Chapter Objectives
After studying this chapter, you will be able to
• describe environmental influences on your personality development.
• explain the role of the family in the development of the child’s personality.
• summarize the role of peers in personality development.
• analyze ways in which education, religion, technology, changing economic conditions, and the mass media may influence personality development.

Reading Connection
Take time to reread sentences or paragraphs that cause confusion or raise questions. Rereading will clarify content and strengthen your understanding of key concepts.

Key Concepts
• A child’s personality development is shaped through the beliefs and behaviors that family members impart to the child.
• People can enrich their lives by learning about the cultural backgrounds of others and about what each person has in common with society as a whole.
• The influence of your peers greatly impacts the development of your personality. You do not, however, have to conform to the choices of your peers. Your choices should be your own.
• A positive educational environment can help children develop a sense of themselves as learners. An appreciation for learning can benefit a person’s personality development throughout life.
• Every generation develops within its own set of environmental conditions.
Part One
Personal Development

Which has the greater effect on human development: heredity or environment? Scholars have debated this question for years. Almost all experts would agree, however, that the effects of your heredity cannot be easily separated from the impact of your environment. You are a product of the interaction between the two. Your hereditary traits affect your functioning within your environment, and your environment affects the development and expression of your inherited traits.

Evidence of this interaction is all around you. Look, for instance, at the highlights that enhance the hair of some of your friends. Those highlights may be achieved by many hours of exposure to the sun’s rays or simply by a chemical treatment. In either case, the inherited hair color is changed by environmental factors.

You might also consider your friends’ personal appearance. Each friend is born with a set of physical traits (heredity). Your friends modify their appearance to some degree with hairstyles and clothing (environment). Still, it is difficult for them to change their appearance very far beyond the limits set by heredity.

Your personality development is also affected by your surroundings. Environmental factors that influence personality will be studied in this chapter. As shown in 2-2, you can see some of the environmental factors that affect your life now. You can also see that the influence of these factors will probably shift within the next five years.

2-1 Your environment—all of the conditions, objects, and circumstances that surround you—plays a major role in your personality development.

Environmental Factors That Affect Personality Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Now</th>
<th>Five Years After High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family is a primary factor</td>
<td>For some, marriage may be a primary family influence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers gain in importance</td>
<td>Peers may be several different “sets” of friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal education has an influential position</td>
<td>Formal education remains a past or current influence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation can become important</td>
<td>Occupation can become a primary factor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion is an individual choice</td>
<td>Religion is an individual choice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community becomes important</td>
<td>Community gains in importance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2-2 Several environmental factors affect the personality development of high school students. These factors shift in importance during the years after high school.

Your Family

The family provides the single most important environmental influence on a child’s personality development. It is within the family that the infant first learns to love and trust others. This sense of trust is gained in the early years through the love and consistent responses of the baby’s caregiver. Family members also shape the child’s personality development through the beliefs and behaviors they impart to the child.

In a positive and nurturing family environment, children learn they are loved. Because they know they are loved, they are able to take the psychological risks necessary to learn new things. They know the important thing is to try their best. If they fail, their family will be there to comfort them and help them try again.

As children grow, they learn to be sensitive to the feelings of others. They learn to be considerate of other family members and to treat others as they themselves would like to be treated. This understanding influences the environment which children later provide as adults for their own children. Thus, positive (or negative) family beliefs and behaviors are often passed from generation to generation.
As part of family living, children are also taught the difference between right and wrong. In this way, children learn to relate to authority figures (people who make final decisions, such as parents, teachers, police officers, and supervisors). They also learn to respect the limits and boundaries of others.

**Relating to Authority Figures**

It is important for children and teens to learn to relate well to parents and other authority figures because authority figures are an ever-present part of life. Almost everyone is accountable to someone. Workers must report to supervisors. Elected officials must be responsive to the people who elected them. Even a company president must answer to a board of directors. Later in life, you are likely to become an authority figure yourself—perhaps as a parent or work supervisor.

Being in a position of authority can be a very difficult job that carries a lot of responsibility. As an authority figure, you are often responsible for the safety and actions of others. Authority figures, however, are not perfect. They make mistakes at times, but they try their best, just as you will when it is your turn to be “in charge.”

Some teens have difficulty accepting guidance from people in authority. They may question and disagree with their decisions. However, it is important to remember that authority figures are doing their jobs. Even if you disagree, you can still be cooperative, accept their decisions gracefully, and learn from them. Then, when you are in charge, you can be prepared to exert authority fairly and effectively. You may even be surprised to find yourself imitating the same authority figures with whom you used to disagree.

**Family Cultural Patterns**

What do you know about your family background? In what country did your ancestors live? One of the most interesting and enriching parts of life is to look into your past and see how your ancestors lived their lives. The total social environment of a people or group is called its culture. Our society is culturally diverse. It is made up of families representing many different cultures. Successive generations blend these cultural characteristics into their current way of life. They celebrate their individual cultural backgrounds while also respecting the many things they have in common with society as a whole.

Each family learns its customary beliefs and modes of behavior from its country or countries of origin. Are you aware of how your cultural background influences your life? Special holiday traditions, foods, heirlooms, and ancestral costumes all remind you of your cultural heritage. You can learn many important lessons from your ancestors.

It is interesting to note ways in which a family’s cultural heritage may influence family relationships. For example, some families are influenced by cultures in which family members prefer not to show their affection outwardly. In contrast, families from other cultures may like to show their affection openly.

Families from some cultures tend to place a high level of importance on close, frequent interaction, even after children have become adults. Adult children and parents may contact one another or get together several times a week. Much of their leisure time is spent in family-centered social events. In other, equally loving families, contact among family members is less frequent.

**Appreciating Cultural Diversity**

Family traditions and customs help make each family unique. However, people can benefit from learning about the values, beliefs, and behaviors of families in other cultures. To expand your appreciation of cultural diversity, you could try to learn a different language. You could make an effort to enjoy the food dishes of other cultures. You could take time to learn about the ways other cultures observe family events such as births and weddings. Even everyday events such as family mealtimes reflect cultural practices. Studying the modern dress and traditional folk costumes of various cultures also provides an interesting perspective.

In this culturally diverse world, it is important to appreciate the contributions of cultures other than your own. If you know someone from another culture, knowledge of that person’s background may be helpful in understanding him or her. Learning about other cultures will also be useful to you when you enter the workforce. Developing an understanding and appreciation of various cultures can help you get along with others and be more effective in your work relationships.
Family Interactions

Your family provides you with daily experiences no other setting can
give you. Every member of a family fulfills certain roles. A role is a socially
expected behavior pattern. Your primary role now is of a son or daughter. However, you fill other roles as well. If your grandparents are living,
you have the role of a grandson or granddaughter. If there are siblings
(brothers or sisters) in your family, you are also a brother or sister.

By now, you have learned to get along with different members of
your family. Your reaction to each is different. The “give and take” of
sibling relationships helps your social growth. Sometimes you may

- be less independent
- feel “overshadowed” at times by
older or younger siblings

Youngest Children may...
- receive a lot of attention and
protection from others in the family
- receive more direction from other
family members
- be pampered or indulged as the
“baby of the family”
- receive less encouragement to be
independent

No matter what position you have
in your family, the way you interact with other members of your family affects
their personality development as well as your own. How can you contribute positively to the environment of all family members?

Each child in a family has a different
personality. Research suggests that
some personality traits are shaped by the
age of each child in relation to his or her
siblings. The following are examples of
ways in which a child's personality may
be influenced by his or her birth order.

Oldest Children tend to...
- grow up rapidly and be given more
responsibility
- have the strongest desire to achieve,
as the parents may expect more
- be expected to care for younger sib-
lings and set a good example for them
- be more independent

Middle Children tend to...
- benefit from the companionship of a
sibling
- be given less responsibility than an
oldest child

Influences of Birth Order

The companionship of siblings adds to their personality development.

compete with your brothers and sisters for a parent’s love or attention.
This is normal. In fact, this sense of competition with your brothers and
sisters, called sibling rivalry, can even be a good thing if it helps you
develop an understanding of sharing and compromise.

Siblings offer companionship, 2-4. This is also true in later life.
When a child is young, he or she may not seem to have much in
common with a sibling who is several years older. However, the age
differences between children seem much less significant when they
become adults. Loving family members provide a source of emotional
support to one another throughout life.

Your Peers

The influence of your peer group (people about your own age) may
currently be one of the strongest forces in your life. Your family will
continue to be a strong influence, but your peers will also emerge as an
important force. The impact of the two influences will vary as you pass
through different developmental stages of your life.
Peer Influence During Adolescence

At this time of your life, your peers are probably very important to you. You share many experiences with them that contribute to the development of your personality. Your friends can be a source of strength and reinforcement. Such peer influence is natural and even essential in the development of healthy adolescents.

As an adolescent, you are searching for an identity (sense of who you are) and social acceptance. You are particularly vulnerable to peer pressure. Peer pressure is the influence exerted by a person’s age group. Many young people go along with their peers’ choices, thinking they are asserting their individuality. In reality, they are conforming to (fitting in with) the decisions made by others.

Peer pressure is a powerful force in establishing conformity, especially during the adolescent years. Most people want to be accepted by their peers. However, if your choices simply reflect your friends’ choices, you will not be learning the process of decision making. You may become dependent on others to make your decisions for you. It is important to remember that you can make your own choices. You should not have to conform to the choices of your peers to be accepted by them.

If your friends are influencing you toward behaviors that go against what you think is right, it will be necessary for you to stand up for what you believe. Those peers who are truly your friends will admire you more for adhering to your convictions.

Loyalties between your friends and you may be tested if they have principles unlike yours. If you become aware that your principles are quite different from those of your friends, you may wish to become closer to people with whom you have more in common.

Learn to identify and live by your own beliefs. If they are similar to those of your friends, it simply indicates your ideas and lifestyles are similar. Your choices should be your own, though you can benefit from sharing ideas with others.

Your Education

Your educational environment provides another important influence on your personality development. A positive school environment provides you with information and problem-solving skills. It also gives you a sense of yourself as a learner. Whether your individual learning style is fast or slow is of minor significance. The important thing is that you learn to the best of your ability. An appreciation for learning will equip you to seek information to help you solve problems throughout life.

A positive educational environment teaches other useful skills as well. Students learn to relate effectively to authority figures, such as teachers, coaches, and club sponsors. In competitive events, students see the importance of playing by the rules. They observe the role authority figures play in enforcing the rules fairly. Occasionally, students observe situations in which life is not fair, and they learn to live with those occurrences, too.

The classroom provides an arena in which you learn to compete and cooperate with others. You are also presented with opportunities to develop and test beliefs of right and wrong, such as deciding whether or not to cheat on an exam. All of these experiences and opportunities help you develop your personality. They also provide a valuable training ground for later life.
Your Religion

The role that religion may play in your life is one of the most personal elements in your environment. Religion means different things to different people. For some people, religion provides a sense of meaning and purpose in life. It offers psychological security, which can be helpful in living life and facing death. People may also feel their religious faith offers them moral and ethical direction as they strive to reach their goals and become responsible family and community members.

Many teens uphold the religious beliefs they learned in their childhood. Others who did not have early religious training may begin investigating religious beliefs during their teen years. If religion is one of your priorities, you may be influenced by it throughout your life.

Your Community and World

The world is constantly changing. The social and economic conditions that affected your grandparents or even your parents have changed. The trends affecting you today may not affect your children or grandchildren. Each generation develops within its own set of environmental conditions.

Influence of Technology

One of the most profound changes in our environment in recent decades has been the shift from an industrial society to an information society. This shift has had a dramatic impact on individuals and families. Rather than just producing commodities, people are now increasingly expected to be “computer literate.” They are expected to be able to gather and exchange information using sophisticated equipment based on computer technology.

Personal computers are increasingly commonplace in our lives. Computers are found in the workplace, in schools, and in homes. For children and teens, computer games provide a popular source of recreation. Some computer programs help students research and write papers for school assignments. The Internet allows access to millions of different resources worldwide. The Internet can be used to send e-mail (electronic messages) to others, gather information, and shop without leaving home. 2-6.

In addition, you can visit company Web sites worldwide. A Web site is a location on the World Wide Web that provides information, services, or products. Each Web site is owned and managed by an individual, company, or organization. Several hours each day can be spent clicking a mouse and staring at a computer screen. Sometimes, these hours compete with other activities such as family responsibilities, physical activity, and social events.

Technology advances also allow people to automate the processes by which they shop, engage in banking activities, and pay bills. By going online, bills can be paid automatically using a computer to transfer funds between accounts. Automated teller machines (ATMs) allow people to withdraw or deposit money into their accounts 24 hours a day. A personal digital assistant (PDA), or handheld computer, can be used as a telephone, calendar, or address book as well as to provide Internet access.

Advances in technology make it easier to be in contact with family and friends from any location. Many family members have their own cell phones so parents and children can be in touch at all times. Even when cell phones are turned off, voice messages or text messages can be left and retrieved later.

Technology has brought about a new awareness of global conditions. With TV and computers, people have a window on the entire world. You can see how others live, and they can see how you live.

These advances in technology provide you with information, convenience, and recreational opportunities that could only have been imagined a few decades ago. Care must be taken, however, to prevent technological devices from replacing valuable one-to-one contact between people. Children as well as adults will increasingly interact with electronic devices instead of with other people. As this occurs, individuals may need to make a greater effort to spend time with each other. Families will need to balance openness to learning about and using new technologies with concern and emotional support for one another.

Changing Economic Conditions

The economy has a continuing impact on people’s lives. There are periods of economic growth and periods of recession. Young people must learn to live with both affluence and scarcity.
Many young people today have few worries about their basic needs. The money they have is spent most often for luxuries and recreation. Teens are major consumers of everything from soft drinks and clothes to computer games and cars.

The teen market is one of the most lucrative in the economy. Teens are establishing new buying habits. Businesses direct much of their advertising to the teen market. They want to encourage teens to establish the habit of buying and using their products.

Many teens view spending as an expression of adult behavior. What they may not realize is that responsible behavior involves spending for necessities and saving for the future as well as working to establish close personal relationships.

When the economy is weak, teens are likely to feel pressure. The job market for young people entering the workforce may be tight. Financial funds for college or training programs may be limited. Such situations may help teens appreciate the importance of an education and a steady job. It may also help them develop personal qualities such as determination and willingness to work hard to achieve an objective.

Teens may be able to help their families by getting part-time jobs. As they contribute to their families, teens also learn valuable lessons. They learn the significance of managing money wisely. They learn that life is not always easy. They also learn the importance of being able to adapt to changing economic conditions.

The Media

Probably one of the most significant influences on your personality development is that of the mass media. Television, movies, magazines, newspapers, and the Internet are only a few examples of such media. It is unrealistic for adults to think that youth can be totally protected from exposure to media influences. However, parents have a responsibility to exert some guidance in this area.

The media are an important source of both information and entertainment. For example, educational programs, news reports, and political analyses keep you informed. The mass media provide ways of learning about the world. However, you should make no apology for avoiding programs or other material that can disturb or upset you or harm your personality development.

You have a responsibility to protect yourself from the desensitizing effects of viewing too much violence or other unwholesome programming. Some studies indicate that young people exposed to violent television programs have a tendency to exhibit more aggressive behavior in real life. Whether or not this is true in all cases, few would argue that a steady diet of violence in TV programs, computer games, or movies is healthy.

The more violence you see, the less sensitive you may become to your own and others' physical and emotional pain. The less sensitive you are, the less skilled you will become in forming and maintaining close personal relationships.

Similarly, the more antisocial behavior you see on TV or in movies, the more you may think that such behavior is expected. You may subconsciously begin to view antisocial behavior as the norm rather than as a bad part of an otherwise good society. These are only a few of the many reasons for limiting your exposure to violence. Similar arguments could be made for content glorifying sexual violence, materialism, dishonesty, self-centeredness, and other behavior.

Try to interact with the media material you see rather than passively absorbing it. Ask yourself, “What is the message I am supposed to be getting?” “Do I agree
Part One  Personal Development

with this message? “What kind of society would we have if everyone agreed with this message?”

Finally, think about the amount of time you are giving to being entertained and influenced by the mass media. Evaluate this time commitment in light of your overall goals. Ask yourself, “Is this game worth the time it is taking me to play it?” “Would I feel better about myself if I were doing something else?”

Sometimes it takes willpower to turn off the TV or computer or to walk out of a movie. People who do so are often pleasantly surprised at how much they can accomplish toward worthwhile goals by putting their time to other uses.

TV Violence: Its Cost to Society

By the age of 18, the average American youth has seen 200,000 acts of violence and 40,000 murders portrayed on TV, according to some estimates. Does TV violence promote violent behavior in real life? Many social scientists think so, though others disagree. A recent national survey revealed that a majority of Americans believe their TV entertainment is too violent and that TV violence is harmful to society.

Television’s influence on children starts early. The average preschooler watches more than 27 hours of television per week. Most children at this age have difficulty separating fact from fiction. Therefore, TV violence may be very harmful to their sense of what is normal or acceptable behavior.

To address TV violence, some concerned individuals and officials advocate greater censorship of violent programs. Others fear that increased censorship threatens first amendment (“freedom of speech”) rights. One thing is certain: Parents have the right and responsibility to limit children’s television viewing to programs that are informative and wholesome.

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**BUILDING ACADEMIC SKILLS**

11. **Social Studies.** Describe traditional customs reflecting your individual national ancestry or cultural background. What meaning does your family find in passing these traditions down from one generation to the next? What family priorities may be reflected in the traditions? Prepare a presentation of your findings to share with the class.

12. **Reading.** Using Internet or print sources, read three articles about the influence of peers on the personality development of teens. Contrast positive and negative peer pressure. In small groups, discuss your findings.

13. **Math.** Keep track of your spending for one week. Record all of your purchases and how much you spend on each purchase. Be sure to record any money you receive or save as well. At the end of the week, total your income, savings, and expenses. How responsible are you with your money?

14. **Writing.** Write a one-page report summarizing television programs or movies that depict various types of environments provided by families. Identify one situation you believe represents positive family functioning. Identify another situation you feel represents negative family functioning. Explain the reasons for your choices. Check your report for correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

**LINKING TO TECHNOLOGY**

15. Using Internet sources, research articles or reports about media violence. What technological options are available for parents to protect their children from exposure to media influences? Using word processing software, prepare a report describing how you think media violence influences a child’s personality development. Be sure to cite any sources you may use for the report. Add a copy of the report to your portfolio.

**TAking Action in Your Community**

16. **Expand your appreciation of cultural diversity.** Choose another culture in which you are interested. What are its main food dishes? What are its modern and traditional ways of dressing? How are special events celebrated? In what ways are its cultural beliefs and practices the same as yours? In what ways are they different? How is this information useful to you in your community relationships? Write an essay discussing your findings.

**Career Reflection**

17. **Choose five companies that interest you.** Using Internet or print sources, research these companies. Learn about each company’s history, products, and employment needs. How well does each company relate to your interests and abilities? Rank the companies in terms of how well they suit your abilities and career goals.

**Linking to FCCLA**

18. **Develop your character, increase your creativity, and sharpen your critical-thinking skills by participating in the FCCLA Community Service Program.** As part of this program, you will develop, plan, carry out, and evaluate a project designed to improve the quality of life in your community. Obtain program details and project ideas from your FCCLA advisor. To extend your achievement, compete in an FCCLA STAR Event in which you present a Chapter Service Project Manual summarizing your community service activities. (See your FCCLA advisor for information as needed.)