

Building Strong Families

Ages and Stages of Youth

Ages 9 – 11 How They Act Physically

- They like hands-on work. They want to make things and do things.
- They like to be physically active, such as playing sports.
- They don't like to play in one area or do just one thing for a long time.

Ages 9 – 11 How They Think

- They need to share their thoughts with others.
- They begin to use logic. They can think of some things as symbols for other things.
- They do best if they can relate ideas to what they can do or sense (see, hear, smell, taste, or touch).
- They usually think in terms of all or nothing, right or wrong, fun or boring.
- They need adults to approve of them.
- They follow rules because they respect adults.
- They are often surprised at what they can do.

Ages 9 – 11
How They Act Socially

- They like to join clubs. (This stage is often called “the gang stage.”)
- They find that it is good to please others.
- They start being responsible for what they do.
- They learn to decide many things.
- They usually choose friends of the same sex when they play games or work on projects.
- They like to try new things.
- They become more independent thinkers.

Ages 9 – 11
How They Act Emotionally

- They need to feel accepted and worthwhile.
- They find that school is getting harder and more demanding.
- They often compare themselves with their peers. (They need to feel successful.)
- They sometimes lack self-confidence.
- They may find it hard to deal with peers.
- They feel threatened when they compete with peers.

Ages 12 and 13
How They Act Physically

- They may feel awkward as they grow rapidly or as their bodies change. (For example, they may have voice changes, face acne, or menstrual cycles.)
- They may be embarrassed or worried if their bodies develop more slowly.

Ages 12 and 13
How They Think

- They are moving from concrete to abstract thinking. They can think about ideas that they can't directly experience.
- They still usually think in terms of all or nothing, right or wrong.
- They usually reject ready-made answers from adults. They like to find answers on their own.
- They like to work in small groups.
- They are usually self-conscious.
- They are forming values and opinions. (For example, fairness and justice are important issues to many of them.)

Ages 12 and 13
How They Act Socially

- They depend less on their parents and more on themselves.
- They enjoy doing things away from home.
- They care more what peers think of them than what parents and other adults think of them. They want their peers to accept them.
- They usually get together in same-sex groups. But they are starting to become interested in the opposite sex.

Ages 12 and 13
How They Act Emotionally

- They often have wide mood swings.
- They often change their minds.
- They are learning to care about what adults think.
- They are learning about themselves. (They often have experiences that challenge their self-concept.)
- They are often embarrassed.
- They are building their leadership skills.
- They are taking on more responsibility.