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# UNIT 2 NEEDS AND CONCERNS OF ADOLESCENTS

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## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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After completing this unit, you will be able to:

- define terms related to needs and concerns of adolescents;
- explain the needs and concerns of adolescence;
- describe the role of teacher in needs and concerns of adolescence; and
- explain the role of parents.

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## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

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Adolescence is a time of moving from the immaturity of childhood into the maturity of adulthood. There is no single event or boundary line that denotes the end of childhood or the beginning of adolescence. Rather, experts think of the passage from childhood into and through adolescence as composed of a set of transitions that unfold gradually and that touch upon many aspects of the individual's behaviour, development, and relationships. These transitions are biological, cognitive, social, and emotional.

In the previous unit you have read about adolescence and various changes. So in this unit emphasis will be given on the needs and concerns of adolescence and the role of teacher and parents to facilitate the adolescents to deal with the needs and concerns positively and effectively.

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## **2.2 NEEDS AND CONCERNS OF ADOLESCENCE**

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Now you will learn about the details of Physical and Psychological Needs and Concerns.

### **2.2.1 Physical Growth Needs and Concerns**

The process of rapid physical changes in adolescence is called puberty. It starts gradually, from around ten years for girls and thirteen for boys. The age at which puberty starts has been dropping in most countries, probably due to better nutrition and sedentary life styles. So, adolescents may hit puberty earlier than you did. Hormones, chemical substances in the body that act on specific organs and tissues, trigger the physical changes of puberty. The hormone changes responsible for physical changes actually begin some years earlier and may produce periods of moodiness and restlessness (so they may be responsible for some of the emotional changes which will be discussed later in this unit). Girls start these changes before boys and for the first three or four years, appear to be maturing much faster. After this, boys catch up.

In both sexes, a rise in growth hormone produces the adolescent growth spurt, the pronounced increase in height and weight that marks the first half of puberty. Perhaps the most dramatic changes of puberty involve changes in the reproductive organs. In boys a major change incurred during puberty is the increased production of testosterone, a male sex hormone, while girls experience increased production of the female hormone estrogen.

Internally, through the development of primary sexual characteristics, adolescents become capable of sexual reproduction. Externally, as secondary sexual characteristics appear, girls and boys begin to look like mature women and men. In boys and girls primary and secondary sexual characteristics usually emerge in a predictable order. However, differential growth in peers and interpersonal differences in growth may cause lot of concerns in adolescents which are discussed in the following units. One of such concern is Development of Body Image and its impact on the self esteem of the adolescents. Body image is the way one perceives one's body. The sudden changes that the adolescents undergo make them acutely conscious of their bodies. It is not surprising that, with the differential speed of these changes, some adolescents become very concerned about their body image and appearance. Adolescents will more often than not feel dissatisfied with their bodies. It's more of due to the comparisons of their bodies with prevalent societal norms and identified role models. This satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their body image plays an important role in the self-esteem of the adolescent.

Self-esteem is a measure of the regard for oneself as human being and sense of one's personal worth and place within the society. Self-esteem is closely linked with self respect. The way a person values oneself will influence one's behaviour. Focus must be on building potential by identifying the strengths and making use of them. Positive self-concept and high self-esteem are foundations of responsible behaviour.

### **2.2.2 Psychological Needs and Concerns**

Adolescence is a phase of psychological changes and development leading to formation of Identity – a perception of self and also perception of surroundings and making of impressions about self. Identity, or a sense of sameness and continuity must be searched for and attained by all individuals.

If inputs from the surroundings are varied, challenging and not consistent with one's self perception, this may lead to identity crisis. Some of the identity crisis issues are "am I Child or adult, my vocational and professional identity, gender identity, where I am going etc."

You will realize that most of psychological concerns at this time are due to interactions between various cognitive factors, value systems, and prevailing social milieu. Psychological issues related to Intimacy and development of Sexuality also lead to lot of psychological concerns.

But given supportive environment their resolution, may happen, but not managed positively may lead to development of psychological issues like identity conflicts and crisis leading to body image concerns leading to depression and suicides, behavioural issues like road rage and aggression, not able to say No leading to physical & sexual abuse due to low self esteem etc. Some of the other psychological concerns of the adolescents are mentioned below which are due to unmet needs of the adolescents. You will read in detail about these issues in the following units.

*\*The word crisis means turning point in the life of an individual.*

**Common psychological concerns due to unmet needs of adolescents are:**

- 1) **Unmet Developmental/Family Issues:** Fear and guilt, anger, frustration, family crisis, concerns from childhood or adolescence, divorce, parenting, and marriage preparation.
- 2) **Unmet Personal Issues:** Anxiety, loneliness, depression, anger, guilt, low self-esteem, stress, grief, relationship issues, family problems, health, alcohol/drug difficulties, and military family life issues.
- 3) **Unmet Relationship Issues:** Roommate problems, boyfriend/girlfriend difficulties, marital issues, and sexual concerns.

**2.2.3 Emotional needs and concerns**

Adolescence is also a period of emotional transition, marked by changes in the way adolescents feel for themselves and others. In comparison to childhood they no more see their parents as all-knowing or all-powerful, and often develop strong emotions against their parents and have a great deal of emotional energy wrapped up in relationships outside the family.

Emotional concerns of this phase are as follows:

- 1) *Emotional lability:* At one moment they may think their teachers/parents is the best and other time they think they are worst. Feel extreme love for someone and extreme hatred for some others.
- 2) *Impulsiveness:* Not able to manage emotions aggressive behaviours, road rage and rising no. of suicides are some of the examples of not able to manage emotions.
- 3) *Excitement:* Craving for excitement in a way that most adults find difficult to understand, they may indulge into experimentation which may be dangerous.
- 4) *Intimacy:* Craving for love and feeling of love may make them think that infatuation, attraction and lust is nothing but love and may make them fall into

love at first sight without considering the compatibility issues. Young people and exciting activities may be dangerous leading to rash driving and fatal accidents.

Helping adolescent to find their excitement in music, sport, or other activities that involve a lot of energy but little real physical risk will save lot of adolescents from detrimental consequences.

#### 2.2.4 Behavioural Needs and Concerns

With the development of the psycho-social competencies, adolescent start testing their capabilities and competencies. In their march towards adulthood they start experimenting and exploring into new behaviours by challenging the values and constructs of the surroundings and society. This phase of the development process of adolescents leads to complain about each other's behaviour from both Teenagers and their parents. Parents often feel they have lost any sort of control or influence over their child. Adolescents want their parents to be clear and consistent about rules and boundaries, but at the same time may resent any restrictions on their growing freedom and ability to decide for themselves.

- 1) *Experimentations and explorations*: Adolescence is the time when people first start in earnest to learn about the world and to find their place in it. It's perfectly normal developmental issue . However, this involves trying out new experiences, some of which may be risky or even dangerous.
- 2) *Independence vs. dependence for guidance*: Being independent, however, means more than merely feeling independent. It also means being able to make decisions and to select a sensible course of action. This is an especially important capability in contemporary society, where many adolescents are forced to become independent decision makers at an early age. In general, researchers find that decision-making abilities improve over the course of the adolescent years, with continues well into the later years of high school.

This independent behaviour may lead to a vicious cycle – as each behaviour lead to psychological effects leading to further vulnerabilities and further high risk behaviour.

#### 2.2.5 Social Needs and Concern

**Development of friendship and Peer Group Involvement**: During adolescence, there is a movement away from the dependency typical of childhood toward the autonomy typical of adulthood. **One of the most noteworthy aspects of the social transition into adolescence is the increase in the amount of time individuals spend with their peers.**

They make close relationships outside the family, with friends of their own age. Relationships within the family also change. Parents become less important in their children's eyes as their life outside the family develops.

##### **Peer influence**

In general, during childhood, boys and girls are highly oriented toward their parents and less so toward their peers; peer pressure during the early elementary school years is not especially strong. As they approach adolescence, however, children become somewhat less oriented toward their parents and more oriented

toward their peers, and peer pressure begins to escalate. During early adolescence, conformity to parents continues to decline and conformity to peers and peer pressure continues to rise.

Although this can be irritating to parents, it is an important way of becoming more independent. These friendships are part of learning how to get on with other people and gaining a sense of identity that is distinct from that of the family. Clothes and appearance are a way of expressing solidarity with friends, although teenage children are still more likely to get their values from the family.

Susceptibility to the influence of parents and peers changes during adolescence. Many parents wonder about the susceptibility of adolescents to peer pressure. They dread the onset of adolescence, fearing that their child will become hostile and rebellious and begin to reject his or her family. Although it is incorrect to characterize adolescence as a time when the family ceases to be important, or as a time of inherent and inevitable family conflict, adolescence is a period of significant change and reorganization in family relationships. Family relationships change most around the time of puberty, with increasing conflict and decreasing closeness occurring in many parent-adolescent relationships.

Changes in the ways adolescents view family rules and regulations may contribute to increased disagreement between them and their parents. Family conflict during this stage is more likely to take the form of bickering over day-to-day issues than outright fighting. Similarly, the diminished closeness is more likely to be manifested in increased privacy on the part of the adolescent and diminished physical affection between teenagers and parents, rather than any serious loss of love or respect between parents and children. Research suggests that this distancing is temporary, and that family relationships may become less conflicted and more intimate during late adolescence.

### **2.2.6 Scholastic Needs and Concerns**

Scholastic issues concerning adolescence relate to adolescent who are not able to adapt to the environment of school due to social, academic and religious issues, neglected adolescents due to biases, or adolescent with learning disability, school drop-outs.

It's also the time of building one's career and the pressure of academic excellence is too much. This gives immense stress to the teenagers leading to many psychological and emotional consequences.

### **2.2.7 Sexual Needs and Concerns**

The dramatic physical changes in the internal and external appearance of sexual organs of adolescence can be very worrying to some teenagers, especially to those who are shy and who don't like to ask questions. First menstrual bleeding in girls may induce very terrifying concerns. At the other end of the scale, some express their concern with excessive bragging about sexual ability and experiences.

Most adolescents' first experience with sex falls into the category of "autoerotic behaviour," sexual behaviour that is experienced alone. The most common autoerotic activities reported by adolescents are erotic fantasies and masturbation. By the time most adolescents are in high school, they have had some experience with sexual behaviours in the context of a relationship. Crushes on someone of the

same sex are common in adolescence. Some go on to be gay, most don't. Some young people (and their parents) will not be sure whether they are gay or straight. This will be dealt in detail in the next units.

Adolescent having sex early are at greater risk of early pregnancy and health problems. Sexually transmitted diseases are common. HIV infection and AIDS are becoming more common. Sensitive support, clear guidance and accurate information about these different aspects of sex are essential - from parents, schools, family doctors, and family planning clinics.

### 2.2.8 Cognitive Transition - Needs and Concerns

A second element of the passage through adolescence is a cognitive transition. Compared to children, adolescents think in ways that are more advanced, more efficient, and generally more complex.

Cognitive changes in adolescence involves changes in the way adolescent think, reason and understand. Themselves and their surroundings. As adolescents mature intellectually and undergo cognitive changes, they come to perceive themselves in more sophisticated and differentiated ways. Compared with children, who tend to describe themselves in relatively simple, concrete terms, adolescents are more likely to employ complex, abstract, and psychological self-characterizations. As individuals' self-conceptions become more abstract and as they become more able to see themselves in psychological terms, they become more interested in understanding their own personalities and why they behave the way they do.

In addition, older adolescents are able to see and interact with their parents as people, not just as their parents. Many parents find, for example, that they can confide in their adolescent, something that was not possible when their children were younger, or that their adolescent can easily sympathize with them when they have had a hard day at work.

By late adolescence most individuals have accepted the process of development and they start accepting themselves as individuals.

#### Check Your Progress 1

a) List the various concerns of Adolescents.

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## 2.3 ROLE OF TEACHERS

**Let us now discuss the main role of teachers. As teachers of adolescents you must understand the range of developmental characteristics of adolescence including interpersonal, cultural, and societal contexts and use this knowledge to facilitate student learning.**

- Adolescent may need a lot of reassurance, especially if they are not growing or maturing as quickly as their friends. They and their parents may worry less if they remember that there's a lot of difference in the ages at which these changes occur.

- Understands the issues and concerns of the adolescents. Provides basic counselling services and refer them.
- Help them in developing life skills and using them appropriately wherever and whenever required. Understands that critical thinking, decision-making and problem-solving processes are critical life skills, which need to be taught.
- Observes and Attends to indications of challenges or difficulties that may affect healthy development of the adolescents.
- Establish a caring environment that supports the healthy development of adolescents and young adults is committed to working with families and other adults to promote healthy development of adolescents and young adults.
- Provides students with interdisciplinary and integrated learning experiences involving several curricular areas to link knowledge, skills, and methods of inquiry to real life applications.
- Understands the importance of the social and cultural context in which adolescents and young adults develop.
- Values the uniqueness of each student and the contributions which each can make to society.
- Positive, enthusiastic, and committed to students in this developmental period. Respects and appreciates the range of individual developmental differences.
- Engages students in activities related to their interpersonal, community, and societal responsibilities.
- Maintains effective classroom management which enables students to become self-directed.
- Understands the complexity of diverse family structures and the role the family plays in an adolescent and young adult's healthy development.

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## **2.4 ROLE OF PARENTS**

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- Appreciates the normal life progression of which adolescence and young adulthood is a part.
- Understands the issues and concerns of the adolescents.
- Observes and attends to indications of challenges or difficulties that may affect healthy development of the adolescents.
- Establish a caring environment in the families that supports the healthy development of adolescents and young adults.
- Spend quality time with the adolescents' communicating with them on the important needs and concerns of the adolescents.
- Creates opportunities for adolescents and young adults to make decisions and create personal goals within the context of the larger society.
- Aware of school and community resources, which can support the healthy intellectual, social, and personal development of adolescents and young adults.

### Check Your Progress 2

a) Discuss the role of teachers in managing the concerns of the Adolescents?

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## 2.5 LETS SUM UP

In this unit you have studied the adolescence and the needs and concerns they experience in this period of transition in their lives. You as teachers and parents play an important role to help them come out of this important stage in their lives to become independent and contribute towards building a healthy society. You have also read the Maslow's hierarchy of needs and its role in adolescence.

## 2.6 KEY WORDS

<b>Vicious</b>	: Deliberately cruel or violent
<b>Inherent</b>	: Existing in something as a permanent or characteristic attribute.
<b>Inevitable</b>	: Certain to happen a situation that is unavoidable.
<b>Dependency</b>	: State when one is controlled by another or dependent on other.
<b>Autonomy</b>	: The right or condition of self government in other words feeling of independence for self management.

## 2.7 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

### Check Yours Progress 1

a) Various concerns of the adolescents?

- Physical Growth & Concern
- Psychological Concern
- Emotional Concerns
- Social Concern
- Scholastic
- Sexual Concerns
- Developmental/Family Issues
- Personal Issues
- Relationship Issues

## Check Yours Progress 2

- a) The teacher of adolescents and young adults must understand the range of developmental characteristics of adolescence including interpersonal, cultural, and societal contexts and use this knowledge to facilitate student learning. The teacher must create a positive classroom environment where individual developmental differences are respected and supported. The role of a teacher is to enable students to become self-directed thereby equipping them to face challenges or difficulties that may affect a healthy development.

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## 2.7 REFERENCES

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