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of incorporating sexuality into one's identity. These processes determine adolescents' comfort with their own emerging sexuality as well as with that of others. Adolescents are also beginning to be involved in intimate relationships, a context in which sexual activity often occurs.

In the twenty-first century, many of the milestones by which adulthood is defined and measured—full-time employment, economic independence, domestic partnership/marriage, and childbearing—are attained at later ages in people's lives than they were in earlier generations, while puberty begins at earlier ages. Therefore, adolescents face many years between the onset of puberty, fertility, and the natural intensification of sexual feelings, and committed relationships and economic independence. As a result, young people have sexual intercourse earlier in life, and there is a greater percentage of adolescents who are sexually experimenting at every age level, a greater number of acts of premarital intercourse, and a greater number of sexual partners before marriage.

Background

Adolescence is the life stage between childhood and adulthood. Its age limits are not clearly specified, but it extends roughly from age twelve to the late teens, when physical growth is nearly complete. Puberty, a term often confused with adolescence, occurs at the end of childhood and lasts from two to four years. It is the period of adolescence during which an individual reaches sexual maturity.

Human beings grow most rapidly at two times during their lives: before they are six months old and again during adolescence. The second period of

ADOLESCENCE: SEXUALITY

Introduction

Perhaps no single event during the adolescent years has as dramatic or widespread effects as the realization of sexuality. The lives of both male and female adolescents become wrapped in this new dimension. Adolescence is a time of sexual exploration and experimentation, of sexual fantasies and realities, and

source of comfort for their children. These parents may wonder how to utilize a more balanced approach, which encourages their children to share their true emotions. Psychologist Alice Miller wrote an internationally bestselling book in 1981 titled *The Drama of the Gifted Child* which highlighted the experience of children raised in such households. As described by Miller, the “gifted child” learns that their parent was only pleased when they achieved success, leading them to believe that love was conditional. Consequently, under the pressure of high expectations, the gifted child develops a fear of negative emotions in the face of failure, since their caregiver had not shown them how to handle any emotions related to failure.

As elucidated in the Circle of Security paradigm, children may experience a wide range of emotions that sometimes make parents uncomfortable, especially when certain strong emotions remind parents of how core figures responded to their emotions in childhood. The *Circle of Security* model illustrates this phenomenon as a kind of menacing background music, or “shark music.” Parents can be more present with their child during displays of strong emotions if they can label when the “shark music” is playing. Learning to be cognizant that whichever emotion the child is displaying is, in fact, safe and acceptable to experience instead of fearing it, allows the parent to assist the child in the present moment.

Miller also emphasizes the importance of accepting all emotions of the child, even negative ones. In times of disappointment, it is important to show love for the child despite their weaknesses. In order to break the cycle of repeating unwanted parenting patterns, one needs to overcome his or her own emotionally suppressed past, which may necessitate seeking personalized psychotherapy treatment. Miller says that in accepting one’s own flaws and perhaps mourning parts of a self that were lost, parents can develop the freedom to become their best selves for others, including their children.

On the other hand, a parent may try to do the opposite, and in effect, overcorrect for past parenting done onto them by taking an overly permissive approach. These parents may be unsure about laying down the law and disciplining for fear of being too harsh or critical. In truth, while children may try to push limits and boundaries all the time, the most secure attachment is formed when children know their caregivers are firmly the ones in

charge. It can be difficult for parents to find the right balance, but a general rule of thumb is to see the world through the child’s eyes by acknowledging their feelings in the moment, while firmly emanating a source of strength, wisdom, and guidance.

Parents with Adverse Childhood Experiences or Traumas

Alicia Lieberman, another prominent figure in the field of parent-infant mental health, is a psychiatry professor and director of the Child Trauma Research Program in San Francisco, California. Lieberman and colleagues expanded upon Fraiberg’s “ghosts in the nursery” work to introduce the concept of “angels in the nursery.” Fraiberg and Lieberman both shed light on the ways early traumas can be transmitted from one generation to the next and how a parent’s unprocessed trauma profoundly affects the way the parent is able to understand their child. “Angels in the Nursery,” published in 2005, highlighted a parent’s recollection of benevolent early experiences with caregivers as a powerful impetus for shaping positive parent-child relationships. Despite having painful memories of their caregiver, parents with adverse childhood experiences are encouraged to identify “beneficial cues” from their caregivers, which can serve to be protective. While it may be difficult to conjure beneficial cues in an otherwise severely impaired parent, acknowledging any signs of the impaired parent’s capacity to convey love and care for them allows the maltreated child to conceptualize the parent as having both “good” and “bad” parts. In being able to integrate seemingly opposing aspects of their caregiver, the maltreated child creates a more nuanced appreciation of their early relationships. It can be incredibly difficult to acquiesce both the ghosts and the angels, and the act of uncovering and integrating both may require the help of a licensed mental health professional to be accomplished safely. With all this in mind, the maltreated child can learn to pass along their poignant benevolent experiences to the future generation, and look back on the previous generation with more forgiveness and understanding of their parent’s circumstances.

Breaking the Cycle

Parents are not always doomed to repeat the same cycle of their own upbringing. According to Fraiberg and Lieberman, many parents with tormented



Boys are less inclined to be helpful around the house. Photo via iStock/denozy. [Used under license.]

quietly doing written work, as “wimpy” or “compliant” and therefore undesirable behavior. Another possible cause of underachievement in boys is that they typically have weaker hearing than girls; therefore, if they are placed in the back of the classroom, they may strain to hear the teacher’s words and will find it harder to follow along and accomplish the assigned tasks.

Similarly, Jones notes that girls were once viewed as struggling in a male-dominated classroom and suffering from low self-esteem and poor self-confidence as a result. People often repeat the notion that girls are inferior at math and science, although this attitude is slowly growing less common. Research has shown that the gender achievement gap in math and science closes in countries that have high levels of gender equity. In countries with the highest levels of gender equality, both boys and girls perform better on standardized mathematics tests. Several researchers have explored the concept of stereotype threat, which holds that when individuals are aware of negative stereotypes about their group (and most children are aware of their culture’s sex stereotypes at a young age), they are likely to conform to those negative or positive expectations.

In a 2001 study by N. Ambady and colleagues, Asian American girls in kindergarten through the eighth grade were presented with tasks intended to highlight either their female identity, their Asian identity, or neither identity, and the girls then completed a grade-level-appropriate standardized math test. Compared to the group of girls who were not primed to consider either their racial or sexual identity, girls whose gender had been emphasized

performed worse (conforming to the stereotype that girls are not good at math) while those girls whose race had been emphasized performed better (conforming to the stereotype that Asians are good at math). Stereotype threat may also explain boys’ relative underachievement in language arts, as children may not be motivated to try in certain subjects if they believe they have a particular gender deficit in that area. Ultimately, long-standing educational gender stereotypes have the potential to become self-fulfilling prophecies when it comes to overall achievement in school or in specific subjects, to the detriment of both girls’ and boys’ academic performance.

The stereotypes that portray girls as compliant and boys as challenging also affect the kind of attention that teachers give to each student. Jones argued that the stereotype of girls as more compliant may make it harder for teachers to identify underachieving girls than underachieving boys. If teachers do not see these girls’ performances as problematic, they are not likely to intervene and help them do better. This results in teachers paying greater attention to underachieving boys than to underachieving girls, thereby affecting the quality of the education that the children receive.

Implications

Gender roles have both positive and negative influences on society. One task for researchers is to find ways, beginning in childhood, to minimize or alter the negative effects that gender roles have on psychological and intellectual development. Society may be difficult to change, but gradual alterations in the definitions of gender roles could help. Another way to minimize negative effects is to eliminate the inferiority associated with various gender traits.

—Elyssa Pearlstein

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fruit and vegetable intake may be attributable to the fiber content of these foods. Higher fiber diets increase fecal bulk, thereby diluting any carcinogens that enter the gastrointestinal tract. By increasing intestinal motility, fiber also decreases the amount of time that fecal material is in the gastrointestinal tract, thereby limiting exposure of the mucosa to potential toxins.

Cardiovascular disease

Cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of death in the United States. They include arrhythmias, congestive heart failure, and valvular diseases, but most of the morbidity and mortality is related to coronary heart disease, or atherosclerosis. Hyperlipidemia is a risk factor for atherosclerosis, and dietary fat has influence on the level of blood lipids. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the recommended intake of fat is 25 to 35 percent of total calories per day. Of that dietary fat, less than 7 percent of total calories should be saturated fat and less than 1 percent should be transfat. Lower fat meats and dairy are recommended, as well as replacement of some meat with vegetable alternatives. Sources of transfat should be limited. The effects of various levels of polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats are debated. While limited intake of cholesterol is recommended, cholesterol intake has had less of an effect on blood lipids than total fat and transfat.

Eating fish, especially oily fish, is recommended as a source of omega-3 fatty acids, which are long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids associated with a decreased risk of certain heart diseases. The two omega-3 fatty acids are eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). Although fish may contain contaminants known to be hazardous to health, the benefits of eating it are believed to outweigh the risks for adults. Restricted intake may be recommended for children and pregnant women. Supplements of DHA and EPA are not recommended for the prevention of heart disease, although they may be prescribed as treatment under a physician's supervision.

Higher intakes of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains are recommended to prevent heart disease. In addition to fiber, these foods may contain antioxidants or other bioactive compounds that are beneficial to health. In addition, these foods may displace other, higher calorie foods from the diet, thus

promoting a healthy weight. Limiting foods high in added sugars is recommended because of the association of these foods with weight gain and obesity. Obesity is a significant risk factor for cardiovascular disease, and achieving a healthy weight through diet and physical activity is important.

A healthy weight is also significant in the maintenance of optimal blood pressure. Because sodium intake is associated with increases in blood pressure on average, limiting sodium intake is also recommended for heart health. Limited amounts of alcohol, if alcohol is consumed at all, is also included as a healthy lifestyle measure for the prevention of heart disease. Moderate alcohol intake is generally considered to be two drinks for men and one drink for women each day.

Foods that are being investigated concerning their role in the prevention of cardiovascular disease include soy and plant stanols. Supplements of antioxidants and fish oils for their DHA and EPA are generally not recommended, but foods containing these compounds may be beneficial.

Diabetes. The incidence of diabetes continues to grow in parallel to the incidence of obesity. Diabetes mellitus has been categorized as either insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (IDDM), which is also called type 1 diabetes, and non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (NIDDM), also known as type 2 diabetes. Nutrition is an important component of both the prevention and treatment of diabetes, regardless of type.

Obesity enhances insulin resistance. Therefore, a main goal in type 2 diabetes is to prevent or reduce obesity. Weight loss in obese persons with type 2 diabetes improves glycemic control and blood lipid profile. Because carbohydrates are the main determinant of postprandial plasma glucose, the amount of carbohydrates and timing of foods eaten may need to be regulated. The total amount of carbohydrates in the diet or meal is more important than the type of carbohydrate, with certain exceptions. Liquid carbohydrates are more easily digested and absorbed than those from solid foods. Beverages such as milk and orange juice may cause a more rapid rise in blood glucose. Sucrose and sucrose-containing foods do not need to be eliminated, but these foods do need to be included in the total carbohydrates and calories consumed for meal planning and coverage with medication. Restriction of sucrose and sucrose-containing foods usually relates to the

- **Finding a trusted adult.** Most children who are resilient have at least one adult they can count on—no matter what. This could be a parent, grandparent, other family member, neighbor, caregiver, teacher, or coach. This adult often becomes a mentor for the child and provides an example of how to be successful at life. At the very least, this adult gives the child a hopeful outlook and confidence in the child's own abilities.
- **Feeling in control of life.** Resilient people are those who believe that their choices matter. When they look at what is happening, they consider how their choices affect their lives and make choices that help them overcome their circumstances. This involves a bit of retrospection and examination, not just letting life happen but, rather, taking control of the situation as much as possible. They nurture self-confidence by expecting that by being in control, they will eventually discover a good outcome for themselves.
- **Believing in themselves.** Resilient people face tough situations and believe that they can think of ways to overcome their problems. They view problems as possibilities and believe that they are capable of reaching their goals. These people are often optimistic and believe that life presents challenges and opportunities. They are able to act independently for their own benefit rather than relying on others to “save” them.
- **Being good-natured.** Often, resilient people are social and easygoing. They surround themselves with a team of other resilient people and rely on them for help when needed. They care about others and are able to see the world beyond themselves. This outward focus lets them easily find others who can help them along the way.

How Can Parents Help Their Child Become More Resilient?

It's important to recognize, as a parent, that resilient people do have stress. It's not that they have somehow avoided having stress in their lives, so parents should not attempt to ease situations and somehow manufacture a stress-free life for a child. Rather, resilient people have developed useful tools

to overcome and deal with stressful situations. It's also important to realize that resilience can be taught. A child who has difficulty dealing with unfortunate events can be helped to develop the strategies they need to learn to be resilient.

Think of helping your child develop resilience as loading up both sides of a teeter-totter. On one side is significant adversity, misfortune, difficult changes, or other miseries in life. On the other side, the side that you can help develop, are coping skills, emotional tools, and positive experiences to counterbalance those negative experiences. You can help your child tip this teetertotter to the positive side by providing protective experiences and coping strategies so that no matter how heavy the negative side is, your child can add enough weight to the positive side to overcome it.

The research performed on resilience provides many ideas for parents to help their children become more resilient. These strategies focus on ways to help children learn to recover and adjust to changes and misfortunes that, inevitably, happen in life.

- **Identify resilience as a trait you'd like your child to have.** Knowing that this is a goal for your child will help you recognize when you need to step back and let them work things out on their own or when you need to step in and teach them a tool to use to help them become more resilient.
- **Let them make mistakes.** If they suffer the consequences of their actions, they will see that their decisions matter. Help them evaluate what went wrong so they can make better decisions next time and grow and learn from their errors. Foster the attitude that mistakes are for learning.
- **Help them understand how to manage their emotions.** Teach them that all emotions are okay, but there are acceptable ways to act on them. Help them name their emotions and learn ways to deal with these named emotions as they arise. Give them tools to cope with the emotions they are experiencing.
- **Model resilient behaviors.** When they ask questions, teach problem-solving by helping them find the answers. Express your feelings, and model how to act on them in a socially acceptable way. Admit your mistakes, and discuss how

Brave

Date: 2012

Director: Mark Andrews, Brenda Chapman

Skilled archer Merida (Kelly Macdonald) is the daughter of Scottish King Fergus (Billy Connolly) and Queen Elinor (Emma Thompson), who wants nothing more than to carve out her own path in life. However, when her defiance of a time-honored tradition leads to chaos in the kingdom, she seeks the help of an eccentric witch (Julie Walters), who grants her an ill-fated wish. Merida must then undo the terrible curse before it is too late, by discovering the true meaning of courage.

Cheaper by the Dozen

Date: 2003

Director: Shawn Levy

Tom (Steve Martin), a high-school football coach, and Kate Baker (Bonnie Hunt), a former journalist, have put their lives and careers on hold to raise 12 children. When Tom is offered a coaching job in a new city at the same time a publisher buys Kate's parenting memoir, the family packs up and moves. However, Tom is left in charge of the children when Kate goes on a book tour, and the household is plunged into chaos. A sequel, *Cheaper by the Dozen 2*, was released in 2005, featuring the Baker family on an ill-fated vacation at a lakeside resort.

Daddy Day Care

Date: 2003

Director: Steve Carr

Charlie (Eddie Murphy) is an unemployed, full-time parent while his wife, Kim (Regina King), is the breadwinner in the family. Charlie decides to start a day care center with his friend Phil (Jeff Garlin), and soon a surge of parents enroll their children with him. Charlie and his team, including the goofy Marvin (Steve Zahn), battle endless red tape in order to keep the business going and prevent parents from defecting to Mrs. Harridan's (Anjelica Huston) competing day care center.

Daddy's Home

Date: 2015

Director: Sean Anders

Brad Whitaker (Will Ferrell), a kindhearted radio executive, strives to be the best stepfather he can be to his wife's (Linda Cardellini) two children. His determination is put to the test when her charismatic ex-husband, Dusty (Mark Wahlberg), rolls back into their lives, and an escalating battle of wills ensues, as Brad tries everything he can to win his family's approval. A sequel, *Daddy's Home 2*, was released in 2017, with Brad's and Dusty's own fathers (Mel Gibson and John Lithgow, respectively) entering the picture for Christmas at a luxury resort.

Elf

Date: 2003

Director: Jon Favreau

Buddy (Will Ferrell) had an unusual childhood: he was raised among Santa's elves, after being accidentally transported to the North Pole as a toddler. Now an adult, Buddy travels to New York in full elf regalia in search of his real father, cynical businessman Walter Hobbs (James Caan). After a DNA test proves their relationship, Walter reluctantly attempts to be a father-figure to the childlike Buddy, as their lives becomes more and more chaotic.