Adolescence And Coping Essay, Research Paper

INTRODUCTION.

Adolescence is a time when our bodies, our families, our schools, and the larger society demand that we change. Our ability to think, reason, and make decisions changes dramatically as we grow older. Adolescence is the transition into adulthood that is often considered a time of stress, characterised by parent -child conflict. However, if parents and children can find compromise and adapt during this period of change, it can be positive for both parents and their children, building foundations for a deeper, stronger relationship that will be of benefit to both parties.

DLT has further reinforced my belief that each teenager is an individual with a unique personality and special interests, likes and dislikes. In contrast to that individualism is the fact that there are also numerous developmental issues that every teenager faces during the adolescent years, such as the adolescent s move towards independence and increased freedom, an increased ability to think ideas through, increased self-reliance, and an increased emphasis on personal dignity and self-esteem. Adolescents are beginning the often confusing crossing of the threshold toward adult reasoning/thinking.

D.L.T. KEY LEARNINGS.

+ From Concrete To Formal Operations.

Jean Piaget developed the theory that the “concrete operational” stage occurs in children between the ages of 7 and 11. In this stage a person can do mental operations but only with real (concrete) objects, events or situations. Logical reasoning is understood. For example, a concrete operational person can understand the need to go to bed early when it is necessary to rise early the next morning. they have little understanding of anything that they cannot see, hear, taste, or touch. Furthermore, children view people as being rather constant.

Between the ages of 11 and 15, children enter the “formal operational” stage. This period is characterised by the ability to perform abstract thinking and start to enjoy abstract thought, formulate hypotheses without actually touching concrete or real objects, and when more adept can test the hypotheses mentally, reason logically, and look at issues from another’s point of view. These new abilities allow adolescents to question inconsistencies they find in the world. The formal operational thinker can generalise from one kind of real object to another and to an abstract notion. The formal operational thinker is able to think ahead to plan the solution path. Finally, at the very end of the formal operational scale, the formal operational person is capable of metacognition, (thinking about thinking).

Adolescents at the “formal operational” stage may question their old beliefs, and also their parents. It is important that parents be supportive in the adolescent period, when their child is still feeling out their own values, beliefs and self-behaviour/self-expectations.

Middle adolescents are better acquainted with their new found mental capacities, but they may not always apply them. An example of this could be seen in a discussion with a parent, where the teen has the ability to see the parent’s point of view, but stubbornly resists. This resistance is often the result of the child’s recognition that their parent’s opinions are not necessarily the be all and end all of the matter being discussed.

Late adolescents often have a handle on these abstract ways of thinking. Communication takes on a different tone now. They are capable of role-taking or “walking in the other person’s shoes.” Many late adolescents view parental opinions as acceptable and valid, while maintaining that their own views are equally as acceptable and valid.

It is my belief that there isn t enough opportunity provided for adolescents to develop the complex, theoretical operations. I am very confident that the ability of current adolescents to hypothesise, use logic and other problem-solving skills would be far lower than the ability of adolescents 5 years ago. This is due to the lack of stimulating what if style conversation taking place in schools, and more importantly, in the home.

+ Nature vs Nurture.

Having chosen to believe in Piaget s theory of Five Stages Of Intellectual Development through which each child must pass before reaching intellectual maturity, I felt I must attempt to reach some conclusion about the Nature and Nurture debate. Although it may appear that I m sitting on the fence , I believe that the following quotations provide a sufficient answer to the question of Nature vs Nurture.

“Nature means the internal factors that influence the child s development – genetic make-up, the characteristics he/she receives from her parents, etc”. “Nurture means the external influences coming from the child s environment and the people he/she is in contact with – verbal and visual stimulation; a healthy environment and diet; feelings of love, security and confidence inspired by family and friends, etc”.

(V. Reynolds, 1987, p. 215)

“both sides are right; nature triggers off the behaviour, and lays down the framework, but careful nurture is needed for it to reach its full potential”.

(J Aitchison, 1978, p.89)

+ Family Influences.

“The family is regarded by some as the most important support system available to the child and adolescent. Consequently, any dilutions of this support system through factors such as changes within the adolescent, parental separation, or a particularly negative parenting style, have implications for adolescent functioning, adjustment and identity achievement”.

(”Family Influences”, p.50, Wk 12 DLT reading)

“In the first place, parents serve as role models, and teenagers learn by observation and imitation. Secondly, parenting styles and child-rearing patterns have an important influence on teenager s social and emotional development. Thirdly, parents transmit their morals and values to their children. Included here are general belief systems about what constitutes acceptable behaviour. Finally, parents are an important source of information on a range of topics. Communication between parents and teenagers is therefore vital”.

(”Family Influences”, p.53, Wk 12 DLT reading)

Every child s social development and training begins in the home, and parents must be responsible in providing disciplinary framework, which enables that child to meet society s expectations as a member of society. If this framework isn t provided before the child reaches adolescence, the child s social development and skills will be severely impaired.

Adolescents from “Authoritative” homes generally appear more competent and show greater adjustment, they have higher academic competence and psycho-social development, and exhibit lower levels (if any) of problem behaviours. Adolescents from “Neglectful” homes rate highly on internal stress and problem behaviours and lower on psycho-social development. “Authoritarian” and “Indulgent” homes produce adolescents that perform between the “Authoritative” and “Neglectful” homes.

Parents can accept responsibility by providing a safe and secure home life for their child; by encouraging independence at age-appropriate levels; role-modelling appropriate social behaviour; and allowing the child to mix socially with immediate family, greater family, strangers (under strict supervision), and the child s peers. Along with the vicious cycle of child abuse, (my father did it to me, I ll do it to my kids ), there is also a vicious cycle of poor discipline, which also contributes to the cycle of poverty. Knowledge is power, and a basic school education provides the foundation for every person to gain knowledge.

I have also come to firmly believe that parents must take greater responsibility for the education of their child/children. My parents have been a strong influence in my own learning and education. My father has always wanted me to do better than he has, in regards to employment. Mum and Dad have always encouraged me to be an independent thinker, and to think outside the square . This type of encouragement from parents is overall, severely lacking. I learned a lot of information beyond what was taught in my classes and enjoyed learning on my own because it was fun! I enjoyed these out-of-classroom endeavours because I was able to use knowledge gained from my science and math classes in experiences that were fun and challenging, and yet did not pressure me to perform well for a grade.

+ The Classroom.

The first challenge for any schoolteacher is to provide a learning environment that stimulates all students and caters for all students learning styles.

“Certainly, it is unfair to force tortoises to race against hares. Hares will become lazy and fall asleep while tortoises will become discouraged at the impossibility of winning. Both, however, can benefit from a system that helps all participants become better runners”.

“If the goal is maximum performance from all students, the schools must provide hope to all students that increased effort can result in success”.

(Raffini, 1988, pp. 13-14)

To provide a stimulating learning environment for adolescent students, I will be attempting to adopt the values that were pointed out in the week 2 reading, such as teaching practices being learner-centred, collaborative, based on suitable outcomes, flexibly constructed, ethically aware and community orientated. Through the lectures and workshops in DLT, I have been able to clarify some of my own views on learning and teaching. Some of my teaching preferences include having clear instructions on assignments, visual aids (pictures, slides, posters) to enable my students greater understanding of ideas, along with an emphasis on hands-on learning experiences.

+ Research Observations.

While conducting classroom observations in schools for DLT research, I often was watching how teachers conducted their classes, interacted with their students, along with making my own assessment of their teaching styles. I often made mental notes of positive teaching examples that I myself can use later as a teacher. I have also discovered that my learning style, and therefore my teaching style, won t always match the learning preferences of my classroom students. In order to meet the needs of individual students as a classroom teacher, I will have to use different teaching styles and methods.

During my research in DLT, I was informed of an incident at a parent/teacher night. A parent of a mainstream student demanded an explanation as to why, after three years at school, the student was still exhibiting poor behaviour at school. It was explained to this parent, (who has a reputation as a stirrer ) that her child had spent five years at home before the three years at the school, and perhaps the parent could answer the question better herself! Schools aren t baby-sitters, they are places where students go to learn to become an equally valued, accepted member of, and contributor to, society.

+ Learning Style Assessments.

This was a very interesting reading and workshop topic, but before I go any further, I feel it relevant to point out the interview with Pat Guild (Wk 10 DLT reading).

Ron Brandt:

“One of the things that makes the subject of learning styles so confusing is that there are so many competing models”.

Pat Guild:

“Well, that s a problem, but it s also an asset. The positive part is the wealth of ideas and resources “,

” I teach a variety of models, because it s important for people to learn about the field of learning styles”.

I can easily relate to Ron Brandt s statement, by remembering the DLT workshops, where students were presented with the “MICA Checklist”, the “4MAT Learning Type Measure” and other tests to assess learning styles. I can now see the relevance in providing us with the variety of learning style assessment methods as it has further raised my awareness of learning style preferences.

In my opinion, The “4MAT Learning Type Measure” is a very good learning style assessment method. My reasoning is that the “4MAT” allows a scale of 1 to 4, thereby providing some leeway for the person filling in the form. The “MICA Checklist” also is easier to fill in, because it too allows room for indecisiveness by the person doing the assessment.

The “Four Temperaments” reading, (Wk 3 DLT Readings), was interesting for me because it wasn t a true “scientific” type of reading. it was written in simple, easily understood terms and clearly defined the boundaries of each temperament. I was identified as an “Artisan”, with “idealist” tendencies.

“Artisans possess such high energy and skill for adapting that they are often referred to as the “Can Do” people. Their core needs are freedom, action, excitement and variation. Words that describe Artisans include spontaneity, strength, grace, boldness, and impulsiveness. They are good negotiators and tacticians. For Artisans, to do is to be”.

(”Four Temperaments”, Wk 3 DLT Reading)

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