



Understanding Adolescents' Stages of Development

Development highlights for eleven to thirteen year olds (middle school students)



Intellectual

- Need information for making decisions.
- Find justice and equality to be important issues.
- Think abstractly and hypothetically.
- Can solve problems that have more than one variable.
- Can imagine consequences.
- Are ready for in-depth, long-term experiences.
- Have moved from fantasy to realistic focus on their life's goals.



Emotional

- Compare themselves to others.
- Are concerned about development and emerging sexually.
- See themselves as always on center stage.
- Are conscious about bodily changes.
- Are concerned about being liked by friends, social graces, and grooming.
- Strive for independence, yet want and need parent help.
- Seek privacy from parents/adults.
- Want to be a part of something important.
- Are aware of degrees of emotion and seek to find the right words to describe their feelings.
- Exaggeration and sarcasm are frequently used to describe subtle meanings.



Social

- Shifting from emphasis on same sex to opposite sex. Girls develop interest in boys earlier than boys in girls.
- Looking toward peers rather than parents; seeking peer recognition.
- Seeking acceptance and trust.
- Tend to regard sex in a depersonalized way.
- Searching for adult role models and often identifying with admired adult hairdos, dress, and mannerisms of popular sports and music stars.
- Question authority.
- Question family values.
- Willing to submerge self for benefit of group.
- Discipline can be a problem because of spirit of group.
- Friendship groups or cliques are often small but intense.
- Have more realistic understanding of who they are and what they can do.
- Are more interested in social activities.



Physical

- Exhibit a wide range of sexual maturity and growth patterns between genders and within gender groups (girls are about two years ahead of boys).
- Experience rapid change in physical appearance.
- Growth of hands and feet, nose, and ears may be faster than arms, legs, and face -- causing concern of appearance.
- May try experimental behavior to enhance sensory stimulation (e.g., drug and alcohol use).

Activities and special considerations (provide opportunities for):

- Engaging in more structured and adult-like activities.
- Exploring other cultures, foods, languages, and customs.
- Completing projects (emphasis on precision and perfecting).
- Discussing issues and opposite sex with friends.
- Leading activities involving the opposite sex, providing opportunities for this age group to learn how to deal with the opposite sex.

