Chapter 5: Developing Through the Life Span

Key Terms

Writing Definitions

1. Developmental psychology is the branch of psychology concerned with physical, cognitive, and social change throughout the life span. (p. 173)

2. The zygote (a term derived from the Greek word for “joint”) is the fertilized egg, that is, the cluster of cells formed during conception by the union of sperm and egg. (p. 174)

3. The embryo is the developing prenatal organism from about 2 weeks through 2 months after conception; formed from the inner cells of the zygote. (p. 174)

4. The fetus is the developing prenatal human from 9 weeks after conception to birth. (p. 174)

5. Teratogens (literally, poisons) are any chemicals and viruses that cross the mother’s placenta and can harm the developing embryo or fetus. (p. 175)

6. Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) refers to the physical and cognitive abnormalities that heavy drinking by a pregnant woman may cause in the developing child. (p. 175)

7. A simple form of learning used to study infant cognition, habituation is decreasing responsiveness to a stimulus that is repeatedly presented. (p. 175)

8. Maturation refers to the biological growth processes that enable orderly changes in behavior, relatively uninfluenced by experience or other environmental factors. (p. 177)

Example: The ability to walk depends on a certain level of neural and muscular maturation. For this reason, until the toddler’s body is physically ready to walk, practice “walking” has little effect.

9. Cognition refers to all the mental processes associated with thinking, knowing, remembering, and communicating. (p. 179)

10. In Piaget’s theory of cognitive development, schemas are mental concepts or frameworks that organize and interpret information. (p. 180)

11. In Piaget’s theory, assimilation refers to interpreting a new experience in terms of an existing schema. (p. 180)

12. In Piaget’s theory, accommodation refers to changing an existing schema to incorporate new information that cannot be assimilated. (p. 180)

13. In Piaget’s theory of cognitive stages, the sensorimotor stage lasts from birth to nearly age 2. During this stage, infants gain knowledge of the world through their senses and their motor activities. (p. 181)

14. Object permanence, which develops during the sensorimotor stage, is the awareness that things do not cease to exist when not perceived. (p. 181)

15. In Piaget’s theory, the preoperational stage lasts from about 2 to 6 or 7 years of age. During this stage, language development is rapid, but the child is unable to understand the mental operations of concrete logic. (p. 183)

16. Conservation is the principle that properties such as number, volume, and mass remain constant despite changes in the forms of objects; it is acquired during the concrete operational stage. (p. 183)

17. In Piaget’s theory, egocentrism refers to the difficulty that preoperational children have in considering another’s viewpoint. Ego means “self,” and centrism indicates “in the center”; the preoperational child is “self-centered.” (p. 183)

18. Our ideas about our own and others’ thoughts, feelings, and perceptions and the behaviors these might predict constitute our theory of mind. (p. 184)

19. During the concrete operational stage, lasting from about ages 6 or 7 to 11, children can think logically about concrete events and objects. (p. 185)

20. In Piaget’s theory, the formal operational stage normally begins about age 12. During this stage people begin to think logically about abstract concepts. (p. 185)

Memory aid: To help differentiate Piaget’s stages remember that “operations” are mental transformations. Preoperational children, who lack the ability to perform transformations, are “before” this developmental milestone. Concrete operational children can operate on real, or concrete, objects. Formal operational children can perform logical transformations on abstract concepts.

21. Autism is a disorder that appears in childhood and is marked by deficient communication, social interaction, and understanding of others’ states of mind. (p. 186)

22. Stranger anxiety is the fear of strangers that infants begin to display by about 8 months of age. (p. 188)

23. Attachment is an emotional tie with another person, shown in young children by their seeking closeness to a caregiver and showing distress on separation. (p. 188)

24. A critical period is a limited time shortly after birth during which an organism must be exposed to certain stimuli or experiences if it is to develop properly. (p. 189)

25. Imprinting is the process by which certain animals form attachments during a limited critical period early in life. (p. 189)
26. According to Erikson, **basic trust** is a sense that the world is predictable and trustworthy, a concept that infants form if their needs are met by responsive caregiving. (p. 191)

27. **Self-concept** is our understanding and evaluation of who we are. (p. 194)

28. **Adolescence** refers to the life stage from puberty to independent adulthood, denoted physically by a growth spurt and maturation of primary and secondary sex characteristics, cognitively by the onset of formal operational thought, and socially by the formation of identity. (p. 196)

29. **Puberty** is the early adolescent period of sexual maturation, during which a person becomes capable of reproducing. (p. 197)

30. The **primary sex characteristics** are the body structures (ovaries, testes, and external genitalia) that enable reproduction. (p. 197)

31. The **secondary sex characteristics** are the nonreproductive sexual characteristics, for example, female breasts, male voice quality, and body hair. (pp. 197–198)

32. **Menarche** is the first menstrual period. (p. 198)

33. In Erikson's theory, establishing an **identity**, or one's sense of self, is the primary task of adolescence. (p. 203)

34. **Social identity** refers to a person's self-concept as defined by the groups to which he or she belongs. (p. 203)

35. In Erikson's theory, **intimacy**, or the ability to establish close, loving relationships, is the primary task of late adolescence and early adulthood. (p. 204)

36. **Emerging adulthood** is the period from age 18 to the mid-twenties, when many young people are not yet fully independent. (p. 206)

37. **Menopause** is the cessation of menstruation and typically occurs in the early fifties. It also refers to the biological changes experienced during a woman's years of declining ability to reproduce. (p. 207)

38. In a **cross-sectional study**, people of different ages are compared with one another. (p. 214)

39. In a **longitudinal study**, the same people are tested and retested over a period of years. (p. 214)

40. **Crystallized intelligence** refers to those aspects of intellectual ability, such as vocabulary and general knowledge, that reflect accumulated learning. Crystallized intelligence tends to increase with age. (p. 215)

41. **Fluid intelligence** refers to a person's ability to reason speedily and abstractly. Fluid intelligence tends to decline with age. (p. 215)

42. The **social clock** refers to the culturally preferred timing of social events, such as leaving home, marrying, having children, and retiring. (p. 217)