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Stages of Child Development:

Sensorimotor: Birth through 24 months

Characterized by reflex activity, increased coordination, development of feelings, developing the concept of objects apart from themselves. Development in this stage is limited to sensory and motor.

Pre-operational: 2 through 7 years of age

The major developmental milestone achieved in this period is the ability to represent objects and events. These involve deferred imitation, symbolic play, drawing, mental imagery and spoken language. Reasoning is dominated by perception. Characteristics of pre-operational thought: Egocentrism, Transformational Reasoning, Centration, Reversibility, Conservation

Concrete Operations: 7 through 11 years of age

Children in this stage of development have mastered the characteristics discussed in pre-operational thought. While the child has mastered these characteristics, he/she is limited to logical reasoning involving real and observable object or events presently before them when asked to solve a problem requiring the use of one of these mental tasks.

Formal Operations: 11 years of age through adulthood

This child begins to develop the cognitive ability to reason logically for all classes of problems. Reasoning extends to include abstract scenarios. An adolescent who has achieved Formal Operational thinking is essentially equipped to think as an adult. An adolescent is limited by their life experience not by their cognitive abilities. Through adulthood, further life experiences will sharpen the adolescents ability to reason effectively.

Key Definitions:

Schema: can be easily thought of as concepts or categories of the mind.

Assimilation: process whereby an individual integrates new perceptual information into an existing schema

Accommodation: process whereby an individual creates a new schema for information which does not fit into existing schemata.

Equilibration: the human mind strives to remain balanced (equilibrium). This is the process of moving from disequilibrium to equilibrium. When a child does not understand something (the information does not fit into existing schemata) the child will seek out an explanation so as to create a new schema (accommodation) so as to return to a state of equilibrium.