

Research Paper

## Contribution of Emotional Maturity and Self-Concept to the Development of Adolescents in COVID-19 and Post COVID-19 Conditions

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### ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing lockdowns created a peculiar and very unusual situation where people who normally spent their quality time outside the home, had to stay at home. Adolescents when at home in normal situations have their freedom to be in the company of their peers physically or through the social media platforms. However, during time of the pandemic and lockdowns, this freedom was also limited to a great extent. This affected the development of a healthy self-concept and emotional maturity of the adolescents. In one of its reports, UNICEF quotes Dr. Damour's coping strategies for mental health of teens during the pandemic. This is actually a suggestion to develop emotional maturity and a healthy self-concept in the Post COVID-19 condition (PCC). Clinical experiences as well as media reports show that for some families and children, the lockdown-induced changes in family routines actually helped reduce child and adolescent mental illness symptoms and even improved their well-being. The purpose of this paper is to provide proper knowledge for parents and teachers to enhance the emotional maturity and healthy self-concept of adolescents during Pandemics and Post COVID-19 condition (PCC). Emotional maturity and a healthy self-concept may not only help them in emerging from the difficult situations but they are also instrumental in helping adolescents acquire the most essential soft skills in daily life of the community of adolescents who are often called as global citizens and powerful agents of change and the next generation of caregivers, scientists, and doctors.

**Keywords:** *Emotional Maturity, Self-Concept, Development of Adolescents, COVID-19, Post COVID-19 Conditions*

According to Dr Flavia Bustreo (2017), Assistant Director-General, WHO, "adolescents have been entirely absent from national health plans for decades". Teasdale et al (2011) in their research found that behavioural responses of the population to pandemics, in their case influenza, can significantly limit or exacerbate the impact on public health. This crisis presents an opportunity to help them relearn compassion and resilience in building a safer home and more caring community. With proper information, healthy self-concept and emotional maturity will help minimize

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students' fears and anxieties during Pandemic COVID-19 and Post COVID-19 conditions (PCC) and they will learn how to cope with its impacts in their lives.

### ***Definition of the Terms:***

#### **Pandemic**

An outbreak of a disease that occurs over a wide geographic area and affects an exceptionally high proportion of the population a pandemic outbreak of a disease. (Merriam Webster) According to WHO a pandemic is a world wide spread of a new disease.

#### **Post COVID-19 Condition**

“According to WHO COVID-19 Pandemic can lead to serious long-term effects, known as post COVID-19 condition (PCC).It is also commonly referred to as long COVID.”

#### **COVID-19**

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new strain of corona virus. ‘CO’ stands for corona, ‘VI’ for virus, and ‘D’ for disease. Formerly, this disease was referred to as ‘2019 novel corona virus’ or ‘2019-nCoV’(WHO).

#### **Adolescents**

Adolescence is a period of speedy biological, psychological and social transformation, and of rapid expansion of social circles. Adolescence is a period characterized by rapid developmental change. In another definition, adolescence is a period of experimentation and exploration as different identities and different attitudes are tried. An adolescent is an individual in the adolescence stage of life, or “the transition stage between childhood and adulthood.”

#### **Self-Concept**

Self-concept, as defined in the Oxford dictionary, is “largely a reflection of the reactions of others towards the individual”. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines self-concept as “the mental image one has of oneself.” In the discourse of the social sciences, according to the Oxford dictionary, it is an idea of the self- constructed from beliefs one holds about oneself and the responses of others.

#### **Dimensions of self-concept**

Three related concepts that contribute towards the formation of the self-concept are self-esteem, self-image and the Ideal Self. In Cooley’s (1902) view, self-image includes what we know about ourselves physically (e.g. brown hair, blue eyes, tall), our social roles (e.g. wife, brother, gardener), and our personality traits (e.g. outgoing, serious, kind). There is another concept of the Ideal Self, or how you wish you could be. In conclusion, there are a multitude of experiences that begin to form a child’s self-concept. According to the social identity theory, self-concept is composed of two key parts: personal identity and social identity. Personal identity includes the traits and other characteristics that make each person unique. Social identity refers to how we identify with a collective, such as a community, religion, or political movement.

According to Carl Rogers, self-concept has three components. Accordingly, Lawrence (1996) called self-concept an “umbrella” term which encompasses the self-image, the ideal-self and the self-esteem of the individual. The first dimension of self-image is self-

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consciousness. It refers to the salience of the self to the individual. Self-image is the way we see ourselves. The self-image therefore can be deemed to develop through a “looking glass”. The second dimension of the self-image is stability. An individual must take account of himself as an important part of a situation and if he is unsure of what he is like, then he is deprived of a basis for action and decision. The second dimension of self-concept is ideal self. The ideal self means what a person wants to be in the future.

The third dimension of self-concept is self-esteem, i.e., the individual's global positive or negative attitude toward himself. Self-esteem is how much one values oneself.

### **Emotional Maturity**

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines Maturity as “the quality or state of being mature”. We grow in maturity when we are faced with challenging situations; when we are tempted to express our fears, hurts, or resentments. In other words, emotional maturity is the right balance between reason and emotion. According to Cole (1954), the most outstanding mark of emotional maturity is the ability to bear tension and it will enable a person to tolerate the frustration that he undergoes.

### ***Studies related to Adolescents:***

Adolescence is the important period for the development of self-concept and appreciation can enhance the healthy self-concept. Self-concept also depends on the social situations and the feedback of the environment in which a child lives. Self-concept of children can be nurtured in their family and society. Adolescence is a time of important role transitions. As Matsueda and Heimer, (1997) conclude, it is a critical time of teenage development. Adolescence is a time when parents and families need to adapt and adjust to accommodate the increasingly maturing adolescent. In his paper “Disturbance in the Self-image at Adolescence” (1973), Rosenberg adopted Gardner Murphy's (1947) view of the self as "the individual as known to the individual." Rosenberg demonstrated that in early adolescence, from the age of 12 to 14 years, the self is characterized by a great disturbance, resulting from the biological, cognitive, and social structural changes that adolescents undergo in this period. He discusses it in its four dimensions and concludes that in each dimension, there is reason to think that the changes would be disturbing for the individual.

Stress in adolescents can have an indirect and long-term as well as direct or immediate impact. The immediate effect can be observed in the thinking of adolescents and the long-term impact is seen later on the behavior of adolescents. Emotional intelligence is one of the factors that influence stress in adolescents. Coping strategies make students better recognize the attitudes or ways one can overcome the problems, especially the coping strategy that focuses on problems and another coping strategy that focuses on emotions. Among the casualties of the COVID-19, a large number was of the adolescents. According to the WHO, even before the outbreak of the pandemic, they died in millions due to road traffic injuries, lower respiratory infections, and suicide. More than two thirds of these deaths occurred in low and middle-income countries in Africa and South-East Asia. Most of such deaths can be prevented with good health services, education and social support. In his study, E. Alpay recommended that the role of the parents in the individual's educational development must not be undervalued. Whatever changes occur in a family's circumstances or its structure, it is the way that the whole family reacts to the changes, the emotional support they give one another and their expectancies for the future that are the prime influences on the child's developing self-concept.

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During adolescence, young people develop a unified sense of self and belonging. Rosenberg (1979) has demonstrated that the consequences of this period of disruption include a markedly unstable self-concept, very low self-esteem, and unusually high levels of depression. It is always advisable for the family to encourage and advise their adolescents about self-care and techniques to reduce stress and mental distress and positive coping strategies, social support, safety planning and avoiding the use of tobacco, alcohol or drugs.

### ***Studies related to Emotional Maturity and Self-Concept of Adolescents:***

A study conducted by Fatima Mumtaz, Young Professional, NITI Aayog, found that just like the pandemic, emotions too are contagious and concludes that we must use our emotions wisely. The study of Irfan Fahriza et al (2020) exhibited that coping strategies are effective to improve the emotional intelligence of students. Emotional maturity is a state of having reached a certain level of emotional development which implies emotional control in social situation. It is important for students to use learning technologies for thinking, organising ideas and creating multimodal products to represent their understanding. One of the most crucial tasks of adolescence, however, according to Michel Walrave et al (2016), is to offer them opportunities to connect with each other, build relationships with the people in their learning communities and explore social identities through the online platforms. Self-awareness and self-regulation can be capitalised on to reduce its spread. At times of crises like this, showing empathy, self-regulation and positive relationships is much needed to maintain a healthy environment in our homes, workplaces, and the public sphere.

The study of Dr. Molly Joy and Ms. Asha Mathew (2018) showed that there was a significant relationship between emotional maturity and general well-being of adolescents. The study of Sunil Kumar (2014) showed that family relationship determinates emotional maturity of adolescent students. It was found that parental attitudes significantly accompany this developmental process of adolescents. Harmandeep Kaur in her study found a positive and significant correlation between the mental health and different dimensions of emotional maturity of prospective teachers. Also, Emotional maturity is significant predictor of mental health of prospective teachers. Dr. Jyoti Syal in her study (2015) found that there exists a significant relationship between Emotional Maturity and Life Satisfaction of the Male students studying in colleges of education. Dr Jyoti found that emotionally mature female pupil teachers exhibit an optimistic attitude towards life. The findings of M. Panimalar Rojal et al (2013) in their study of emotional maturity and self-concept at higher secondary students indicate a positive relationship between emotional maturity and self-concept. Sahen Gupta and Sudhesh N. T (2019) found in their study a negative moderate relationship between physical competence and global self-worth dimensions of self-perception and emotional maturity, with regression analysis confirming their predictive abilities. In their study (2017), Chanda Rawat & Ritu Singh found after analysis that family setup plays momentous role in overall development of adolescents. Substantial efforts to maximize its positive influence on the personality of adolescents can be made on the part of parents, school setup and all others who are directly or indirectly related to them. Ritu Singh et al (2014) found that adolescents from joint family were more adequate, personally, inter-personally and socially, and were as a result found to be more socially mature than those from nuclear family. Also, adolescents from joint family were found to be significantly better than those from nuclear family on the scale of emotional stability, emotional progression, social progression, personality integration and independence component of emotional maturity and eventually on emotional maturity. The study of Fathima Jaseena et al (2018) recommended that living environment and parenting atmosphere should be more

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relaxed and culturally mature to facilitate a culturally intelligent generation. The main findings of this study of Maynard, M. L. et al. (2025) They noted a decline in self-worth and behavioural conduct after the COVID-19 pandemic. Li, Y., Ma, X., Feng, C., & Wang, Y. (2024) explored the effects of parental psychological control on a population of 1,100 junior high school students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study showed a mediating and moderating effect of self-concept clarity and mindfulness. This finding aligns with a previous work of El-Khodary & Samara (2019). Dubey et al. (2020) noticed the Post COVID-19 condition (PCC) effect of COVID-19 on the mental health of the people e.g. phobia, obsession, depression and irritability. Lal, P., & Gupta, S. (2025) revealed that children and adolescents during COVID-19 school closure and lockdown condition created a peculiar change in the daily routines. Social isolation and disrupted routines caused in the people insomnia and nightmares. Social isolation and disrupted routines caused in the people insomnia and nightmares. Kim J. Ewing et al. (2025) found that about 20% adolescents were clinically depressed and the pandemic also created socioeconomic and racial disparities. Pipia. A. et al. (2025) concluded that COVID-19 decreased the social skills and affected the academic responses of students. The emotional and behavioral response to COVID-19 was found to be multifactorial. It depended not only on external components, but on personal and innate ones as well.

Studies revealed that adolescents with enhanced psychological maturity would have more resources to cope with the trauma and stress generated by the pandemic and post-pandemic conditions. More mature adolescents report higher levels of life satisfaction and emotional stability, and lower levels of depression and suicidal tendency.

### ***Adolescents' behavior during the Pandemic COVID-19 and Post COVID-19 condition (PCC):***

Early evidence suggests that people in their teens and 20s are at increased risk of depression and anxiety, online harassment, physical and sexual violence and unintended pregnancies. Health experts have expressed concern about indirect effects of COVID-19 especially on women and the youth. The investigators found young people were as much as three times more likely to develop depression in the future due to social isolation, with the impact of loneliness on mental health lasting up to 9 years later. Overall, the investigators found that social isolation and loneliness increased the risk of depression, as well as the possibility of anxiety at the time of loneliness, which was measured between 0.25-9 years later. The duration of loneliness was strongly correlated with mental health symptoms than the intensity of loneliness. Pravat Kumar Jena (2020) in his study shows that the worldwide lock down created very bad effect on the life of students. All educational activities halted in India and around 32 crore learners were stopped from going to their schools and colleges.

Young people need a sense of stability amid rapid change to help them process, adjust and develop new strategies for coping with emerging and fluid contexts. For many children, schools provide this stability, as shown by Catherine Drane, Lynette Vernon and Sarah O'Shea in their study (2020) on the impact of 'learning at home' on the educational outcomes of vulnerable children in Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic. Disadvantages in the learning environment can be broad and varied. While some students may not be technologically equipped to learn online, others may struggle to cope with the emotional challenges that off-site learning may bring. The emotional repercussions of a school closure cannot be underestimated. Psychological distress such as anxiety and depression amongst students may increase as students start to lose school connectedness,

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including a loss or lessening of the belief that both adults and peers in their school care about their learning as well as about them as an individual.

Preparing for a pandemic is therefore extremely important. According to Emma Teasdale et al (2012), coping appraisals appear to be an important predictor of how people may behave during pandemic COVID-19 and Post COVID-19 condition (PCC) and their findings provide encouraging preliminary evidence that it may be possible to change these perceptions. Such changes would likely influence the self-concept of an individual and may as well affect how satisfied one is with oneself. Not only are parents still critically important but peers can also play an important role.

### ***Impact of Pandemic COVID-19 and Post COVID-19 condition (PCC) on the Self-Concept and Emotional Maturity of Adolescents:***

The impact of the pandemic was very rapid and widespread, resulting in the establishment of lockdowns in various countries. In the school setting teaching and learning activities are shifted to learning from home. Stress in adolescents can have an indirect or long-term and direct or immediate impact. The immediate effect arises on the conditions of thinking of adolescents and the long-term impact will be seen on the behavior of adolescents. “Fatigue, breathlessness, muscle or joint pain, and impaired sleep are common symptoms of post-COVID-19 condition.” (WHO, 2025). In their research work, Rakhi Saxena and Shailendra K. Saxena (2020) found that the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) created anxieties, turbulence, and fears in the young minds, and they barrage their parents with heaps of questions.

According to Roger Allen, we don't become more mature when the waters of life are calm and placid and everything is going our way. We grow in maturity when in turbulent, choppy waters; when tempted to act out our fears, hurts, or resentments. She defines emotional maturity as the ability to make good, positive, healthy choices during the challenges of life. Children must be advised to take this period positively and play better role in developing positive attitudes, skills and enrich their personalities and enhance level of achievement motivation. Because everybody have a good and sufficient time to spend with their families, enjoy this time and prepare for better future.

Some children and young people may be feeling more isolated, anxious, bored and uncertain. They may feel fear, and grief, over the impact of the virus on their families. Stress in adolescents can have an indirect or long-term and direct or immediate impact. The immediate effect arises on the conditions of thinking of adolescents and the long-term impact will be seen on the behavior of adolescents. Coping strategies make students better recognize the attitudes or ways someone can overcome their problems, namely by coping that focuses on problems or coping that focuses on emotions.

### ***Contribution of Self-Concept and Emotional Maturity to Coping with the Pandemic COVID-19 and Post COVID-19 Condition (PCC):***

A significant proportion of the population live alone or are vulnerable to mental health problems yet, in the vast majority of cases, individuals in social isolation have no access to mental healthcare. The only resource is people themselves using self-help, self-medication and self-care. During prolonged COVID-19 isolation, an in-built system of homeostasis can help rebalance activity, thought and feeling. Increased physical activity enables a reset of physical and mental well-being. Prior to COVID-19, self-care was already increasing in

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relevance for health systems. The World Health Organization (WHO) views self-care as a contributor to “the ability of individuals, families and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and to cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a health-care provider”. The scope of self-care includes health promotion; disease prevention and control; self-medication, providing care to dependent persons; seeking hospital/specialist care if necessary; and rehabilitation including palliative care. The negative impacts of COVID-19 lockdown on mental health can be ameliorated by the use of physical exercise, which should be as vigorously promoted as social distancing itself.

In one of its reports, UNICEF quotes Dr. Damour’s coping strategies for mental health of teens during the current pandemic. According to him one should focus on one’s self and try to find productive ways to look after the self. This is actually a suggestion to develop emotional maturity and a healthy self-concept in this new found time due to the lockdowns or movement restrictions during the pandemic. With emotional intelligence possessed by students, they are expected to be able to participate in learning activities from home during the COVID-19 pandemic well. Emotional maturity is not reached by age but by being trained to handle a problematic situation. Behavior developed to cope from adverse conditions by using the intellect at the right time and right place. Emotional maturity is also related to happiness, courage and calmness. An emotionally mature people know how to cope with COVID-19 and Post COVID-19 condition (PCC).

### ***The Role of Social Networking Sites in the development of Self-Concept and Emotional Maturity during a Pandemic COVID-19 and Post COVID-19 condition (PCC):***

Janette Hughes and her colleagues explored adolescent identity construction through online platforms such as Facebook and other SNSs such as Ning. Parents and caregivers, meanwhile, are being asked to navigate their children’s shift to online learning and recreation while balancing work and other uncertainties related to the pandemic. Having information and facts about COVID-19 will help diminish students’ fears and anxieties around the disease and support their ability to cope with any secondary impacts in their lives. The home, however, is not always a safe place for children, adolescents, women and older people. In many cases, they are experiencing or are at risk of abuse. Parents attempt to regulate the use of the internet by creating rules on time and websites permitted. Communication and enforcement of the rules appear inconsistent.

A research conducted in Hong Kong, it was found that during the pandemic, trust in government/media information was more strongly associated with greater self-efficacy and hand-washing, whereas trust in informal information was strongly associated with perceived health threat and avoidance behavior. By bridging work on biological, cognitive, emotional, and social development in adolescence, we will gain a deeper and richer understanding of the processes that influence Judgment and Decision Making (JDM) at key parties and in the other real-world contexts in which adolescents spend time.

According to certain studies on the youth, 80% of American adolescents used social networking. It is therefore important to understand the functions of online self-disclosure and privacy management amongst this unique group. Adolescents who lack attachment to peers are more likely to report psychological distress and to harbour thoughts of suicide. Michel Walrave et al (2016) in their research found that restricting social interaction can only have a negative effect on the child’s social development and, ultimately, on the child’s self-concept. Keeping children informed and engaged and empowering them with the skills

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to use the internet safely is a critical line of defense. This can produce all kinds of insecurities and threats to self-esteem in adolescent children. As important as it is for students to use technologies for thinking, organising ideas and creating multimodal products to represent their understandings, it is equally important to offer them opportunities to connect with each other, build relationships with the people in their learning communities and explore social identities which is one of the most crucial tasks of adolescence.

### ***The Role of the Family in the development of Self-Concept and Emotional Maturity in Pandemic COVID-19 and Post COVID-19 condition (PCC):***

As children enter adolescence, or their teenage years, they interact less with their parents, while peer relationships expand and assume greater importance. Adolescents at home, probably more frequently than anywhere else, commonly fail to win recognition of their entry upon this stage of growth. Adolescents who lack attachment to peers are more likely to report psychological distress and to harbour thoughts of suicide. Although parents continue to influence behaviours and decisions of adolescents, the time which they spend with peers expands and peers become their most important reference group. Families of adolescents need to adjust and adapt their relationships to accommodate their increasingly maturing adolescents. In some cases, the home, however, is not always a safe place for children, adolescents, women and older people who are experiencing or are at risk of abuse. Evidence shows that violence can increase during and in the aftermath of disease outbreaks. Researches show that violence can increase during and in the time of COVID-19. The National Commission of Women has reported a rise in domestic and gender-based violence since the imposition of the countrywide lockdown.

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is not as lethal for children and adolescents as it is for the adults, but it causes a lot of psychological distress in this age group. Adolescents are experiencing acute and chronic stress because of parental anxiety, disruption of daily routines, increased family violence, and home confinement with little or no access to peers, teachers, or physical activity. Due to lockdown, adolescents are restricted in their homes and they feel loneliness which normally results in a feeling of sadness, worry, confusion, scare or anger. Adults also feel loneliness. Financial hardship, risk of unemployment, worry of pay-cuts and the fear of contracting the disease are all affecting our collective mental well-being. It can develop the feeling of self-harm among adolescents. Parents, families, and communities are extremely important, as they have the greatest potential to positively influence on adolescent behaviour and health. For healthy adults of future, there is a great need to create healthy atmosphere for adolescents at home during the lockdown-like times.

Clinical experiences as well as media reports show that for some families and children, the lockdown-induced changes that changed family routines helped reduce daily stress. These changes seem to actually reduce child and adolescent mental illness symptoms and even improve well-being. In this context, the crisis may provide a unique window of opportunity to test long-standing hypotheses on modern life stressors and mental health problems or psychiatric pathogenesis and well-being in developing children and adolescents.

### ***The Role of teachers in development of self-concept and emotional maturity during Pandemic COVID-19 and Post COVID-19 condition (PCC):***

Through coping strategies students are taught to be able to solve problems according to the classification of coping itself, namely coping that focuses on problems or coping that focuses on emotions. When children learn to solve their own problems, they build

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confidence. Children are curious and imaginative, and the teachers must be careful not to suppress such traits.

Teachers should take care of the self-concept of their pupils. Self-concept tends to be more malleable when an individual is younger and still going through the process of self-discovery and identity formation. Physical distancing is ineptly termed as social distancing. In the Post COVID-19 condition (PCC) there is a need to choose motivation, step outside the comfort zone, seek self-growth, unity in family and society and cooperation with others. Thus, it is social cohesion rather than social distancing which is to be emphasized in the situations of pandemic. WHO (2025) suggested proper rest, sleep, skills training for energy conservation and for better management of symptoms.

Education about the importance of quality rest and sleep and skills training on energy conservation techniques can help patients manage their symptoms better

### **CONCLUSION**

Adolescents experience rapid physical, cognitive and psychosocial growth. This affects how they feel, think, make decisions, and interact with the world around them. Many questions arise in the mind of adolescents which is related to COVID-19 and their health issues which can affect their self-concept, emotional maturity, motivation level and also aspirations. Students faced difficulties in overcoming challenges inherited from the pandemic period. The pandemic widened educational disparities, particularly affecting children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Data also revealed that adolescents with high emotional maturity felt low stress in difficult situations. And the adolescents with low emotional maturity suffered high stress during and after the pandemic, as it affected their social skills and resulted in poor academic performance.

After Pandemic COVID-19 there is need for change according to situation and creative ideas among teachers and parents that will engage adolescents in understanding and manage their emotions and work accordingly to deal the challenges it brings to their world and what can be done to protect them. Some adolescents may feel depressed due to isolation and in lockdown situation. In such a situation, it is necessary that we encourage our adolescents to express and communicate their feelings of anxiety, dread and anguish. They must be afforded platforms to discuss and motivate them and also need to explain that these are normal reactions in such difficult times. And also great need to nurture students' healthy Self-Concept and Emotional Maturity during early and late adolescence.

The role of teachers and the family members is very important in such situations; they can engage the adolescents in a number of activities which will enhance the creativity of the child. Only teaching through online mode is not sufficient some other activities like quiz competition, games and ethical training through films are also important. Training of adolescents for handling themselves in a dignified manner is important in times of the Pandemics. It will help alleviate the uncertainty and fear. It is very important to stay in touch and avoid isolation. Technology is a great blessing in this age of the so-called social distancing.

Family has to spend time together and support their child's interests. Criticisms or lectures must be avoided during this quality time support him in mastering that skill or accomplishing his desired level of achievement. Feeling competent and good at something

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grows a positive self-concept. Being connected keeps the lines of communication open, and it is especially important for our children as they grow into adolescence to feel supported, safe, and important. Parents are better advised to watch out for resources and ideas and projects that will keep children engaged in some or other projects.

With the guidance and counseling teachers and parents can resolve problems that occur during adolescence, and help the youth to be self-reliant and nice people. Group guidance service is a basic service to assist adolescents conducted by counselors through group activities that are useful to prevent the development of problems faced by adolescents.

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