

Identity

Health Promotion Disease Prevention
N4225

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Defining Identity

Webster's Dictionary

Identity: 1 The condition of or fact of being the same or exactly alike; sameness; oneness. [groups united by identity of interest] 2 The condition or fact of being a specific person or thing; individuality

Webster's Thesaurus

Identity: 1 Individuality, uniqueness, integrity; character; personality 2 Identification, antecedents, true circumstances, parentage, status, citizenship, nationality, connections

Identity

- Abstract concept
- Not something we are born with (only genetic identity)
- Develops over time
- Constantly evolving

Dimensions of Self

- Genetic
- Physiologic
- Physical (gender, age)
- Emotional
- Social
- Cultural
- Moral
- Spiritual

Gorin & Arnold(1998) Health Promotion Handbook pp 343

Define yourself

Who are you? (3 words)

Identity and Health are Dependent on one Another

WHO

- Health is a state that is not determined by the absence of disease but by optimal levels of physical, mental and social wellbeing.”
- Physical mobility, independence and control are impossible for those with disabilities to achieve

Faull et al (2004) Investigation of health perspectives . . .

Faull et al. Identity

- Health and identity are dependent on one another
- Disability strengthens one’s sense of “I”
- “Rather than health being achieved *despite* disability, participants believed they had achieved health *because* of disability.”

‘Normal’ Identity Development

Actions to Sustain Self Development

- Maintenance of relationships that provide nurture, support
- Participation in purposeful activity, working, productivity, provide income and support and satisfaction
- Adequate nutrition, exercise and rest
- Participation in education and recreational activities
- Enjoyment of aesthetic and cultural activities
- Enhancement of spirituality
- Experience necessary losses and grief
- Introspection and self examination

Gorin & Arnold (pp352)

Family

“Among the various systems with which the individual affiliates and in which the individual is nurtured, the family is surely the most significant”

Gorin & Arnold pp.340

The Family serves to:

- Educate
- Role play
- Set rules/norms
- Define responsibilities
- Provide decision making skills
- Supports personal boundaries and eventually separation . . . leading to self care

Gorin & Arnold pp340

Adolescence

Erickson

The central task of adolescence is formation of a stable identity

“Serendipity”

- One adolescents thoughts reflecting identity development
- A window into an adolescents mind
- Themes
 - Fear
 - Risks
 - Transformation of self
 - Torn between childhood and adulthood
 - Self image
 - Difficulty in asking for help and guidance
 - Desire for autonomy
 - Relationship development
 - Dreams

“Serendipity”

*Thoughts rushing through my mind
Answers I need to find
A reason without fault
To unlock this forbidden vault
Full of fears and pain galore
So helpless wanting nothing more
Hiding within the depths of unhappiness
Fully knowing the risks of this
But unable to break away
So scared that I must stay
Petrified to transform
But sick of being so forlorn
Torn between both worlds I live
But unwilling to give in
I walk the ropes of sanity
Lacking any potential vanity
Engulfed in terror here I stand
Longing for a helping hand
But incapable of such a request
Losing myself in this vast mess
Hanging on by one last thread
Dreams exploding in my head
Thoughts combining into one
This night is nearly done
But one last thing I do inquire
As the night feasts upon my desire
I ask that no one show me any pity
And that my life be left to serendipity . . .*

-Anonymous

Erickson's components of healthy identity

- Development of personal identity (sense of uniqueness, and self esteem)
- Sense of autonomy, independence from parents
- Ability to relate to same sex and opposite sex peers
- Commitment to a vocational choice

Race

Chestang's identity

- Total identity is made up of
 - Personal identity
 - Racial identity

Yancey, Antronette (1992)

Abnormalities/ Pathology of Identity Development

Defining Identity Crisis

Webster's Dictionary

Identity Crisis: The condition of being uncertain of one's feelings about oneself, esp. with regard to character, goals, and origins, occurring esp. in adolescence as a result of growing up under disruptive, fast-changing conditions.

Identity Crisis

- Refusal to self examine
- Inability to form positive relationships
- Lack of decision making skills
- Dependence
- Avoiding responsibility
- Unwillingness to make moral judgments or the absence of morality

'Onion Skin'

"I see myself as an onion, composed of different layers. The external layers are for people that I don't know that well. The agreeable, the social [layers], and as you go inward, there are more sides [that I show] to people I know. I am not sure about the innermost [layer], whether there is a core."

-Anonymous college student

Gilligan, In a Different Voice, pp 67

Challenges to Identity

- Teen parenting
- Foster Care
- Poor mental health
- Gender identity disorders
- Trauma
- Chronic illness
- Physical Disability
 - Acute
 - Chronic
- Grief
- Many other challenges

Teen Parenting

- Lists generated by teen parents expresses different wants, needs and expectations of 'typical teens' and 'typical parents'

Gallin, Bitton, Positive Parenting Curriculum (2002)

Typical Teen Characteristics

- Independent
- Experimentation
- Exploration
- Self-centered/self absorbed
- Spontaneous
- Unpredictable
- Unreliable
- Irresponsible

Typical Parent Characteristics

- Dependable
- Satisfied
- Stable
- Selfless
- Planned
- Predictable
- Reliable
- Responsible

Teens

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Foster Care “Nobody’s Children”

- *“Without the filter of good parenting, the immediate environment and broader social milieu exert their destructive influences unchallenged.”*
- Foster youths personal identity achievement is adversely affected.
- Positive racial identity is impaired, stable and healthy total identity is extremely unlikely.”

Yancey, Antronette (1992) Identity formation . . . in foster adolescents

Yancey (1992)

“The task of positive self-image formation in children of color includes perception of racial differences, identification as a member of a socially devalued group, and coexisting acceptance of the self as a unique and worthy individual, while distancing oneself from the inferior societal stereotype of the majority.”

*“**Parents** aid children in distinguishing between their own self image and the role imposed by society”*

PRIDE

- Personal and Racial/Ethnic Identity Development and Enhancement
- *“To support the development of a stable identity, ethnically marginalized youngsters in foster care must be exposed to positive role models of the same ethnicity and of both genders.”*
- Hybrid of one on one mentoring and career days
- “Who am I?” Where do I fit into the world?”
- Teens reported feeling less isolated and relief that adults in their situation had “made it”

Yancey, Antronette (1998)

Poor Mental Health

Eating Disorders “Who am I?”

- Compulsive overeater “She’s not Fat, She’s my mom”
- Anorexia
- Bulimia

Addictions

- Alcohol & Drug abuse
- He Wo Un Poh: Recovery in Native America

Alzheimer’s Disease

Dementia is viewed as a threat to self

Clare, L. Managing threats to self:
Alzheimer’s disease (2003)

Self Maintaining Stance

- Protects self from threat
- Normalizes situation
 - “normal wear and tear”
 - “It’s got a lot to do with age.”
- Minimize difficulties
 - “just a jumble”
- Maintains prior sense of self

Clare

Self Adjusting Stance

- Engage potential threat and attempt to integrate experience into the self
- Confront difficulties
- Adjust one’s sense of self accordingly

Clare

Is lack of awareness a **symptom** of dementia or a **response** made by a threatened self?

Other Mental Health Conditions

- Susan White, "Mistaken Identity"
- Oliver Sacks

Gender Identity Disorder

- Persistent cross gender identification (in childhood)
- Evidence of discomfort about one's assigned sex
- Significant distress or impairment in social, occupational or other areas of functioning
- Overwhelming desire of the patient to acquire the anatomical sexual characteristics of the chosen gender

Bower (2001) The gender identity disorder in the DSM-IV.

'Red flag' associated disorders

- Social isolation commonly seen in males, particularly during adolescence
- Frequency of anxiety-depression syndrome
- Frequency of personality disorder
- Engagement in personality disorder

Ethics of gender identity disorder?

- Physically, endocrinologically and genetically normal individual
- Only treatment is surgical sex reassignment
- Disorder is based solely on subjective diagnosis of provider

Bower(2001) The gender Identity Disorder in the DSM IV

<http://www.jennifer-o.com/>

Chronic Illness

The Case of Alice Alcott

Kleinman, Arthur, M.D. The Illness
Narratives: Suffering, Healing & the
Human condition (1988)

Alice Alcott's Identity Crisis

- The loss of confidence in one's health and normal bodily processes
- A betrayal of fundamental trust, mourning for the bodily foundation

Kleinman, Arthur, M.D. (1988)

How Can We Help?

"Empowerment"

Grief & Loss

Loss as part of natural development

- Loss of innocence
- Loss of youth

Unexpected Loss

- Sudden death
- Loss of employment
- Having to move **

Expected loss

- Terminal illness

Relationship Loss

- Divorce

Grieving at Times of Change

- Graduation
- New Year
- Birthday

“Unacknowledged grief can put a whole in one’s identity ie. A person’s family may be un-whole without it’s member.”

Gorin & Arnold

In Conclusion

We are born only with a genetic identity

*As nurses and providers of health promotion
and disease prevention we can assist
people in their quest for a positive identity,
in turn enabling them to achieve a state of
good health.*