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**COURSE CODE: PUH**

**COURSE TITLE:**

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**QUESTIONS**

1. **The problems of adolescence in terms of: social problems, substance abuse, health needs, and sexuality.**
2. **Solution: how to help them cope in modern times**

**Social Problems**

A number of social problems pop up in the period of adolescence. The social contacts of the person expand from infancy to maturity. In infancy a child’s social contacts are with one person, and it’s usually its mother. From the early childhood onwards the mother-child relationship normally expands as the child comes into contact with other members of the family. When the child moves outside his family circle, he establishes contact with other children of his age, when he gets admission into school; the peer group expands because now the child is free to choose his own friends and associates. Here he meets the teacher too. Adolescence is the stage of development which produces a number of problems for the person. These problems arise out of the adolescent’s adjustment with following social groups:

* Family
* School
* Associates of one’s own sex; and
* Associates of other sex.

**Substance Abuse**

Substance abuse describes a pattern of substance (drug) use leading to significant problems or distresses such as failure to attend school, substance use in dangerous situations (driving a car), substance related legal problems, or continued substance use that interferes with friendships or family relationships. Substance abuse, as a disorder, refers to the abuse of illegal substances or the abusive use of legal substances. Alcohol is the most common legal drug of abuse. People can often stop substance abuse on their own or with a little help when they realize it is interfering with their life.

**What Substances are most often abused by Adolescents?**

Substances frequently abused by adolescents include:

* Alcohol
* Marijuana
* Tobacco
* Prescription drugs
* Hallucinogen
* Cocaine
* Methamphetamine

**What causes substance abuse?**

Cultural and societal norms influence acceptable standards of substance use. Public laws determine the legality of the use of substances. Substance-related disorders in adolescence are caused by multiple factors including genetic vulnerability, environmental stressors, social pressures, individual personality characteristics, and psychiatric problems. However, determining which of these factors are most to blame in adolescent populations has not been determined.

**Who is more influenced by substance abuse?**

* Children of substance abusers
* Adolescents who are victims of physical, sexual or psychological abuse
* Adolescents with mental health problems especially depressed and suicidal teens
* Physically disabled adolescents.

**Health Needs**

Until recently, there has been little evidence of interest in the question of how adolescents view health in general or their own health in particular. The prevailing impression appears to be that adolescents take their own health for granted. To date, most of the health research which has focused on this particular age span has utilized “special” populations.

Sexuality

Adolescent sexuality is a stage of human development in which adolescent experience and explores sexual feelings. Interest in sexuality intensifies during the onset of puberty, and sexuality is often a vital aspect of teenager’s lives. Sexual interest may be expressed in number of ways such as flirting, kissing, masturbation, or having sex with a partner. Sexual activity in general is associated with various risks. The risks of sexual intercourse include unwanted pregnancy and contracting a sexually transmitted infection such as HIV/AIDS, which can be reduced with availability and use of a condom or adopting other safe sex practices. Contraceptives specifically reduce the chance of pregnancy. The risks are higher for young adolescents because their brains are not neutrally mature. The brain is not fully mature until the age 25. Partially, because of this young adolescents are generally less equipped than adults to make sound decisions and anticipate consequences of sexual behaviour. Subsequent sexual behaviours start with the secretion of hormones from the hypothalamus and anterior pituitary gland. These hormones target sexual organs and begin their maturation. Increasing levels of androgen and oestrogen have an effect on the thought processes of adolescents and have been described as being in the minds of almost all adolescents a good deal of time.

**SOLUTION: HOW TO HELP THEM COPE IN MODERN TIMES**

Parents should try to:

* Keep an eye on the behaviour of the person by looking for erratic behaviours and change in his or her appetite, sleep patterns, and moods
* Ensure they get through their meals. They should eat balance diet
* Ensure they understand the importance of safe sex
* Not confront them if they are found abusing any substance avoid going as far as getting a drug test done because it can threaten the person involved
* If necessary, get such adolescent the appropriate treatment
* Understand if their adolescent child is spending more time outside than with them in the house. Accept that they are discovering a whole new world and let them know you are there when they need you
* Be there for them emotionally and physically as this will help them deal with possible disorders
* Share their social and dating life experiences with their children as this can put them at ease sometimes
* Understand that the hormonal changes in teenagers may make them act impulsively. The adolescent may not like it but they should be well aware on the consequences of unprotected sex and how it can change their lives
* Make them aware because awareness is the only way to prevent early pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STDs) in adolescents.
* Not accuse their children of any wrong doing instead they should encourage them to talk and be honest.