

## ADOLESCENCE, MENTAL HEALTH, DRUGS AND VIOLENCE



The estimated population of teenagers in Brazil is of 21 million. This, not being a coincidence that this segment is occupying spaces in the media due to its increase in crime in which teenagers have active participation. This has generated heated debates on reducing criminal majority. Nevertheless, there is less talk about the violence suffered by teenager who ends up being cheap labor and easily disposable work, this in the context of illegal practices. One should add that, the ideal of masculinity concerning bravery, courage and the reduction of fear putting male adolescents, especially in higher availability condition, to adhere to the practice of antisocial and illegal acts.

By doing this, the teenager also exposes the hypocrisy of adults with regard to these practices, forcing them to review rules and laws. Unfortunately, this will lead to the issue of reduction of age.

Although segments of society argue the contrary, these voices are less heard, pointing out that it is always important to remember that the behaviors are learned. This leads to adults providing the condition for learning and leading to the appreciation and respect for life. These are two important indexes of Mental Health, with a construction of a complex process that occurs throughout the development of the individual. Nevertheless the foundations of this construction are launched during the childhood and adolescence periods. Considering that this is part of their up growth, an individual is formed in the context of establishing relationships with people around him. It is with them that, the ways of thinking and acting in the world are learned. A violent and operational context leads to the construction of equally violent individuals.

Although we tend to have unrealistic representations of adolescence, sometimes noisy, messy yet harmless and other times aggressive and therefore dangerous, it is known that there are different ways in which adolescents live their stage of life. For a significant portion this number of people, the conditions surrounding them are not good enough and even very bad ones. In two studies which highlights this issue of SMAD, the circumstances are examined to facilitate drug use<sup>(1)</sup> (legal and illegal) and among it, includes living with family that also uses it. This in turn may contribute to the decrease in risk perception<sup>(2)</sup> (as pointed out in the study that deals with this subject in relation to alcohol consumption) concerning the use of these substances. The use of illegal drugs also places the teenager in contact with the infraction universe and so, contributing to the completion of the image of a dangerous teen. Therefore, it is worth remembering that this teenager is both victim and aggressor. UNICEF report data on Brazilian teens, revealed that in 2011:

- Adolescents, 14% were out of school;
- Of every 100 young people, 49 were in school, and of those, only 29% were in an adequate number matching their age;
- Eighty thousand children and adolescents were living in shelters, 24% because of poverty and 53% with sheltering for over two years;
- Deaths, between the age of 15 and 19 years, 43% were homicides, taking into account that African-American teenagers showed four times more chance likely to be murdered than Caucasians. The homicide mortality rate in the general population was of 4.8%;

- Crimes against life were committed by 0.013% of the adolescents.

These numbers give an unprotected segment size, for which care must be offered if we want physically and mentally healthy people.

## References

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