

Adolescence

I would like to share with you my personal experiences of pubescence, a topic that is not spoken of often because it is a sensitive subject that is said to be very personal and not something you speak of openly, but in private or in some families here in the United States not at all.

I was at an age where you already have a pretty good grasp on the general ideas of life, or at least you think you know some truth or have been blessed to hear so pretty interesting things from others. Most of the time you make your own assumptions of what is coming, you never know how or when it is going to happen but growing up in a very liberal country, as an eager adolescent boy you yearn for the day that you become a “man”. If you were not educated by parents, in my case I didn’t have a father to give me the talk, or advice on the changes I would go through as he passed away when I was just 4 years of age, I depended on my brothers who always wanted to kind of mess with me and also my un-educated still pre-pubescent friends. My brothers had more of an opportunity with my father to talk of things like this, however it was always kind of something that was learn as you go type of thing. I was told that you just go through life and one day “it” happens, at that time I had no idea what that meant other than the never ending gossip I would get from my friends but I figured it was just something that was normal and happened to all boys. Where I grew up it didn’t matter if you had gone through the change or not, experimentation was expected and there was a great amount of peer pressure to do so. I remember so desperately wanting to become a “man” because at that time it seemed that my friends were all passing me up and my older brothers were

having the time of their lives. I would sneak out and show up at parties with my brothers at just the age of 8 but ended being the joke and they would pick fun because I was trying to follow my older brother's cues, and would flirt with girls much older than me. I just wanted to fit in. For me the change could not come fast enough!

Sometimes my older cousins would come to spend the weekends at my house, and as boys we like ritual would talk about girls and of course sex, pretending we all knew way more than we did, they had experienced things I hadn't and I would act as though I was very proficient in the world of girls and experience because I wanted so badly to fit in. Looking back now it's in a way very embarrassing but I am willing to share because it was an interesting part of my life that differs from the stigma and culture of today. Today although boys pretend that girls are "gorse" and experimentation is considered very wrong, but in my country things were much different than they are here. As I got older I soon realized that things were not all they were cracked up to be but at the same time when I did go through the change I almost felt as though experimentation and the quantity of girls you could kiss was something that was expected, or you were labeled in a sad category as one that could not get the girl. To be honest I never really had that problem but I think it was because I wanted so badly to fit in. It took me longer to progress into adolescence and it was very embarrassing so I guess I was just making up for lost time. I am a grown man now and I know that at that time it was something that was very normal, but I really struggled. I was teased by my cousins relentlessly because they all as you would say "blossomed into a man" way before I did. Because I still did not have any facial and pubic hair or my voice did not change my nickname that has stuck even to this day is Kid.

I am from Brazil and growing up there, the culture is very different from the way people grow up in America. I think in Brazil we are more open to the idea of talking about sexuality than here, at least between cousins and friends in an early age even to this day as I went through puberty many years ago. Most likely in Brazil it is more common now than it was then because of the media and other influential things that are available to young kids.

Back then I would get really upset and frustrated when my cousins and I were together because they would make fun of me so badly. I have always been short and very thin and muscular but have always looked younger than I actually am. I still am told that I look much younger than I am. Sometimes I would cry for days, because I wanted so badly to be at the same growth stage as they were. It's kind of funny... but my wish and prayers to God at that time as a young boy was that soon I could have hair on my body as they all had, so that I could tell them that I was a man already. I told this to my wife who is from here and she could not stop laughing. This is an example of something very different to what we discussed in class, we discussed that this time in life is a period that children are very embarrassed to talk about this subject and the changes in our body, in my case and I am sure others, I was very happy for the transformation.

I lost my father very young, and I never had a strong male figure in my life so I could ask my questions about the process, I had to lean on my Uncles and my older brothers for information. It made it so those questions lingered with no answers for a long period of time. I was raised by my mom, my father died when I was just 4, I had a difficult time

speaking to my mother about these things because she is an older lady and started to have children very young. I am one of the youngest and she is a very quiet soft spoken woman and it was a challenge because I thought in my mind that this was inappropriate to ask a female about things like this, even though she was my mother. I felt embarrassed. I have a great amount of respect for women and I didn't want to make her feel uncomfortable so as I would call it I was left to the wolves when getting my information, speaking of my cousins and my brothers.

So when I was 11 years old I started to notice the transformation in my body, at first I was very happy just for the fact that some hair had grown. For sure my first thought was to tell my cousins that I was a man now, well I told them but it did not matter they kept teasing me anyway.

After a while I totally started to get embarrassed of my own changes and be more private, I believe that is something that everybody goes through in life. I am sure that there was a time even for my cousins that they became very private and closed off due to awkwardness. I believe I matured really fast, there was so many things at that time I wanted to experience, that sometimes I ended up getting in trouble for.

Another example is my niece Aubree, she's 13 years old and went through puberty at the age of 7, and it was a very big adjustment as I have watched her grow within the past 6 years. Starting your period at 7 is something for girls that must be hard. She was so embarrassed. Mentally she was still very young but by 7 she already had a full B cup and now she is in a DD size bra, when my wife told me that I couldn't imagine how she must have felt then. When I went through puberty I remember feeling the same way which is why I feel so worried for her emotional progression because it is still way less advanced

than she is physically. She has been very teased at school by friends and classmates. Friends would say that she was having sex and other things that were completely vile for her age, these things led her to home schooled because she was so emotionally damaged from the tournament from her friends and class mates. I do understand also that the amount of stress she went through living just with her mother and no father figure and financial difficulties, these things could lead her to not being emotionally prepared and be the cause of her intense desire to hide her beauty now. She does have a lower self-esteem and sometimes feels overwhelmed with the idea of feeling like she had to grow up so fast.

I really enjoyed what we learned in class about puberty and all of the effects of it. I understand how the study is proficient. Learning what I have of this subject gives me a bigger understanding of everything I was going through. Certainly it has given me knowledge so that one day when I need to explain to my children when they are at that stage, I now absolutely know the best way to explain it to them so they feel safe and secure and free of fear.

Euclides Cruz