

## Human growth — the influencing factors

### *Forces of Nature*

A. Heredity - Genetics determine sex, race, hair and eye color, physical growth, stature, and to some extent psychological uniqueness.

B. Temperament - Temperament is a characteristic psychological mood with which the child is born and includes behavioral styles of easy, slow-to-warm, and difficult. It influences interactions between the individual and their environment.

### *External Forces*

A. Family - The purpose of family is protection and nurturing of its members. Functions of family include: means for survival, security, assistance with emotional and social development, assistance with maintenance of relationships, instruction about society and world, assistance in learning roles and behaviors. Family influences through its values, behaviors, beliefs, customs and specific patterns of interaction and communication.

Ordinal position (e.g. first child, middle child) and gender influence individual's interaction and communication in family.

B. Peer groups - Peer groups provide new and different learning environment. They provide different patterns and structures of interaction and communication that require different style of behavior. Functions of peer group include allowing individual to learn about success and failure; to validate and challenge thoughts, feelings, and concepts; to receive acceptance, support, and rejection as unique persons apart from family; and to achieve group purposes by meeting demands, pressures, and expectations.

C. Life experiences - Life experiences and learning processes allow individual to develop by applying what has been learned to what

needs to be learned. Learning process involves series of steps; recognition of need to know task; mastery of skills required to perform task; expertise in performing task, which expands capabilities; integration into whole functioning; and use of accumulated skills and experiences to develop repertoire of effective behavior.

D. Health environment - Level of health affects individual's responsiveness to environment and responsiveness of others to the individual.

E. Prenatal health - Preconception (e.g. genetic and chromosomal factors, maternal age, and health) and post-conception (e.g. nutrition, weight gain, tobacco and alcohol use, medical problems, and use of prenatal services) factors affect fetal growth and development.

F. Nutrition - Growth is regulated by dietary factors. Adequacy of nutrients influences whether and how physiological needs, as well as subsequent growth and development needs, are met.

G. Rest, sleep and exercise - Balance between rest and sleep and exercise is essential to rejuvenating the body. Disturbances diminish growth, whereas balance reinforces physiological and psychological health.

H. State of health - Illness and injury has the potential to hinder growth and development. Nature and duration of health problem influences its impact. Prolonged injury or illness may cause inability to cope and respond to demands and tasks of developmental stages.

I. Living environment - Factors affecting growth and development include season, climate, home life, and socioeconomic status.