

# Adolescent Cognitive Development & Decision-Making



Barb Iversen, M.C.

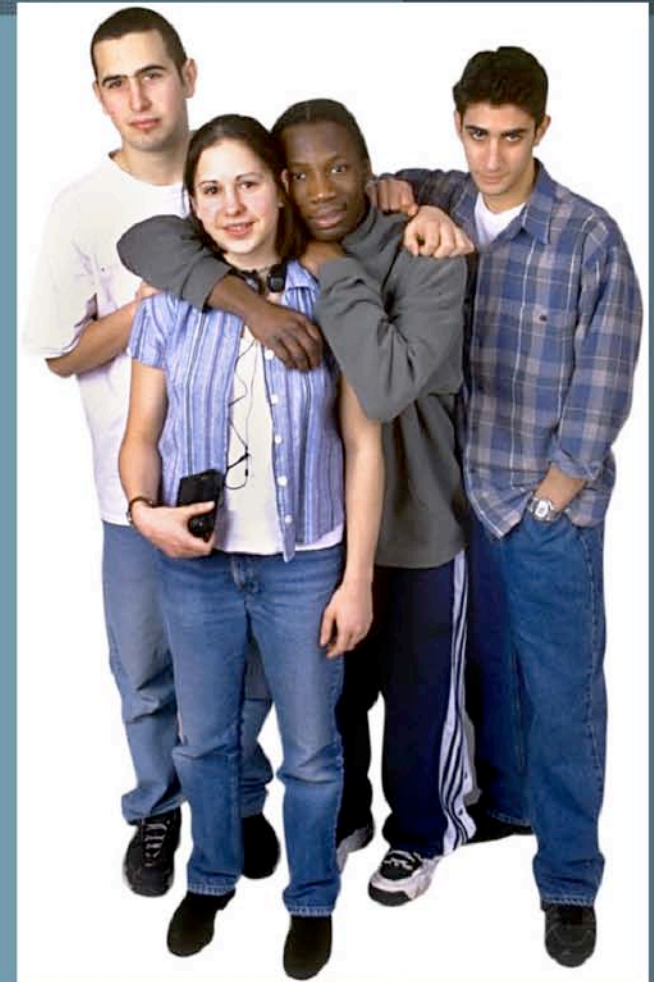
# Adolescence

An important developmental stage that moves an individual from being a child to being an adult. It's more than just a "phase" to survive.



# Adolescence

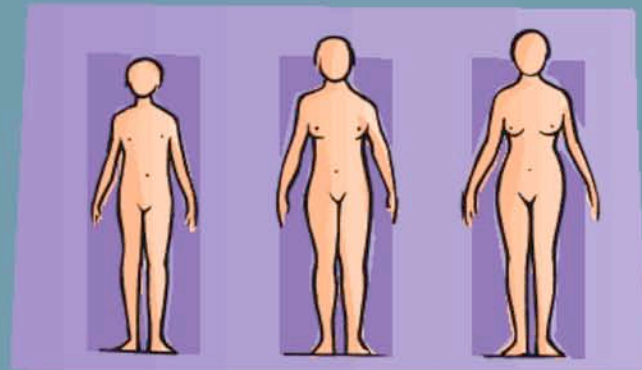
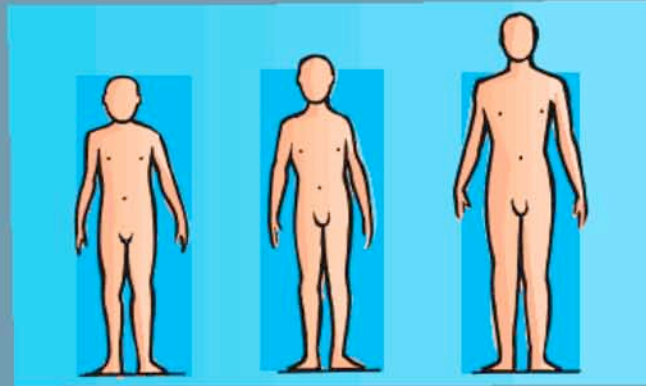
A period of accomplishing significant developmental tasks - an active (not passive) process that requires effort.



# Adolescence

- Early  
10 - 14 years
- Middle  
15 - 17 years
- Late  
18 - 24 years

# Physical Changes



# Characteristic Behaviors



- Egocentrism increases in early adolescence.
- Contributes to a feeling of being completely unique; so much so that no one can understand you.
- Makes it hard to understand perspectives other than one's own ("it's not a problem for me").

# Cognitive Development



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Being aware of and thinking about one's own thinking – contributes to a common 'cognitive error' of teens...





# Cognitive Development

Being aware of and thinking about one's own thinking – contributes to a common 'cognitive error' of teens...

*“If I'm thinking about me, then you must be thinking about me too.”*

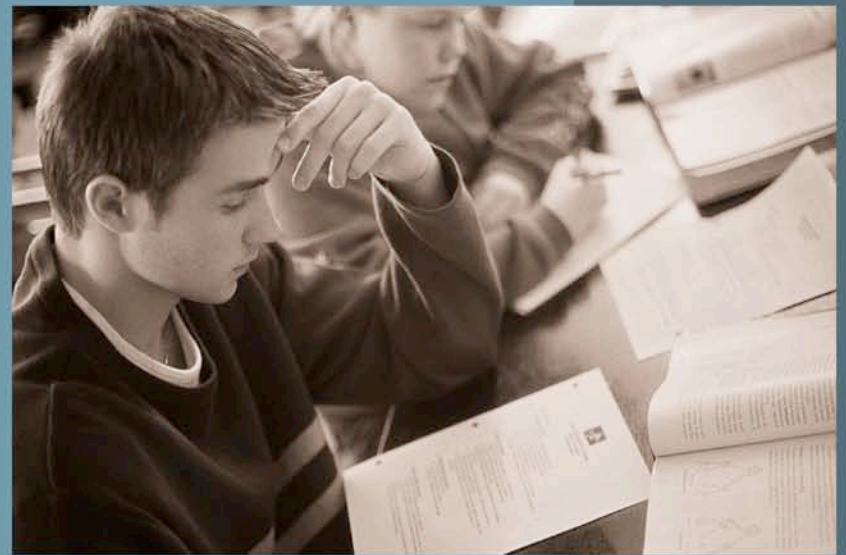


# Cognitive Development

- Shift from concrete to abstract thinking
- Not a distinct or continuous process
- Highly dependent on context
- Needs experience to fully develop

# Abstract Thinking

- Involves changes in...
  - Perspective
  - Patterns
  - Possibilities



# Brain Development



The part of the brain that governs impulse control, delaying gratification, motivation, and planning is still being developed during adolescence.

# Brain Development



Because of how the adolescent brain is 'wired' they often respond to situations based on their 'gut reactions'.



# Risk Behaviors

- Behaviors that threaten an adolescent's health, well-being, and transition toward successful young adulthood.



# Adolescent Decision-Making

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- Less experience with the decision-making process.

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- Complex developmental challenges for effective risk assessment.
- Less experience with the decision-making process.
- Often don't gather all the information necessary to make a good decision.

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- Often fixate on some *initial possibility*.

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# Adolescent Decision-Making

- Often fixate on some *initial possibility*.
- Less cognitive capacity to anticipate and recognize harm as an *unintended result* of their decisions.
- Emerging autonomy can make it hard to accept adults' input.

# Effective Communication

- Takes into consideration...
  - Developmental maturity
  - Characteristic behaviors
  - Cognitive development
  - Decision-making ability



# Acknowledgements

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