be changed through training and interventions and also a desire to change. It can get changed when one is able to manage one’s fears effectively.

Self esteem also gets enhanced when you choose to do something good. Your initiative and the success that follows will raise your self esteem. This gives you the confidence to make the right choices and thus helps in achieving goals and upholding values that you cherish. Self esteem helps to develop interpersonal relationship and use them for your growth and development. You tend to respect and like others. Thus self-concept and self esteem is the key to self-awareness.

4.7 Self Awareness –

If we are aware of our real or genuine self, we are able to perceive life differently and also feel the power of life flowing through us. Life becomes more challenging and happier. Self awareness empowers us to see the world without judgment and prejudice. With self awareness you see the bigger picture and know the boundaries between yourself and others. You are able to distinguish between truth and lie. You are able to differentiate if the beliefs you are carrying are based on the highest truth or
on conditioning and programming you have been brought up with. Walter Benjamin said “To be happy is to be able to become aware of oneself without fright”.

For most of us, who we are, appears simple. We identify ourselves through our name, economic status, position or any such description. Actually we are a lot more than that. There are several aspects to this puzzle. We are generally convinced that we know ourselves well and that there is nothing more to it. We are not willing to accept the numerous facets of our own persona especially the negative ones. Many a times there is a vagueness about our own perception of ourselves and hence unable to fully realize ourselves and grow.

The problems actually begin when we start believing in what we are manifesting and lose contact with our true self. Knowing ourselves is very difficult and agonizing and also extremely complicated. We do not wish to dig deeper to find out what lies below the exterior. There is also a fear of the unknown aspect. We should learn to become aware without feeling embarrassed. If there are grey areas that should be resolved, rather than hidden.

To actually identify oneself, we should submit ourselves to an honest scrutiny by reflecting an analyzing different aspect of our personality in an objective manner. We should attempt to do this as a free individual without taking others opinion in to consideration. We should break the cycle of others’ influence with a lot of courage and considerable strength as well as persistence. If it means, we have to detach from others for some time and stay with oneself during the analysis, it should also be done.

We can discover ourselves part by part or layer by layer and then build on these to get an inclusive portrait of our own self. This will create harmony with ourselves. The following set of questions will help us unfold the secret of our personality and unravel the secret of becoming self aware. (Devandra Agochlya). What are your strong likes and dislikes?

- Do you feel responsible for your actions or blame somebody else for it?
- What motivates you and what de motivates you?
- What are your desires, dreams and ambitions?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What are your distinguishing abilities and what are your competencies?
- How do you define success and happiness in your own context?
- Would you like working alone or as a team player?
- Are you organized in your day to day activities and chores?
- Are you honest and trustworthy?
- What are your greatest fears and Why?
- What makes you feel guilty and why?
- Do you feel angry and bitter – at yourself, at others and at society and why?
- Do you rely on others for guidance?

Thus it is very important that adolescents answer these questions very honestly. It is easier when they are able to talk to themselves intimately. There will be some grey areas, but they should learn to come out of their comfort zone and start accepting the truth away from the masked self, they have created. Once they are able to accept themselves as they are, there will be self awareness and a lots of peace. The fear factor will dissipate and it will become a little easy to evoke their inner power to bring about changes in their personality, which will lead them to self growth.
4.8 Peer Groups and their dimensions–

Peers are very important during adolescence. This is a period where there is a dramatic rise in the time spent with peers. Adolescents also associates with peers of opposite gender, much more. They also tend to identify with groups of peers based on similar or comparable characteristics.

Peers group members give them the opportunity to develop social circles. It is a period where empathy, leadership and sharing are learnt. They can have positive influence like academic drive to perform well or can have negative influence like drugs, theft, smoking, and vandalism. While peers may facilitate social development for one another, they may also cause harm to it. It is often noticed that today’s high school going adolescence operate in groups in ways that it is both beneficial as well as secluding.

Peer group can also be seen as a relatively small group of adolescence engaged in a similar shared activity. They generally share a deep sense of understanding of each other and share similar beliefs and interests. Adolescents use various methods to obtain approval and share a good relationship with their peers. Peers also have an influence on social development and behavior of adolescents. Peers become reference groups for adolescents. Since their need for social approval, affiliation, leadership, power, status become stronger, they try to enhance their capacity to enter into a close relationship with like minded individuals. This leads to the formation of peer group.

Then there arises a need to be accepted by the peer group. They want to get along with the group and be accepted by the group. Sometimes in order to get this acceptance, they may have to deviate from their own beliefs and values. The role played by the peers in the process of growing up is critical, since adolescents spend twice as much time with peer as compared to parents. Adolescents can experience positive as well as negative sway due to peers. Association with peers provides a setting where adolescents can practice interpersonal communication. These skills can be extremely useful later in life to communicate with others, at institutions of education, workplace or in the social network. Teens who do not develop this skill, will find it difficult to get along with others during adulthood.
Also peers association provides a lot of opportunities for enhancing the process of learning, as also developing a better understanding of the state of affairs around them. The environment of a peer group is conducive to experimentation and actions without the threat of punishment as may be with adults. They develop an attitude of risk taking. The association can also bring out the latent talent of the adolescents.

In a peer group, learning different strategies their friends’ use, in problem solving or decision making and using them in similar circumstances is possible. Their adaptive skills can also be developed through interaction with peers. If the peer pressure is positive, it exhorts members for higher academic or greater achievement in sports, music or other extracurricular activities.

In the negative form, peer pressure can lead to drug abuse, sexual activity, smoking, stealing, and misconduct or force the adolescent to indulge in high risk behavior. At such times adolescents should break the cycle of others’ influence with a lot of courage and considerable strength as well as persistence. If it means, they have to detach from others for some time and stay with oneself during the analysis that should also be done. They can discover themselves part by part or layer by layer and then build on these to get an inclusive portrait of their own self. This will create harmony with themselves.

4.9. Development of sexuality:
Development of Sexuality of an adolescent becomes an important aspect in their development. There are several social economic as well as cultural differences which influences how adolescents develop. *Menarche*, is considered as the defining point for transition into adulthood in many cultures. Restrictive societies pressures youngster to refrain from sexual activities until they get married. In semi-restrictive societies, adults do not encourage sexual activities; however, they do not take strong steps towards stopping it; in liberal societies, the transition into sexual adulthood is normal and parents simply ignore any sexual activities among children.
4.10 What are Autonomy and its types?

Establishing Autonomy is another aspect which is worth mentioning. Development in adolescents can be described as strive for autonomy. According to Mc Elnavey et al there is three ways autonomy can be described. The first being

4.10.1 Emotional Autonomy which is described as being the development of more adult like close relationship with adults and peers.

4.10.2 The second is Behavioral Autonomy, which is the ability to make independent relationship and follow through them.

4.10.3 Cognitive Autonomy This is the third known autonomy and is categorized by manifestation of an independent set of viewpoints, ideas and estimation. One way to categorize cultural difference in behavioral autonomy, is to compare the teen timetables of parents and adolescents of different cultures. The teen timetable is a questionnaire that tells us the age adolescents are permitted to engage in various behaviors that signal autonomy.

Adolescence thus describes the psychosocial changes that occur as individuals, leave childhood and develop into independent, contributing members of the adult society. During this developmental period they face a number of issues and problems which are not perceived easily by adults. Let us first discuss these issues before we go on to develop ways and means to resolve these issues.

4.11. Issues of Adolescence:

Most of the issues of adolescences are due to failure in understanding the anatomical, morphological and psychological changes expected during adolescence. Psychologically, this is such a venerable stage that these teens are carried away by the perceptions generated by the society. They are always prone to such exposure in the society – which ultimately are retained as perceptions in their minds to form their behavioral patterns. This is the period when foundation is laid for successful career and productive life. However,
these are relative to the set of values, life skills, beliefs, practices the community, family and society sets during these growing years. The key areas of concern and issues related to these growing years can be listed as under.

4.11.1 Identity Crisis:

During these growing years adolescence still struggle to explore their distinctiveness, along with combating with the experience of anxieties and physical transition. The need for identity is intense, because they are at a stage where they start defining the purpose of their life, and also expected to be more responsible. The process of developing identity also involves detecting some meaningful relationships.

What others judge them as, is very important at this stage. It is literally like trying to wear different masks till you find one that suits you best. Also this identity becomes very different, because they encounter people with different standards and framework and it become almost impossible to please everyone. Development of identity also depends to a large extent on cultural, familial and social factor. They need to build a harmonious blend of all these components to develop an integrated genuine and rational identity. This becomes an important step in the maturity of the individual.

The formation of identity involves a number of key components. An adolescent must have a strong self concept. They should believe in their values, principles, and ethics. Must know their potential and capabilities and also know their own purpose of life. The process of developing an identity involves becoming aware of their potential and what they are capable of doing. The process also becomes difficult because they encounter different people, who have their own set of views and try to enforce these on the individual. Expectation from others is also another hindrance in the process of Identity formation for an adolescent.

The only way by which the identity crisis can be resolved is developing the life skill of self awareness. Developing a strong self concept is crucial for individual’s growth and success. Self awareness helps the individual have a realistic view of one’s self. They become aware of their own strengths and weakness and the identity crisis gets resolved automatically.
4.11.2. Managing Emotions –

Adolescence is a time when one is likely to encounter failure, rejection and loss. There can be an accumulation of negative events and hassles. They are also exposed to more expectations and disappointments. Social alienation, excessive demands, romantic concerns, loneliness are some of the domains in which they experience hassles. To add to all these are the problems of decisions of personal life, career and academic challenges and peer relationships.

All these make them vulnerable to depression. All of them experience feeling ‘low’ ‘in the blue’ or ‘in the dumps’, at some time or the other. However, it is very important as to how quickly or easily they are able to cope up with and come out of this depression.

The adolescents are also relatively inexperienced in coping with these stress. Many at times they are incapable of developing solutions to reduce the feeling of disappointment and this leads to depressions.

What are most essential for these teens are good support and counsel and a good set of strong life skills to help them tide over this emotional transition and turmoil. They should be given the opportunity to share their concerns and get appropriate response to their questions. If the family and school support is conductive, their levels of anxiety are reduced and their emotions are managed without affecting their emotional health.

a) Ability to cope with emotions: Emotions give a human dimension to communication. A measure of effective communication is the ability to manage emotions in such a way that the message is also conveyed effectively. Managing emotions also means the understanding emotions of others and responding to them in your own positive way. A harmony of emotions between two individuals will ensure a sound transaction.

Sound life skill training for adolescents will make more meaningful and redefine relationships for the adolescents.
b) Management of Anger: Anger is completely normal and healthy human emotion. Also it is accompanied by physiological and biological changes. We can also describe anger as a response to threats. The goal of managing anger is to express it in non-aggressive ways, calmly and assertively. Managing anger means that we remain in control of emotions and respond in a calibrate manner that does not hurt anyone.

4.11.3. Peer Pressure –
Adolescents experience pressure in various domains. However, peer pressure has a special role in their lives. They influence the lives of the adolescents to a great extent. Especially negative peer pressure has been a factor of concern. However, there have been several instances of positive influence too. For instance peer pressure can exhort members of the group for achievement in academic influence, and also in the fields of arts and craft, music or other extracurricular activities. In the negative form peer pressure may be exercised in a variety of areas including drug abuse, misconduct, sexual activity and various high risk activities which can bring conflict with the law. Peer pressure can impact an individual to redefine relationship with family and other adults. During adolescence, ‘the need to belong’ is overwhelming. They attach a lot of value to their association with their group. At times, in their quest to exhibit loyalty to the group, they overcome the voice of their conscience and negate the call of principles which they had imbibed through their growing years.

But researchers have shown that the influence parents and peers are usually similar. If there is positive relationship between parent and child. This confirms the fact that all influence of peer pressure can be negated if the child is brought up in a positive atmosphere with strong family values and correct life skills.
4.11.4. Stress –

In the competitive world of today, all of us including adolescents are encounter stress. The level, nature and situation may differ. The influence of some day may be so debilitating physically and emotionally that the capacity to work and carry out day today responsibility is eroded. Stress is associated with everyday life due to present day complex and competitive world. The nature and duration of stress may differ, but they do cause a lot of mental strain, anxiety and tension. At times stress erodes our capacity to carry out our day-to-day responsibility.

Adolescence being a unique transitional stage of life is subject to stress more than other adults. They also have less perspective necessary for mitigating the anxieties that goes with stress.

These youngsters are confronted with a number of problems through life having to satisfy all adults around them they are unknowingly caught in a net that can further aggravate the situation.

Stress that is ill managed can lead to anxiety, aggression or even withdrawal. They then tend to resort to alcohol, drugs and other unhealthy practices which invite more trouble and increased stress.

Ultimately stress leads to depression. The feelings of tension, frustration, worry becomes long lasting and culminates in to hopelessness. Sadness, worry isolation and worthlessness.

4.12. External stressors

Some of the external stressors in adolescents include –

a) Stress related to performance in studies, where expectations from parents, teachers, peers and self play a major role. The non-fulfillment of these expectations can itself become a cause for stress. Also the fear about the consequences of below-par performance can also aggravate stress.

b) Issues of growing up due to psychological and physical changes. Changes that are investable of this period do cause a lot of anxiety if they are not put in perspective. It is necessary for the family to understand the emotions of these youngsters and equip them with necessary life skills to control stress associated with the changes.
c) An issue arising out of Relationships – Relationships with friends is very crucial for the growth of the adolescents. If for some reason, the relationship gets disturbed, it can cause stress, sometimes leading to depression. But if the emotional safety net is available, along with strong life skills, then this stress can be controlled. Self-made, Inter stressors can be listed as Anger, Frustrations, Guilt, Phobias/Fear and worrying.

Since the adolescents are in a transitional stage of life, they are more likely to get stressed than others. Besides having fewer life experiences in life, they are not equipped to cope with pressures and problems. They also have less perspective necessary to mitigate the anxieties that go with stress, making them more vulnerable. Most of these teenagers have to contend with pressure from family, peers and society. These pressures include expectations to score good grades, to be popular and cool, to perform well in sports, to impress parents, teachers and also behave responsibly. Sometime overloaded stress in teenagers leads to withdrawal, aggression or physical illness. Some of them may also resort to drugs, alcohol. It may also lead to depression associated with a feeling of sadness, isolation, worthlessness and withdrawal.

4.13. Internal Stressors:

a) Anger-
One emotion that can cause a lot of stress is anger. When angry, reason and rationality are the first causalities. When stress gets translated in to anger, in an adolescent, the victim may not be the person who has caused the anger but someone else who is in a vulnerable position.

b) Frustrations –
Adolescents experience frustrations when things do not turn out quite the way they expected them to. When they cannot accomplish what they set to do, when they feel cheated, foiled or baffled. Also when they are unable to take decision or are in a dilemma, they feel frustrated.

c) Guilt –
Guilt is a form of self punishment. An adolescent can develop a sense of guilt, when they feel they have betrayed or compromised on internal values or broken the trust of a friend. These thoughts lead to anxiety and hence stress. When they feel guilty, it is important to see if it of a healthy or unhealthy variety. The situations that make them feel guilty have their genesis in their family values and life skills attained by them.

d) Phobias –
Fear is natural, but phobias are irrational and inappropriate. Under conditions of severe phobia the adolescent ends up causing a lot of stress and tension to one’s own self.

e) Worrying –
Worrying reflects the adolescents attempt to mentally cope up with their own concerns and fears. It can be viewed as a part of anxiety and worrying leads to stress after some time. A firm trust and belief, strong family values and a good set of life skills can reduce worry and hence stress in an adolescent.

For an adolescent even going to the next class, having a new environment other than the one is familiar with having new teachers are also enough to cause anxiety and stress. These can be discussed as stress caused due to change. The stress that can be caused by changes will be determined by the extent and manner in which these changes affect their lifestyle and emotional state. Changes beyond control are far more stressful than the ones they feel capable of handling or controlling.


Adolescence is also a trying period emotionally. The sudden upsurge of adult like sexual desire, along with the rapid physical changes makes them helpless, since they lack the experience to cope with such issues. They also experience a fierce need to gain independence and attempt to deal with this stress them, resulting in a turmoil, which is expressed externally as heightened irritability and sensitivity. A feeling of emptiness, loneliness, and boredom are bound to creep in, in the absence of strong upbringing. Lack of the required skills to combat this phase can lead to experimentation with drugs, alcohol or involvement in serious antisocial behavior.
Many become disenchanted. They are rejected socially. This disenchantment is related to the fact that adolescent has developed the capacity to abstract. They are now capable of manipulating and thinking about more possibilities.

The emotional sensitivity of adolescents is basically related to the hormonal, physical and body image changes during this period. For them body image concern cause a lot of anxiety. Comments on their size, weight, acne dress as also comments on their family, school or friends are considered as attacks on their personal being.

To a great extent, their response to these comments will depend inversely on their own sense of self worth and security. This in then will depend on their relationship with parents and the skills developed before the onslaught of adolescence. In their words, the degree of turbulence experienced by the adolescents vastly depends upon the quality of relationship the adolescent shared with his parents. Managing the adolescent’s progress, towards heterosexuality is also difficult. Adolescents are often reluctant to talk about the upsurge of sexual feelings.

4.15. Health Issues in Adolescents –

In the protection and promotion of health, parental consideration is the key and the youth perspective the doorway. The responsibility of parents to educate their off springs about personal, physical and social aspects of sexuality, pregnancy, sex roles and sex related matters including STD prevention and management are a major concern.

Environmental factors have significant impact on adolescent health and well being. Adolescents are extremely sensitive to environment influences as they have not developed all their cognitive abilities for evaluating information. It is therefore evident that health patterns of adolescents always reflect the status of their social environment.

They are bombarded from an early age with social messages having formative effects. Aggressive marketing targeted at this age group, combined with risk taking behavior leads to emergence of new morbidities.
These include eating disorders, STD, unwarranted pregnancies, substance abuse, accidents and mental health issues. Of great interest is the fact that most of these problems arising out of adolescence are preventable.

4.15.1. Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD)-
Young adults account for a large and increasing proportion of HIV diagnoses. There is also a considerable increase during the past two years, of the prevalence of HPV (Human Papilloma virus) and Herpes virus type 2. Also incidence of Chlamydia chromatic infection in sexually active female adolescence is on the increase.

4.15.2. Unwanted Pregnancies –
This causes serious health problem in young females which includes dangerous and illegal abortions. According to the data, world over 30-40% of 16-18 year old girls are sexually active. 30% do not use contraceptives and use untrustworthy measures such as withdrawal.

4.15.3. Eating Disorder –
There is an increase in the incidence of anorexia nervosa and bulimia in adolescent population during recent years. The over estimated value of lean and sexy body figures, which is fortified by media, plays a significant role in elevating the prevalence of eating disorders. Poor eating habits and resorting to junk food results in diet which lack calcium, iron and fiber.

4.15.4. Tobacco, Alcohol and Drug use –
Adolescence is a period of experimentation and rebellion. This is the age when smoking, drug use and alcohol drinking become establishing habits. Smoking percentage in high school population was approximately 20.8% in 1998. Alcohol abuse that is very common is frequently associated with youth violence. Unplanned sex and motor vehicle accidents. Also it is estimated that 9% to 16% of
high school students in Europe have used marijuana. Mean age of this experience being 14.9 years.
Adolescents have a delicate innocence that can be easily traumatized, influenced and subsequently destroyed. Once they have imbibed something negative, it becomes impossible to change them. They often go ahead ‘innocently’ practicalise, destroying their lives in the process.

4.16. How to overcome these issues?

4.16.1. Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal Communication, especially verbal is basic to our life and a crucial element of our survival. As a part of the society we interact with fellow human beings and communication is basic to this interaction. It is very important that we develop the ability to communicate the essence and meaning to the receiver as we intend to.

Components of effective communication-

a) **Self Concept**: One must understand that the word ‘self’ is central to the act of interpersonal communication. Self concept affects your communication with others. Your perception about yourself and your actions and behavior. Self concept cannot be ignored or sidelined during adolescence. It is not an abstract or notional either. In short we can say that self concept is the essence of the adolescent’s universe. It is the basis of understanding the intricacies of the situation and also forms the core of their personality. It is the screen through which they see, hear, evaluate and understand their immediate environment.

A strong self concept is essential healthy and satisfying interaction with others. It is necessary to have a very objective and realistic view of one self. An adolescent have a strong self concept is fully aware of their individual strengths and is realistic. They are very sure of what guide their action and what makes them behave in a particular manner.
A person who is unsure of oneself has a weak self concept. They do not know their own strength and lacks self awareness. They tend to have difficulty in communicating and are extremely cautious in expressing views. They tend to feel that others will disagree with them and this may result in affecting their relationship with others.

b) **Listening:** Listening is an important element in communication. It is not a passive process and it occurs when the listener discuss and understands the sender’s meaning. It is much more intricate and complicated. Listening is not a physical process, but an intellectual and emotional process. Effective listening implies trying to understand the meaning behind spoken words. It tries to decipher the feeling of the speaker. Adolescents must try to master this art, to ensure effective communication.

c) **Clarity of expression:** It is absolutely essential to communicate effectively to others and process clarity of expression during effective communication. Regardless of whether the communication is day to day, or to achieve long term goals. The skill to complete the communication is necessary.

The adolescents generally presume or assume that the other person has understood what they mean to express, and this is one most difficult barriers of successful human communication. Poor clarity of expression leaves the listener to guess or infer the meaning and proceeds in miscommunication and obviously mutual misunderstanding. Training in clarity of expression during formative years help to tide over this problem.

d) **Self Discloser:** The ability to express truthfully about oneself is necessary for effective communication. The ability to engage in oneself revelation is a symptom of healthy personality. It also enhances ability to interact meaningfully.

Ability to cope with emotions: Emotions are an integral part of any communication. It gives communication its human dimension. Emotions should be managed in such a way that they are supportive of your communication and reinforce it. In ability to manage emotions, during communication, may result in breakdown of the communication. Coping with emotions during communication
also means understanding the emotions of others and responding to them in a constructive and positive way. Harmony of emotions between individuals is considered as a sound transaction.

There are blocks in self revelation. Adolescents have fears and doubts, that some part of them is unworthy or unlovable. While it is very easy to talk about one’s triumphs and attributes that are considered worthy. They are reluctant to express themselves about failures, anxieties and shame. But it is essential to believe that trust begets trust. An effective communicators does not speak mere words, he transmits a message of faith. It is necessary to have emotional involvement and expression of feelings in communication. The art of being able to self disclose is one of main attributes that an adolescent has to master to avoid complicated situations in simple communication.

4.16.2. Decision Making-

Adolescents face challenges; their abilities are tested to the limit. But one thing is certain, if they wish to experience happiness in life, they should be clear about their vision and the path they would like to traverse to realize their vision.

Accordingly it become necessary for them to take decisions to get themselves organized for action. Decision making is a means to solve the problems. It is process that leads to action for achieving desired results. It can be influenced by many forces. It is arrived at after analysis and deliberations. The contest in which the decision has been taken is also important.

Decision making is a sequential process. Many a times the stages do not follow rigid pattern and are very specific to the practical issue. The process also depends on the nature, complexity of the problem, availability of time and mental skill of the decision maker. Regardless of what stage of life or situation one is, everyone is often called upon to take a decision in personal life. In fact when they are faced with difficult option, decision making acquires more crucial significance. Decision making become more difficult if it requires the adolescent to come out of the existence ‘comfort zone’ and take a decision. It becomes a dilemma at times. A lot of decisions are based on
values the adolescent has inculcated in life. The influence of values on decision making process is profound. They make value judgments regarding selection of opportunities and determining their priorities based on values.

Also the propensity for risk taking in decision making, depends on the level of risk involved and the course of action. Some are found to be more predisposed to taking risk than others.

Those adolescents with a fair deal of aptitude and those who have low aversion to risk taking are inclined to established different objectives than those with high aversion to risk taking. They are able to convince themselves that the benefit of success rather than harmful effect of failure.

Another factor that plays a significant role in decision making of an adolescent is their emotional and physical health. When one is not in the best emotional state, they perceive or analyze situations differently. They severely affect the ability to make the right choice and cramp decision making, so it is essential for adolescents to take charge of their emotion and manage them well. For this what they require is a good set of life skills.

In taking decision, an adolescent may get advice from different people with different point of views and interest. Their suggestion can be conflicting. It then becomes necessary for the adolescent, to organize oneself, understand the different messages and take the right decision. Adolescents should take decision making as a means rather than the end itself. It should be considered as the process that leads to action for achieving desired results. Every decision is the outcome of an active process influenced by many factors. Decision making is a progression of thought, a sequential process. It does not follow a rigid pattern and depends and on the nature and complexity of the problem. A sound and stable adolescent is able to take the right decision and also take the onus of the decision in case something goes wrong in the process.

4.16.3. Problem Solving –

As they go through their daily lives, adolescents come across numerous problems and are also capable of resolving them without any special effort. Problems faced in the
family, relationship, physical health, choosing or pursuing an academic course. Problems during studies are all solved without affecting day-to-day life.

Whereas their other problems, that they are confronted with which have the potential of testing their ability to the limit. If the problems have the potential of affecting them physically, emotionally or financially, they are forces to take it head on. This is exactly where their values and life skills become very important and help them resolve the problem, which would otherwise have dire consequences.

4.16.4. Goal Setting –

Goal setting is an organized personal planning process, which gives substance and direction to our efforts. Goals put the passion and drive in the adolescents. Goals are supposed to give great satisfaction and happiness. When they set a goal, one should stick to the plan of action and accomplish what they had set to. They achieve a deep sense of fulfillment. Once the adolescents start chasing his/her goal, we start noticing an increase in self confidence. They become more realistic and reinforced.

Goals should be at a level where the adolescents’ abilities and capacity is challenged and it takes them out of their ‘comfort zone’. If they set goals within their capacities, then their potential may not get optimized and may also improve growth. Goals should be such that to achieve them, one should have to develop certain competencies and put extra efforts. Also once a certain goal is achieve, the adolescent should raise the bar of performance, so that higher goals can achieved.

However, goals should also be realistic and not beyond their potential. The competition should not get unhealthy exercise and should be competition with one’s own self.

The adolescent should always remember that goals set should be in consonance with their values and also the means adopted for accomplishing. These goals must be consistent with the values, only then will they experience a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction. Therefore it is become absolutely necessary to be empowered with the right values and life skill before embarking on the journey of goal setting. Values adolescents need to relate during Goal Setting.
The values that adolescents need to relate to would be
- Religion or Spirituality.
- Family.
- Education and academic excellence.
- Relationships and peers.
- Moral and ethical standards.
- Health and well being.
- Status and Recognition from others.
- Happiness, etc.

While goal setting is a lifelong process, it becomes necessary to consider certain aspects while setting goals as an adolescent.
- Breaking larger goals into smaller ones.
- State each goal; as a positive statement.
- Prioritizing the goals.

It is essentially important to maintain motivation and commitment during the process of goal achievement self belief and self confidence of the individual adolescent will serve as strong motivational force in optimizing goals. It should be better if the adolescent generates a high level of emotional attachment to the goals.

One has to learn to be mentally strong and committed to the goal, to withstand the pressure and confront positively to the situations.

In the process of achieving goals it is necessary for the adolescent to regularly review and reinforce confidence from time to time. Also keeping a close watch on the values is a must, to ensure there is no dilution or deviations on that account.

### 4.17. Dealing with Adolescents

Most parents are often too busy to monitor their teens. Such parents must note that they have failed in their parental duties. If the child ends up being a junky, prostitute, a thief or a sexual pervert it is not the teen’s fault. While dealing with adolescents one has to be more patient, understanding, and firm but not strict, persuasive but not authoritarian. Most importantly one has to emphasize on teaching of life skills to these vulnerable teens at the right time, to ensure that they have a smooth transition to adulthood.