**Chapter 5 Early Childhood**

Body Growth and Change

Height and Weight:

Average growth is 2.5 inches and 5 to 7 pounds per year during early childhood

Girls are only slightly smaller and lighter than boys

Overall decline in body fat during preschool years

Brain growth slows during early childhood

Brain has reached 95% of adult volume by age 6

Changes in child’s brain structure:

Myelination: nerve cells are covered and insulated with a layer of fat cells

Increases the speed and efficiency of information

Important in the development of many abilities

Rapid, distinct spurts of growth and loss as brain continues to reorganize itself

Most rapid growth takes place in frontal lobe areas

Planning, organizing new actions, maintaining attention

Motor Development

Gross motor skills:

Simple run-and-jump movements at age 3

Child becomes more adventurous at age 4

Child is self-assured and often takes risks at age 5

Fine motor skills:

Can pick up tiniest objects at age 3, but still a little clumsy

Improved fine motor coordination at age 4

Has better eye, hand, and body coordination by age 5

Nutrition

Nutrition in children:

Percentage of overweight and obese children has increased dramatically in recent decades, from 5% in 1980, to 10.4 % in 2008, to 12.1% in 2010

Overweight young children

Serious health problems in early childhood

Strongly influenced by caregivers’ behavior

Determined by body mass index U.S. has second highest rate of childhood obesity

Physical Activity and Exercise

Young children should engage in physical activity every day

Most children do not get the recommended amount of physical activity

Observing play at preschools show mainly sedentary activity even when playing outdoors

Malnutrition:

Poor nutrition affects many preschool age children

Most common in young children from low-income families

Programs such as WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) help to address this problem

Illness and Death

Leading causes of death in U.S. children are:

Motor vehicle accidents

Cancer

Cardiovascular disease

Safety is influenced by family and home, school and peers, and actions of the community

Exposure to parental smoking is another major danger to children

State of the World’s Children (UNICEF):

Mortality rate of children under 5 is the result of a wide range of factors:

Nutritional health and knowledge of mothers

Level of immunization

Dehydration

Availability of maternal and child health services

Income and food availability in the family

Availability of clean water and safe sanitation

Overall safety of child’s environment

The poor are the majority in nearly one of every five nations in the world

Dramatic increase in number of young children worldwide who have died from HIV/AIDS

Typically transmitted from parents

Especially likely in countries with high poverty and low education

Cognitive Changes

Piaget’s Preoperational Stage (2 to 7 years):

Children begin to represent the world with words, images, and drawings, form stable concepts and begin to reason

Cognitions are dominated by egocentrism and magical beliefs

Preoperational: child does not yet perform operations, or reversible mental actions

Children can only do mentally what they can do physically

Symbolic Function Substage (2 to 4 years):

Child gains the ability to mentally represent an object that is not present

Egocentrism: the inability to distinguish between one’s own perspective and someone else’s perspective

Animism: the belief that inanimate objects have lifelike qualities and are capable of action

Intuitive Thought Substage (4 to 7 years):

Children begin to use primitive reasoning and want to know the answers to questions

Centration: centering attention on one characteristic to the exclusion of all others

Conservation: altering a substance’s appearance does not change its basic properties

Children may be able to conserve in one area but not another

Conservation may appear earlier than Piaget originally thought

Vygotsky’s Theory:

Social constructivist approach: Emphasizes social contexts of learning

Construction of knowledge through social interaction

Children think and understand primarily through social interaction

The mind is shaped by the cultural context

Zone of proximal development (ZPD): range of tasks that are too difficult for the child alone but that can be learned with guidance

Lower limit can be achieved by child working independently

Upper limit can be achieved by child with adult guidance

Captures skills that are in the process of maturing

Scaffolding: changing level of support during a teaching session

Vygotsky and Language:

Children use speech to communicate socially and to help them solve tasks

Language is used for social communication, solving tasks, and monitoring one’s own behavior

Private speech: use of language for self-regulation

Inner speech becomes their thoughts

Language and thought develop independently of each other and then merge

Child uses language to communicate with others before she/he can focus on inward thoughts

Transition to use of internal speech occurs between ages 3 and 7 and is followed by action without speaking aloud

Children who use private speech more are typically more socially competent

Research finds private speech is used more during difficult tasks; users are more attentive and perform better

Vygotsky’s Teaching Strategies:

Effectively assess child’s ZPD

Use the child’s ZPD in teaching

Use more-skilled peers as tutors

Monitor and encourage child’s use of private speech

Place instruction in a meaningful context

Transform the classroom with Vygotskian ideas

Evaluating Vygotsky’s Theory:

Vygotsky overemphasized the role of language

Possible problems with collaboration and guidance

Information Processing Approach:

A child’s ability to pay attention improves significantly during the preschool years

Deficiencies in memory:

Salient versus relevant dimensions: young children will pay attention to flashy, attractive stimuli even when it is not relevant

Planfulness: young children do not tend to engage in systematic plans for analysis

Memory:

Short-term:individuals can retain information up to 30 seconds with no rehearsal

Short-term memory generally increases during early childhood but varies between individuals

Speed and efficiency of memory processes improve with age and experience

Memory becomes more accurate with age

Young children can remember a great amount of information when given the right cues and prompts

How accurate are young children’s long-term memories?

There are age differences in children’s susceptibility to suggestion

Preschoolers are more suggestible than older children

There are individual differences in susceptibility

Interviewing techniques can produce substantial distortions in children’s reports about highly salient events

Most likely recall accurate when interviewer has neutral tone and avoids asking misleading questions.

Theory of Mind: awareness of one’s own mental process and the mental processes of others

Age 18 months – 3 years: children begin to understand three mental states — perceptions, desires, and emotions

Age 3 to 5: children understand false beliefs, and that people can be mistaken

Children demonstrate an inability to “think about thinking”

Potential problems with false belief studies

Only beyond preschool years (5 to 7 years of age) do children have a deepening appreciation of the mind itself

In middle and late childhood, children understand beliefs are interpretive and that the mind is an active constructor of knowledge

In early adolescence, children begin to understand that people can have ambivalent feelings or experience conflicting feelings at the same time

Individual Differences in Theory of Mind:

Children perform better on theory of mind tasks when:

They have more siblings at home (especially when they are older)

They talk with their parents about feelings frequently

They engage in pretend play

Gender Differences in Theory of Mind:

Some research suggests that girls understand false beliefs earlier than boys

Parents tend to discuss emotions more with daughters than with sons

Girls tend to have better overall language ability

Autism leads to large deficits in theory of mind

Especially difficult to understand others’ beliefs and emotions

Individual variation in autistic chilren

During preschool years, children:

Become more sensitive to the sound of spoken words

Make all the sounds of their language

Demonstrate a knowledge of morphology rules

Learn and apply syntax rules

Rapidly learn new words

Talk about things that are not present

Use different styles of speech to suit the situation

Changes in syntax and semantics

Advances in pragmatic

Young children’s literacy

Strategies for using books effectively with preschool children

Early Childhood Education

Variations in Early Childhood Education:

Child-centered kindergarten: emphasizes the education of the whole child and concern for his or her physical, cognitive, and socioemotional development

Montessori approach: teacher is a facilitator; child is given freedom and spontaneity

Young children learn best through active, hands-on teaching methods

Educational practices should be developmentally appropriate, taking into consideration the uniqueness of the child

Education for Disadvantaged Children:

Project Head Start:

Federally funded, created in 1965

Not all programs in the U.S. are of equal quality

Seeks to intervene where there is a lack of enriched early childhood educational experiences

Evaluations support the positive influence of quality early childhood programs for disadvantaged young children

Controversies in Early Childhood Education:

What should the curriculum be?

Should preschool education be universal in the United States?



**Early Childhood: Psychosocial Development**

Emotional Development

**Emotional Regulation**

The ability to control when and how emotions are expressed due to connections between limbic system and prefrontal cortex

**Initiative versus guilt**

Erikson’s third psychosocial crisis, in which children undertake new skills and activities and feel guilty when they do not succeed at them.

**Self-concept:** A person’s understanding of who he or she is, incorporating self-esteem, appearance, personality, and various traits (e.g. gender, size).

Protective Optimism: Preschoolers predict that they can solve impossible puzzles, remember long lists of words, and control their dreams.

Helps them try new things

Culture and Emotional Control

Goals for emotional regulation that seem to be important in certain cultures:

Overcome fear (United States)

Modify anger (Puerto Rico)

Temper pride (China)

Control aggression (Japan)

Be patient and cooperative (Native American communities)

Seeking Emotional Balance

Lack of emotional regulation may be an early sign of **psychopathology** (disorder of the mind)

**Externalizing problems**

expressing powerful feelings through uncontrolled physical or verbal outbursts, as by lashing out at other people or breaking things

**Internalizing problems**

turning one’s emotional distress inward, as by feeling excessively guilty, ashamed, or worthless

The Brains of Boys and Girls

Neurological and hormonal effects:

Boys tend to be aggressive (externalizing)

Girls tend to be anxious (internalizing)

Children of both sexes usually learn to regulate their emotions as their brains mature and their parents nurture them

Play

Play is the most productive and enjoyable activity that children undertake

Play is universal and timeless

Form of play changes with age and culture

Increasingly complex social play is due to brain maturation coupled with many hours of social play

Children must learn how to make, and keep, friends

Young children play best with *peers*

Toddlers are not yet good playmates

Playmates

Peers:

People of about the same age and social status

Provide practice in emotional regulation, empathy, and social understanding

Children usually prefer to play with each other rather than with their parents

Cultural Differences of Play

Physical setting of a culture shapes play

Some communities provide many toys and close supervision

Others leave children to play on their own with whatever they find

Types of Play (Midred Parten, 1932)

*Solitary play*:A child plays alone, unaware of any other children playing nearby.

*Onlooker play*:A child watches other children play.

*Parallel play*:Children play with similar toys in similar ways, but not together.

*Associative play*:Children interact, observing each other and sharing material, but their play is not yet mutual and reciprocal.

*Cooperative play*:Children play together, creating and elaborating a joint activity or taking turns.

Active Play

**Rough-and-tumble play:** Play that mimics aggression through wrestling, chasing, or hitting, but in which there is no intent to harm.

Expressions and gestures (e.g. play face) signifying that the child is "just pretending”

Particularly common among young males

Ample space, distant adults, and presence of friends increase likelihood

Advances children’s social understanding but increases likelihood of injury

Drama and Pretending

**Sociodramatic play:** Pretend play in which children act out various roles and themes in stories that they create.

Sociodramatic play enables children to:

Explore and rehearse social roles

Test their ability to explain and to convince playmates of their ideas

Practice regulating their emotions by pretending to be afraid, angry, brave, and so on

Develop a self-concept in a nonthreatening context

Parenting Styles

Diana Baumrind (1967, 1971). Parents differ on four important dimensions:

*Expressions of warmth*:From very affectionate to cold and critical

*Strategies for discipline*:Parents vary in whether and how they explain, criticize, persuade, ignore, and punish.

*Communication*:Some parents listen patiently to their children; others demand silence.

*Expectations for maturity*:Parents vary in the standards they set for their children regarding responsibility and self-control.

Baumrind’s Styles of Parenting

**Authoritarian parenting:** High behavioral standards, strict punishment of misconduct, and little communication

**Permissive parenting:** High nurturance and communication but little discipline, guidance, or control

**Authoritative parenting:** Parents set limits and enforce rules but are flexible and listen to their children

**Neglectful/uninvolved parenting:** Parents are indifferent toward their children and unaware of what is going on in their children’s lives

Children of authoritarian parents tend to

become conscientious, obedient, and quiet but not especially happy

feel guilty or depressed and blame themselves when things don’t go well

rebel as adolescents and leave home before age 20

Children of permissive parents tend to:

be unhappy and lack self-control, especially in peer relationships

suffer from inadequate emotional regulation

be immature and lack friendships (main reason for their unhappiness)

continue to live at home, still dependent, in early adulthood

Children of authoritative parents tend to:

be successful, articulate, happy with themselves, and generous with others

be well-liked by teachers and peers, especially in societies in which individual initiative is valued

Baumrind’s Three Styles of Parenting

Children of uninvolved parents tend to:

be immature, sad, lonely and at risk of abuse

may have social and cognitive problems

Problems with Baumrind’s Parenting Styles

Her original sample had little economic, ethnic, or cultural diversity.

She focused more on attitudes than daily interactions.

Some authoritarian parents are very loving toward their children.

Some permissive parents guide their children intensely, but with words, not rules.

She overlooked the child’s contribution to the parent-child relationship.

Children, Parents and the New Media

Children who watch televised violence become more violent themselves.

Racial and gender stereotypes are still evident in children’s programs.

Educational television may have positive effects.

Experts recommend that parents limit their young children’s television viewing and spend more time talking and playing with them.

Internet and electronic games *can* be harmful if violent

No electronic media recommended for those under age 2 by APA, AAP,AMA, etc.

Some electronic media is OK but children tend to pick those that are not.

Adult selection & supervision are needed

Moral Development

**Empathy:** The ability to understand the emotions and concerns of another person, especially when they differ from one’s own.

**Antipathy:** Feelings of dislike or even hatred for another person.

**Prosocial behavior:** Actions that are helpful and kind but that are of no obvious benefit to the person doing them.

Increases from age 3 to 6

**Antisocial behavior:** Actions that are deliberately hurtful or destructive to another person.

Declines beginning at age 2

**Instrumental aggression:** Hurtful behavior intended to get something that another person has and to keep it.

**Reactive aggression:** An impulsive retaliation for another person’s intentional or accidental action, verbal or physical.

**Relational aggression:** Nonphysical acts, such as insults or social rejection, aimed at harming the social connection between the victim and other people.

**Bullying aggression:** Unprovoked, repeated physical or verbal attack, especially on victims who are unlikely to defend themselves.

Parental Discipline

Young children gradually come to understand things from other viewpoints.

When the sense of self is developing, sharing becomes more difficult.

Young children are eager to talk and think, but they say more than they really understand. Explanations and discussion before and after misbehavior help children learn.

Children may disconnect a misdeed from the punishment.

Physical Punishment

Some researchers believe that physical punishment is harmless; some don’t.

Physical punishment increases obedience temporarily, but increases the possibility of later aggression.

Many children who are spanked do not become violent adults; other factors (e.g. poverty, temperament) are stronger influences.

**Psychological control:** involves threatening to withdraw love and support and that relies on a child’s feelings of guilt and gratitude to the parents.

**Time-out:** involves separating a child from other people and activities for a specified time.

Becoming Boys and Girls

Age 2: Children know whether they are boys or girls and apply gender labels consistently

Age 4: Children are convinced that certain toys (such as dolls or trucks) are appropriate for one gender but not the other

Sex and Gender

**Sex differences:** Biological differences between males and females, in organs, hormones, and body shape.

**Gender differences:** Differences in the roles and behaviors that are prescribed by a culture for males and females.

Initial confusion about gender and sex

Age 5: Increased awareness of sex and gender differences

Age 8: Belief that their biological sex is a permanent trait

Increase of awareness of sex differences, preferences for same-sex playmates and stereotypical gender activities from age 2 to age 8

Theories of Sex Role Development

Behaviorism

Gender differences are the product of ongoing reinforcement and punishment

"Gender-appropriate" is rewarded more frequently than "gender-inappropriate" behavior

*Social learning* theory:Children notice the ways men and women behave and internalize the standards they observe

Cognitive Theory

**Gender schema**

A child’s cognitive concept or general belief about sex differences, which is based on his or her observations and experiences.

Young children categorize themselves and everyone else as either male or female, and then they think and behave accordingly.