

***Reviving Ophelia* Abstract- Female Adolescent Development**

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Most preadolescent girls are interested in sports, nature, people, music, and so forth. They are not concerned as much about the female role and can be tomboys, while conveying courage, competency and irreverence. They can be androgynous, having the ability to adapt to any situation regardless of gender constraints. An androgynous person can comfort a baby, change a tire, cook a meal, or chair a meeting. Research has shown that, since they are free to act without worrying if their behavior is feminine or masculine, androgynous adults are the most well adjusted.

Something happens in early adolescence to females. They lose their resiliency and optimism and become less curious and inclined to take risks. They express great unhappiness with their bodies. The story of Ophelia, from Shakespeare's Hamlet, shows the destructive forces that affect young women. As a girl Ophelia is happy and free, but with adolescence she loses herself. Girls know they are losing themselves. They are sensitive and tenderhearted, mean, competitive, superficial and idealistic. They also expect their families to keep up with these changes.

Simone de Beauvoir believed that adolescence is when girls realize that men have the power and that their only power comes from consenting to become submissive adored objects. Adolescent girls are conflicted between their autonomous selves and their need to be feminine, between their status as a human being and their vocation as females. Girls stop being and start seeming.

Adolescent girls are saplings in a hurricane. Three factors make them vulnerable in a hurricane. One-their developmental level. Everything is changing-body shape, hormones. Calmness is replaced with anxiety. Second- American culture has always hurt girls with sexism, capitalism, having to have certain looks, thus solely evaluating the person by how they look. Third- American girls are expected to distance themselves from parents just when they need the parents the most.

Corporate America markets to Adolescent girls. This put up job creates sex objects. It's a time when girls are taught to focus on outward appearances while they really need to be focusing on inward exciting changes. Thus adolescent girls become hyper-sensitive. A mother's haircut or a father's bad joke can ruin the child's day because it all does not fit into the expected plan for perfection and on a falsely creating timeline that the adolescent thinks must be adhered to in order to avoid subconsciously perceived rejection or failure.

Women are good at knowing how everyone else in the family is feeling and what they are thinking about, excluding themselves. They are great at balancing the needs of others, coworkers, husbands, children and friends, but they forget to put themselves into the equation. Many feel guilty if they take time for themselves. Many women regain their preadolescent authenticity with menopause. They are no longer beautiful objects by

society's standards. They are not preoccupied primarily with the caring for others, they are free one again to become the subjects of their own lies.

Central themes among adolescent girls are that they feel obligated and resentful, loving and angry, close and distant, all at the same time with the same people. Certain themes, such as concern for weight gain, fears of rejection and the need for perfection, all seem to be rooted in cultural expectations rather than a focus on individual talents and strengths. Be sexy but not sexual, Be honest, but don't hurt anyone's feelings. Be independent, but be nice. Be smart, but not so smart that you threaten boys. Thus by junior high, most girls sense their lack of power, but usually they cannot say what they sense.

Girls have four general ways in which they can react to cultural pressures to abandon self: They can conform, withdraw, be depressed, or get angry. Thus America is currently a girl-destroying place. Once girls understand the effects of the culture on their lives, they can fight back.

Think about it! Girls generally have strong bodies when they enter puberty. But these bodies soften and spread out in ways that our culture calls fat. Just when their bodies are becoming rounder, girls are told that thin is beautiful, even imperative. Girls who are too attractive are seen primarily as sex objects. They want to be known for more than their packaging, yet the reinforcement for the packaging is a strong lead in to becoming a sexual object to adolescent boys and men.

In school, boys are praised for academics and intellectual more according to the research, while girls are praised for their clothing, behaving properly and obeying rules. Boys are criticized for their behavior, while girls are criticized for intellectual inadequacy. Thus academic levels tend to fade in a female adolescent's life, due to the lack of reinforcement.

Just before people die, they become addled. They leave this reality and go some other place. The men become farmers again, driving their horses home through a blizzard. They call out, "Giddy up go, it's not far." Women call out for their mothers. Yet female adolescents grow up rejecting the similarities with their mothers. They have tremendous fears of being like their mothers.

Rigid fathers limit their daughter's dreams and destroy their self confidence. Sexist fathers teach that value in life lies in pleasing men. Sexist fathers teach their daughters to give up power and control to men. On the other hand, nonsexist fathers can be helpful in teaching their daughters healthy rebellion. They can encourage them to fight back and protect themselves. They can teach them androgyny, particularly in sports and academics and social activities. These fathers can teach their daughters the male point of view and the forces that are acting on men and women socially. The best fathers can model good male-female relationships and respect for women.