

Building Strong Families

Ages and Stages of Youth

Ages 9 – 11

Physical Characteristics

- like hands-on projects that involve making or doing something;
- like physical involvement in activities (e.g., ball games, swimming);
- don't like physical confinement (don't like to play in one area or be involved in doing something for long periods of time).

Ages 9 – 11

Cognitive Characteristics

- need to share thoughts and reactions with others;
- are concrete thinkers;
- beginning to think logically and symbolically;
- handle ideas better if they are related to something they can do or experience with their senses;
- tend to think in terms of all or nothing, right or wrong, fun or boring;
- need adult approval;
- follow rules out of respect for adults;
- are often surprised at their accomplishments.

Ages 9 – 11
Social Characteristics

- like to join clubs (this stage is often called the gang stage);
- are discovering the benefits of pleasing others;
- starting to take responsibility for their actions;
- developing decision-making skills;
- tend to choose friends of the same gender when playing games or working on projects;
- like to try new things as they develop an increased independence of thought.

Ages 9 – 11
Emotional Characteristics

- have a strong need to feel accepted and worthwhile;
- school is becoming more difficult and demanding as pressures increase;
- tend to compare themselves with their peers (need to have successes emphasized and failures minimized);
- self-confidence is shaky;
- may have difficulty dealing with peers;
- feel threatened by competition from peers.

Ages 12 and 13
Physical Characteristics

- may feel awkward as they experience growth spurts and rapid changes in physical appearances (acne, voice changes, unpredictable menstrual cycles);
- slow developers are embarrassed and concerned over lack of physical changes;
- tend to divide themselves into sex-segregated friendship groups.

Ages 12 and 13
Cognitive Characteristics

- moving from concrete to abstract thinking;
- still tend to think in terms of all or nothing, right or wrong;
- tend to reject ready-made solutions or explanations from adults; like to find solutions on their own;
- like to work in small groups;
- tend to be self-conscious;
- forming values and opinions (e.g., issues of fairness, justice and equality are important and are often regarded as a reflection of the individual).

Ages 12 and 13 Social Characteristics

- moving away from dependence on parents to dependence on self;
- enjoy participating in away-from-home activities;
- seeking peer acceptance rather than adult recognition (depend more on opinions of peers rather than opinions of parents and other adults);
- tend to cluster in same-gender groups; however are starting to be interested in opinions and feelings of opposite sex.

Ages 12 and 13 Emotional Characteristics

- tend to have wide mood swings;
- tend to change their minds frequently;
- learning to value opinions of adults;
- learning about self (tend to have experiences that challenge their self concept);
- tend to be easily embarrassed;
- developing leadership skills;
- demonstrate a growing sense of responsibility.