

LESSON 10

CHILDHOOD

SUMMARY

Childhood is associated with play, fantasy, and innocence. It involves growth and development which are critical for the entire life span. The period of childhood is classified into four stages:

- (a) **Infancy (birth to 2 years)**
- (b) **Early childhood (2 to 6 years)**
- (c) **Middle childhood (6 to 11 years)**
- (d) **Adolescence (12 to 19 years)**

Physical and Motor development in Childhood

Physical growth is rapid during infancy, but it is comparatively slower in childhood. Changes in height, weight, muscular and skeletal structure lead to development of motor skills. Studies have shown universal trends in physical and motor development, yet there are large individual differences.

Major Milestones of Physical and motor development are as follows:

Lifting chin up while lying on stomach	1 month
Lifting head and chest	2 months
Rolling over	4 months
Picking up objects with palm without sitting with support	5 months
Finer use of thumb and fingers	7 months
Sitting alone (without support)	8 months
Standing with support (holding on to	8-9 months

furniture)	9 months
Crawling	9-10 months
Standing independently	12-13 months
Taking few steps without holding on and walking holding on	13-14 months
Grasping objects with thumb and forefingers	15 months
Walking alone	2 years
Running and climbing stairs	2½ years
Walking on tip toe	3 years
Riding a tricycle	4 years
Throwing ball over head, walking down stairs with one foot to a step	6 years
Copying complex figures	

Gross and Fine Motor Development

Motor development is divided into two categories:

Gross motor- refers to control over large muscle groups that enable the child to get around, e.g., crawling, standing and walking. They usually involve the limbs or the whole body.

Fine motor - refers to control over smaller muscle movement e.g., grasping, pinching etc. These are necessary to engage in smaller, more precise movements.

Child's age	Activities involving Fine Motor Skills
0 and 3 months	Holding an object
3 and 6 months	Trying to reach out for objects, putting things in mouth
6 months	Trying to hold food,

and 1 year	using hand and fingers to play games
1 and 1-1/2 years	Scribble on paper, trying to play throw and catch with the ball
1-1/2 and 2 years	Drawing lines with pencil, using a spoon to eat food with little help
2 and 3 years	Brushing teeth and buttons cloths with help
3 and 5 years	Builds using building blocks, uses a pencil to draw, turn pages of a book
5 and 7 years	Draws various shapes very easily, brushes and combs without support, cuts shape very clearly

Physical and Motor Development in Early childhood (2-6 years)

Early childhood/ Pre-school stage (2-6 years) -

- Child is mobile now and interacts with the wider society, resulting in learning of rules for social behaviour.
- Mental abilities develop which prepare for formal education and schooling.
- Locomotion skills such as-walking and running, becomes refined.

2-3 years – Child develops a smooth gait, ability to jump, hop, throwing and catching large balls.

3-4 years – Child can climb stairs (bring both feet together on one step before going to next step), can jump, hop, play throw and catch, learn to ride a tricycle, kick a ball, build tower using blocks, mould clay into various shapes, scribble with crayon. Child begins to show

preference for right or left handedness and use hands for twisting motions required in opening door knobs, jar lids, holds pencil, eat using spoons and forks. Child is toilet trained by this age.

5-6 years – Child is capable of coordinated actions requiring body balance, muscle coordination for fine motor activities improves, can complete self-care tasks, can feed themselves without an adult's help. Child is able to run faster, rides bicycle with training wheels, climb stairs sideways steps, play on swings like- jungle gym, see-saw, slide etc.

Physical Development in Middle Childhood -

During this period physical growth becomes gradual, rate of overt change becomes slower until puberty.

Changes occur in height, weight and muscular strength and swiftness. Large gender differences can be seen. Girls are slightly shorter than boys during 6 to 8 years but then the trend reverses. The growth spurt for boys comes later than for girls.

Children achieve greater control over large and small muscles. They become stronger, faster and attain better motor co-ordination.

School children are energetic and enjoy all types of outdoor games. Increase in cognitive capacity also

helps them learn the rules of new games.

They can copy complex figures and assemble tools and model toys. They become skillful in games requiring skillful eye-hand coordination such as throwing, catching and hitting targets.

Cognitive Development

It refers to the way children learn and process information, and includes attention, perception, language, thinking, memory and reasoning. Piaget described four major stages of cognitive development:

- Sensory-motor stage (Birth- 2 years)
- Pre-operational stage (2-7 years)
- Concrete operational stage (7-11 years)
- Formal operational stage (11+ years)

Cognitive Development in Early Childhood (2-6 years) - Children become proficient in using symbols such as – word, images etc. they have good vocabulary and their sustained attention span is improved. They become selective in their attention and perceptual skills also improve. Thinking becomes logical, memory and information processing improves.

Pre-operational stage (2-6 years)

- a) **Symbolic function** (2-4 years) – child can create mental images of objects and store

them in their minds for later use.

Ego-centrism – inability to see the world from others perspective.

- b) **Intuitive thought** (4-7 years) – Children tend to be so certain of their knowledge and understanding that they are unaware how they gained this knowledge in first place.

Centration – child focus on one characteristic of an object and base their decisions on that only.

Their ability to understand, process, produce language improves. The period of 3-6 years is referred to as ‘language explosion’ as the vocabulary increases from 900 words at 3 years of age to 8000 to 14000 words by 6 years of age. Child form more than two-word sentences and learn and understand grammar rules.

Cognitive development in Middle childhood – In this stage, children are full of curiosity and keen to explore environment. Memory, conceptual knowledge improves, which facilitates logical thinking beyond immediate situation. They engage in music, art, dance and develop other such hobbies in this stage.

Socio-emotional and Personality Development

During early childhood, children typically start to develop self-conscious emotions like shame

and guilt as they start evaluating themselves, instead of simply reacting to caregivers' or other adults' evaluations.

Children become increasingly self-aware, effective at communicating, and understands thoughts and feelings of others, their social skills improve. They become skilled at modifying and expressing their emotions to fit different social situations. This helps them to fit in with groups and helps in creating interpersonal relationships.

Empathy develops during early childhood; it is an important component of positive social behaviour.

Learning how to appropriately express and deal with anger and fear is a valuable life and social skill. Parents and caregivers directly teach ways of controlling emotions and also indirectly influence children's behaviour by acting as models.

As children grow, they begin to mature in their ability to interact with others (i.e., people outside immediate family) socially. They engage in parallel play in which they play beside each other without truly interacting with each other.

Young children begin to play more cooperatively. Often, these first forms of cooperative play include pretend or symbolic play. As they continue to develop socially with peers, they often enter a stage of rough and tumble play which

includes running, racing, climbing, or competitive games. This is the stage when social skills such as learning to take turns and follow simple group rules and norms are practiced.

Middle Childhood - Children show fast change in social relationships. They use social comparison to distinguish themselves from others, start seeing things from other's perspective. They begin to weigh self-worth and increasingly compares themselves with peers.

They are now able to understand emotions of pride and shame and can experience more than one emotion in a given situation. They can suppress emotions and use self-acquired strategies to cope. They internalize or begin to control their values and feelings from within. They start making judgments at this age that impact moral development.

Gender differences are observed during middle childhood. Girls may attach greater importance to good interpersonal relationships and the family, while boys may emphasize the importance of social prestige.

Bullying – it is a common problem at this stage. Research suggest that bullies display certain characteristics, such as being intrusive, having demanding but unresponsive parents. Victims are often depressed and have lower self-esteem.

Self-concept changes from a focus on observable characteristics and typical behaviour and emotions to an emphasis on personality traits, positive and negative characteristics, and social comparisons. The child begins to see his or her own strengths and limitations. This helps the move towards achievement of an identity.

Socialization

The process of acquiring norms, values and beliefs, which are considered significant in a society, is called socialization. It is the process of transmitting cultural values, preferences and patterns of behaviour to children. This is done by various processes, institutions and people.

Early childhood is a crucial period of development because during this period children learn a great deal about the norms, conventions and practices in their families, society and culture. They acquire language and learn the fundamentals of culture. The primary socializing agents during this period are the family members.

Middle childhood is the time when influence of peers and school becomes prominent, though family context remains important. The effect of media is undeniable.

Parenting Styles –

Authoritarian style	•demanding, controlling, insensitive parenting.
Permissive style	•indulgent, non-demanding parenting.
Authoritative style	•firm, consistent parenting, reasons given for discipline.
Neglectful or uninvolved style	•uninterested, uncaring, low control and communication.

Besides family, peers, media and school, there are other factors which influence the socialization process. Ethnicity and socio-economic status of the parents makes an impact on the child's development directly and indirectly. Ethnicity is linked to family size, structure, education, income, composition, extended networks.

Evaluate yourself

1. What do you understand by gross motor development?
2. Explain the physical and cognitive changes of early childhood.