



DISCOVERY



Facilitating the Healthy
Development of Children

12-15 YEARS



DISCOVERY

Development of Children 12-15 Years

INTRODUCTION

This paper will focus on the developmental challenges facing today's youth. For more than 150 years, the YMCA has consistently provided opportunities for adolescents to develop. Although our goals have remained the same – personal growth, service to others and social development – we face new challenges as we continue our work with youth.

The complexity of adolescent development has been carefully studied. Research tells us that a single model of development may not accurately characterize all adolescents. Many physical and psychological changes occur quite rapidly during this transition into adulthood. Puberty is a period of rapid skeletal and sexual maturation accompanied by a host of psychological changes. In this period of early adolescence, ages 11-15 years, cognitive development is characterized by the developing power of thought and a time of increased decision-making about the future. Self definition and social integration become a focus.

Today's adolescents are presented with a less stable environment than their counterparts from a few short decades ago. High divorce rates, high adolescent pregnancy rates and increased geographic mobility of families all contribute to a lack of stability in the family unit. Through the media, our youth are exposed to a variety of lifestyles; while this amount of choice can allow for more creativity and self-expression, it can also be very confusing and stressful.

It is important to understand that the majority of adolescents experience the transition to adulthood more positively than portrayed by adults and the media. Some of the problems facing adolescents today involve other people's idealized

images of what they should be as well as society's ambivalent messages about what they should be and who they should become.

The Premier's Council on Health, Well-Being and Social Justice in *Your's, Mine and Our's*, discovered the following through consultations with youth:

Youth are focused and concerned about their economic future. Youth want support and encouragement as they learn to become independent. Youth want better preparation for the adult world. Youth said boredom is the main cause of violence among their group. Youth described health in terms of time, patience and love.

Basic needs for youth include the need to belong, to express, to love and be loved, to lead and to be accepted. Developmental needs consist of physical activity, self-definition, creativity, positive social experiences, structure and participation. Other critical developmental outcomes for youth include competence in culturally valuable skills, good coping skills, control over one's life choices, and a sense of psychological well-being. Supportive environments and control over decisions and choices are key factors assisting a healthier transition into adulthood.

One promising feature of the adolescent transition is that it represents one of the most promising opportunities for positive re-direction of developmental pathways that soon become much less flexible. Studies have identified the establishment of a close connection with another person as one key factor in such transitions, thus the vital importance of an influential role model.

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Behaviour Self Image

Relationship To Adults

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL GROWTH	ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT
Rapid physical changes produce strain – may need privacy to reflect and gain perspective.	Educate and praise.
Seeks identity – tries out many roles.	Provide leadership opportunities.
Is uncertain and self-conscious about image.	Provide opportunities to set goals and plans to achieve these goals.
Needs to integrate self-image with opinions of others.	
Is responsible, self-critical and/or self-admiring.	
Constructs ideals and compares with reality.	
Experiences mood fluctuations.	
Becomes more secretive about thoughts and discreet about opinions.	
Has difficulty making decisions – is aware of so many possibilities.	

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL GROWTH	ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT
Is critical towards adults but needs adult approval and support (selects significant adult).	Provide small group experience, including adults in the group.
Needs to separate from adults to develop own identity.	Important for adults to be a positive role model.
Fluctuates between dependence and independence.	
Understands rules as mutual agreements for the social good.	
Abhors double standards.	
Can be rebellious and un-cooperative.	
Tests limits.	



Relationship To Peers

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL GROWTH	ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT
<p>Requires close and trusted friend.</p> <p>Group acceptance important (may have positive or negative effects).</p> <p>Peer groups less random and longer lasting (based on special interests with recognized leaders).</p> <p>Groups become mixed by end of phase.</p> <p>Great interest in opposite sex.</p> <p>Anticipates group reaction to self.</p> <p>Likes to discuss social issues.</p>	<p>Small group experiences and discussions, i.e. values-based, life skills training, sexuality, social issues, environment and social justice.</p> <p>May have high interest in team games and group activities.</p>

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Rate of Growth

Body Growth

PHYSICAL GROWTH	ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT
<p>A period of rapid and uneven growth (usually occurs between 12 and 16 years).</p> <p>Increased concern about body image.</p>	<p>Concentrate on gross motor skills, i.e. teach proper technique, practice repetition individually, practice in game/real situation, provide specific feedback.</p>

PHYSICAL GROWTH	ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT
<p>Body type becomes more evident. (i.e. Endomorph, Mesomorph, Ectomorph).</p> <p>Dramatic changes in weight and height occur.</p>	<p>Move to fine motor skills after mastery of gross motor skills using same strategy as mentioned above.</p>



Organic Growth

Energy – Concentration, Motivation

PHYSICAL GROWTH	ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT
Onset of puberty – unique to each individual.	Educate them in regards to what is happening to their body.
Hormone changes result in physical and sexual maturation.	Patience and understanding is important.
Maturation of central nervous system usually incomplete until 15-16 years.	Identify success not failure.
May be awkward and clumsy due to the inability to adjust to rapid growth and redistribution of weight.	Draw out discussion.

PHYSICAL GROWTH	ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT
Growth rate may result in fatigue, lethargy and restlessness.	Educate and provide coping techniques.
Glandular changes contribute to mood swings.	
Tremendous energy consumed – appetite increases.	
Range of individual differences increases – i.e. flexibility, agility and physical abilities.	

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Language Listening

Cognitive Development

LANGUAGE/INTELLECTUAL GROWTH	ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT
<p>Can listen critically to report views and make positive contributions.</p> <p>Becomes more sensitive to implied meanings.</p> <p>Can appreciate the feelings and values expressed through prose, poetry and music.</p> <p>Uses language to maintain self, to direct, to report, to imagine, to reason, to predict, to project.</p> <p>Uses language to maintain group relationships.</p> <p>Practices discussion techniques.</p> <p>Able to discuss and support alternative ideas.</p> <p>Able to re-examine and refine conclusions.</p> <p>Interested in discussing and clarifying ideals and abstractions – i.e. power.</p> <p>Developing interest in techniques of argument and debate.</p> <p>May use metaphors.</p>	<p>Provide opportunities for small group situations, i.e. problem-solving, debates, group discussions</p> <p>cooperative games.</p>

LANGUAGE/INTELLECTUAL GROWTH	ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT
<p>Able to perceive and analyse relationships (still needs 'hands-on' materials).</p> <p>Thought becomes more objective.</p> <p>Can reason about things never experienced – can reflect about own thoughts.</p> <p>Can see and test situations from another point of view.</p> <p>Can see many alternatives in solving problems.</p> <p>Can generate 'What if ...' scenarios.</p> <p>Able to think of probability.</p> <p>Able to verify hypothesis using controls – e.g. holding some variables constant.</p> <p>Able to look back, re-check thoughts, correlate ideas and recognize when own ideas need re-thinking.</p> <p>Can think abstractly about cause and effect relationships.</p> <p>Developing understanding of historical past and future time.</p> <p>Constructs ideals – reasons about own future.</p> <p>Develops schemes to aid memory.</p>	<p>Provide small group work experiences.</p> <p>Problem-solving and cooperative games.</p>

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Mission: The YMCA of Greater Toronto is a charity offering opportunities for personal growth, community involvement and leadership.

Vision: The YMCA of Greater Toronto will focus on making connections: connecting people, connecting with youth, and connecting with the community.

Values: Caring • Health • Honesty • Inclusiveness • Respect • Responsibility



YMCA

We build strong kids,
strong families, strong communities.



United Way
of Greater Toronto