

Stress and anxiety in adolescence

Taghi Abutalebi Ahmadi

Department of Education, Farhangian University, Nasibe Branch, Tehran, Iran

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Abstract

Usually in society, when people take responsibility for their own actions, they can live with less stress in that circumstance. Relations of social life are in such a way that everyone should know they cannot always change the situation to their own advantage, but they can adapt themselves to different situations. Otherwise, they may suffer from stress. At the beginning of puberty and adolescence with the rapid development of physical and mental health, turmoil, confusion and worry can be seen in adolescents and in its shadow, they have a lot of anxiety and stress. There are important issues at this time in relation to the development of these areas including identity crisis, conflict in role playing, discussing independency, sexual evolution and acceptance of gender roles, relationships with peers and parental opposition, and needs such as having a quiet living environment, the need to love and respect, the need for comfort and psychological security of the home, the school, the university and the community and the need for exercise and intellectual games in order to grow overall talent. If these needs are not fulfilled, in turn, it may cause stress. Also a history of academic failure, disease, negative physical and academic self-concept lack of hope for pursuing studies and lack of academic success in university education; lack of family financial resources are considered problems for adolescents in achieving Identity and self-worth and make them susceptible against stressful factors.

Keywords: stress, anxiety, adolescence,

Introduction

Humans can live with less stress, when they take responsibility for their own actions. He should know that he cannot always change the situation to his advantage, but he has the ability to adapt to different situations (Shahidi, 2008, as cited in Kazemian Moghaddam K. *et al.*, 2008). Stress usually aggravates in terms of some stimuli. These stimuli can be vital factors such as water, food, warmth and cold, exposure to pollution, congestion and noises, darkness or lack of sleep. Other invisible factors like fear, anger, uncertainty, too much joy and the like can cause stress (Behnam, 2008, as cited in Kazemian Moghaddam, *ibid*). In general, "stress" has been defined as biological or psychological response to the demands, challenges or threats which provokes the person's capabilities to cope with such factors. There are important issues at this time in relation to the development areas including identity crisis, conflict in role playing, discussing independency, sexual evolution and acceptance of gender roles, relationships with peers and parental opposition. These factors pave the way for stress in teenagers (Khodayarifard, 2005, as cited in Kazemian Moghaddam, *ibid*). Imam Ali (AS) State-din Nahjul Balagheh (Letter 31) that the heart of a teenager is like a favourable ground which accepts any kind of seeds. Adolescents and youth are considered the warm and vital artery of conscious societies, awaken nation and efficient or capable arms of the governments. In the contemporary world, good and evil, reality and dreams, beauty and ugliness, ignorance and awakening, poverty and richness,

Corresponding author: Taghi Abutalebi Ahmadi, Department of Education, Farhangian University, Nasibe Branch, Tehran, Iran. E-mail: taghiabutalebi@gmail.com.

existence of justice of ideas, realm of ideas made the young generation dual and confused. Morality and faith are two powerful tools that ensure the integrity and security of the world and salvation in the young people's hereafter and also ensure their health and wellbeing against the disasters of the life (Educational Charter of the Young, 1994, pp.3-1). Teenagers often suffer from emotional problems. Among these, we can point to stress and anxiety as the set of non-adaptive responses to psychological pressures and the nature of the vulnerability of teenagers (Tavakoli, 1991, as cited in Asadi, 2004)

Definition of adolescence

The World Health Organization defines adolescence as the period between the ages of 10 to 19 years old although this definition has changed according to different cultures. In psychological recent works, usually the age of 11, 12, 13 to 18, 19, 20 have been regarded as the period of adolescence. In this period, the teenage is involved with two major problems which are the review and reconstruction of the relationship between parents and community adults, and recognition and reconstruction of oneself as an independent person (Heydari, 2004). Also, adolescence is described as a period of maturity and sophistication as human beings which almost starts from the beginning of the early age of 12 to 19 or 20 years of age (Babai, 1997, p 17). It must be said that stress and anxiety are closely related to each other and anxiety is one of the immediate and common effects of stress which appears in teenagers due to mental and physical changes. The majority of scholars generally consider puberty a period in man's life along with which the physical changes, confusion, agitation and worry can be seen in teenagers-and in its shadow; it brings a lot of anxiety and stress (Nejati, 1989, p 22). Beginning of adolescence is along with growing and in fact, the end of childhood. Based on expert's recommendation, if parents pay attention to mental health and health principles of their children in childhood, they will be in a better mental state in adolescence (Behpazhoo, 1981, as cited in Asadi, 2004). Ericsson emphasizes adolescent identity and regards it as the most important achievement of teenager personality. A teenager who undergoes the mental conflict period of the identity against identity confusion successfully, enjoys a strong self-description. Stress, anxiety and depression are the most common psychological problems of teenage period (Burke, 2003, pp.95-97).

Teenager characteristics

The characteristics of teenagers can be divided into different sections:

Physical characteristics of adolescence: changes such as the shape changes, weight gain, incidence of sexual characteristics, a feeling of malaise and spiritlessness, psychological and physical symptoms of puberty make the teenager anxious and concerned and of course the girls are two years ahead. Bones reach the last stage of their development, there is a lot of desire to eat and other physical changes appear in him/her.

Intellectual characteristics of adolescence: Adolescent intelligence reaches its maximum growth and achieves complex logic and symbolic thought; he can analyze the problems around him. Artistic talent and interest will appear in him little by little.

Emotional Characteristics of adolescence: At this stage, adolescent development is more influenced by emotions; he is always excited and tends to go from one excitement to another. He sometimes seems sad, sometimes happy and sometimes hopeful and humble, sometimes hopeless and defeated.

Social characteristics of adolescence: The teenager likes to speak out. He enjoys being accepted by the group. He likes to be superior to others, he likes to act independently and decrease the amount of domination of the family over him. He tends to be attracted by the social trends, he understands the relationship between himself and others very well (Nejati, 1988, pp.36-28).

Teenage problems

During adolescence, the ability to think abstractly helps individuals to find identity. Due to the complexity of identification as well as factors such as the relationship between parents and adolescents, a variety of cultural stress, social changes, patterns of identity formation particularly in modern societies vary and it is a long and difficult task for him.

Problems related to physical growth of children: These problems include having a feeling of fatigue and malaise, clumsy movements; ugliness, the insomnia and lack of sleep; emerging sexuality and how to satisfy those concerns, lack of fitness and other similar problems will pave the way to create problems for the teenagers.

Problems related to social development: these problems include the fear of getting down with the

people, interest in groups and community membership, a sense of helplessness and inactivity in relationships with peers, fear of committing social errors, concern of being unaware of the methods and principles; being inexperienced in social affairs, the lack of role models and a way to meet people, inability to make decisions in indifferent cases, the feeling of unawareness and clumsiness in communicating with peers and others.

Teenager family problems: they are care and control of him/her, too much expectations of parents in the affairs or in having a body of necessary knowledge for a balanced life and sometimes childish confrontations with him/her, etc.

Academic problems: These problems include waste of time, inability to study properly, lack of concentration, lack of proper methods of study, inability of planning to study, the use of punishment, humiliation and the lack of encouraging by teachers, inability to answer and question in class, thinking about the what and how of exam, etc, adolescent personality problems such as shyness, lack of responsibility, feelings of inferiority, lack of or low self-confidence, wondering, feeling of self-distrust, Suggestopedia, the lack of precision in the work, feeling of pressure in the acceptance of ideas and comments of those around and friends, feeling of laziness and confusion, the feeling of not being accepted, great restlessness, feelings of worthlessness and lack of independence, etc. (Nejati, 1978, pp.115-57). Further, some studies show that negativism leads to mental pressure and anxiety and it also leads to social and inter-personal conflicts and problems.

Problems caused by thoughts and imaginations of teenagers: these problems include fear of death, vague and baseless thoughts about the passing and end of life, not having correct understanding of social life values, interest and need for religious information, making the moral values of society the basis of benchmark rate, lack of peace of mind in moral behavior, duality in the selection of sensual and moral desires, expressing interest in friends, etc. (Nejati, 1988, pp. 78-77). Sometimes a family is a source of anxiety in adolescents. Adolescents and young adults who have emotional disorders living in a disjointed family often have this problem (Ghaemi Amiri, 1982, p 102). When parents and children have different values, they are often in conflict. The tensions will be low only when the parents do not compare their children with their own growth and conditions (Borjali, 2001, p 49). The attitude of people with problems and self-depression has often

a root in the improper relationship with their parents and this relationship can include exclusion, negative evaluation and punishment of the parents toward their children, being deprived from love and creation of feelings of guilt and anxiety (Afroz & Alavi, 2001, p.23).

Teenager's needs for balanced growth

There are some needs for teenagers in order to have a balanced growth such as the need for quiet and emotional living environment, the need for love, respect, the need for psychological comfort and security in the home, school, university and community, the need for exercise and intellectual games in order to gain skill and grow talent in general, the need for individual and group recreational activities to maintain the freshness and receive social education, the need for religious faith, the need for accepting and making models, the need for social education, the need for love, affection and safety, etc. (Nejati, 1988, pp.125-130). According to Asghari (2001), parenting styles and the method of interactions of family members especially father and mother can play an important role in the formation of personality and children's behavior so that it is said the essence of the personality of everybody is formed in the family. Cox (1985, as cited in Rasooli, 2002) says that the family's emotional atmosphere is associated with the growing of confidence in children and warm family relationships cause creativity and peace of mind in children. The results of the studies done by Abutalebi Ahmadi (2005) indicate that parenting style along with logical authority increases the self-esteem of teenagers. Regarding parenting styles and its relationship with the mental health of the students, we can say that there is a statistically significant relationship between parenting style and parental mental health. Also, there is a significant relationship between parenting style with logical authority and the mental health. But there is no relationship between mental health and free or dictatorial styles.

Crises of anxiety in adolescence

During adolescence, we can point to three types of anxiety including sporadic physical stimulation based on physical manifestations, mental pervasive fear by extremely psychological fear, and anxiety as a "stimulus sign", a sign in which the "I" is stimulated against a potential danger of anxiety (Bahrami, 1987, as cited in

Asadi, 2004, p.13). In a study, the results showed that older adults show more anxiety reactions than younger adults (Fox *et al.*, 2005). In fact, it should be said that they feel alone and powerless like teenagers. Teenagers suffer from anxiety due to various reasons such as improper behavior of parents toward them, repeated failure, blame and humiliation. Such an anxiety can be called learnt or conditional anxiety. The anxiety of teenager may be due to false and incorrect self-interpretation. Sometimes, anxiety of the teenager is due to decisions made about education, job, and choice of wives (Asadi, 2004, p.13). According to Noori Neshat (1994, as cited in Asadi, 2004), the anxieties resulting from negative self evaluations of adolescents and adults are considered deterrent factors in the emergence of social behavior (p.67).

Causes of stress in adolescence

Adolescents suffer from stress due to various reasons some of including lack of freedom in doing affairs and disagreement with adults, too much expectation in doing affairs, different generations and obligation in the acceptance of the ideas of adults, the lack of necessary self-confidence in doing the affairs, physical defects, not having a proper job suiting talent and interest, fear of disease, boredom, etc. With regard to studying some reports about individual's anxiety, depression and level of self-confidence, the results indicate that in terms of interactions, those who enjoyed low level of confidence and low reason able assertiveness, were more vulnerable to stress whereas those who had less anxiety and depression and who enjoyed the necessary self confidence had less stress and anxiety (Shokoop *et al.*, 2006, as cited in Kazemian Moghadam *et al.*, 2008). In high school and in the first year of university which is the final stage of adolescence, there are different regulations for controlling and orienting their energy logically. By creating some regulations, the adults hope that the teenagers keep from misconducts and personal or personality problems and achieve success while being far from stress but sometimes the functions of authorities in schools and universities can pave the way for stress during the teenage years. Society can also sometimes cause stress for the teenagers (Azad, 1995, pp.205-209).

The effect of stress and anxiety on the activities of teenagers

During teenage period, stress can be problematic for teenagers in pursuit of identity and self-worth,

due to some in appropriate factors such as a history of academic failure, a history of serious illness, negative physical and academic self-concept, lack of hope for pursuing studies in university as well as the lack of academic success in university or the question of future employment, lack of interest in the acceptance of social norms, lack of family resources, absence or little presence of parents at home, poor communication of parents, and social factors such as school or college factors. In practice, as Tavakoli (2001) states, stress makes teenagers vulnerable to the problems and creates many different individual and social problems for them (pp.1-2). In another research, the results indicated that the way of responding to stress depends on the imagination of people and choice of individuals' methods in confronting or adapting with it (Bentley *et al.*, 1980, as cited in Graham and Dewey, 1991). The results of three studies on aggression, anxiety and anger indicate that everybody shows sensitivity with regard to the notion of individual differences in connection with pressure sources.

In another study done by Frey and Goodman (2000, as cited by Heydari, 2004), the results indicated that when facing the problems, the girls who showed lower positive orientation (lacking problem-solving skills) showed a high correlation between stress and depression ($r=0/6$) and the girls who have average or higher grades (using positive approach to problem-solving) showed a weak relationship between depression and stress. The findings of the research done by Zaghimi (1987, as cited by Tavakoli) imply that there is a significant relationship between gender and anxiety and on the average, girls have more stress than boys. The anxiety of the students living in the rich part of the city is higher than that of the students living in the poor part of the city. The results of the research conducted by Sheikhol Eslami and Lotfian (2002) indicated that among the different self-images, only the value self-image has got a negative and significant relationship with depression. Also, the students who had higher value self-images enjoyed a better general health condition. There was no significant relationship between gender and general health conditions and its constituents (pp. 6-16). The findings of the study done by Moradi *et al.* (2008) indicated that anxiety decreased the efficiency and functions of processing in oral assignments more than visual assignments. Also, the efficiency of the processing in the group with high anxiety decreased when the group received visual assignment as the

second assignment (p.77). The results of the research conducted by Abolghasemi (2004) indicated a comparison of treatment methods. The results of the research indicated that the treatment method of immunization instruction against stress and reducing the anxiety of taking exam is more effective than the method of systematic desensitization (p.3).

The results of the research conducted by Zolfaghari Motlagh *et al.* (2008) indicated that the parental intervention based on attachment and management training could significantly and statistically reduce the anxiety symptoms of children's separation (pp.380-388). The results of the research done by Kazemian Moghaddam *et al.* (2008) indicated that the systematic desensitization method could reduce test anxiety and could improve the academic functioning of girl students in the experimental group, as compared to the control group (pp.55-77). The results of research conducted by Rahimi *et al.* (2006) indicated that assertiveness training improved social skills, assertiveness and reduced social anxiety (pp. 111-124). In another study done by Nissi *et al.* (2005), the results showed that the variables of self-esteem, perceived social support, psychological hardiness and general anxiety have a significant positive relationship with social anxiety. Among predictor variables, the variables of general anxiety, perceived social support and psychological hardiness are the best predictor of social anxiety (pp. 4-3). Based on the research results of Ostvar *et al.* (2006), it was estimated that after controlling depression symptoms, adolescents with high social anxiety are more likely to create negative social events than adolescents with low social anxiety but they remember socially negative words less than before (pp. 364-349). According to the results of the research conducted by Alirezaei (2009), there is no significant difference between the participants' average anxiety scores in the experimental and control groups before cognitive - behavioral therapy.

While after the cognitive - behavioral therapy, the control group had lower anxiety scores than experimental group. Also, among the participants' average anxiety scores in the experimental group, there are significant differences on Cattell anxiety test before and after cognitive - behavioral therapy (pp. 25-34). We should confess that our children may suffer from stress and anxiety. due to the features such as physical, speed of growth and change in appearance, rational characteristics, flourishing of art talents and job interests, being always in the excitement and emotional characteristics and con-

stantly tending to go from one emotion to another, social characteristics and having a tendency for friendship and social groups, social identity problems, problems related to physical growth, problems related to social growth, family problems, academic problems, personality problems such as shyness, lack of responsibility, feelings of inferiority, lack of confidence, problems related to thinking about and concern about fear of death, the meaning of life, and other obscure unspoken thoughts. On the one hand, with the acceptance of the facts about social life of man in every period of life, we should accept that under no circumstances, we cannot destroy stressful factors of life forever for some people, but we can learn effective ways to reduce the severity of it and manage it. When every man at any age, especially during adolescence takes responsibility for his own actions, in that case, he can live with less stress. Teenager with the big help of God and God's creations has a clean heart ready to accept everything. He is like a favorable land which is ready to accept any kind of seed. Faith and morality are considered two powerful tools in ensuring the honesty of the world salvation hereafter and in ensuring their health and happiness against the pests of the life. Therefore, it is better for education and training officials to create better conditions for growing this vulnerable class i.e., teenagers. In the meantime, it must be said that teenagers need a quiet living environment full of emotions, affections, love, respect, tranquility and mental security in the home, school, university and community so that they can be trained. The way of the up-bringing of children and interactions of family members are of paramount importance in the formation of personality and behavior of the teenagers. The proper emotional atmosphere in the family helps the teenager directly to grow self-confidence. Warm and intimate relationship in the family increases creativity and a sense of psychological security in children.

Conclusions

According to the results of the research, in this paper, we provide a few items as applied guidelines:

- Strengthening the spirit of faith, belief, belief in psychological support and having a strong support in the system of creation;
- Knowing that he is not alone., and he always believes in the one who created him with logic;
- Contributing to the formation of their true identity and personality with regard to the devel-

opment of education principles in the process of growth;

- Strengthening the spirit of spontaneity and conscientiousness in male and female teenagers in the identification of problems and obstacles of life and improving the capacities and their carrying against the hardships;

- Developing motivation, moving forward through increased life expectancy and improved spirit of self-belief, self-control and self-esteem and assertiveness in the long run can make teenagers be successful in various fields in life;

- Respecting the teenagers and accepting them in all areas of his life, responding to their reasonable requests;

- Reinforcing a positive self-esteem in adolescents in such a way that with real self-esteem and self-confidence, their stress or anxiety will be managed and reduced;

- Providing the right conditions for their active participation in various areas and avoiding loneliness and illogical reclusiveness;

- Learning good communication skills and successful interactions with others which lead to increased self-esteem, self-concept and compatibility;

- Eliminating the feeling of helplessness and inability to think through situations logically in terms of physical and mental ability of teenagers;

- Participating in group discussion and problem-solving which in turn has got a heavy effect on logical assertiveness and on improving self-confidence of teenagers;

- Linking job and work, family life atmosphere, new academic environment which in turn reduces stress and anxiety in teenagers

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