

3. Psycho 3rd year Middle childhood

Middle Childhood (Ages **6-12**) A **child's** developmental path in their **middle childhood years** (between **6** and **12 years** of age) contributes substantially to the adolescent, and adult they will become.

a) Socio- psychological crisis

At six the child experiences one of the most influential events of his life. His entry to school, pushed out of his habits and routine life, he is suddenly plunged into a crisis that will not be solved till 4 or 5 years later, after a long quest for a new equilibrium.

The passage from a warm affectionate parental environment (or nursery school) to the school milieu is nothing else but another brutal weaning.

For sure the child has some good reasons to cry for at his first school day:

- * he is going to miss the affection of his parents
- * games are going to be practically entirely suppressed
- * he will be obliged to concentrate on something else than himself
- * he will be compelled to give his fictive, imaginary world for real world and this last (the real world) is going to oppose him a lot of resistance.

It is thanks to this opposition that the child will be able to adapt to life in community.

The child's evolution during middle childhood is marked by prominent facts that are hard to disentangle (or dissociate).

b) Affectivity:

Past the great emotions of first days of school, a certain number of changes occur in the way the child behaves.

The first change that occurs is the internalization of his affectivity. The child is called by his first name and this invites him to moderate his emotions displaying. The child progressively acquires new ways and his fear of strange surroundings fades away. His impulsive temperament is not allowed in the classroom and cries are laughed at by his peers. Replacing the freedom of early childhood with work constraint, school contributes greatly to remove the child from the domination of affectivity and to develop in him self-control.

Developing his self-control and thus controlling his emotive responses allows the child to become a social member of his community.

c) Play

Back home the child indulges again in his symbolic games but very soon he will quit because of a decreasing interest in such games.

At school, even if he plays less, he plays nevertheless. He doesn't play on his own but with classroom mates and play is codified along traditions that the child has to comply with. To respect the game rules means already integrating to a group.

d) From the child's ego to the outside world: on the road to knowledge of the world.

Started at birth, with the physical separation from the mother with the severing of the umbilical cord, continued throughout early childhood with weaning (on the affective plan) the distinction between the child' ego and his environment will be fully realized during middle childhood when the child goes to school. School is going to give the child the techniques and instruments necessary for learning. School will make the child adopt new behaviours and compels the child to explore his environment.

*** Learning tools:**

the most important one is undoubtedly language and at school, the child's language is enriched . The child also learns the written language and passes from direct symbolism: sounds → ideas to second degree symbolism: sounds → graphic signs → ideas.

Written language is more efficient because freed from emotion and subjectivity.

*** New behaviours.**

At school the child the child acquires the ability to control his attention so as to learn and explore his milieu. Busy doing so, he forgets about himself and directs his attention to the acquisition of knowledge and techniques that will allow him to better understand and adapt in his environment.

He also acquires good learning habits by trial-and-error, imitation or operant learning (S-R conditioning).

The role of the teacher is to encourage good habits and correct bad ones.

*** The world exploration:**

At school the child gets in a group but is not yet integrated to it. With time, he will be part of the group and is integrated in his class. Social integration is going to allow the child

to develop his moral judgement but that will take a long time. The moral judgement of the child goes through definite stages explained in previous chapters.

f) Conclusion: personality evolution.

From egocentrism to sociocentrism, the child acquires his self-control by inhibiting egocentric impulses and acquires a moral judgment that opens up choices for him to select according to the set of rules, traditions, and ideals he has internalized.