

Child Development and Family Dynamics
For Children's Representatives in Custody Proceedings
Kathy Shands, M.D.

A Brief Outline of Theories of Child Development

- Cognitive Development (Piaget)
 - Sensorimotor Period (0-2 years)
 - object permanence (18 months)
 - recognition memory vs. evocative memory
 - Pre-operational Thought ((2-7 years)
 - "The Magic Years" (Fraiberg)
 - egocentrism
 - animism
 - size, shape, time
 - contiguity confused with causality
 - Concrete Operations (7-12 years)
 - Abstract Thinking ((13 years and up)

- Emotional Development; Development of Relationships with Others
 - Object Relations (Mahler: "Separation-Individuation")
 - Symbiotic Phase (0-4 months)
 - Differentiation (4-10 months)
 - Stranger reaction (6-9 months)
 - Practicing (10-16 months)
 - Rapprochement (16-25 months)
 - "On the Way to Object Constancy" (2-3 years)

 - Attachment
 - Ainsworth, Bowlby

 - Psychosexual Development
 - Freud

Developmental Tasks for Children of Various Ages

(Adapted from Baris and Garrity)

- **Infants**
 - Form attachment to primary caretakers
 - Develop trust

- **Toddlers**
 - Begin to develop a sense of independence
 - Develop self-awareness
 - Learn to use language and locomotion
 - Develop capacity to use “transitional objects” for comfort

- **Three to Five-Year-Olds**
 - Grow in independence and individuality
 - Develop the capacity to hold absent parent in mind to comfort self for extended periods
 - Develop verbal skills to express of feelings and needs
 - Regulate and master emotions and bodily functions
 - Develop identification with the same-sex parent

- **Six to Eight-Year-Olds**
 - Begin to develop peer relationships
 - Develop a sense of morality
 - Develop empathy and greater internal regulation of impulses
 - Continue to develop a self-concept around competence and mastery

- **Nine to Twelve-Year-Olds**
 - Develop proficiency in skill areas: academic, athletic, artistic
 - Develop an increased awareness of self, evaluating own strengths and weaknesses as compared to others
 - Find a place within the peer group

- **Adolescents**
 - Continue to solidify identity
 - Separate from parents, prepare for independent living, and mourn the loss of childhood and its comfortable dependency and protection within the family
 - Negotiate and solidify peer relationships
 - Learn to handle sexual feelings
 - Establish a sense of self with respect to the rules and regulation of society

What Children Need From Parents at Various Developmental Levels

➤ All Children

- Love
- Empathy
- Firmness and consistency
- Stability and control of own emotions
- Low levels of conflict between parents

➤ Infants

- Nurturing attitude
- Availability
- Attunement to child's needs in absence of verbal communication

➤ Toddlers

- Ability to let child go to explore and return for "emotional refueling"
- Ability to monitor child's activities closely
- Patience

➤ Six-to-Twelve Year Olds

- Ability to foster peer relationships and community activities
- Ability to provide for fostering of proficiencies

➤ Adolescents

- Flexibility
- Ability to tolerate challenging and questioning of parental authority
- Ability to tolerate the child's independence