

UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGEMENT OF THE ADOLESCENTS' EMOTIONS FOR BETTER ADULTHOOD

Dr. Joy Chinele Anyafulude
Department of Educational Foundations,
Enugu State University of Science and
Technology (ESUT),
Enugu.

Abstract

Adolescence period is transcendental. Its spanning period is longer for some and shorter for others depending on culture and nutrition. The period is marked by some violent changes in the physiques, psychics and personality of the adolescents and brings along with it a lot of upheavals and demands that must be satisfied for smooth transition to adulthood life. Most psychologists see the period as the time of conflict, stress, storm, defiance and emotionality. Some adolescents have experiences different from that of others. Most adolescents meet these challenges successfully and grow into healthy adults. Others find it difficult to cope with. This paper, discusses fear and anger as part of adolescents' emotional reaction. It x-rays the role of the teacher in addressing these reactions of the adolescents. Finally, the researcher proffered some recommendations as solution to adolescents' emotional reaction.

Adolescence is the period between puberty and adulthood. It is the transitional period between childhood and adulthood. Adolescence is generally marked by a final surge of all round physical growth. The changes are usually accompanied by new and often times, confusing emotional responses, a broadening social awareness and functioning, (Sprinthall, 2004).

Adolescence is defined as physical, emotional and mental process which manifest from the late childhood to the beginning of adulthood (Ozigi, 1998). It is safe to conclude that adolescence is a period in human development which is both biological and social, influenced by factors as varied as environment, heredity, culture and social set-up of the community.

Blair (2005) saw adolescence as that period in every person's life that lies between the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood. This is an interesting period in the development of a child since it is a movement or graduation from childhood to adulthood. At this stage, the growing person is no longer a child, yet he does not have full qualities that make one an adult.

The adolescence period is marked by some changes in the psychics and personality of the adolescent boy and girl and brings along with it a lot of upheavals and demands that must be satisfied for smooth transition to adulthood life (Adeyanju, 2000). This period is usually referred to as a period of storm and stress. Fear, anger, conflict, defiance and emotionality may be outcomes if this period is mishandled. According to

Ugwu (2007), fear is an unpleasant feeling caused by the possibility of danger, pain and threat. It is a spontaneous protective reaction since it gets one prepared to avoid or deal with danger. Fear in adolescence are caused by many factors among which are identity formation, peer approval and achieving assurance of economic independence. Ugwuegbe (2002) defined anger as violent vindictive passion, sudden and strong displeasure as a result of injury, opposition or mistreatment. Anger in adolescents are caused by frustrations and disappointments.

Walker (2008) observed that adolescent stress is characterized by feelings of tension, frustration, worry, sadness and withdrawal that commonly lasts from a few hours to a few days. White (2008) suggested that it is not a healthy goal to make the teenager peaceful and calm all the time. The storm and stress is not there by accident. It is there for some good psychological reasons. He equally maintained that the adolescent's anger has a health-promoting function and in trying to quell it, one loses that healthy function. In this sense, one can say that a happy teenager is not a healthy teenager. It should be noted, however, that it is not being suggested to run rampant. It is recommended that anger expression be encouraged in a particular form so that it benefits the adolescent in the long term and allows him or her to become sociable at least, to some degree.

This paper therefore, discusses fear and anger as adolescent emotional reactions. The paper also x-rays the role of the teacher and other professionals in the school in addressing the reactions of the adolescents during stress and crisis period of their lives. Finally, the researcher proffers some recommendations as solutions to adolescents' emotional reaction.

Fear and Anger as Adolescent Emotional Reaction

Emotional feelings in the adolescent years are deeper and longer lasting than during childhood or even adulthood, (Landsdown, 1996). Love, anger, hatred and jealousy are deeply felt by the adolescent.

They rarely control their feelings and sometimes, hide emotions by substituting them with others. For example, fear becomes shyness and anger. Unlike adults who have greater control over their emotions, among adolescents small annoyance produces major emotional outburst, because at this stage, the adolescent is going through major changes, physically and psychologically.

Fear is both psychological and physical like increase in heartbeat. Fear always involves our sensing danger to ourselves, either against our physical well-being or psychological safety (National Teachers' Institute, 2009). Fear is a universal protective response, which is essential for our survival, since it alerts us of danger and gets us prepared to avoid it or deal with it (Ugwu, 2007). Sometimes, we have to teach children a certain degree of fear like beware of strangers, and be careful of the traffic.

Adolescence period is termed the crisis period with its attendant stress storm and conflicts which are exhibited in different forms of fear (National Teachers' Institute, 2009). Among them are the fear of achieving a more mature relationship with age-mates of both sexes, the fear of achieving masculine and feminine social roles, accepting ones physical looks and using the body effectively, fear of achieving emotional independence

from parents and other adults and fear of achieving assurance of economic independence etc. Apart from the enumerated fears and concerns of the adolescents, there are some basic and fundamental fears that confront the adolescents.

Firstly, identity formation is the first crucial concern of adolescents. The search for self is unending and at the same time, frustrating. The self is the sum total of a person's idea and attitude about whom and what he is. His problem is compounded when sometimes, he behaves like adult and he is accepted and at another time, he is told that he is not matured for such yet.

Secondly, is the effect of peer on adolescence. Adolescence have lesser dependence on parents and draws comfort from members of his age group and they provide support and security for him. The influence of peers may be negative or positive especially when the needs of adolescents are not met.

These factors may lead to mood changes, depression and anxieties in the adolescents because they are struggling to deal with the conflicting demands of the world and anxieties about the future. Unfortunately, some adolescents who are extremely anxious and depressed may want to commit suicide because of the inability to cope with the problems. Some of them may want to be left alone when they are depressed or engage in drinking alcohol, smoking, drug abuse, cultism etc so as to overcome these problems or distract themselves from their feelings of inadequacy or inferiority complex.

Lewinsohn and Teri (1992) revealed that anger is a frightening emotion. The adolescent has feeling of intense displeasure or antagonism towards someone or something that comes with the realization that things are not always normal. Anger and fear are feelings not behaviour and they take many forms from indignation and resentment to rage, fury and fright. According to Ugwuegbe (2002), anger in adolescents are caused by social frustration and disappointment. Frustrations due to such thing as discomfort, lack of attention and failure in an activity makes adolescent angry. For most adolescents, anger is expressed in a controlled way as withdrawal or moodiness, though adolescent boys may seek more attention from their peers, by being aggressive. It is not expected of adolescent or even an adult to show anger by shouting. But in communities where open display of aggression is tolerated, people display such behaviour. The adolescent reacts with anger to show that they can no longer be controlled by parents, teachers and other adults because they can see, feel and experience maturity in themselves. Therefore, any attempt to correct him earns hostile reaction from him. Above shows that the adolescent enjoys independence and freedom most of the time.

Teachers' Address to Emotional Reactions of Adolescent-Students During Period of Stress and Crisis.

Teachers are used to adolescent-students and are usually involved when these adolescents undergo periods of stress and crisis. They do spend long period with the adolescent-students and therefore should know them better than anyone else in the school. Therefore, teachers should be in a better position to provide early and ongoing intervention remedy the problems associated with adolescents' emotional reactions.

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However, they are also in a very difficult position because they need to remain composed and in control of their students at a time when they themselves may be experiencing a flood of emotions in response to adolescents' problem. Classroom teachers can find this difficult if they are not trained in crisis response and/or are not familiar with how to address the needs of these students following a period of crisis. The following are interventions that teachers can provide to address the emotional reactions of the adolescent-students.

- (1) After obtaining the facts regarding the period of crisis, as well as permission from the principal to disclose them, classroom teachers should accurately and honestly explain what has happened to their students. The students should be given the information in a manner that they can understand, taking such variables as age and functioning levels into consideration.
- (2) Teachers should most of the time, consult the school personnel trained in crisis response and crisis intervention (e.g., school psychologist, school social worker, guidance counselors) on how to most effectively address their students' reactions to the crisis.
- (3) It is often helpful when teachers model appropriate expression of feelings for their students and let them know that they have permission to verbalize what they are experiencing. It is important that teachers remain in control of their own emotions while dealing with their students, a task that may be difficult given that teachers themselves may have been significantly affected by the crisis. Adolescents tend to look toward adults to assess how to react to a situation. A teacher who is experiencing difficulty may not model the optimal ways of coping and expressing feelings.
- (4) If a teacher is unable to function adequately and meet the immediate needs of his/her students, another school official may need to replace the teacher temporarily or help him/her deal with the students. Every attempt should be made to keep the classroom teacher with his/her students.
- (5) Education of students regarding likely responses to the crisis is essential. Students should not feel they are "abnormal" or that they are "going crazy". Explaining to students that they will have a "normal reaction to an abnormal situation" can be helpful for them.
- (6) Students need to be warned that they may experience waves of strong emotions and coached on how to effectively deal with them (e.g., by talking to others, looking to others for support).

The strong emotional reactions to a crisis situation are usually overcome in one to six weeks following the crisis.

Conclusion

Adolescence is a transition period from childhood to adulthood. The immediacy and unpredictability of emotional reaction which leads to crisis situation often leave individuals with a sense of worry, vulnerability and distrust. The adolescent's confusion, fear and anger stem from the fact that sometimes when he behaves like an adult he is accepted yet at another time, he is told point blank that he is not mature enough for such

yet. However, full acceptance of the adolescent's conduct and his views may lead to a more or less well – integrated mature individual. Assuming that the adolescent fails in this area it may result to delinquency or insanity. A school system is unique in that it brings together individuals of all ages and professionals from numerous disciplines. Effective response to a period crisis capitalizes on the resources within the school environment.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are proffered as solution to adolescents' emotional reaction.

- (1) As a teacher, you should understand the body changes taking place in adolescents and how they affect their emotional reactions. They should be guided on how to understand and overcome the effect of these changes.
- (2) Emotional reactions such as fear, anxiety, guilt, jealousy and anger can inhibit bodily functions growth and even learning, therefore, teachers must learn to satisfy the emotional needs of children. The parents and the society at large are not left out in this crucial task.
- (3) They must promote the emotions of love, tenderness rest, joy, pleasure humor and laughter to facilitate mental health among adolescents.
- (4) Adolescents should be given appropriate autonomy. This will make them to become more active, outgoing, socially assertive and friendlier and they would have more positive self-image. The need for new experiences and self-esteem during adolescence is very vital.
- (5) Parents, teachers and members of the society as well as the government should join hands together to provide the necessary needs of the adolescents in order to have a better and well behaved adults.

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