
LEARNING GUIDE

**ADOLESCENT COGNITION:
THINKING IN A NEW KEY**

Narration By

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(30 Minutes)



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It is not just teenage bodies that undergo tremendous changes in adolescence. Young minds begin working in new ways that sometimes cause awkward situations just as do the newly elongated legs or deeper voices.

Referring to the work of Piaget, Erikson, Goffman and his own studies, David Elkind looks at the intellectual, emotional and social consequences that result from the changes in thinking. These changes permit new ways of reasoning and enable students to take on much more challenging materials. Sometimes the transition results in inconsistent forms of thinking which create social and emotional difficulties.

This video includes newly shot footage in a public middle school and structured interviews illustrating the intellectual challenges of this period of life when adolescents are constructing personal identities and new mental capacities.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a time of passage into a new phase of life- commonalties across time and culture:

- Even the teenagers described by Aristotle in his Rhetorica are recognizable today.
- Intellectual aspects are as important as the more commonly studied physical and social changes.
- Sometimes there are awkward transitions into adult forms of thought.
- Ancients saw syllogistic logic appearing about age 6 or 7 and called it the Age of Reason. This corresponds to the Concrete Operational stage of Jean Piaget. *Concrete* refers to the logic applies to tangible items; this stage enables children to operate according to rules, a necessary requirement for formal education.

FORMAL REASONING

Barbel Inhelder and Jean Piaget defined this stage

Elements of Formal Reasoning:

- Abstractions- using symbols for other symbols
Proverb example with a longitudinal example.
Young people need this ability to successfully deal with subjects like algebra.
- Propositions-argue from the basis of a statement
Over-use results in argumentative nature of many teens.
Need opportunities to use this skill.
- Ideals-imagine possibilities
Adolescents tend to be idealists.
Difficult to distinguish between what they can imagine and reality, i.e.: other people's parents seem better than their own.
Leads to creativity in many fields.
- Think about Thinking
Can criticize their own work.
Privacy becomes a big issue as they can imagine other's reactions to themselves.

Imaginary audience

Self conscious- think everyone is as interested in them as they are in themselves.

Children and older teens less self-conscious as demonstrated with structured interview.

Personal fable

Bad things happen to others not us- lead to risk taking behavior.

Applies to all ages, but at its peak in adolescence.

Personal Fable Scale shows that teens who think they are special and invulnerable are more likely to indulge in risky behaviors.

Strategic Interactions

Concept developed by sociologist Erving Goffman.

Action taken to conceal, scramble or manipulate information in order to attain a particular goal.

Gum-plastic chewing episode is used as example.

- Combinatorial Logic- hold many variables in mind at the same time

Science class example of evaluating toilet paper on several measures.

Leads to ability to prioritize, a skill teens find difficult.

Pseudo-stupidity- reading more into a problem than is really there.

SENSE OF PERSONAL IDENTITY

- Erik Erikson saw the construction of this as a lifetime activity but also the defining challenge of the teenage years.
- Adolescents need Formal Reasoning to pull together aspects of themselves into a coherent whole.
- Social aspects also important. Young people define themselves through memberships in groups. Groups tend to be more inclusive during teenage years.
- Adolescents need to include academic success as an aspect of the construction of a sense of personal identity.

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