Adolescence and Young People’s Health & Well-being

Meaning of adolescence: ‘the period in human growth and development that occurs after childhood and before adulthood, from ages 10 to 19.’ (World Health Organisation)

It represents a critical transition period in the life span, characterized by tremendous pace in growth and change.

Cultural context
- Just like research with children needs to be understood in relation to research on their childhood, research with young people needs to understand how young people are viewed socially.
- Use historical or cross cultural views of youth to relativise our understandings and expectations.

E.G.: Responsibility? Compare the responsibility held by a 12 year old girl in Kenya who looks after her 2 year old brother all day while her mum works, with that of a middle class child not trusted to carry her violin home safely.

Compare the autonomy of a street child with a Western teenager. Consider how latchkey children of the 1950’s compare with Nordic children who happily walk home from school and spend 3 hours at home before parents return from work, in 21st century.

Key changes and processes:
- Biological: growth, sexual maturity, hormonal changes, mood swings, changing appearance.
- Psychological
- Cognitive
- Social

‘Storm and stress’:
GS Hall introduced the concept in relation to adolescence in 19004.
Reconsidered by JJ Arnett in 1999 and Rutter in 1976.

Looked at mainly in relation to relationships with family, mood swings and risk behaviour.

Arnett’s general support for ‘storm and stress’ even though not universal.
Psychoanalytical view of adolescence.
Rutter’s examination of adolescence, alienation, inner turmoil and psychiatric disorder.

Growing independence and risk taking:
- Increasing influence of peers relative to parents
- Risk and uncertainty are a normal part of growing up.
- Taking risks can, for some, mean the difference between staying at home and joining activities with friends and peers.
- Most young people see risk taking as positive and can find it rewarding to ‘live on the edge’ (Matza 1969, Lyng 2004).

Many identities, not one identity:
- Ethnic and racial
- Gender
- Scholastic