

Case Study: Erica

Erica is a 15 year old teenage girl who is busy trying to juggle going to High School, working as a babysitter, and volunteering at a local hospital. She struggles in school a little, which means getting her homework done takes even more of her time. Her parents are divorced and barely ever interact with one another. Her mom works long days and busy nights when working on a special project, taking her away from Erica even more. All of the things Erica experiences throughout her daily life affect her development.

Physically, Erica seems to be developing like any other 15 year old with the exception of getting a proper amount of sleep. She goes to school, and then babysits Monday, Wednesday, and Friday until 6:30. On Tuesdays and Thursdays after school she volunteers at the local hospital until 10:00. She has some time to finish homework on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, but not on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Sometimes she even stays up all night writing in her journal, if something difficult happened in her day. All of the lack of sleep will take a toll on Erica's development. Teenagers need roughly 8.5 to 9 hours of sleep every night. Sleep increases the brain's alertness and increases the ability to learn. When you sleep well, you can think well.

Erica loves when she can interact with the children at the hospital, but struggles in school and with her school work. I believe that she is an Interpersonal learner, but has a weakness in the area of Logical intelligence. Being an Interpersonal learner means that you can communicate well and have more enjoyable experiences when you can interact with different people. With the same token this makes me believe that Erica is a weak

Intrapersonal learner. She is not extremely confident in herself, and doesn't really know herself, but is fine when interacting with other people.

Cognitively, Erica is developing right on track. She is in Piaget's "Formal Operational" stage. This is his highest stage of Cognitive Development. She has grown through all the stages of development of thinking. She can think abstractly and hypothetically, but also see situations from a multitude of points of view. She doesn't think egocentrically, like children in lower stages of development. This is evident when she talks about her mom working long hours at work. She understands that her mom must in order to support the family. Along with the higher Cognitive Development, she has developed her own sense of moral reasoning, which Piaget theorized developed as Cognitive development furthered.

In reference to moral development, Erica is in Kohlberg's 3rd stage of Moral Development. In this stage people define what is right by what is expected by society. People define themselves also by what is considered to be good. While volunteering at the hospital Erica overheard parents talking about lying to the insurance company to cover a surgery. Erica is really troubled by them lying because she believes that it is *never* ok to lie. Society's expectations are that no one lies because it is wrong. So Erica is basing her decision about lying on what Society believes to be right, thereby solidifying her spot in Kohlberg's 3rd stage of Moral Development.

Erica is developing right on track with Erikson's social/emotional stages. Being an Interpersonal learner, she is really developed socially, but she struggles a little emotionally. This leads me to believe that she is in Erikson's 5th stage of development

called: Identity vs. Confusion. This stage is where someone is trying to “find” themselves. Erica is overloaded and busy with all of her responsibilities and commitments. She also has to emotionally learn how to deal with the death of children at the hospital. These deaths take an emotional toll on Erica and causing her to question how she feels. She often writes in her journal how she feels when a child dies. I think she will quickly grow and develop through this stage as she figures out exactly who she is and her place in society.

The final piece to Erica’s developmental puzzle is the influences in her life. Her family relationships make a difference to her development. The theorist Brofenbrenner believed that a person’s environment affected their development. The fact that Erica’s parents, who are divorced, barely speak to each other this affects her development.

To help keep Erica and her development on track, Erica needs to work on her time management, her parents need to improve their relationship for Erica’s sake, she needs to get a little more sleep, and Erica needs a little more homework help to her improve in school. If these “changes” were implemented then Erica will continue developing at the proper pace.