

Early Adulthood (17-25 years)



Cognitive development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
BRAIN-BASED DEVELOPMENT		
Concentration, complex thought, planning and impulse control have matured	<p>Becoming more able to plan, anticipate consequences and make decisions</p> <p>Continuing to improve and refine precision and speed when performing complex tasks, with fewer errors</p> <p>Displaying more consistent and flexible use of these abilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model effective planning behaviour. If youth observe their adult ally setting goals, making plans, and achieving success, they will often emulate the behaviour • Create opportunities for youth to plan larger-scale events • Help young people to become financially independent by assisting them in preparing and following a budget • Encourage a realistic understanding of personal abilities and skill sets • Provide opportunities for independence and for leadership (summer jobs and volunteer opportunities as rewarding ways to gain these valuable experiences) • Provide freedom for youth to make mistakes as this is an important aspect of learning. If a youth experiences a setback, support efforts to get back on track • Provide guidance and knowledge while demonstrating trust and respect. Do not be surprised if a youth chooses not to follow your advice
Efficiency of brain functioning continues into adulthood	<p>Able to understand and interpret complex and abstract ideas (for example, able to think hypothetically and create a number of possible scenarios instead of limiting their thoughts to what is real)</p> <p>Able to learn new information quickly</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage youth to familiarize themselves with new ideas (for example, propose books, biographies, documentaries, movies and other resources that can lead to new discoveries)
The ability to assess risks and rewards increases	<p>More able to effectively assess risk versus reward</p> <p>May decrease thrill-seeking and risk-taking behaviour</p> <p>May be less sensitive to pleasure and reward</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain open communication and promote honesty and mutual respect • Encourage youth to educate themselves about the potential outcomes or consequences of their actions • Reinforce strategies for effective self-regulation (for example, encourage youth to stop and think before making decisions and engaging in risky behaviours) • Demonstrate trust and respect for youth as they begin to make carefully considered decisions about activities they participate in • Share your own experiences with risky situations (for example, by reflecting on your own good and bad choices) • Show interest in the activities of youth (this can help them feel comfortable approaching you for information or guidance) • Encourage youth to take positive and reasonable risks (for example, applying for a job) • Provide guidance and access to tools (for example, protective equipment, a cell phone or a map) and information from a variety of sources (for example, online forums, others who have had similar experiences) to help them learn and be prepared • Encourage relationships that are positive and supportive to improve peer support for pro-social behaviour
There is greater capacity to control impulses and regulate behaviour	<p>Even under conditions of high emotional stress, able to anticipate consequences, control impulses, and act on rational decisions</p> <p>Has improved organizational skills and ability for long-range planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish expectations for behaviour and allow youth to solve complex situations independently • Give more room for youth to work through their personal situations (for example, difficulty at work) with more independence

Early Adulthood (17-25 years)



Cognitive development (Cont'd)

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
DEVELOPMENT OF REASONING SKILLS		
Abstract thought matures	Able to compare and contrast different theories and ideas to draw their own conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When a youth is learning a new theory (for example, supply and demand) have them walk you through their thought process. Probe their depth of understanding by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proposing alternative explanations (“<i>But have you thought about...?</i>”) - Posing alternative perspectives (“<i>Would you think the same way if you were...?</i>”) - Asking youth to generate analogies, comparisons and connections (“<i>Do you think that’s similar to...?</i>”) Introduce diverse perspectives, concepts, and lifestyles through movies, books, biographies, case studies and music Remember that even adults learn through experience and “doing” (for example, activities that engage the senses and allow learners to interact with the learning environment [such as travelling, volunteering, visiting art gallery] are powerful teaching tools) Guide youth to continually ask questions and seek information about all aspects of life Consider how games can be used to support problem solving and strategizing skills (for example, video games)
Logical thinking matures	Improving ability to think about possibilities, form and evaluate hypotheses, deduce and induce principles that serve to guide decision making Establishing abstraction and advanced reasoning	
Working memory matures	Further refining the flexible use of working memory (for example, when solving a puzzle, can keep track of the solutions that have already been tried)	
Beliefs about knowledge are more sophisticated	Acknowledges that truth, facts and ideas are often relative, and sees that some methods of evaluating truth are more reliable than others Able to think about knowledge as being constructed. (for example, being able to think critically and question how it is we come to know “X” is true) May become frustrated with a lack of “right answers” to issues and questions Developing a mature understanding of the nature and limits of knowledge	