Adolescent Addiction, Spirituality, and Where We Stand Today

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Adolescent Addiction Today

Adolescence is a time in which we are discovering who we are. In *Counseling Individuals through the lifespan*, we learn that this stage is where adolescents are going through an identity "crisis" (Wong, Hall, Justice, & Hernandez, 2015). When trying to figure out who you are, there are many things during these years that are thrown into an adolescent's life. School change, more responsibility with more freedom, and physical changes are just a few things that adolescent children face during these years. In a time of transition, there is also a time to where the children can begin to be rebellious or become addicted to drugs or alcohol. We see this trend increase in the late adolescent stage between nineteen to twenty-five. As these are the stages from the ending of high school and the beginning of college. Students in college begin to party more and have more freedom than previous years to experiment with new things in which can lead to new addiction. Not all addictions are due to substance drugs or alcohol though as internet addiction is more prevalent in today's society. When facing addictions, what is society doing to help combat this, and does religion play a factor in those who practice often come up in discussion with addiction among young people.

Though we often correlate addiction with drugs, the new addictions seen in todays society can come from technology, more specifically gaming. We see an increase in kids being addicted to online gaming than in previous years. In a study on gaming from Vadlin et al. (2015) states, "it has been suggested that gaming can be addictive in a similar sense as alcohol and other drugs"(Vadlin, Aslund, Nilsson, 2015, para. 2). If gaming is being classified under having the same addictive qualities such as drugs and alcohol do, then it can be a very serious problem in the growing youth today. Vadlin et al. (2015) also stated that in their research that over 90 percent of children 11 and older had access to or where using the internet every day in Sweden (Vadlin, Aslund, Nilsson, 2015, para. 2). With the increasing level of access it has made for an easier means to become addicted. We may not be able to limit the access of technology and gaming but researchers today hope to increase awareness of this new addiction to help with those who suffer. As of now other than determent from the gaming no treatment is actively working.

Technology is not the only threat of addiction in youth. Drugs and alcohol have been around for years and still pose just as much of a threat. Adolescents who drink during these stages are more likely to become alcohol dependent throughout their lives (Knight et al., 2014). When a child leaves the home to go off to college they begin a new stage of freedom. They begin to find themselves as they interact with others in ways that they have not experienced before. Peer pressure begins to play a role in the college years of adolescence. Wong et al. (2015) states that these adolescents are participating in "pregaming" which is where they get drunk before going to a party, bar, or etc, in order to drink without being of age (Wong, Hall, Justice, & Hernandez, 2015). This is important in that we identify the ways that these addictions begin so that society will be able to prevent the causes of addictions among youth.

A question that is asked is that being religious should decrease the addictions among adolescents right? Researchers such as Knight et al. (2014) found that there is not a drastic difference in religious adolescents compared to the non religious. The biggest factor in the Knight et al (2014) research was forgiveness. In the spiritual world forgiveness is something that people look at in different ways. Whether they believe they will be forgiven or that they can not be forgiven plays a role in decision making. The students that believed they were forgiven even though they drank within the last ninety days still drank less than the atheist or non religious associated group showing religion has some correlation with addictive choices. Spirituality plays a role in the development and though it does not prevent addiction it does give someone a greater sense of responsibility.

In conclusion, there are many factors throughout each persons development. There are various things in todays society in which adolescents become addicted too, technology, drugs and alcohol being the mentioned examples. In society the main solution has been awareness, as these increases of addictions happen, all we can do is make the people around us aware of them so they can choose to seek treatments. Spirituality in adolescent children does not in fact completely deter addiction, but it does help with decision making by showing us how negative thoughts due to belief systems can change our ways of action (Wong, Hall, Justice, & Hernandez, 2015). Many children are suffering in different ways but as

they grow older we have to be aware of what is out there to help them cope with feelings and even causes of addictions in order to put in to play the preventive measures they have available to them.

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Adolescents Returning Home

A common occurrence in today's adolescent generation is the “re-nesting” or returning to the home after being off in college. Taking a look at what the causes may be is important to distinguish why late adolescents are feeling the need to return home instead of the traditional independent living or pursuit of marriage.

In an article by Burn & Szoeke (2016), it states that there are two types of adolescents returning to home or staying home more than previous years, “boomerang adults” are those who return after a time of independence from the home, while “failure to launch” adults have never left the home (Burn, & Szoeke, 2016). Studying the cause has been the main level of interest, with the past generations being more interested in marriage and becoming independent, researchers are looking at what is causing this shift to staying in the so-called “nest”. Warner (2013) believes that these adults are returning to gain more confidence to be independent and that by returning home it essentially buys them time to gain this confidence having their parents help support them (Warner, E., 2013, pg 2). Researchers have tried to systematically find the cause of having a larger population stay home and one correlation has been how early a child leaves the home. The younger that a child leaves the home the more likely they are to return to the home (Van Den Berg, L., Kalmijn, M., & Leopold, T., 2019, para. 5). Van Den Berg et al. (2019) also states, children that leave the home earlier feel the need to return for the security they had when they left in order to gain the financial stability they need to be independent.

In Genesis 2:24 the Bible states, “therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh”, showing that a man is to leave the

house of his parents and cling to his wife (Online, 2015). This shows that spiritually though it is tied to marriage, we are to go off from our homes and create a new family.

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The Lasting Effects On Childhood Trauma and Coping with it Spiritually

There are many things in life that we face that helps to shape and mold who we become. During development it is a pivotal time in someones life as you are going through new experiences, making changes mentally and physically, and trying to figure out your place in the world. We each go about development in different ways, as we each are from different backgrounds that help create us who we are to become. One thing in particular that effects our development is trauma. Something we must face through development but we each do not want to experience often. Trauma is defined as “a disordered psychic or behavioral state resulting from severe mental or emotional stress or physical injury”, this gives an insight that it can be more than physical and that trauma can be emotionally changing and even mentally changing (Trauma, n.d.).

The effects of trauma can be seen at an early age, children are effected by trauma of all types being sexual abuse, violence or even maltreatment (Perry, 1994, para. 3). In an article by Perry, his focus was on PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) in children. Perry states that 1.5 Million

children are effected by sexual abuse, maltreatment or violence each year(Perry, 1994, para. 3). This number is representative not only because of it being large, but also showing that we are able to study the effects as the sample size is large enough to show correlation with these seen effects on a Childs development. The article also states that this high number of cases may not be accurate as children who are abused or face trauma before 4 years of age do not always recall the trauma(Perry, 1994, para. 5). If that is so we are losing some of the actual numbers on trauma and its effects due to how early it can happen in a Childs life. Perry (1994) goes on to talk about how children who experience trauma have anxiety and mood disorders.

So you may be thinking how we deal with trauma if it occurs so early in life. We deal with trauma in different ways. One of those ways is through groups and therapy. This is where religion can come in to play showing how our spirituality ties in with our trauma. In an article on *Spirituality and Trauma: Development of a Group Therapy Module*, it was examined how our spirituality correlates with the healing from trauma in all ages (Drescher et al. 2004, p. 71). The article states that our spirituality and trauma have both positive and negative outcomes(Drescher et al. 2004, p. 72). As we experience trauma we may change our view on if God is real, if the religion is something we truly believe in, and question why we may be going through this trauma in our lives. All of these feelings are something each person faces that has a spiritual walk with God but yet faces some of life most difficult feelings along the way. Drescher et al. (2004) stated that in the therapy groups the attendees were observed that until they felt the group was a safe place that they would not discuss the trauma (Drescher et al. 2004, p. 78). Drescher et al (2004) also states that spirituality was chosen because it is something beyond understanding that gives us a relationship with a high power much like a relationship with family or friends and how that played a role in the group opening up about the traumatic events (Drescher et al. 2004). It is

believed that God does not want his people to live in fear and reflected in the Bible throughout different interpretations. In Proverbs 1:33, it says “but whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of disaster”, which relates to how God knows that as humans we will face times of trauma and disaster but that we are to listen to his word and persevere through these times (64 Bible Verses about Trauma, n.d.).

In conclusion, trauma can damage all ages and have long last effects of all kinds. How we cope and heal from that trauma is different. Spirituality can play a role if incorporated and gives someone hope and a sense of knowing a higher power is overseeing their lives can change how the lasting effects of trauma development in each person. Drescher et al. (2004) states that by using spirituality as a coping mechanism is effective in the wake of trauma as it provides a sense of hope to those who do and do not believe (Drescher et al., 2004). With it being something we each face, it is important that we pursue even more understanding of the lasting effects of trauma, and the ways that we may cope and help others to cope with it over our lifespan.

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Developmental Analysis

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Abstract

This paper is to analyze the knowledge I have gained over the course of this semester and apply it to my own development over my lifespan. I will be explaining how the life events, choices, as well as physical development have molded me into who I am today and how those correlate with what the empirical studies that suggest typical growth and development across different stages of life.

Introduction

We each go through the stages of life in unique ways. Our backgrounds are different, the way we are taught and learn new things comes in different ways as well. I do not believe there is a correct way to develop but that there are milestones and choices that ultimately shape the result of a person's life. These important choices in my life will be explained in this paper and as result I will show how they have made me the person I am today.

Prenatal Period, Infancy and Toddlerhood

I am pairing my prenatal period with my infancy and toddlerhood. In the prenatal period my mother was twenty seven years old when she had me. She was for the most part very healthy. She had no drug or alcohol addictions and did not use them at all before pregnancy. Emotionally she was in a good place but had recently lost a baby with a chromosome disorder so she was concerned with having a healthy child. When I was born they checked me for spinal meningitis as I was running a fever and not acting normal. This got my life out to a rough start as through infancy my mother described me as being prone to being sick. I had ear tubes removed early in my toddlerhood in order to help with the pain I had with them. Though I had minor health

issues, overall my mother said my temperament and my ability to learn was very high. My motor skills were very fine and I began to walk around six months which was ahead of the nine to twelve month typical time frame.

Preschool, Early and Middle Childhood

In preschool I began to learn to fine tune my relationships as I started to make friends.

My mother says I was very social and that as far as behavior I had no issues with following instructions from the preschool teachers. It was important that the preschool I went to had multiple teachers and was a very well run school as I found this to be key in my development at this early stage of my life. In an article by Duncan and Magnuson (2013), they showed that though it was more expensive to send children to private childcare, it proved to help them cognitively and showed quality of home life as well (Duncan, G., & Magnuson, K., (2013). The preschool I attended was privately run and I do believe it made impacts on my learning ability. If left at home or with an unorganized caregiver I do not believe that my cognitive ability would have increased as it did at the time.

Going into early childhood I began school with what I believe was a “headstart” over some others due to my parents financial success and planning of quality early caregivers. I was

described by teachers as being polite and very invested in learning in class. Relating this to the cognitive focus I gained during having this "school-like" head start in preschool, my advantage came from being used to obeying commands from someone unrelated to me and learning to follow a schedule. Other children in my classes struggled with what is described by Knafo and Plomin (2006) as "prosocial behavior", this behavior is meant to benefit others in society. I believe that through the schooling and the discipline I was given at home these are the key into my prosocial behavior being above some other children (Knafo, A., & Plomin, R., (2006).

Learning my place within the world was important in development as I began to place myself within groups and fit the autonomy vs. shame and doubt stage described by Erikson. As a child I was unafraid of stepping into society and was more social than some other kids. In an article by,

Green, Kalvaitis & Worster (2016), they state that children in this stage of life are egocentric and focus primarily on themselves so they are starting to realize how they fit into groups more so than how the things around them are functioning (Green, C., Kalvaitis, D., & Worster, A., (2016). This shows why my interest at this age was more about myself and how I was to fit in and not about the others in my class.

During middle childhood one of my drawbacks in development was not mentally but physically. Though I was learning at a rapid pace and performing well in school, I was not physically developing as fast as the children around me. By the time I began my middle childhood years I was well established in sports. My friends within these sports began to surpass me in stature and height. This is not something that is immediately noticed, but every time my parents and I began to have discussions about what the obvious physical differences were. After noticing these

distinct differences, height, weight, strength, etc, I went to the doctor to see what was causing my development physically to be behind. The doctors discovered that I was well behind on the growth chart for my age and suggested I take growth hormones. This affected me emotionally as I was very confused and I just wanted to be “normal” like all of my friends. I carried this worry over into my adolescent years. With my physical development behind I transitioned my thinking to more of the skills I did have and how I could apply those within the current situation I was in as I did not want to feel less than my peers socially. I began to become more interested in how my skills would translate into society and how I could benefit others with what I could do. This is a key example of the industry versus inferiority stage from Erikson, and stated by Newman (2017), that a child begins to look at what skills they can offer in society or begins to see inferiority to others around them. I had a sense of inferiority as far as physically but

began at this early age to see how my skill set could be applied elsewhere leading me to being successful in the classroom and on the field (Newman, B. M., & Newman, P. R. (2017).

Adolescence

In my adolescent years, sports became the focal point of my life making my development physically increase all but in height. This time in my life was the most pivotal in creating the person I am today. During my adolescent years, I moved three times changing schools three times. This was very pivotal in teaching me how to make new friends as I was placed in a new environment and expected to perform well. By moving I learned a lot about different types of people as each school had a uniquely different set of students. This time in someone's life can

already be very confusing as we are experiencing physical changes we never have before, we are learning of intimate relationships, and discovering how we fit into society. This can be a very stressful time in someone's life and learning to manage that is important. As I got later into my highschool years I experienced anxiety as a result of stress. Learning to balance school, friends, sports and the everyday necessities overwhelmed me at times. One thing I found myself doing more in these times was using the internet. Social media, gaming, reading, all were pivotal in my development at this age as they gave me escape from the stress. Feng, Ma, & Zhong, (2019), states that the addictions in the internet use during this time have drastically increased and can be a leading factor in stress. Though I used this as a getaway from my stress I can see the correlation of how the media portrays "normal" and how that places stress on adolescents to fit that mold when that is not attainable for most.

Early Adulthood

In my current stage of early adulthood, I have found that I am a result of these previous experiences. It has greatly helped me in learning how each event I have gone through has molded a piece of the person I am today. Though I still struggle with anxiety, I have learned to manage it in much healthier ways then before and I have a wonderful family to support me in times of need. Key events in my life now are the big things to come, marriage, purchasing a home and starting my career. These can all be stressful but I look forward to meeting these milestones in my life. Knight (2017), shows that I am in the current intimacy versus isolation

stage from Erikson's stages of development (Knight, Z. G. (2017). As I am going through this early adulthood stage in my life, I have my own apartment and am in a very serious relationship.

Knight (2017) says that this stage is where adults leave the “nest” and make their own lives and families, which is what I most recently did about 2 months ago becoming financially independent from my parents and moving out on my own. This is a key event in the stages defined by Erikson, where one has fully adapted into early adulthood and prepared for the next step of development.

Adulthood and Maturity

Though I have yet to experience this in my life, I do look forward to reaching this stage. This stage of development will give me a sense of security. Though each stage comes with different challenges that we navigate through in this stage you have a little more security in your finances, lifestyle and a routine that can be followed throughout the duration of your life. As I grow into this stage, I look forward to being in my career and supporting a family. It is important as I age to be conscious of my health and to start to consider more long term effects on my body than I have in the previous stages of my life. It will be important as I face the maturity that I feel that

what I have accomplished over its course has been successful. An article by Branje & Koper, (2018), they state that it is important when transitioning to this stage to be able to look back and feel good about their lives because then it is easier to accept the aging of the body and the oncoming of death. I want to reach this point of development in a way that I know I did my best

to contribute to my family, and society in positive ways so that I can rest assured I made a positive impact.

Conclusion

Though we each develop in different ways, there are key events in life that we each face. These events create the people that we are in society today. By understanding the process in which a person grows cognitively and physically, it can benefit in our counseling of others. Though I have reached certain points of life, each person's route to get to this point can be different from mine making us unique and learning about these stages beyond just the empirical research out there will be pivotal to being able to properly assess and help the needs of others going through these various stages.

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