

Early Adolescence

Girls ages 11-13, Boys ages 12-14
Transition from Childhood to Adolescence
(Characterized by puberty)

Identity:

Puberty changes: body anxiety is high ('Am I normal?').
Sense of loss of control.
Family and parents are important.
Older siblings may be important.
Peers are beginning to become important ('I want to belong').
Role models and heroes are important.

Intellect (Cognitive Development):

Concrete thinking: very literal, very 'black and white'.
The world is 'here and now', unable to think into the future.
Understand events or problems in terms of direct experiences.
Egocentric: Imaginary audience, ('everyone is looking at me').

Independence:

Still dependent on adults, but some pulling away begins.
Complaints about lack of privacy, wants time with friends away from parents.
Basically accept parental guidance, but start to test adult authority.
Fluctuate between clinging to adults and rebelling against them.

Intimacy (Relationships):

Same-sex friendships are strong, 'best friends' and cliques develop.
Same-sex sex play is common: does not indicate sexual orientation.
Focus is usually not on sex: more interested in skateboarding and teen heartthrobs.

Integrity (Values):

Own values not yet defined.
Right and wrong is very black and white: no gray areas
Internal control not developed: clear limits and boundaries are necessary.
There is a mystery about being 'grown-up'.
Begin to question rules and beliefs previously accepted at face value.

Adapted from materials by Wayne Pawlowski, Planned Parenthood Federation of America

Middle Adolescence

Girls: ages 13-16~ Boys ages 14-17

The Essence of Adolescence

(Characterized by strong peer group influence
and great conflict with parents and other adults)

Identity:

Identity changes day-to-day, friend-to-friend, group-to-group.

Physical changes are in full swing: concerned about being attractive.

Concern for what it means to be male or female in their culture.

May hold rigid sex-role stereotypes or may completely rebel against sex roles.

Being like everyone else is very important.

Peers define who you are, what you do, what is "cool".

Parents are *uncool* and an embarrassment.

Intellect (Cognitive Development):

Flashes of abstract thinking. Begin making connections between present and future

Under stress, revert to concrete thinking.

Increased intellectual curiosity, ability and creativity.

Idealistic thinking.

Egocentric: Personal Fable ("I am unique: no one has experienced this before"). Omnipotent,

Omniscient, and Immortal. All powerful, all knowing, invulnerable.

Independence:

Don't leave me!).

Classic rebellion against and conflict with family.

Experimentation: trying adult behaviors.

Drive for emancipation: power struggle with adults in authority.

Intimacy (Relationships):

Intense friendships: telephone conversations that last for hours.

Intense sexual feelings.

Dating begins and love object becomes primary focus ('puppy love')

Sexual experience for some.

Discomfort with sexuality is common

Integrity (Values):

Developing and testing own values

Reject parental values to test out own ('my parents can't do anything right')

Adapted from materials by Wayne Pawlowski, Planned Parenthood Federation of America

Late Adolescence

Girls: ages 16-19, Boys: ages 17-19
Transition from Adolescence to Adulthood
(Characterized by taking on adult roles)

Identity:

Physical changes leveling off and ending: less confusion regarding body.

Greater sense of self control

Better more realistic sense of self and how one compares to others

Search for identity is less influenced by peers: more self-identified.

Arriving at concept of self as an adult: need to accept that self

Peers are important but more able to resist peer pressure.

Establishment of sexual identity.

Intellect (Cognitive Development):

Adult thinking: ability to think abstractly has developed in most.

Future goals more clearly and realistically defined.

Idealistic.

Able to link consequences to behavior.

Realization of own limitations and mortality.

Independence:

Self sufficiency begins (car, job, etc.).

Separation from parents complete, (psychologically if not physically).

Family tensions decrease.

Establish new, adult relationship with parents.

Intimacy (Relationships):

Pairing more realistic and less changeable.

'Real relationships' with emotional intimacy are possible

Peer group membership is important but one-to-one relationships are primary.

Movement from egocentrism to mutuality and real sharing.

Satisfaction of other(s) can be as important as satisfaction of self

Sexual behavior more prominent: majority of teens initiate intercourse during this stage

Integrity (Values):

Refining and clarifying of values: large swings and inconsistencies less common

May return to family's values

Conscience is more fully developed internal controls based on moral principles

Adapted from materials by Wayne Pawlowski, Planned Parenthood Federation of America

Suggestions For Having A Positive Encounter With...

An Early Adolescent:

1. Accept the teen's feelings about puberty changes and body anxiety, and provide reassurance that the teen is normal.
2. Keep all information concrete, hands on, and don't try to project too far into the future.
3. Be more directive in your counseling than you are with older teens.
4. Be aware that a strong focus on early sexual behavior at this stage may be an indication the adolescent is trying to satisfy *non-sexual* needs through sex.
5. Provide clear limits and rules, and teach the skills needed to stick to limits in the face of peer pressure.
6. Use older teens and other role models to give healthy messages.
7. Strongly suggest and support the postponement of sexual intercourse, but provide information on and support for using contraception and/or condoms.

A Middle Adolescent:

1. Be accepting of short-term identity experimentation such as changes in hair color or fashions. Struggling with a teen over non-harmful behaviors is likely to increase conflict.
2. Reinforce the fact that peers may *seem* to know more or do more than they really do. Regardless of how they talk, they *are not* all having intercourse, doing drugs, etc.
- 3 Help the teen make connections between decisions and behaviors today and one's life in the future. (If you got pregnant now, how would your life be different in six months?)
4. Encourage intellectual curiosity, learning, idealism, creativity.
5. Set limits as appropriate Encourage the teen to be involved in setting realistic rules. 6.
6. Encourage the teen to examine and clarify own values and beliefs.
7. Provide information on and support for practicing abstinence, contraception and safer sex.

A Late Adolescent:

1. Counsel much as you would an adult when it comes to sexual decision-making.
2. Remember that not all older teens or even *adults* have fully completed the developmental tasks of Identity, Intellect, Independence, Intimacy, and Integrity.
3. Act as a sounding board for the teen's exploration of own identity as an adult.
4. Do not assume that all teens are heterosexual.
5. Strengthen the new ability to think abstractly by asking the teen to evaluate his/her own behaviors and their potential future consequences.
6. Provide support in the quest for healthy, satisfying relationships
7. Encourage examination and clarification of own values and beliefs
- 8 Provide information on and support for practicing abstinence, contraception and safer sex

Positive Encounters: Talking One-to-One With Teens about Contraception and Safer Sex Decisions, Vogelaar, Planned Parenthood of Greater Northern New Jersey, 1999.

