

# Adolescence

by Sophia Tutorial



## WHAT'S COVERED

This lesson will focus on the topic of adolescence by covering:

1. Cultural Changes
2. Physical Changes
3. Psychological Changes
4. Cognitive Changes
5. Social Changes

## 1. Cultural Changes

**Adolescence**, also known as the teenage years, is when a child transitions into becoming an adult. It's important to note right off the bat that there's certain cultural variation that goes along with the idea of adolescence. Different cultures have different measures of adolescence. Adolescence can be identified as starting at different times for a person.



### THINK ABOUT IT

Would you consider a 14-year-old person to be an adult? Your answer to this question depends on where you are from.

The culture in the United States considers 14-year-olds to be school-aged. They are not expected to have more responsibility other than going to school, playing with their friends, and doing extracurricular activities.

In other cultures, a 14-year-old can already be married and have children. Cultures can have very different ideas of what constitutes adolescence or what teenagers are supposed to be doing at certain ages.

In the U.S. specifically, the adolescent time comprises the years between 11 and 18 years of age. This person is reaching puberty, and they are able to do things more independently. Many cultures have ceremonies that mark this transition to adulthood, or this adolescent time.



**EXAMPLE** The Jewish culture celebrates a bar or bat mitzvah.



### TERM TO KNOW

## Adolescence

The time when a child transitions to adulthood; the teenage years

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# 2. Physical Changes

During this time, there are many physical changes that occur. The period of time from 11 and 14 years of age is, specifically, a period of rapid growth. This is when a person reaches sexual maturity. **Puberty** is the word used to describe this biological period of time in which a person grows and becomes sexually mature, or able to reproduce.

There are other changes that occur during this period, as well. Change in men can include:

- Growth of facial hair
- The voice drops
- Muscles begin to grow more

Changes in women can include:

- Breast growth
- The hips widen

These are all changes that are secondary sexual characteristics.



### TERM TO KNOW

#### Puberty

Sexual maturation; when an individual becomes capable of reproduction.

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# 3. Psychological Changes

There are coinciding psychological changes as well. One of the most important ones to note during this time is the formation of an identity, or a sense of self. During this time, a teen begins to question who they are as an individual.

Erikson used the phrase "identity crisis" to describe this period of time. It's a time where there's an intense analysis and exploration of the different ways that a person looks at themselves. A lot of this is formed as a result of social experiences during this time.

A person during this time will also experiment with different types of roles. A teen might try to engage in activities that they wouldn't have normally done as a child.

This leads to an eventual achievement of identity, where they solidify and realize what kind of person they are. They learn what their likes and dislikes are. A person who doesn't go through that identity formation might be uncertain about who they are and what they're trying to do in life.

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## 4. Cognitive Changes

There are cognitive changes as well. Remember, a person is still developing biologically, so the brain is developing as well. Areas like the prefrontal cortex, which is identified with personality, identity, and cognition in general, are still developing.

Piaget formulated in his theory of development that it's during this time that children start to think abstractly. They can think beyond the concrete world itself and start to form hypotheses about the world. They can think deductively and come to reasonable conclusions about things.

There's also what is called egocentrism at this time, which is to say that children are very self-centered. Personal fable is the belief that an adolescent holds, believing that he or she is very special and unlike anybody else. This belief includes the idea that nobody else understands what they're feeling, or has experienced those kinds of things.

➦ **EXAMPLE** When an adolescent says, "You don't understand me," it's coming from this stance of egocentrism.

Imaginary audience is when an adolescent has the experience of constantly being on stage or being the focus of everyone's attention. The person may feel that everybody's watching them. This emerges along with the adolescent's ability to think about what others are thinking.

Children aren't able to necessarily put themselves in another person's shoes. As a person moves into adolescence, they begin to constantly think that other people are thinking about them.

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## 5. Social Changes

Adolescence is a time of social development as well. A child is looking for acceptance from other people. Their self-esteem depends on the relationships that they have with other people.

This is called a self-concept, which is an idea that they form as a result of the opinions of others. It is during this time that the peers of a person become more important than their family in terms of social influence.

This is also a time when peer pressure becomes important, because there's a push for the adolescent to conform or to be more like their peer group. This is also the reason why there is experimentation with things like drugs or sex during this time, especially since physically, the child is developing as a sexual being.



### SUMMARY

There are many changes that occur during the period of time called adolescence. **Physical changes** begin to occur during puberty, and secondary sexual characteristics develop. **Psychological changes** include the development of self. **Cognitive changes** include the ability to think abstractly and begin to develop hypotheses about the world. An adolescent also begins to develop the ability to consider what another person might be thinking. **Social changes** also occur as the peer group begins to become more important than the family regarding social influence.

Good luck!

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia Author Erick Taggart



## TERMS TO KNOW

### **Adolescence**

The time when a child transitions to adulthood; the teenage years.

### **Puberty**

Sexual maturation; when an individual becomes capable of reproduction.