**Adjustment in adolescence**

When a developmental stage of adolescence is described as a stage of turbulence, a ‘period of storm and stress’, of emotional instability, and a problem age, exploring the truth behind such statements generates interest. The complex and dynamic nature of current social context is posing greater challenges, which further justifies the need to take a closer look into the world of adolescents as well as understanding the manner in which they face various challenges.

**Adolescence** is a **time** of great change in a person's life. In order to deal with the stress of development, **teenagers** can either change their behaviors in a positive way, a process called **adjustment**, or in a negative way, which leads to maladaptive behaviors.

**The changing body and appearance**

The physical self is a major concern in adolescence as compared to any other period of life because new sensations, features and body proportions start emerging. Adolescence begins with the well-defined maturation event called puberty. Although this is a normal maturation process it can cause difficulties for the individual especially, if a young person is precocious in puberty or if puberty is significantly delayed. Because of these dramatic body changes, the adolescent body becomes an important symbol itself in which the adolescent invests emotions of security, self worth, and competence. The adolescent’s body is also a representation of the adolescent’s self . Hence not surprisingly, teenagers spend great time, energy, and money trying to make their appearance conform to some perceived ideal. Many adolescents become anxious about their appearance if their development does not proceed at the same rate as that of their peers.

**The challenges within the family**

Family environment and the related factors also have the potential of causing stress for adolescents. This primarily includes the family’s style of functioning. Some families are very rigid and others laissez-faire, some families are very enmeshed and others are disengaged. Depending on the forms of functioning adopted, different families present different conditions, rules, and expectations regarding depress behaviour and autonomy. Dealing and adapting to these is often a challenging job for adolescents. Parenting style is another important factor related to adolescent stress. If parenting style is the one that inhibits change and tries to maintain the same structure that was applied when the adolescent was a child then the adolescent will struggle to make the changes that are required to move towards adulthood. Other issues like parental alcoholism, domestic violence or financial problems also have a significant impact on adolescent development and are potential sources for raising stress among adolescents.

Problems are also faced by adolescents who grow up in a society where their own family cultural background differs from the major cultural influences of their environment and can lead to conflicts in culturally determined social and moral values and exposure to conflicting beliefs, attitudes and behaviours.

**Beyond the family: Peers, school and others**

Educational problems loom large in the lives of adolescents. Problems relating to school failure, study habits, pupil-teacher relationship, and the like apparently appear in the lives of many high school boys and girls. Educational environment may sometimes be stressful for adolescents as the students have little power and authority, both being issues that are very adverse. In response to particular stresses, some adolescents either refuse to go to school or become truant.

Achievement in school is equated with future success in life, and adolescents are under constant stress to perform well. Sometimes their leisure time activities may be curtailed to increase their study hours.

Making friends and maintaining lifelong ties is a normal phenomenon, more so during the turbulent years of adolescence. Peer group assumes greater importance, owing to the greater degree of acceptance it gives and the amount of time spent in the company of the peers. Adolescents who do not find a minimal degree of acceptance at this time in their lives are likely to suffer lasting consequences of isolation, low self-esteem and stress. Most adolescents tend to devote a great deal of time in developing characteristics which they feel are desirable in themselves, and are constantly striving for a status within the peer group.

**Relationship with the opposite sex**

Adolescents continually face issues which are likely to be stressful for them concerning changes in relationships. As the adolescent matures, relationships with parents, siblings, peers and those in position of authority all undergo change. Adolescence sees the epochal development of experiencing sexual attraction towards others l and it is natural for adolescents to be attracted to peers of the opposite sex. However, these relationships may well be temporary, unstable and vulnerable because adolescents are in a stage of exploration and experimentation.

**The issue of identity and looking towards future**

The other major psychological challenges for the young person with regard to a central feature of adolescence involve the formation of a new identity. The adolescent is no longer a child as a new person is emerging. The young person is in a continuous struggle with the greatest of all issues-‘searching for the meaning and purpose of life’.

At one end, there is striving toward integration of inner and outer directions, and at the opposite end there is identity diffusion leading to a sense of instability in the midst of many confusing inner and outer demands. This polarity must be solved within the span of adolescence if transitory or lasting disturbances in adulthood are to be prevented.