

Aggression in Adolescence: Reasons and Suggestions

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Abstract: Adolescence is known as the period of storm and stress, which makes the adolescents hostile and problematic. There are many reasons for their hostile and aggressive behaviour. We should be aware about the reasons and suggestions for controlling aggression in adolescents.

Keywords: adolescence, aggression.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human growth and development is characterized by several distinct and unique stages beginning with conception and ending out death. Like all stages of human development adolescence is also an important stage.

2. ADOLESCENCE

The word 'Adolescence' is derived from the latin word 'adolescere', meaning, "to grow up", to grow into maturity. It means, the period of adolescence is a transitional time from the dependency of childhood to independence and responsibility of adulthood. (Harris & Liebert, 1987)

According to Flaherty (1969) : "Basically adolescence is a period of time between puberty and maturity; it is marked by the appearance of secondary sexual characteristics. The age range may vary from twelve to twenty years, although the variation is peculiar to the individual. The change in adolescence encompasses gonadal maturity and a replacement of emotional security in the home for emotional security in wider society. (Mishra, 2011)

Adolescence can be divided into three sub periods:-

- 1. Early Adolescence:** It refers to the period of initial physical change, usually marked by a sizable spurt in growth.
- 2. Mid-Adolescence:** It begins after the noticeable changes in physical appearance have already taken place. This is the period of maximum rebellion, but mixed with rebelliousness is a tendency towards extreme conformity. Finally mid-adolescence is the time when unpredictable mood swings are most likely to occur.
- 3. Late-Adolescence:** In this period, physical maturity is essentially complete. This period brings concerns about education, occupation and courtship and marriage as the young person begins to confront the realities of adult life.

(Harris & Liebert, 1987)

All the various characteristics mentioned above give rise to tensions. Thus, adolescents face many problems and frustrations. They are often very frightened and troubled. It is actually the crucial stage between the age of thirteen and nineteen years when a young person acquires the physical maturity of an adult, but suffers from impulsiveness and instability of emotions that create an unusual behaviour. That is why this period is known as a period of storm and stress.

3. AGGRESSION

According to Crick & Grotpreter, 1995: "Aggression is an unusual behaviour that is intended to hurt or harm others".

Aggression is any form of behaviour directed towards the goal of harming or injuring another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment. It is also called combativeness. It is mostly responses to anger, pain, anxiety or frustration, which are frequently expressed emotions in every age, but when anger, pain, anxiety or frustration continue to act in extreme, it turns to aggressive behaviour.

According to most psychologists, some amount of aggressive behaviour in adolescents has been accepted as normal and universal. They use aggressive types of behaviour to work out or display their emotions. It becomes a way of releasing or showing emotions.

But, according to Maslow (1962): "Aggression is not an essential part of human nature. It is a reaction to circumstances in which essential requirements are unfulfilled".

Aggression is directed against persons, animals or objects. It may be physical or verbal like hitting, kicking, punching, biting, poking, insulting or abusing. It may be mild or intense. It is considered as the initiation of violence, often defensive violence is not considered as aggression because it is a responsive action.

Violent outbursts of anger or temper tantrums are typical in adolescents.

REASONS OF AGGRESSION:

1. **Heredity** : Some molecular genetic studies have demonstrated that genes encoding some key proteins involved in serotonin transmission could present some polymorphism in relation with impulsive aggressive behaviour (Staner, Mendlewicz J. : Heredity and Role of Serotonin in Aggressive Impulsive Behaviour)
2. **Physical or Brain Abnormalities**: Some form of physical or mental(brain) abnormalities such as dumbness, deafness, blindness or any other type of physical deformity and mental retardness affect the behaviour of adolescents. They show more aggression than the normal adolescents.
3. **Family environment and Parent's Attitudes** : Lack of the warmth, love, affection, care, supervision and independence on the part of parents, leads to aggression among adolescents. Harsh or authoritative parenting, inter parental or family violence, divorce, parental criminality, poor educational achievement of parents, large family size and poverty are the factors which also had even stronger effect on aggressive behaviour.
4. **Physical Changes**: The bodily changes of puberty lead to a variety of other changes, like boy's voice deepens and his facial hair begins to grow and girl's menstrual periods etc. These physical changes creates negative feelings and irritation among adolescents, which leads to aggression.
5. **Stress or Anxiety**: Various family stresses or school anxieties produces aggressive behaviour in adolescents. They worry about their studies, achievements, career, future, relationships etc.
6. **Frustration**: Frustration can lead to aggression. Berkovitz (1989) argues that, "it does so only when it produces negative, unpleasant experiences such as insults, abuses, negative feedback, criticism etc., which result in emotional arousal.
7. **Lack of Adjustment** : Due to unsatisfactory relationship with parents, teachers and friends, adolescents faces the problem of adjustment in family, school and in peer group respectively, which produces aggressive behaviour.
8. **Punishment**: Severity of punishment by the parents or teachers also effect the adolescents behaviour. They shows aggression against them.
9. **Media**: Studies have shown that adolescents who watch more violence on television or films, tend to be aggressive. An investigation by Bandura (1963), on behaviour learned from observation showed that children were more likely to be aggressive when they had observed another person behaving aggressively.

10. Videogames: Nowadays, videogames have greatly influenced the adolescents. They spend lot of time playing videogames and most of the videogames have violence. According to Karen E.Dill & Craig A. Anderson (2007), “Videogames are more harmful in increasing aggression than violent T.V. shows or violent movies due to their interactive and engrossing nature of time.”

11. Gender: Gender is also a factor that plays an important role in human aggression. According to Coie and Dodge(1997), “Males are generally more aggressive than females” .

According to Bjorkqvist (1994), “Males are quicker to aggression and more likely than females to express their aggression physically.”

12. Dietary Factors : There has been considerable interest in the possibility, initially raised by Feingold (1975), that a number of artificial food additives have an effect on hyperactive behaviour. For example – Synthetic food colors particularly Tatzine (Yellow-E102) & Amaranth (Red-E123), Synthetic flavours such as Vanillin, Antioxidant Preservatives particularly Butylated Hydroxyanisole (BHA-E320), Butylated Hydroxytoluene (BHT-E321), Tertiary Butylhydroquinone (TBHQ-E319) and Salicylate & Aspirin (Salicylic Acid). (Martyn et al., 2014)

4. SUGGESTIONS TO HANDLE AGGRESSION

1. Time-Out: A particular procedure known as Time-Out from positive reinforcement, in which the child is removed from the room to somewhere less reinforcing for a short period of time, about five to ten minutes. Time-Out techniques have been shown to be effective as part of a strategy to reduce aggressive behaviour (UNESCO,2004)
2. Adolescents can be trained in social skills and ways of interacting directly through specific social intervention program.
3. Provide them proper guidance and counselling to develop abilities to solve their own problems.
4. Dietary changes may help peaceful living. The Feingold Association provides a list of foods that it believes are safe to eat. (Feingold Association,2009)
5. Providing a good, calm family environment to adolescents, which appear to be important in maintaining aggression.
6. Physical and cognitive behaviour modification program can be highly effective.
7. Removing stimulants that leads to violent or aggressive behaviour.
8. Healthy and knowledgeable T.V. programs should be selected for adolescents.
9. Videogames and films showing violence should be banned for adolescents.
10. Motivate adolescents for Yoga and Meditation.
11. Parents and teachers should also control their anger, which initiate the aggression in adolescents.
12. Teach them moral education and also develop reading habits, thus they gain moral and ideal thoughts.
13. Give appropriate freedom to adolescents, to share their problems with parents and teachers.
14. Develop their hobbies such as sports, games, music, dance etc. to utilize excess energy.
15. Educate them about physical changes in adolescence, thus they feel normal and positive about it.
16. Avoid any kind of physical punishment for the adolescents.
17. Motivate adolescents to develop a habit of diary-writing to express their emotions and anger through writing.
18. Encourage them to watch some entertaining & humorous T.V. programs and films for mood refreshment.

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