
Your Teenager's Developmental Stages

There are three distinct stages of adolescence, although the age at which each stage is reached varies from child to child.

Early Adolescence 11–13 years

Children at this age still need help in learning to choose between right and wrong. Setting a good example for them is an excellent way of teaching at this stage. Both boys and girls need a period of time in which most of their activities are with children of their own sex. They still need a hero or an adult to look up to, and special athletic, artistic or musical talents may emerge and should be encouraged. Teens at this stage begin to be curious about sexual matters and accurate information should be made available.

Middle Adolescence 14–16 years

Rapid growth and sexual maturation combine confusingly with an increasing need to be independent at this stage. The need to be independent may lead to some annoying habits, such as poor manners and untidy dress. Teens need love and acceptance but may hide such needs in an effort to be mature. Physically, they need extended periods of rest – sleeping late on the weekends is normal. Teens at this age still find security in structure – explain the rules and consequences and then stick to them.

Late Adolescence 17–19 years

Mature appearance and behavior may mask teens' worries about whether they are ready to face the changes of adulthood. By this age, most young people have opportunities to experiment with drugs and alcohol and parents must keep lines of communication open. Communicating openly about sexual matters is also an ideal goal. As difficult as it may seem, spending time together with your teen will enhance communication and build your relationship.



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