

Identification of Common Emotional Issues in Adolescents and Self-Regulation Methods Combining Movement and Stillness

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Abstract: Mental health problems among adolescents are becoming increasingly prominent worldwide. Adolescence is a period of rapid development in a person's life. The imbalance of physical and psychological development, as well as the pressure of various adaptations, can easily cause various emotional problems in adolescents, which in turn leads to mental health problems in adolescents. Therefore, exploring the identification and adjustment of common emotional problems of adolescents is an important way to reduce their mental health problems. Based on the main emotional problems and their manifestations, this paper introduces the identification of anxiety, irritability, repression, depression, inferiority, loneliness, apathy, obsessiveness, and sensitivity and suspicion in adolescents. The self-regulation mode of dynamic and static combination is given, including mindfulness therapy and exercise therapy. This study can provide adolescents, parents and teachers with identification and intervention methods for adolescent emotional problems, offering practical scientific methods for families, schools and society to reduce adolescent mental health problems.

Keywords: adolescents, emotional issues, anxiety, combining movement and stillness, self-regulation

1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescents are the future of nations and the world. However, mental health problems among adolescents are becoming increasingly severe globally. According to the World Health Organization's 2024 survey statistics, about one in seven individuals aged 10-19 in the world suffer from mental disorders, 4.4% of adolescents aged 10-14 and 5.5% of adolescents aged 15-19 suffer from anxiety disorders. Additionally, 1.4% of adolescents aged 10-14 and 3.5% of those aged 15-19 experience depression. In China, the "2023 Annual Report on Mental Health in China" released in October 2023, shows that adolescents are facing increasing pressure on their studies and employment, and mental health problems are becoming increasingly prominent, with a trend of younger age. The constant changing growth environment combined with the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic has made the mental health problems of adolescents more prominent. Studies have shown that most people with mental disorders already have symptoms of depression and anxiety during adolescence. It is estimated that 50% of adult mental health problems begin at age 14 and 75% by the age of 18 (Du Toit et al., 2024). Therefore, mental health problems in adulthood may be related to emotional problems in adolescence. If these emotional problems cannot be adjusted in time and actively alleviated, which will have adverse effects on life. Studies also show that adolescents who experience emotional problems are often stigmatized by their peers (Lau, A.S. et al., 2016).

As a result, countries around the world are paying more and more attention to adolescent mental health issues. For example, the Ministry of Education and 17 other departments of China issued the "*Special Action Plan for Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving Student Mental Health in the New Era (2023-2025)*", which pointed out that promoting students' physical and mental health and all-round development is a major topic of concern to the Party Central Committee, the people, and society. This study aims to introduce the specific performance and recognition of common emotional problems of adolescents, as well as scientific and effective self-adjustment methods combining dynamic and static, so as to help adolescents, parents, educators and all aspects of society to scientifically identify emotional problems, master operable self-adjustment methods, and establish a positive, open, inclusive and healthy psychological state. To promote the all-round development of youth personality and the formation of self-identity, improve their mental health literacy and happiness, help teenagers grow up, and promote social harmony and progress. At the same time, this study makes a modest contribution to the relevant theories of adolescent emotional problems in terms of theoretical significance, and provides new perspectives and ideas for the self-regulation of adolescent emotional problems.

2. COMMON EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS IN ADOLESCENTS AND THEIR IDENTIFICATION

Adolescence is the stage of transition from childhood to adulthood, during which individuals experience significant physical and psychological changes, facing with many pressures and challenges such as academic pressure, family relationships, interpersonal communication, social identity, etc. Due to the limitation of cognitive level, incomplete personality formation, lack of life experience and other reasons, psychological and behavioral problems with emotional problems as the core are prone to occur. Adolescents are faced with the problem of self-identity integration, and their physical and mental development is subject to drastic changes. Accompanied by cognitive, physiological and psychological changes, emotional problems are thus very common among adolescents (Wang et al., 2018). The emotions of teenagers show the contradictory characteristics of semi-mature and semi-immature, which are manifested as bipolarity, variability, stubbornness, introversion and expressiveness (Lin Chongde, 2018). Therefore, the identification and assessment of adolescent emotional problems is particularly important. For example, in July 2021, the General Office of the Ministry of Education of China issued *the Notice on Strengthening the Management of Students' Mental Health*, clearly proposing to do a good job in the assessment of students' mental health. Studies have found that the common emotional problems of adolescents are anxiety, irritability, repression, depression, inferiority, loneliness, apathy, obsessiveness, and sensitivity and suspicion, etc. The following sections mainly introduces the identification of the above emotional problems.

2.1. Anxiety and Its Identification

Anxiety is the negative feelings of nervousness, worry, and unease that arises when an individual anticipates possible danger in the future and feels unable to cope with this threat (Dong Qi and Lin Chongde, 2011). Adolescents are particularly susceptible to anxiety, they are faced with many tasks such as establishing self-identity and developing self-awareness, and at the same time, they are under great learning pressure and are prone to confusion of psychological integration (Lin Chongde, 2018), thus leading to anxiety and other emotional problems. When anxiety reaches a high level or persists for an extended period, it is easy to evolve into pathological emotions and have a negative impact on the daily life of adolescents. Adolescent anxiety comes from many aspects, while academic pressure and interpersonal relationships are the two main sources of anxiety among middle school students (Li Yuxia, 2013).

The main manifestations of adolescent anxiety include, (1) Excessive thinking, upset, and decreased

self-control; (2) Easily feel nervous, fearful and worried, with lack of confidence and security; (3) Avoidance behaviors, such as escaping from learning, social situations, etc.; (4) Inability to concentrate and decreased cognitive efficiency; (5) Over-reliance on others, seeking comfort and support, and in some case, extreme behaviors such as non-suicidal self-injury; (6) Abnormal physiological state, such as insomnia, changes in appetite (loss or increase), headache, stomach pain and other physical discomfort symptoms, as well as motor restlessness, and autonomic dysfunction symptoms such as rapid heartbeat and shortness of breath. Nervousness is the core feature of anxiety, and anxiety can be well identified based on the above manifestations.

2.2. Irritability and Its Identification

Irritability is an emotional state that is triggered by a stimulus that is unfavorable to oneself on a certain occasion. Psychologically, this is a psychological anomaly that occurs due to excessive excitement or high self-awareness in the central nervous system of adolescents. Adolescents are in a stage of heightened emotionally sensitive and active physically and mentally development. Affected by family, interpersonal and higher education pressures, they are often prone to strong unpleasant emotional experiences over minor issues.

The main manifestations of irritability in adolescents include, (1) Restlessness, sensitivity and suspicion; (2) Tough attitude and rough behavior; (3) Self-centeredness; (4) Aggressive behavior, reduced emotional self-control; (5) Contextual nature: irritability is often situation-specific; (6) Obvious migration: The migration of adolescent irritability refers to the fact that when a certain aspect of a person's words and deeds arouses their disgust, they tend to transfer this disgust and rejection to all aspects of the person, or even deny the person completely. Explosive anger is the core characteristic of irritability, and irritability can be well identified based on the above manifestations.

2.3. Repression and Its Identification

Repression refers to the depressed emotions that arise when dissatisfaction, sadness, and other psychological experiences occur while needs and desires cannot be met and satisfied, but also are not expressed to others. As adolescents grow older, they develop a variety of needs, both physical and psychological. However, there are many needs that cannot be met, sometimes due to the desire itself is unrealistic or because of social resistance and parental limitations, and sometimes it is inexperience that leads to failure, so that adolescents are vulnerable to self-esteem but have the urge to compete. In such a contradictory situation, they often find themselves in a state of repression (Lin Congde, 2018).

The main manifestations of repression in adolescents include, (1) Depressed mood and lack of motivation; (2) Decreased energy, decreased interest, and feeling inadequate and overwhelmed; (3) Difficulty in maintaining intimate relationships, strong defensiveness, and avoidance of interpersonal communication; (4) Avoiding problems and denying the difficulties they face; (5) Low self-esteem, falling into self-blame and helplessness. Suppressing one's feelings inward is the core characteristic of suppressed emotions, and based on the above manifestations, repressed emotions can be well identified.

2.4. Depression and Its Identification

Depression is a short-term emotional response that is a series of cognitive, motivational, and physiological changes triggered by various environmental situations, which may be caused by frustration, stress, or loss in life, and is characterized by depressed mood, anhedonia, low energy, pessimism, and tiredness. Various stressors from different causes interact with individual susceptibility to trigger temporary emotional changes. In this sense, the emergence of depression would be an adaptive response, with more intense stressors (genetic, social, etc.) potentially triggering a state of neuroinflammation (Cavieres et al., 2022). It is important to note that prolonged or severe feelings of

depression may develop into clinical depression.

The main manifestations of depression in adolescents include, (1) Negative emotional expression, feeling down and depressed; (2) Lack of interest and vitality; (3) Decreased social activity; (4) Decreased level of psychological response; (5) It can be accompanied by corresponding physical manifestations, such as insomnia, loss of appetite or burst, headache, stomach pain or chest tightness and shortness of breath and other physical discomfort symptoms. Feeling down is the core feature of depression, and depression can be well identified based on the above manifestations.

2.5. Inferiority and Its Identification

Inferiority is a low mood caused by excessive self-denial due to experiences of failure. Adolescents with feelings of inferiority tend to evaluate themselves poorly in various aspects and often doubt their abilities. They often compare their own shortcomings with the strengths of others and fail to see their own worth. In addition, the psychological level of adolescent individuals is semi-mature and semi-naïve. Several occasional failures are easy to make adolescents have self-doubt and extreme inferiority. Because teenagers with feelings of inferiority can't find their own value, they are easy to lose hope in life, and in severe cases, they may even have thoughts of suicide.

The main manifestations of adolescent inferiority include, (1) Low self-evaluation; (2) Generalization of feelings of inferiority in a certain aspect; (3) Consciously cover up what they perceive as "shortcomings"; (4) Doubting or denying self-worth. Self-esteem is the core characteristic of inferiority complex, and it can be well identified based on the above manifestations.

2.6. Loneliness and Its Identification

Loneliness is a reflection of an isolated psychology, a feeling of loneliness and depression that arises when one feels disconnected from the outside world or excluded from it. Hollingworth refers to the age period from adolescence to early adulthood as the period of "psychological weaning", from which the individual will be psychologically detached from the protection of his parents and his attachment to them. Teenagers will independently explore the formation of an independent personality, and gradually become an independent member of society. This transition also creates a lot of uneasiness for adolescents, who in reality find it difficult to adapt to independent living in a short period of time, despite their subjective demands and desires for independence. The ambivalence of psychological development exacerbates loneliness and tends to cause confusion in psychological integration. In addition, adolescents still have a need for intimacy, but the social relationships associated with it have not yet been fully established, so it is often difficult to extricate themselves when they fall into a state of loneliness.

The main manifestations of loneliness in adolescents include, (1) Sadness, accompanied by obvious melancholic emotional expressions; (2) Feeling bored, irritable, and having the urge to vent; (3) Surrounded by feelings of solitude and loneliness all day long, having little interest in other things and indifference to other matters; (4) It is often accompanied by some discomforts and difficulties in adapting in life. Helplessness is the core characteristic of loneliness, and loneliness can be well identified based on the above manifestations.

2.7. Apathy and Its Identification

Apathy refers to the state of mind in which emotions show indifference. It is manifested as a lack of corresponding emotional response to external stimuli, indifference to people, loss of interest in surrounding things, poverty of inner experience, loss of emotional connection with the surrounding environment. In severe cases, individuals may show indifference even to significant changes or stimuli.

The main causes of emotional apathy are external stimuli, blows, or frustrations. The apathetic and ruthless trait is also known as "limited prosocial emotions". Previous studies have found that there are three aspects of apathy: coldness, indifference, and ruthlessness (Zhu et al., 2023). During adolescence, the mood is more sensitive, and when they are frustrated, and hit in real life, they are easily discouraged and lose their enthusiasm for life and interest in the things around them. They may struggle to reconcile role conflicts, are prone to self-pity, and lose hope in life.

The main manifestations of adolescent apathy include, (1) Lack of empathy, indifference, and lack of guilt for doing wrong; (2) indifference to the surroundings, loss of interest, and dull expression; (3) Concealment of emotions from others. Indifference to the people and things around you is the core characteristic of apathy, and it can be well identified based on the above manifestations.

2.8. Obsessiveness and Its Identification

Obsessiveness mainly refers to certain ideas and behaviors that arise from within, are meaningless but recurring. It can sometimes be restrained and get rid of, which is a kind of psychological problem of the will. Teenagers with such psychological problems often inexplicably appear certain unnecessary ideas and behaviors, and are overly cautious, so they are often troubled by nervousness and inner conflicts. Adolescents are prone to self-suppression and self-isolation when they have obsessive behaviors and emotions, and are overly sensitive and pursue perfection.

The main manifestations of adolescent obsessiveness include, (1) Persistent and unnecessary worries about certain things; (2) Anxiety and the presence of thoughts or behaviors inexplicably; (3) Repeated inspection or cleaning; (4) Excessive attention to detail or pursuit of perfection. Repetition is the core feature of obsessiveness, and it can be well identified based on the above manifestations.

2.9. Sensitivity and Suspicion and Their Identification

Sensitivity and suspicion are a kind of nervous and suspicious negative state of mind caused by the variability and bipolarity of adolescents' emotions with the development of self-awareness. Adolescents are in a critical period of physical and mental development, eager to show themselves and gain the attention of others (Liu et al., 2022). Adolescent individuals are more sensitive to the environment, and due to a lack of self-security, they stubbornly produce illogical thoughts and concepts that lack factual basis (Xiao Feng, 2003). Adolescents with this problem may be overly aware of the behaviors and feelings of others, often have strained interpersonal relationships, always have conflicts in life, and are prone to annoyance and anxiety, which affects physical and mental health.

The main manifestations of adolescent sensitivity and suspiciousness include, (1) Excessive concern for the opinions of others, doubting oneself and others, questioning their own abilities or worth; (2) Tendency to self-implication and excessive sensitivity to the words and deeds of others, easily feeling offended or hurt by comments or actions that may not be intended as much; (3) Emotional tension, easy anxiety and irritability, feeling stressed; (4) lack of self-confidence, nervous breakdown, timid avoidance; (5) Insecurity, lack of trust in others. Excessive exposure to people and things in the unexpected world is the core characteristic of sensitivity and suspicion, and based on the above manifestations, it can be well identified.

3. SELF-REGULATION METHODS COMBINING DYNAMIC AND STATIC APPROACHES FOR ADOLESCENTS' EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS

The intervention methods for adolescent emotional problems mainly include professional psychological counseling and self-regulation, among which self-regulation is the most critical method. Self-regulation is an important psychological process that aims to help adolescents cope with and adjust to various

emotional distress or challenges they may encounter in their daily lives through a series of methods. The study will introduce a combination of dynamic and static methods to help adolescents self-regulate their emotional problems, including static mindfulness therapy and art therapy, dynamic exercise therapy and horticultural therapy. In static methods, mindfulness therapy and art therapy can be used by adolescents in their daily life to break through the constraints of space and adjust their emotional state in time. As well as in dynamic methods, exercise therapy and horticultural therapy can effectively enhance the physical fitness of adolescents, relieve stress, cultivate positive emotions, and promote the perfection of personality, mental health and growth and development of adolescents.

3.1. Mindfulness

Mindfulness is derived from the Eastern Buddhist practice of meditation, which is a purposeful, non-judgmental way of putting oneself in a relatively relaxed and calm state, focusing attention on the present moment, including awareness, attention, and remembering. Mindfulness training is considered to be an extension of traditional focused attention meditation, with an emphasis on expanding attention in a non-judgmental and non-reactive way, so that people have more awareness of the feelings, thoughts, and emotional experiences of the present moment (Mei et al., 2023). Mindfulness can help regulate and improve mood and cognition, reduce stress, develop emotional balance, and build important emotional and interpersonal skills, promote well-being, enhance self-efficacy, and promote mental health (Altinyelken, 2018; Xie et al., 2024). Traditional mindfulness training techniques include "body scanning", "mindful breathing", "mindfulness meditation", "mindful walking", "mindfulness yoga", "mindful writing", "mindful eating", "mindful stretching", etc., in the practice of some techniques, attention is sequentially guided throughout the body (Hofmann et al., 2010).

Mindfulness therapy is mainly about putting oneself in a quiet environment, allowing the body to be in a relaxed but not dormant state, and accepting and being aware of changes in the body in an open, non-judgmental manner. Depending on your own situation or emotional problems, choose different attention sites. Below are several mindfulness training methods for adolescents.

3.1.1. Mindful Breathing

Mindful breathing requires paying attention to the breath in the present moment, feeling the frequency and ebb and rhythm of inhalation and exhalation. Focus on feeling the subtle changes in the air moving in and out of your nostrils, or the movement of your chest rising and falling as you breathe. When the mind is drawn by new thoughts, emotions, or other physical sensations, gently bring the attention back to the breath, maintaining an accepting but not dwelling attitude towards these distractions, allowing them to dissipate naturally (Vieth & von Stockhausen, 2023). Mindful breathing does not have strict time and space requirements, which makes it convenient for adolescents to carry out this training to bring their emotions to a calm state and improve concentration.

3.1.2. Mindful Writing

Mindfulness writing can be combined with self-compassion writing to regulate emotions such as anxiety and depression, and it is also a form of self-compassion. Self-compassion, an attitude orientation towards self-care and acceptance, is a concept proposed by Neff based on Buddhist thought, which refers to being kind to oneself, understanding suffering, and adopting an open and inclusive attitude of care when experiencing personal failure or suffering, with three aspects: self-friendliness, universal human sensuality, and mindfulness (Li et al., 2024; Mei et al., 2023).

This training method only requires a simple pen and paper to record and recognize the feeling of the moment. The first step is to review and write in detail about a negative event in your past life that made you feel bad. The second step is to find common experiences and list some people who have similar

experiences. Combined with the universal sensuality of self-compassion, individuals can enhance their sense of connection with others, find empathy and protect themselves from feelings of isolation and shame when facing difficulties. The third step is to simulate comfort and imagine how you would comfort your friend if he or she had experienced a similar incident. Apply the universal human sensuality of self-compassion to exercise individuals to use imagery to reason and think compassionately about themselves and others in order to gain self-support to deal with negative thought processes such as self-criticism. Finally, describe how you feel in the moment objectively and non-emotionally. Mindful writing can improve concentration so that individuals can gain more perspectives to reduce self-criticism, engage in cognitive reevaluation, and thus improve their mood (Mei et al., 2023). Positive self-compassion can be effective in adjusting emotions and accepting one's imperfections, allowing for an open mind to be kind to oneself.

3.1.3. Mindful Walking

Mindful walking takes the form of walking, focusing on the soles of your feet and feeling the sensation of your feet touching the ground. Start walking, take small natural steps, experience the weight movement of your body as each foot lifts off the ground, lifts and moves forward, and perceives the change in your body from one end of the path to the other. When you reach the end of the path, you can slowly turn around and enjoy the movement pattern of your body changing direction. This kind of training can help the body and mind focus in the face of small distractions that often occur in our movements (Williams & Penman, 2023) and reduce negative emotions such as anxiety.

3.1.4. Mindful Eating

Research indicates that mindful eating behaviors are positively correlated with well-being and have a positive impact on eating behaviors. They can regulate physical, emotional, and cognitive experiences, potentially helping to regulate stress responses, enhance self-acceptance, deepen understanding of the connection between the body and mind and of eating, and improve overall health (Chiba & Yoshiike, 2024; Shaw & Cassidy, 2022). Mindful eating emphasizes food consumption and full awareness, taking a slow approach to eating, focusing on the act of chewing (Chiba & Yoshiike, 2024), and experiencing the taste of things as they are. This training does not take up extra time, and can be used in the daily diet of teenagers to achieve self-emotional adjustment.

Global researches have proven that mindfulness is effective in coping with persistent anxiety or destructive emotions, helping people manage and interrupt their stress, thereby reducing depression, anxiety and other emotions (Zhai et al., 2023). Mindfulness therapy can efficiently enhance adolescents' emotional awareness, learn to deal with their difficult or negative emotions, and effectively regulate emotional problems.

3.2. Art Therapy

In the mid-20th century, art therapy in the narrow sense referred only to painting therapy. With the development of art therapy concepts and methods, the development trend of art therapy has evolved significantly with the multi-theoretical orientation, comprehensive media application and technology. Currently, art therapy generally refers to the therapeutic techniques of visual forms such as painting, sculpture, handicraft, calligraphy, seal carving, performance art, and film (Zhou Qinshan, 2018). Working on art can improve their personal inner health, helping to enhance emotional expression, self-esteem, and self-awareness, as well as their self-concept and emotional stability (Del Río Diéguez et al., 2024).

In the self-regulation of adolescents' emotional problems, painting or calligraphy can be used to calm emotions and relieve anxiety. You can use artistic means such as movies or handicrafts to regulate depression, improve mood, and form positive guidance.

3.3. Horticultural therapy

Horticultural therapy is a branch of Eco psychotherapy, which affirms the effects of nature on people's physical and mental health, such as reducing stress, reducing aggression, eliminating tension, relieving anxiety, etc. (Zhou, 2016). Plants can induce different sensory stimuli that can relax the mind, provide an unconscious calming experience, improve sleep quality, etc. (Yang et al., 2024).

In emotional self-adjustment, anxiety and other emotions can be relieved by sowing, planting, watering, pruning and fertilizing, so that the body and mind can be relaxed. At the same time, gardening-themed craft activities can also be carried out, such as: taxidermy, embossing, plant pruning, flower arrangement, etc., to enhance emotional experience and bring positive cognition.

3.4. Exercise Therapy

With the rapid development of social economy and lifestyle changes, the physical activity level of adolescents is gradually declining, 80% of the world's children and adolescents do not reach the recommended level of physical activity, sedentary behavior and lack of exercise. The problem is becoming increasingly prominent, and long-term exposure to electronic products and media equipment is not only detrimental to physical health, but also has a negative impact on mood.

Researches indicates that exercise is beneficial for both physical and mental health, and that exercise can enhance mental resilience, maintain emotional stability and regulate emotions. Studies have shown that physical activity can improve adolescent emotion regulation and reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression (Yan Jingfei and Dai Shengting, 2024). Exercise alters the way people respond to and process experimental or nature-induced emotional experiences, which can promote emotional recovery, stress resilience, and emotional inertia (Bernstein & McNally, 2018). Physical education can improve adolescents' subjective well-being, self-esteem and physical and mental health, shape a good lifestyle, and improve anxiety, depression and other emotions (Ruiz-Ranz & Asín-Izquierdo, 2024).

Regular physical exercise, such as running, playing ball, cycling, etc., can not only strengthen the body, but also promote a happy mood. Regular physical education classes are also important to improve adolescent emotional regulation and enhance the emotional experience of happiness. When facing negative emotions, engaging in exercise can help regulate and improve your mood. By making an exercise plan, reminding and self-urging to carry out physical exercise, the emotions can be released to a certain extent, so as to maintain the emotional level in a stable and normal state.

In summary, this study proposes some practical techniques and methods for the self-regulation of adolescents' emotional problems, breaking through the traditional time and space limitations, and realizing self-healing through adolescents themselves. Of course, for different ages, different degrees and types of emotional problems, it is the main direction of future researchers to explore personalized and diversified intervention programs for adolescent emotional problems in various aspects of home, school, social and political aspects.

This study, based on the main emotional problems and their manifestations, has detailed the identification of common emotional problems such as anxiety, irritability, repression, depression, inferiority, loneliness, apathy, obsessiveness, and sensitivity and suspicion in adolescents. It has also introduced a dynamic and static self-regulation model, including mindfulness therapy and exercise therapy. This research aims to provide adolescents, parents, and teachers with methods for identifying and intervening in emotional problems. It offers scientifically sound and operable solutions to reduce mental health problems among adolescents and has significant popular science value. We look forward to scholars in related fields paying more attention to adolescents' emotional problems in the future. We hope that families, schools, communities, and governments will work together to actively assist and

intervene in the various emotional and mental health problems encountered by adolescents during their growth, providing a robust support network for their physical and mental health development.

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