PERSPECTIVES ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
A PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE-SPAN DEVELOPMENT

Every age period of life is important
Focus: processes that took place
Perspectives that support this philosophy:
1. Development is multi dimensional & interdisciplinary

2. Development continues through the life span

3. Both heredity & environment influence development

4. Development reflects both continuity & discontinuity

5. Development is cumulative
6. Development reflects both stability & change
7. Development is variable
8. Development is sometimes cyclical & repetitive
9. Development reflects individual differences
10. Development reflects cultural differences
11. Development influences are reciprocal
1. Development is multi dimensional & interdisciplinary

- Human development is a complex process; divided into 4 dimensions:
  - Physical development
  - Cognitive development
  - Emotional development
  - Social development

- Even though each dimension is unique, there is interdependency among them.
Examples:

- Cognitive skills depend heavily on physical & emotional well-beings as well as social experiences.

- A “slow learner” may be also an emotionally disturbed teenager due to her physical appearance which may have kept her peers away.
Each dimension has general characteristics - according to life stages.

- Infants start to walk by the age of ≈ 12-18 months

- Unique characteristics of each dimension differentiate one person from others.
Physical Development

- Includes genetic foundation for development; physical growth of all components of the body; changes in motor development; senses; bodily systems
- Height & weight
- Main organ system (central nervous system, brain)
- Includes health care, nutrition, sleep, substance abuse, sexual functioning ➔ healthy lifestyle
COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- Cognition = the act of knowing and perceiving
- Includes changes in intellectual processes (knowledge & ability) in
  - Thinking
  - Learning
  - Remembering
  - Judging
  - Problem solving
  - Communicating

- Perceiving, thinking, understanding & using these skills to survive/excel in life
- Influenced by both heredity & environment
EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Emotion is the state of feeling(s).
- Development of attachment, trust, security, love & affection; & other emotions/feelings & temperaments.
- Development of feelings & expressing them within the context of relationships with other people / objects.
- Development of concepts about self & autonomy.
- Emotions are media for communication.
- Important for social interactions & catalysts for behavioural development.
- Emotions are source for happiness or sadness that can influence moral development.
Emphasizes socialization process; moral development & relationships with others.

Various context of development: family, neighbourhood, community, state, country, world.

Human beings can influence & be influenced by the whole process of social development.
Electronic & printed media; mosque/church/temple/; schools other world events can influence the socialization process.
Development starts upon conception and ends with death.

Some aspects of physical growth stop, developments in terms of change & adaptation continues.

There are sickly infants/adolescents who manage to live as healthy adults.

Emotional maturation; socialization continues; cognitive development continues.
3. HEREDITY & ENVIRONMENT INFLUENCE DEVELOPMENT

- Human development is influenced by both factors.

- The concept of “Nature (heredity) versus Nurture (environment)” stressed the importance of HOW to USE/CONTROL the influence of both in order to optimize development.

- Some aspects of development seemed to be influenced more by one factor over the other; but most aspects are influenced by both.
4. DEVELOPMENT REFLECTS CONTINUITY & DISCONTINUITY

- Certain aspects of development are gradually and continuously growing or changing (e.g. physical, language)
- Other aspects of development progress in distinct stages; each preceded by abrupt changes – from one stage to the other.
- Continuous development indicate high influence of environmental factor.
- Discontinuous/stage theory indicate heredity.
Our lives are influenced by events that had happened before (earlier experiences).

Early experiences accumulate and impacted later lives.

Studies have shown relationships between negative experience and bad outcome.

... NOT ALL CASES!
6. DEVELOPMENT REFLECTS STABILITY & CHANGE

- Certain aspects of development remain stable; others changed.
  - i.e. a problematic teenager may end up as a successful adult.
- Personality may or may not change over time.
7. DEVELOPMENT IS VARIABLE

- Human beings experience variability in growth & development.

  - an adolescent may be big in size (height & weight / look) as compared to his/her peers; but still think like a small child.
8. DEVELOPMENT IS CYCLICAL & REPETITIVE

- Some aspects of development may repeat during different phases in life
- Identity crisis is faced during adolescence; may be repeated at middle age
- Adjustment phases occur as we grow (from childhood to adulthood / single to married / single again / working to retire)
Individuals differ in terms of timing and rate of development.

Height, weight, maturity, body build, physical abilities, health, cognitive ability, emotional reactions, personality, social ability ..... differ from one person to the other.

General or average of these characteristics are normally referred to when we discuss development (i.e. average age when a child starts talking/walking/etc.).
Cultural differences influence many aspects of development.

- i.e. western values promote independence; others may promote closeness with parents; differences in racial/ethnic; educational level may influence quality of parent-child relationship; meaning of puberty, arranged marriage; age at marriage.

- Certain aspects of development are “prescribed” in certain culture.
11. DEVELOPMENTAL INFLUENCES ARE RECIPROCAL

- Reciprocal influences of environment & significant others on child well-being & children on caregivers.
  - A pleasant, easy to smile infant “attracts” more.
  - The effect is bidirectional, and thus influence overall development.
At least 11 established perspectives looking at how human beings develop within the environments.

Each perspective focuses on certain concepts.

Understanding the claims may increase our own understanding of who we are.
New (additional) perspective:

Development involves changing of allocation & resources.

Investment of resources (time, energy, talent, money & social support) are varied across life span.

Resources are used for GROWTH, MAINTENANCE, RECOVERY, DEALING WITH LOSS.

During childhood / young adulthood - resources go for growth; mid-life - balanced use; old age – regulations of losses.