

Adolescent Psychology

This is a full, two-hour professional development session regarding the psychological and physiological aspects of adolescents, their overall development, and how adults can support their achievements. Dr. Liz Gony, Associate Professor, and licensed psychologist, conducted research to inform this module. This session can be modified to approximately 90 minutes, by omitting the Fishbowl activity.

Participants will learn and understand the dynamics related to adolescent psychology and development, and the transition to adulthood that includes rapid changes in the brain and body, often at different rates. Moreover, it is a time for adolescents' healthy exploration of identity and learning independence, which could also be a stressful and challenging time, given these transformations.

There are three fundamental changes occurring in the body during adolescence: biological, cognitive, and socio emotional. Although adults have all been through adolescence, they may have forgotten the various dynamics. In some cases, adolescents are not cognizant of what they are doing, and why their decisions and actions may not be prudent or sound. In fact, one of the most important aspects of adolescence to understand is, the prefrontal cortex of the brain is continuing to develop, through early adulthood. Therefore, it is critical to understand students, and be able to connect with them, as they experience this growth phase in their brains and bodies, which can have an impact on their mental and emotional state.

Adolescence is also a time when students begin thinking about their futures. Given these and other developmental stages, and the growing needs of adolescents as they matriculate through their secondary education experience, it is essential for adults to understand this human life cycle, and challenges they encounter as a result, and ensure students are fortified with the tools to support them effectively.

While some students tend to focus on short-term goals and do not explore long-term objectives of what they want to do with their lives, it is incumbent for adults to guide them. Through a video, and engaging activities, this session helps adults understand how adolescents develop, what is transpiring in their brains, bodies, as well as their development, and how to be most helpful, as they navigate through school, planning, and making decisions about their future. In doing so, adults will be more inclined to embody more empathy, provide more intentional advising sessions, and interventions.