

# **Assessment of the Adolescent: “The Hidden Agenda”**

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**Presented at PATA forum, 2010 Uganda**

# Presentation Outline

- Aim
- Basics of Adolescent development
- Key issues when working with Adolescent.
- The Hidden Agenda
- **HEADSS**
- Dealing with the Hidden Agenda

# Aim

- To appreciate that Adolescents have health issues (hidden issues) that they may not openly share with Health workers but which need to be addressed to enhance good health

# Things to Remember: Basics of Development

- Adolescence is a dynamic time of life defined by physical, emotional, cognitive and social transition.
- Often a “disconnect” between a teen’s physical appearance and his/her emotional maturity level.
  - Not “little adults” or “big children”
- Teens may act and feel they are in control of their lives.(mask themselves)
- Teens assert/crave for their independence from adults, around style issues; but still tend to follow adult lead on health issues.
- It’s not what they say, it is what they “do”.

# Key issues when working with Adolescents

- 1 . Liking/appreciate the Adolescent
2. Establishing Rapport

Good rapport involves being warm- friendly and making the adolescent feel accepted for who they are, explore issues that concern the adolescent.

## 3. Involving the family:

- Family is a critical component in the care of an adolescent
- Spend some time discussing the concerns of the family. The Adolescent is your primary patient.

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## 4. Ensure confidentiality

- its critical to ensure a sense of confidentiality with the adolescent.
- creates trust and confidence.
- Discuss limits of confidentiality.
- Parents to be aware of confidentiality.
- Lack of privacy and confidential health services are barriers to adolescents' access to health care.

5. **Listen to the Adolescent.** value their ideas, does not mean giving advice, show interest and alertness.

## 6. **Discovering the hidden Agenda**

# Discovering the hidden Agenda



# Hidden Agenda

- It is very common for an adolescent to present with a complaint that does not represent the major issue they are concerned about.
- They often hide some of the health issues they want to discuss.
- Parents may present concerns that are not the major issue for the teen.



## cont.....

Example, May come complaining of a headache but is concerned about being pregnant or having an STI.

The Hidden is the main problem to address

- Sometimes, they are true “hidden agendas” – e.g., the adolescent knows he/she is “faking” and sometimes symptomatic.
- Symptoms are more typically real and need to be taken seriously.
- Common ones are headache, abdominal pain, chest pain, Fever, sore throat

# Case Presentation

- An 16 year old female walks into your clinic, saying, “My head hurts”. Vital signs and physical exam are completely normal.
- You ask her to describe the pain and she says . . .
  - “It hurts”
  - “I have had it a while”
- The more you ask her about the headache . . .
  - The more she doesn’t look at you
  - The more she seems uncomfortable

# Dealing with Hidden Agenda

- It is critical for the health worker to be aware of these other issues that may be more threatening to the HIV positive adolescent's health other than the complaint the adolescent presents with.
- Obtain psychosocial information using the HEADSS interview
- Start with something general and about him/her. Can you think of something they might be the “expert” on?
  - What might that be and how would you ask

# Content of Psychosocial Assessment

- **H**ome
- **E**ducation/Eating/Exercise
- **A**ctivities
- **D**rugs/Depression
- **S**exuality
- **S**uicidality/Safety

**(Focus & explore on Strengths in line to the above)**

**HOME** \* **E**ducation/Eating/Exercise \* **A**ctivities  
**D**rugs/Depression \* **S**exuality \* **S**uicidality/Safety  
**STRENGTHS**

- How are things at home?
- Where and with whom do they live?
- Who are they closest to at home?
- What happens when people are mad in the house?
- How do parents, siblings handle stress?



Home \* **EDUCATION**/Eating/Exercise \* Activities  
Drugs/Depression \* Sexuality \* Suicidality/Safety  
**STRENGTHS**

- Are they in school? If so, what school do they go to?
- How is school going?
  - Do they like it? Do they have friends?
- How are their grades? Are they the same, better, or worse than last year?
- What would they like to do when they finish school?



# Home \* **Education/EATING/EXERCISE** \* Activities Drugs/Depression \* Sexuality \* Suicidality/Safety **STRENGTHS**

- Review what they typically eat. What did they have for breakfast yesterday? Lunch? Dinner? Snack?
- Do they think those are the right kinds/right amounts of food for them to eat? Does their family? If not, what do they wish was different?
- Do they do any sports? How often do they practice?



# Home \* Education/Eating/Exercise \* **ACTIVITIES** Drugs/Depression \* Sexuality \* Suicidality/Safety **STRENGTHS**

- What do they do after school/work each day and with whom? On Saturdays? Sundays?
- What do they have the most fun doing?
- Do their friends ever want you to do something that they don't want to do? What do they do when that happens?





Home \* Education/Eating/Exercise \* Activities  
Drugs/DEPRESSION\*Sexuality \* Suicidality/Safety  
**STRENGTHS**

- What is their mood typically like?
- What makes them happy?
- What makes them sad?
- Who do they talk to when they are upset?
- When do they typically go to sleep?  
Get up? How often do they wake up in the middle of the night?
- Do they ever get so anxious that it interferes with your life or activities?

# Home \* Education/Eating/Exercise \* Activities Drugs/Depression \* **SEXUALITY** \* Suicidality/Safety **STRENGTHS**

- Ask about relationships first : Crush? Someone who likes them, anyone special?
- What sexual behaviors are they doing? How many partners? Make sure they know the terms, don't be afraid to be explicit.
- How do they handle situations that make them uncomfortable?
- Their use of birth control, condoms
- Ask about first experiences and consider the possibility of molestation, rape, or abuse



# Using information from HEADSS

- How will the information from the HEADSS help you to identify and address the hidden agenda.
- What are some of the questions from the HEADSS you want to ask?
- Don't forget to think about **strengths** in each area.
- How are you planning on handling confidentiality



- Listen and give them chance to voice their concerns. Listen to verbal, non verbal, emotions and experiences.
- After taking time to deal with their immediate concern, a high percentage will take the opportunity to discuss the issue most important to them.
- In a supportive environment, adolescents will express their hidden agendas.

# Adolescent Sexual & Reproductive rights

- The right to education and information about sexual reproductive health issues.
- Right to receive reproductive health services as long as needed.
- The right to feel comfortable when receiving services.
- The right to say no to sex.
- Respect for bodily integrity.

# The Responsibilities

- Inquire about available reproductive health services
- Give /share correct reproductive health history
- Make an informed choice
- Consult the service provider in case of doubts
- Use services correctly
- Maintain positive behaviour. Positive prevention

# Things to Remember:

## Know Yourself and Be Comfortable

- This isn't your own adolescence: Avoid assumptions.
- You are not their parent. You are not their friend.
- Know what provokes your sense of “outrage” or “judgment”. Outside of the exam room, find a way to re-frame or to whom to refer
- Avoid the power struggle: the goal is “adherence”, not “compliance”
- You don't have to be “cool”, or know all of the current adolescent culture. You do have to listen.

# Summary

- Help the Adolescent make healthy decisions
- Exhibit high emotional intelligence

## **Follow up**

- Health workers to take professional responsibility to follow up and support Adolescents overcome /deal with their problems
- Referrals made should be appropriate.



# Acknowledgements

1. Dr Sabrina Bakeera- Kitaka
2. Susan L. Rosenthal, PhD, Columbia University
3. Makerere University and Columbia University  
Departments of Pediatrics
4. Adolescents living with HIV
5. TASO