PSY 372:

**Understanding Developmental Milestones**

Learning objective: Understand basic developmental milestones from infancy through young adulthood and how these tasks may be helpful in social intervention research.

How do we know if a child is doing well? How do we know if a child is delayed, struggling, or at-risk for later problems? Understanding developmental milestones can help. Milestones are a collection of age-defined tasks that reflect competence in the environment. They are often described according to a domain (physical, cognitive, social, and emotional), indicate good functioning in the present, and pave the way toward successful functioning later in development. Some milestones are universal and others are culture specific. Within a culture or society, the pooled knowledge from parents, teachers, and other important people in the lives of children generally reflects the expectations inherent in these milestones.

Examples of milestones for child conduct:

Early childhood: “Child begins controlling behavior and complying with parents.”

Middle childhood: “Child follows rules for classroom conduct. Gets along with others.”

Adolescence: “Youth follows rules of school, home, and society without adult supervision.”

Part I: Developmental Milestones for Young Adults

Think about young adults in your age range (18-25). Across the different domains (physical, cognitive, social, emotional), what are some key developmental tasks that would reflect competent functioning for young adults in our society? In other words, what behaviors, competencies, skills, and/or attributes does society expect of young people now and that will help them be successful in the future?

According to the milestones you identified, can you think of examples of people that may be lagging behind in their development? Do you consider these people to be at-risk for a poor developmental outcomes? Explain.

Part II: Developmental Milestones for Children and Adolescents

After choosing an age period (infancy and toddlerhood (0-2), early childhood (3-5), middle childhood (6-11) adolescence (12-20)), discuss in small groups what you believe are the important developmental tasks or age-appropriate competences for children during that period. Make a list of 4-5 age-appropriate competencies. Based on your list, what are signs that a child may be off-track or at-risk for poor developmental outcomes?