

# A Key Point for Youth Mental Health

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By Benjamin Wagener on January 16<sup>th</sup> 2014.

The development of Human Beings is known to be the slowest of almost all form of Life. Many explain by this slowness various aspects of Human Beings nature and specificities. This is especially the nervous system and our cognitive abilities that are acknowledge having such specificities, by example our special and advanced intelligence, because of this slowness. The nervous system develops in parallel to the development of the body and depending a little bit on the person and perhaps also on the sex we are known to be adult around 16-20 years old. This state of adulthood may be considered in various points of view. Growth by itself is perhaps the earlier state of development to be achieved, then development may be considered from the point of view of sexuality that goes with adolescence or for what is our concern here from the point of view of psychology. It appears actually that the development of the psychology of a human being can go much after the biological maturity and that a full maturity including a psychological maturity may often be reached only around 30 years old or even later.

I would like here to discuss a little bit of this and of what it implies from the point of view of psychology and of mental health. What has appeared to me from various observations that may be quite obvious to anyone is that young people very often undergo a stage of a kind of psychological instability at the beginning of their social adulthood. This can be seen by the various situations of abuses and of the risky medical situations many young people put themselves in. Various situations of drugs abuses, I include here alcohol and tobacco, and many other risky behaviors are observed at this period of human life. The consequences we can observe of this are that the destiny of many persons may indeed be sealed from this period of time and that by example some will go out of this stronger and with a lesson whereas the life of other can be dramatically impaired.

By this, I am not really speaking about what is commonly called the adolescence crisis. I am much more interested about the psychological relationship between young people, adults and the society and even more precisely why this relation causes such exaggerated behaviors. There is here a key mental health and public health issue that address a serious question to our society about the place of young people and the societal coverage of them.

The question of public health it raises may be a difficult one but it is perhaps some of the most important with respect both from a health care point of view and for the consequences it has on the development of our society and on its future. It seems actually unreasonable to let so many young people putting their all life in danger. Moreover it seems even perhaps more unreasonable to accept this state of things without doing what is

necessary to do what could avoid this. Please, becoming an adult in society is not passing a crash test but in some respect it seems to be so.

The key point I would like to speak about is the instability that is caused by the huge difference made in the society between let say a child or an adolescent and an adult. It appears in facts that there is a total and quite brutal gap between adolescence and adulthood that is both disproportionate and inappropriate to the actual development of a human being.

This total gap has no reason to sustain it from a medical or biological point of view. Somehow it has always been made a clear difference between a special class of beings, the children and adolescents, and the real fully considered human beings. There may be various sociological and historical reasons for that but I do not want to enter such questions here nevertheless. The fact about it is that at many levels it causes some problems in the society and it perhaps especially caused mental health problems.

What we can say of growth is that it is a very slow and quite regular process that may be a little bit different from one human being to another. The actual conceptualization of a special class of human beings, considered and treated differently from others, may perhaps have happened along history as an easy way of structuring society but has no justification from a biological point of view.

The consequence of this is quite clear and may explained to some extent the various phases of psychological conflicts or instability that a lot of young people experience. Moreover the psychological pressure that may appear to many young people at the beginning of adulthood may be responsible of later psychological disorders. What we name and observe as the adolescent crisis and that many consider as a natural phase of human being development may indeed be a direct consequence of this misconception and may not be a natural phase at all but a normal result of the historical structure of the society, something that by itself has almost no biological ground. And so this may have no justification from the point of view of Health.

Many could say that the society is how it is and that such things could not or should not change and so that such matter of fact has to be taken for granted. Maybe, but it remains that we can expect a lot of health issues to be answered just by imagining a more adapted structure. This could be something important to consider for the future development of our society with respect to the good consequences it could have.

It can be hoped that with a more regular exterior context of evolution, young people would be lead to develop better and that less health problems would occur. It may not be so easy to put in the place and both parental and societal responsibilities should be taken with regard to a better understanding and management of those questions. Too many young people waste their life at the beginning of their adulthood because of a bad environment and we can really hope that a lot can be avoided. Either risky behaviors like the consumption

and abuses or drugs or various kinds of societal risky behaviors occur and this should be a real concern of the authorities from a public health perspective.

Those young adults or late adolescent should not be somehow considered as adult because their psychology is often far from maturity and moreover they are to be rightly considered as the victim of a society that has forgotten their importance and that is missing its role. Moreover the tendency of this is to do a favor to the richer ("rich" taken in a broad sense) because they are more likely to have an appropriate environment and to put the risk on a part of the society that should normally be helped more but that considered as equal are let helpless. This is something that can only cause more problems to our future society.

We can expect that a better understanding of the relative role of children, adolescent, adults and society be better understood and that such problems appear less. It requires some serious examination of this old problem that concern us all but for which proper issues could be of great effect on our society.

From a public health point of view we can see that less young people would put themselves at risk, and, for the importance it has, this could help to prevent the development of various illness either psychological or even physical because of the consequences risky behaviors have on the long run.

Psychologically, all young people would benefit of a society that would integrate them properly and not brutally and it is quite sure that various psychological disorders would be less likely to develop. The global consequence of this would probably be of great impact on mental health in general.

As a final remark, it seems that this inappropriate societal system that brutally integrate youth into the "true" society has no legitimacy to be let so, either from a biological side or, because it goes with it, from a psychological side.