



Child Development

Summary of Toddlers to Teenagers

Ages 7 and under

Physical

- Physically small
- Tire easily – the heart does not grow in proportion to the rest of the body
- Find it difficult to sit still and do not learn well when too still – need to fidget a little
- Co-ordination skills are still developing

Intellectual

- Concrete thinkers
- Work slowly
- Limited ability to read/comprehend
- Visual learners - pictures & stories
- Fact & fantasy still merge at times
- Very short concentration span
- Too young for extended projects
- Can memorize - especially songs & rhymes
- Likes repetition of favourite stories, activities
- Very observant but doesn't understand everything he sees
- Limited understanding of time, space and number

Emotional

- Very emotionally orientated
- Insecure
- Seek acceptance
- Learn spiritual truths through emotional experiences
- Learn by copying others - good examples important
- Easily believes adults

Social

- Starting to make friends - in & out of relationships
- Enjoys being part of a group – gives a sense of belonging & helps with self-confidence
- Important to encourage a sense of community

Spiritual

- Spiritual development closely linked to emotional development
- Learn spiritual truths through emotional experiences



Ages 8-10 year olds

Physical

- Energetic
- Co-ordination improving

Intellectual

- Concrete thinkers
- Some start to ask searching questions
- Can start to encourage critical thinking
- Short projects possible
- Enjoys collecting things e.g. cards for trading with friends
- A good age for memorizing

Emotional

- Less insecure, more confidence
- Emotionally uninhibited
- Start to use 'masks' to hide feelings

Social

- Very conscious of peers
- Want to fit in and be part of the group
- Encourage thoughtfulness to others - sense of community

Spiritual

- Strong sense of justice/fairness
- Personal conscience - knows difference between right & wrong
- Hero-worshippers - help them to choose good ones
- Low self-discipline



Ages 10-12 'The Tweenagers'

Physical

- Onset of puberty:
- From the age of 9 the perpetuity glands produce hormones which affect changes – long before physical change becomes apparent
- Growth spurts: growth is rapid but uneven; usually occurs in girls before boys
- Heart & lungs increase in size
- Appetite may increase
- Sometimes need extra rest as growth tires them
- More oil in skin so pimples & greasy hair start to occur
- Some become sexually mature

Intellectual

- They start to ask searching questions
- Can introduce apologetics
- Get distracted easily – butterfly minds
- Can encourage critical thinking
- Still need to use concrete ideas but can use them to deal with deeper issues

Emotional

- Very self-conscious, particularly of their physical appearance
- Get embarrassed easily
- Emotional changes = mood swings
- Often over-react – laugh loudly / get the giggles / cry without apparent reason
- Need reassurance

Social

- Great need for acceptance by peer group
- “Are there other people like me who are still doing this?”
- Desire a measure of independence
- Clashes with parents start to become more dramatic
- Parents are an embarrassment one minute but an essential part of life the next
- Don't always appreciate the company of younger children, especially siblings
- In some cultures they become interested in boy/girl relationships

Spiritual

- Searching for purpose – asking what life is about
- Need a deeper relationship with God

The Teenagers

Physical

- Growth spurts: can sometimes grow significantly in just a few weeks = clumsy
- Sometimes need extra rest as growth tires them
- Appetite may increase and change – preferring savoury more than sweet food
- Heart & lungs increase in size
- More oil in skin so pimples & greasy hair can be a problem
- Sweat glands become active
- Can be vast differences between teenagers of the same age

Intellectual

- Develop the ability to think in more abstract terms, e.g. hypothetically
- But concrete examples still helpful
- Can think more critically & develop their own opinions
- Enjoy apologetics & a good argument/debate
- Idealistic
- Simplistic
- Dogmatic
- Talents & skills may be emerging and should be encouraged

Emotional

- Conscious of their appearance – size, weight, looks
- More emotional depth & understanding
- Emotionally vulnerable
- Mood swings
- Look for mentors other than parents – may find good ones or bad ones

Social

- Some become more self-accepting but peers are still very important
- Want to be treated as adult, but need to be childish also

Spiritual

- Spiritual awareness deepens
- Need reality in their relationship with God

Further Reading

The New Macmillan Guide to Family Health

Human Body: Ted Smart

Andy Back: Children's Ministry Guide to Working with 9-13s

James Dobson: Preparing for Adolescence

Rob Parsons: Teenagers – what every parent has to know

Violet Lopes: The Child

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