

CHILD DEVELOPMENT BY THE AGES

Note: Cognitive development is the development of thinking, social development-the child's ability to relate to others

Ages 5-7 Cognitive Development:

- Exhibit all or nothing thinking as in they can describes themselves all positively or all negatively, it is important at this age to help them gain realistic perspective on their abilities.
- Tends to attempt only tasks known to them - that which they *can* accomplish
- Begin to realize complexity and ambiguity

Ages 5-7 Social Development:

- They care what adults think and it is important that we are clear about what is expected and acceptable at this age.
- Inclination to lead or follow develops at this age
- Impressions of self formed at this age

Strategies in working with this age:

- Ensure corrections are based not on their worth, but the behaviour only
- Children this young do not benefit from grades—be interested in what they are and never bribe them to learn at this stage
- Be kind - sense of self still dependent on the adults around them
- Will continue to follow our (adult) behaviours
- Think of questions as a gift, not something to answer. A question should be recognized as a way to help her see and think about the complexities of life's situations. It's an invitation to step into her world and explore the complexities of life. Use questions as an opportunity to practice negotiating the grey and to join her in the process of thinking and reasoning through the moment.

Ages 8-11 Cognitive Development:

- Move away from black and white to being able to read between the lines and process the complexities of situations
- Thinking logically and will appreciate cause and effect
- During these years the body, including the brain and limbic system, the centre of emotional development, is literally reorganizing, growing and transforming itself in a very complex way. This results in a mismatch between feeling and concrete thinking and the ability to make mature judgements.

Ages 8-11 Social Development:

- They will evaluate their performance in comparison to others (not meant to be critical, but know where they stand)
- Actively choose friendships based on shared attitudes and interests
- Can have the ability to stand in "other's shoes" which could be good to develop empathy or also to hurt others. Interesting side note: Research indicates parents who model prosocial and altruistic behaviour have children who do the same
- Children at this age should do chores
- Instilling character at this time is important and taking on roles in their community
- Developing competencies at life skills also makes them proud
- Friendship patterns begin to change; they begin to cluster more, don't interact as fluidly, friendship clusters of ages 8 and 9 evolve into the best friends category by about age ten. Age and stage differences can impact friendship stability at this point too. It is helpful for parents and teachers to support her stabilizing interests (ie. horses, collecting pictures... whatever she chooses)

Strategies in working with this age:

- Girls at this age can be very critical and competitive—therefore, help child to see that we value character first, her effort second and grades last.
- Resist the temptation to monitor every aspect of their grades
- Important research finding is that girls are given more negative feedback at this stage, both at home and school which can result in the development of negative feelings about one's sense of self. In the research, poor grades for girls were linked to perceptions that they were less smart, whereas for boys it was perceived to be due to less effort
- Be clear in communicating feedback. Rather than "well done", include the specifics of the actions (eg. "You put forth some good effort managing your time to get that task done. Good for you!")
- Children are often anxious to be good at something—be supportive and realistic, help develop strategies for things they find difficult, share examples, do not cut off interests just because they are not good at it now (difficulty with speech now but could be lead debater in high school)
- The tween world has shifted tremendously from virtually ignored to targets of sophisticated marketing strategies. Provide opportunities to stay in touch with the truth of their own experience, the genuine knowledge of their own feelings and belief.

Ages 12-14 Cognitive:

- Can think logically and abstractly—able to take positions and find social, moral issues exciting as a result. Look to dinner time or other opportunities to share ideas (and remember you don't have to agree)
- Their brains are susceptible to cortisol (stress hormone) and their sex hormones are active, which affect impulse control and psych development
- Research indicates strong correlation with teen's ability to self-regulate to a positive relationship with their parents—great age to begin work on these behaviours.

Ages 12-14 Social Development:

- Lots of conflict as there is tremendous amount of time spent on identity development
- Their identity may even seem contradictory at times
- Peers shift for the forefront, but despite appearances, they are still very dependent on adults and need our presence
- Combining the physical changes of puberty, social self-conscious, uncertainty of oneself, while also separating from the family makes this a difficult time for parents and children

Strategies in working with this age:

- We need to recognize of tremendous tasks at hand for teens: finding sense of self, academic success, friendships, and now separating and individuating from their parents. Teens will need to challenge, ignore and criticize adults at this time.
- Teens need to have psychological space and physical space from adults
- Teens need plenty of opportunities to dream about and work out their future selves—not the manufactures selves of schools and parents
- Provide distance with safety and a warm place to return to
- Say yes when you can and no when you have to
- Be aware of subtext in conversations—issues of loss, identity and control are prioritized at this time

Ages 15-17 Cognitive:

- Trying to figure out the "real me" as they figure out contradictions within themselves
- Still an unsettling time
- Girls continue their 'facade' while developing their interior core with a bit of privacy, getting more clarity on what she thinks and believes. She can look out from within facade and keep collecting data, wisdom, and experience that allow her to mold the construction process of that core.

Ages 15-17 Social:

- Psychological and social issues turbulent as in the toddler years (“ I do it myself” is replaced by “It’s my life, don’t tell me what to do”)
- Multiple views of self gives different images and causes confusion for teens
- Moodiness often due to self worth issues
- May disconnect themselves from previous interests
- As they differentiate roles they also differentiate relationships with parents. Tough times for moms as mothers often bear the brunt of their child’s wrath. For teens, letting go of childhood is hard and the separation will result in conflicts.

Strategies in working with this age:

- Self-regulation is an issue much like the toddler stage—therefore parents need to have clear expectations and consequences
- Children should also bear the brunt of natural consequences—not the time to buy them out or dig them out of trouble and escaping consequences
- Teens are desperate to get information so as to know what is normal from a non-judgemental adult—treating such questions from the point of inexperience (as opposed to infantilizing) is key to keeping communication open.
- Balance “playing the field” of options in activities, work, etc. with hard work, patience, persistence will help to develop self-management skills.
- They will begin to dismantle that wall of facade as their interior self grows, however, as many women see that their facade is better, more acceptable, an easier fit in the eyes of the world than is their more authentic core, they set aside the work of building inside and continue the facade. Help your daughter to recognize the value of her truest self, and to see examples of authentic people around her.

“Girls can't go against the societal grain on everything. It's just too heavy a load. We need to have conversations about making choices and deciding which of so many things we are willing to swim upstream to get, to make a point, to be independent.” - Joanne Deak

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