

DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS

Robert J. Havighurst is a well-known educator and behavioral scientist. He has identified eight developmental tasks of adolescents. Success in these tasks leads to happiness and success in other developmental tasks they will perform later in life. Failure leads to unhappiness, disapproval by society, and difficulty with later developmental tasks.

TASK ONE: To achieve new and more mature relations with peers of both sexes. This includes learning to work well with others in groups, learning to view girls as women and boys as men, and discovering how to become an adult among adults.

TASK TWO: Adopting socially approved masculine or feminine adult roles. This is more difficult today because roles are no longer preset for adolescents. This decision will affect dating patterns, career choices, and overall lifestyle.

TASK THREE: To accept their acquired physique and use their body effectively. They need to accept the myriad of changes taking place in their body and become proud, or at least tolerant, of their body. They need to learn to care properly for their body, to keep it healthy, and to protect it from physical harm and abuse from alcohol, tobacco, and drugs.

TASK FOUR: Achieve emotional independence. To think critically, review alternative choices, and make decisions. Develop a new type of affection for parents on a more adult level. Develop respect for other adults without depending on them.

TASK FIVE: Develop personal attitude toward marriage and family living. Obtain knowledge about marriage relationships, home management, and parenthood.

TASK SIX: Select and prepare for an occupation. Evaluation of personal skills, talents, and goals is necessary to choose an occupation for which the adolescent is well suited. Educational goals are then set to accomplish this task.

TASK SEVEN: Acquire a set of standards as a guide to behavior. It is necessary to form realistic priorities about what is important to the adolescent in life. The process of building personal priorities takes place through relations with others who are important to the adolescent and past experiences in the family and society. These personal priorities are important in guiding behavior and making decisions.

TASK EIGHT: To accept and adopt socially responsible behavior. Adolescents learn how society expects them to act and then incorporate those expectations into the behavioral patterns. This enables them to become an accepted, functioning member of society.

Havighurst believes that parents and adults need to help and guide adolescents through these behavioral tasks that help to prepare them for their future as responsible adults.