

Stages of Healthy Adolescent Development

Characteristic Developmental Milestones and Tasks			
Stage with Age Range (Approx)	Early Adolescence (ages 10-14 years)	Middle Adolescence (ages 15-17 years)	Late Adolescence (ages 18-21 years)
Physical Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Puberty: Rapid growth period ▪ Secondary sexual characteristics appear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Secondary sexual characteristics ▪ 95% of adult height reached 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Physical maturity and reproductive growth leveling off and ending
Intellectual/ Cognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concrete thought dominates “here and now” ▪ Cause-effect relationships underdeveloped ▪ Stronger “self” than “social awareness: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Growth in abstract thought; reverts to concrete thought under stress ▪ Cause-effect relationships better understood ▪ Very self-absorbed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Abstract thought established ▪ Future oriented; able to understand, plan and pursue long range goals ▪ Philosophical and idealistic
Autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Challenge authority, family; anti-parent ▪ Loneliness ▪ Wide mood swings ▪ Things of childhood rejected ▪ Argumentative and disobedient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conflict with family predominates due to ambivalence about emerging independence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emancipation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ vocational/technical/college and/or work ▪ adult lifestyle
Body Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preoccupation with physical changes and critical of appearance ▪ Anxieties about secondary sexual characteristic changes ▪ Peers used as a standard for normal appearance (comparison of self to peers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Less concern about physical changes but increased interest in personal attractiveness ▪ Excessive physical activity alternating with lethargy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Usually comfortable with body image
Peer Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Serves a developmental purpose ▪ Intense friendship with same sex ▪ Contact with opposite sex in groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong peer allegiances – fad behaviors ▪ Sexual drives emerge and teens begin to explore ability to date and attract a partner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decisions/values less influenced by peers ▪ Relates to individuals more than to peer group ▪ Selection of partner based on individual preference
Identity Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Am I normal?” ▪ Daydreaming ▪ Vocational goals change frequently ▪ Begin to develop own value system ▪ Emerging sexual feelings and sexual exploration ▪ Imaginary audience ▪ Desire for privacy ▪ Magnify own problems: “no one understands” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Experimentation – sex, drugs, friends, jobs, risk-taking behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pursue realistic vocational goals with training or career employment ▪ Relate to family as adult ▪ Realizations of own limitations & mortality ▪ Establishment of sexual identity, sexual activity is more common ▪ Establishment of ethical and moral value system ▪ More capable of intimate, complex relationships