

Child and Youth Development Handout 1: Ages and Stages

Ages & Stages: 8-10 Year Olds

Our Bodies: *Physical Development & Abilities*

- We are more coordinated than we used to be. Sports, games and other physical activities help us to develop our new coordination and practice our motor skills.
- Our bodies are beginning to grow and develop. Some of us, especially girls, are in the beginning stages of puberty.
- Physical differences between sexes are becoming more pronounced. Even though those assigned male at birth do not actually gain superiority in muscular strength until after puberty, males already tend to outperform those assigned female at birth in sports and other physical activities. Whether this is based on socialization or other factors is a matter of some debate.
- We are becoming more aware of what others think of how we look, and become self-conscious about things about us that are different, like being short or tall or having glasses. Physical appearance begins to play a more important role in how we think about ourselves and others.

Our Minds: *Cognitive Development*

- We are able to hold more than one concept in our mind at once. We are able to understand how something works, but we need concrete materials to help us develop that understanding.
- Our thinking has become more flexible, with room for grays, not just blacks and whites. We are able to classify things by type or category and order things in a logical progression.
- We like to have jobs and designated roles where we can demonstrate and practice what we know.
- Along with our newly developed logical thinking, we have a high level of natural curiosity about why things are and how things work.

Our Ears & Mouths: *Language Development*

- We are able to think and talk about the future and the consequences of our actions.
- We are learning how to use metaphors and symbolic language.



- We may try out using sarcasm, but we still often do not understand when and how someone is being sarcastic when they speak.

Our Hearts & Souls: *Social & Emotional Development*

- We know how to express our feelings with words, but if we are very upset, sometimes we forget and need reminders.
- We are beginning to develop close friendships.
- We are able to recognize that other people have feelings and to imagine their perspective, but it is still hard for us to work cooperatively. We can learn how to work with others by seeing older children and adults model that for us.
- We are beginning to notice our status in groups and to become concerned with popularity. We worry about how others see us.
- We develop a sense of achievement and self-confidence when we master skills and find things we can be successful at.
- Rules are not so rigid anymore. We want to know the reasons for the rules we are asked to follow.

Tips for Educators: *8-10 Year Olds*

- Help us to find things we are good at and give us plenty of opportunities to be successful and take pride in our accomplishments.
- Provide us with lots of activities that give us opportunities to show off our newly developed fine motor skills.
- Give us chances to ask questions when there is time to really discuss the responses.
- Let us be involved in making the rules, so we have a good understanding of what they are and why they exist.
- Teach by example. Remember, we are watching you and listening to you, and we understand more than you realize.

Ages & Stages: 11-13 Year Olds

Our Bodies: *Physical Development & Abilities*

- We are fast approaching adulthood and our bodies are changing rapidly.
- There is a wide variation about how we are physically developing—some of us have hit growth spurts and some of us have not.
- Due to the rapid changes of puberty, we often feel uncomfortable about our bodies.
- For those of us, especially those assigned female at birth, who have physically matured earlier, we are sometimes the subject of unwanted attention from adolescents and adults. Just because our bodies seem more adult does not mean we are.

Our Minds: *Cognitive Development*

- Our thinking has become more complex, and we realize that most things don't have single, simple answers. We can think more abstractly, without needing concrete examples or demonstrations.
- We are becoming interested in the adult world, including political, social and environmental issues. Our sense of fairness and justice is often quite strong.
- Although we can plan ahead, we are still mostly unable to think in long-range terms and to consider the seemingly far-off future.
- We may challenge rules or attempt to manipulate adults, but we still want and need firm limits.

Our Ears and Mouths: *Language and Development*

- Our vocabulary and language skills are expanding.
- We enjoy discussing and debating particularly concerning issues of fairness and justice.
- We are beginning to realize that sometimes the way we speak at home or with our friends is not necessarily appropriate in every setting.

Our Hearts and Souls: Social and Emotional Development

- Our friends are very important to us. We have begun to develop a few lasting close friendships. We also occasionally have conflicts with friends and power struggles in groups. These issues can seem like the most important thing in the world.
- We want privacy with our friends to discuss the changes we are going through.
- We are interested in romantic relationships and curious about sex and sexuality.



- We do not want to be associated with anything that we consider to be for kids, However, we may actually still enjoy playing games and hearing stories.
- We want opportunities to contribute.
- We experience many mood swings and varying energy levels, along with the rapid physical changes we are going through.

Tips for Educators: 11-13 Year Olds

- Provide opportunities for us to discuss issues that are important to us and to express our opinions.
- Give us our space. Respect our privacy while still letting us know if you are available to us.
- Do not single us out in front of our peers for praise or criticism.
- Provide opportunities for us to participate in community service, work in groups, and make things creatively.

Ages & Stages: 14-18 Year Olds

Our Bodies: *Physical Development & Abilities*

- Most of us have overcome the awkwardness of puberty and are approaching physical maturity with our development.
- Some of us—especially those assigned male at birth—are still experiencing growth spurts and our voices deepen.
- Acne, weight, exercise, and other physical changes make us self-conscious.
- We are very concerned with our body image, and we are swayed by images we see in advertising and the media. We worry if we fit into society’s standards of beauty.

Our Minds: *Cognitive Development*

- We are capable of high levels of abstract thought and solving complex problems. We need our learning and activities to be meaningful, complex, and challenging. So challenge us!
- We think about the meaning of life. We enjoy having philosophical discussions and we are developing our own personal philosophies.
- Setting and attaining goals is important to us.
- We are better able to plan for the future and to imagine the future consequences of our actions. We have started thinking about our future goals and ambitions, including our career and post-secondary aspirations.
- We are very curious and we may experiment with drugs, alcohol, tobacco and other risky behaviors.

Our Ears & Mouths: *Language Development*

- We enjoy discussing and debating, particularly concerning issues of moral rights and privileges and the meaning of life.
- We are realizing that sometimes the way we speak at home or with our friends is not appropriate in every setting.
- We want to become experts in our chosen art and forms of self-expression such as music, poetry, drama, visual arts, and creative writing.

Our Hearts & Souls: *Social & Emotional Development*

- We are learning more about ourselves and we are figuring out how we fit into the world and how others see us. We try out different answers to the question, “Who Am I?” At different points in our identity formation, we may feel uncertain about our gender, sexual, religious, ethnic and/or racial identities.



- Our friends remain very important to us, but our social networks are growing.
- Our social standing is important to us, and we want to be recognized as unique individuals.
- We care about the wellbeing of others. We are developing a community consciousness, including a sense of social justice.
- We are gaining our independence and further distancing ourselves from our parents or caregivers.
- Developing our self-confidence is important to us, as is receiving respect for our skills and contributions.
- We often want to take on adult leadership roles and demonstrate our knowledge and skills.

Tips for Educators: 14-18 Year Olds

- Give us opportunities to demonstrate our independence and skills by involving us in the planning of our learning experiences and giving us adult responsibilities.
- Push us to stretch our thinking by providing us with real life problems to solve, make decisions, reflect, and evaluate.
- Give us opportunities to positively contribute to our communities.
- Hold us to high standards and hold us accountable for the success or failure of our plans to keep us on our toes.
- Challenge us on our thinking on our identity, values and beliefs. Encourage us with learning experiences related to self-discovery, self-understanding, and getting along with others.
- Help us plan for our futures by providing guidance on and exposure to career and post-secondary options.
- Don't make comments criticizing our appearance. Give us opportunities to critically examine media messages about what is considered "normal."
- Answer our questions and give us information about sex, relationships, and health without judging or minimizing our opinions.