**Question: Select one of the following age spans (0-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6-11, or 12-20) and identify one developmental task of that age group. Inform a naïve reader about the selected topic so they would better be able to relate to a child (infant, teenager) of that age.**

Introduction:

Parenting is a journey filled with challenges, joys, and countless opportunities for growth. In this essay, I will explore the key aspects of parenting and child development for the age group 6 to 11, offering insights that will empower a naive reader to navigate this transformative phase.

The purpose of helping a naïve reader understand the developmental task of a child aged 6 to 11 is to provide parents with a better understanding of what their child is going through during this stage of development. When parents understand the developmental tasks that their child is working on, they can be more patient, provide more effective support, and have more positive interactions with their child. This can help children feel valued and supported, which is crucial for their emotional and social development. Additionally, by understanding the developmental tasks of this stage, parents can avoid misinterpreting or overreacting to their child's behaviour, which can be confusing and harmful to the child. Instead, parents can recognize that certain behaviours are normal and developmentally appropriate, and respond in ways that support and encourage their child's growth and development.

In this essay, a unique "naïve parent-guide" approach is used to explore the complexities of parenting and child development. Through a dialogue between a caring but naive parent and an informed guide. The goal is to equip parents and caregivers with knowledge and practical strategies for a nurturing upbringing during this crucial phase. Join me as I embrace the parent-guide dynamic, illuminating pathways to understand, nurture, and guide children through the transformative journey of ages 6 to 11.

**Parent:** You know, I have been feeling a bit overwhelmed with parenting lately. Our child is growing so quickly, and I want to make sure I understand their needs better, especially during these years from 6 to 11.

**Guide:** I completely understand. Parenting is a journey with its ups and downs. Understanding your child's development during this age range is indeed crucial. It can help you provide the right support and create a nurturing environment for them.

**Parent:** I am glad you think so. But honestly, I do not know where to start. How can I really understand what they are going through?

**Guide:** Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the experiences typically encountered by children aged 6 to 11, often referred to as "Early Childhood," holds significant importance**.** During these years, children go through important changes in many areas of their lives. They improve their communication and thinking skills, learn how to get along with others and begin to understand their emotions more deeply. Since they are going to school, they are also making new friends and starting to take on more tasks independently. This phase is all about exploring, being creative, and discovering new things about themselves and the world around them.

As a parent, imagine your child stepping into this exciting period. They are like little explorers, soaking up knowledge and experiences like sponges. Their minds are becoming sharper, and their curiosity is boundless. They are eager to grasp how things work and why things happen. This is a perfect time to support their inquisitiveness, answering their questions and encouraging their interests.

Friendships are taking on a new level of importance for your child. They are discovering the joys of companionship and shared activities. At the same time, they are learning how to navigate tricky situations in their relationships. As a parent, you can help them develop healthy social skills by discussing how to cooperate, communicate, and resolve conflicts with their friends and adults. This guidance will contribute to their growth as considerate and understanding individuals.

These years are a special time for your child to grow and learn. When you encourage their curiosity, help with their feelings, and guide them in making friends, you're helping them build a strong foundation for what's ahead. So, Mom, your role is a bit like being a trusted guide, helping your child through this important time with care and confidence.

Think of it like being a gardener for your child. They are growing in every way, not just physically, but also learning about being good and kind from the world around them. It is like giving them sunlight and water, just like plants need to grow. Andrew (2002), guiding and supporting children is like giving them sunlight and water. They are not just growing physically; they are also learning about being good and kind. Chowdhury (2006) adds that they are like sponges, absorbing lessons about what is right and wrong from the world around them.

**Guide:** You might have noticed how your child is changing and going through different stages. Have you ever heard about experts who study how children grow and learn? They are called child developmental theorists, and they help us understand all these changes and stages in a child's life.

**Parent:** No, I have not. I would like to learn about them.

**Guide:** That's great! Child developmental theorists are experts who have spent a lot of time studying how children grow and develop. They have come up with theories and ideas that help us understand the different stages of childhood and how children learn.

Learning about these theorists can provide valuable insights into your child's development and help you better understand their needs and behaviours. It's like having a roadmap to navigate the exciting journey of parenthood.

Here are a few well-known child developmental theorists you might find interesting to learn about:

The first is Jean Piaget, a developmental biologist. He spent a lot of time watching and studying how children grow and learn. Piaget proposes that children experience four stages of development. Your child is in the concrete operational stage (7-11 years). Piaget tells us that in each stage there are Developmental tasks.

What is a Developmental task? A developmental task refers to a specific skill, behaviour, or milestone that individuals are expected to achieve or master during a particular stage of their development.

One of the key developmental tasks is "the acquisition of concrete operational thinking skills" which means that during this stage your child is learning how to think in a more organized and logical way about things they can see and touch. They are getting better at understanding how stuff works and how to solve problems step by step. It is an important part of growing up and getting smarter!

Another expert is, Erik Erikson. His theory about growing up is split into eight parts. Right now, your child is in Stage 4, which he called "Industry versus Inferiority."

During this stage, your child starts acting more grown-up. They begin to understand school subjects better. They might also become a bit competitive, wanting to be as good as their friends and trying new things. They are learning about their capabilities and skills. When they succeed at tasks or activities, they feel a sense of industry, which means they are proud of what they can do. However, if they struggle or do not do well, they might start feeling inferior, like they are not as good as others. It is a crucial stage for building self-esteem and confidence as they navigate various challenges and achievements in their lives. The major developmental task is pride, accomplishments, and abilities.

Let us chat about another expert who can provide a valuable understanding of your child's development – Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky believed that children learn a lot from being around others, like their friends, family, and teachers. He compared this learning to a team game, where working together and sharing thoughts helps everyone understand better. So, when your child talks with you or others, they are actually learning and getting smarter. It is like mixing ingredients in a recipe; their thoughts and yours blend together.

A significant developmental task is learning through social interactions. Curran et al. (2013), Deputy et al. (2016), and Tsubaki and Matsuishi (2008) agree that building happy friendships is like making a secret recipe for their future. They are learning how to play together, just like in a team game. Erikson (Miller, 2016) says they are also learning about themselves – who they are and how they fit in with their friends and family. Therefore, fostering positive interactions with others becomes crucial for their learning and overall growth.

On the spiritual dimension, this is Professor James Fowler who studied how children grow in their faith. He found that a child aged 6-11 is usually at what he calls the 'Mythical Literal' stage. Let me break it down for you. At this stage, children pay a lot of attention to their faith community, like their church. They tend to take things they learn there very seriously and believe them quite literally. This means she is really into her church and takes things she hears there very seriously.

A critical developmental task is justice and fairness. For instance, if they see someone being treated unfairly, like a friend not getting a turn to play a game, they might get upset because they think it is not right. Her learning about what is fair and unfair is usually based on the stories and teachings in her faith community. Akin to this is another significant developmental task- empathy – the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. Emotionally, your child is also undergoing significant changes. They are learning to handle a wider range of feelings – from happiness and excitement to frustration and disappointment. You might notice your child starting to show concern for their friends' emotions or sharing in someone's happiness or sadness. This is a beautiful development that you can nurture by talking about feelings and sharing experiences that involve understanding others.

These are essential skills that help children grow into kind, compassionate individuals who can relate well to others and make the world a better place.

Understanding and recognizing the developmental tasks of children is essential for promoting their healthy growth and development. It allows parents, caregivers, and educators to provide the necessary support, guidance, and opportunities for children to progress through each stage of their development successfully. This understanding helps create an environment where children can thrive, learn, and become well-adjusted individuals.

So, remember, these insights from Piaget, Erikson, Vygotsky, and Fowler help us see that your child is like a little explorer. They are growing their thinking, figuring out who they are, and learning from everyone around them – including you! As a parent, you are their trusted reliable on this amazing adventure of learning and growing.

How can you apply these insights to your parenting approach?

I encourage you to:

1. Listen: Pay attention when they talk and ask questions. This shows you care about what is on their mind.
2. Talk: Have conversations with them about their day, their interests, their questions and value their perspective. This helps them learn and feel valued. When engaging with your child, it is crucial to be authentic and genuine. Remember, the connections you build are significant to them, as they perceive themselves as unique individuals, albeit small in stature.
3. Speaking gently: This is a practice that carries immense weight. Children attach importance to the opinions of significant figures in their lives. Words from adults can shape or scar their self-perception. Therefore, the manner in which you communicate matters deeply. Positive words foster a sense of security and esteem.
4. Support: Encourage them when they try new things, even if they make mistakes. It's all part of learning.
5. Be Patient: Patience is key when dealing with children. Remember that they are exploring and figuring things out. It might take time, and that is okay.
6. Play Together: Join in their play and adventures. It is a great way to bond and help them learn.
7. Set Boundaries: Give them rules and limits to keep them safe, but explain why these rules are important.
8. Celebrate: Praise their achievements and milestones. It boosts their confidence.
9. Most importantly, be a Positive Role Model: Recognize that children learn not only from what we say but also from what we do. Think about this- Do not be anxious that your child may not listen to you; instead, be conscious that they are constantly watching you. This awareness can help you model the qualities and behaviours you wish to instill in your child, fostering their growth and development in a positive way.

Incorporating these insights into our parenting approach helps us become more effective and understanding caregivers, guiding our children on their incredible journey of learning and growing.

As a parent, it is commendable that you are dedicated to being the best you can be for your child. Your presence, active listening, and guidance play a significant role in their development. And remember, you are part of a community of parents who are all on this incredible journey of parenting and growth together. You are not alone in this adventure!

**Parent:** Thank you for explaining all of this. It really gives me a better perspective on my child’s development.

**Guide:** You are most welcome. Remember, you are growing and learning alongside your child. Embracing each day as an opportunity to learn and bond can create lasting memories and strengthen your relationship. If you ever have more questions or need support along the way, do not hesitate to reach out. Praying for you and your child all the best on this incredible adventure of parenting and personal growth!

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