

Unit Five Lessons 1

Children must pass through several stages in their lives to become adults. For most people, there are four or five such stages of growth where they learn certain things: infancy (birth to age 2), early childhood (3 to 8 years), later childhood (9 to 12 years) and adolescence (13 to 18 years). Persons 18 and over are considered adults in our society. Of course, there are some who will try to act older than their years. But, for the most part, most individuals have to go through these stages irrespective of their economic or social status. World Health Organisation (WHO) identifies adolescence as the period in human growth and development that occurs after childhood and before adulthood. This phase represents one of the critical transitions in one's lifespan and is characterised by fast paced growth and change which are second only to those at infancy. Biological processes drive many aspects of this growth and development with the onset of puberty marking the passage from childhood to adolescence. The biological determinants of adolescence are fairly universal; however, the duration and defining characteristics of this period may vary across time, cultures, and socio-economic situations. This period has seen many changes over the past century— puberty for example, comes earlier than before, people marry late, and their sexual attitudes and behaviours are different from their grandparents, or even parents. Among the factors responsible for the change are education, urbanization and spread of global communication. The time of adolescence is a period of preparation for adulthood during which one experiences several key developments. Besides physical and sexual maturation, these experiences include movement toward social and economic independence, development of identity, the acquisition of skills needed to carry out adult relationships and roles and the capacity for abstract reasoning. While adolescence is a time of tremendous growth and potential, it is also a time of considerable risks during which social contexts exert powerful influences