

Understanding others

Begin to understand the social world

See behavior as actions that are influenced simultaneously by a variety of needs, emotions, relationships and motives

Understand the motivation and origin of various behaviors

Analyze the future impact of whatever action a person might take

Recognize personality traits and use them to predict a person's future reaction

PEER GROUP-The Society of Children

Most influential system for developing the self-concept is the peer group

Has special norms, vocabulary, rituals and rules of behavior, dress codes

Many of the norms and rules of the peer group implicitly encourage independence from adults and some go even further demanding distance from adult society. Let children esp boys whose parents kiss them in public are pitied "momma's boys", students whose teachers favor them are teased "teacher's pet" and who betray other children to adults are despised tattletale snitch rat

While acceptance by the entire peer group is valued personal friendship is even more important – better to have a close friend but be unpopular than friendless but popular

Middle Childhood

Children tend to be concerned with the judgment of the entire group of classmates. Become more dependent on each other for companionship but also for self validation and advice

Social comparison –comparing their skills and achievements with those of others

evaluate themselves in terms of variety of competencies: sports, music, math, Nintendo

Increased self –understanding comes at a price. Self criticism rises and self-esteem dips.

As they compare themselves to others children become increasingly concerned about self presentation

Perceive their friends in psychologically richer ways because they understand themselves better.

Older children demand more of their friends, change friends less often, find it harder to make new friends and are more upset when a friendship breaks up.

Pickier pick friends whose interest, values, and backgrounds are similar to their own.

By age 10 children often have one best friend to whom they are quite loyal (more apparent among girls) boys tend to emphasize group identity and loyalty girls form smaller more intimate networks and then are more concerned about being excluded from the small circle

Bullies

Aggressive-rejected

Withdrawn-rejected

Well-liked

### **Coping with childhood stress-**

Expansion of a child's social world brings new and disturbing challenges

Stresses and hassles of middle childhood are so common that almost every child experiences some of them

Peers are often family members siblings and cousins

Stressors

Family stress

School Stress – academic/bullying

Peer stress

Financial stress

If a child has several crucial strengths he/she can sustain reasonably good development even in the face of serious problems – social, academic, and creative skills

Through self-esteem – if children feel confident in at least one area of their lives they become able to see the rest of their lives in perspective

Children with better-developed cognitive and social skills are able to employ coping strategies against their problems

## Social support

### Strong attachment to a parent

Children welcome some events and are able to adapt to them with relative ease. They perceive other events as threats to their own or the family's daily routines or general sense of well-being, and these stresses are more troublesome. Most stress faced by children is in the middle, neither welcomed nor seriously harmful, but rather a part of accomplishing the tasks of childhood and learning about themselves.

Youngsters may also worry about making friends

succeeding in school

combating peer pressure

or overcoming a physical impairment

. Whatever its form, if stress is too intense or long-lasting, it can sometimes take a toll on children. Clusters of stressful events seem to predispose children to illness. Major events, especially those that forever change a child's family, like the death of a parent, can have lasting effects on children's psychological health and well-being.

Minor daily stresses can also have consequences:

- They can contribute to loss of sleep or appetite.
- Children may become angry or irritable
- school grades may suffer
- Their behavior and their willingness to cooperate may change.

## How different children cope with stress

Children's temperaments vary and thus they are quite different in their ability to cope with stress and daily hassles:

Some are easygoing by nature and adjust easily to events and new situations.

Others are thrown off balance by changes in their lives.

All children improve in their ability to handle stress if they previously have succeeded in managing challenges and if they feel they have the ability and the emotional support of family and friends.

Children who have a clear sense of personal competence, and who feel loved and supported, generally do well.

How a child perceives and responds to stress depends in part on development, in part on experience, and in part on a child's individual temperament.

Ironically, many parents believe that their school-age children are unaware of the stresses around them and are somehow immune to them. After all, their children not only have all their basic needs met, but perhaps they also have a roomful of toys, friends to share them with, plenty of playtime, and a full schedule of extracurricular activities.

Yet children are very sensitive to the changes around them, especially to the feelings and reactions of their parents, even if those feelings are not communicated directly in words. If a parent loses a job, children will have to adjust to their family's financial crisis; they must deal not only with the obvious family budgetary changes but also with the changes in their parents' emotional states. Children may have to cope with a bully on the playground, a move to a new neighborhood, a parent's serious illness or the disappointment of a poor sports performance. They might feel a constant, nagging pressure to dress the "right" way, or to achieve the high grades that can put them on the fast track toward the "right" college.

### Stress and today's middle-years child

today's middle-years youngsters actually are faced with more stress than the children of previous generations were and have fewer social supports available. The change in family structure from the large, supportive, extended families (including both parents, aunts, uncles and grandparents) of previous generations, to the present high incidence of divorced families, single-parent families and stepfamilies has drastically altered the experience of childhood. Millions of youngsters must adjust to such changes.

Even in intact and stable families, the growing number of households with two working parents often forces children to spend more time in after-school programs or at home alone. For some children this loss of time with their parents is quite stressful. So, too, is the responsibility for caring for themselves and the family home and sometimes for overseeing a younger sibling after school.

Many children and their families are stressed by the multiple activities that fill children's "free time." Overscheduled children with inadequate "down time" can become exhausted.

Today's children are also being raised in an era in which they are exposed to violence and peer pressure about sexual activity and drug use and are warned to be cautious about kidnapping, sexual abuse and other crimes. This sense that they are living in an unsafe world is a constant source of stress for

some children. In short, today's youngsters are regularly confronted with challenges to their coping skills and often are expected to grow up too fast.

### Good and bad stress

Not all stress is bad. Moderate amounts of pressure imposed by a teacher or a coach, for example, can motivate a child to keep her grades up in school or to participate more fully in athletic activities. Successfully managing stressful situations or events enhances a child's ability to cope in the future.

When the stress is continuous or particularly intense, it takes a toll on both the psyche and the body. Sudden stressful events will accelerate your child's breathing and heartbeat, constrict her blood vessels, increase her blood pressure and muscle tension and perhaps cause stomach upset and headaches. As stress persists, she might be more susceptible to illness and experience fatigue, nightmares, teeth-grinding, insomnia, tantrums, depression and school failure.

Here are some suggestions:

- Spend time with your child. Talk with her about her friends, her accomplishments, and what challenges she will face.
- Be involved with your child's school. Go to school events; meet your child's teachers.
- Encourage your child to join school and community groups, such as a team sport, or to take advantage of volunteer opportunities.
- Help your child develop his own sense of right and wrong. Talk with him about risky things friends may pressure him to do, like smoking or dangerous physical dares.
- Help your child develop a sense of responsibility—involve your child in household tasks. Talk to your child about saving and spending money wisely.
- Meet the families of your child's friends.
- Talk with your child about respecting others. Encourage your child to help people in need. Talk with him or her about what to do when others are not kind or are disrespectful.
- Help your child set his own goals. Encourage him to think about skills and abilities he would like to have and about how to develop them.
- Make clear rules and stick to them. Talk to your child about what you expect from her when no adults are supervising. If you provide reasons for rules, it will help your child to know what to do in those situations.
- Use discipline to guide and protect your child, instead of punishment to make him feel badly about himself.
- Talk with your child about the normal physical and emotional changes of puberty.
- Encourage your child to read every day. Talk with her about her homework.
- Be affectionate and honest with your child, and do things together as a family.