

# Early Adulthood (17–25 years)



## Social development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
<b>DEVELOPMENT OF IDENTITY</b>		
<b>A sense of identity is solidifying</b>	<p>May begin to commit to an identity after exploring various roles, values, beliefs and goals</p> <p>May signal values, beliefs and goals through the opportunities and interests pursued</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the opportunity to explore and participate in organized events, clubs and teams so that youth can identify their talents and potential career pursuits</li> </ul>
<b>Gender identity is more stable</b>	<p>May display a sense of confidence around gender identity—expressed through clothing/image</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk about gender identity without making assumptions</li> <li>Encourage youth to engage in opportunities without concerns about preconceived gender identity labels</li> </ul>
<b>Social group-esteem and social identity mature</b>	<p>May display a commitment or sense of belonging to social groups</p> <p>Begins to feel comfortable with their own social identity and has positive feelings about social group membership</p> <p>Has learned about their own social groups and has examined their own beliefs independently</p> <p>Rejects negative views based on stereotypes held by others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouraging volunteer and other local structured opportunities, which can lead youth to a better sense of community and social inclusion</li> <li>Support participation in cultural traditions to help youth develop their sense of cultural social group identity and social group-esteem</li> <li>Promote opportunities for young adults to mentor other youth</li> </ul>
<b>Spiritual beliefs may be more internalized</b>	<p>May begin to integrate religious/spiritual beliefs into their larger identity</p> <p>Motivated to act/ behave to a greater degree by deeply held beliefs</p> <p>Sense of place in, and connectedness to, the larger world beginning to emerge</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where appropriate, support youth participation in religious and spiritual traditions to help them develop their sense of spiritual identity</li> <li>Support critical thought about religion</li> </ul>
<b>Self-concepts become more integrated</b>	<p>May be able to resolve conflicting self-concepts based upon differences in contexts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage youth to focus on more positive self-concepts (integrate those activities they are good at into settings where youth are less sure about themselves)</li> </ul>
<b>Self-appraisal skills continue to improve</b>	<p>Continuing to refine ability to think critically and be reflective of one's self</p> <p>Is less reliant on/looking for the approval of others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide constructive feedback to encourage the development of self-appraisal skills</li> <li>Encourage self appraisal through questions like, "how do you feel?"</li> </ul>
<b>Self-efficacy is increasing</b>	<p>Can take on more difficult and longer-term challenges, and persevere in the face of adversity or failure to achieve goals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Model a confident understanding of your own skills and capabilities—youth learn to be self-efficacious from the role models in their lives</li> <li>Help youth set goals and support their attempts to reach those goals, to enhance self-efficacy</li> <li>Provide realistic challenges for youth to tackle, and provide support and counselling through these challenges</li> </ul>
<b>Self-esteem improves</b>	<p>Feeling more confident and positive about themselves</p> <p>Level of self-esteem continues to improve (this process is ongoing until late adulthood)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create opportunities for youth to excel (for example, scholastic, vocational, volunteer, recreational)</li> <li>Show interest in the opinions, ideas, beliefs, goals and life plans of youth</li> <li>Provide an opportunity for young people to be leaders</li> <li>Recognize achievements</li> </ul>

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## Social development (Cont'd)

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
<b>DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS, ROMANTIC PARTNERS AND FAMILY</b>		
<b>Understanding of multiple perspectives is maturing</b>	<p>May fully understand the effect of social roles in perspective-taking</p> <p>Understands that “neutral” perspectives on a situation are rare, and that everyone’s perspective is coloured by their context, beliefs and background</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support understanding of the experiences, challenges, and issues of others</li> </ul>
<b>Peer relationships continue to evolve</b>	<p>Exhibits weakened influence of peers, greater ability to choose a romantic partner based on personal compatibility (as opposed to social standing as is often the case for younger teens)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage youth to maintain connections with friends, even as they become more committed to school, work or their romantic partners</li> <li>Keep in mind that while the influence of peers often shifts during emerging adulthood, friends continue to support the development of romantic relationships by sharing their social networks and being supportive when relationship troubles occur</li> </ul>
<b>Romantic relationships mature</b>	<p>Shifts focus in romantic relationships from fun/companionship to forming strong emotional bond with physical and emotional intimacy</p> <p>May have longer-lasting relationships (often more than a year) and be working with a partner toward a committed and long-term relationship in which conflicts are negotiated and resolved.</p> <p>Spending a large amount of time alone in couples, rather than in larger group (some may prefer to engage in shorter-term relationships as they explore their independence)</p> <p>LGBTQ youth may “come out” more fully in openly acknowledging a same-sex relationship</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give space to youth to develop relationships that are private and personal but stay connected and approachable, providing opportunities for questions and help when needed</li> <li>Demonstrate respect for a young person’s relationships</li> </ul>
<b>Family relationships continue to evolve</b>	<p>Experiences a continuing decline in conflict with parents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop strategies and tools that can be used to stay connected at a distance (for example, phone, email, online messaging)</li> <li>Try to stay in regular contact with youth (on a daily or weekly basis) to remain informed of each other’s lives</li> <li>Establish routines or dedicate certain times as “family time” such as major holidays, specific meals or a chosen day of the week</li> <li>Share experiences together (for example, shopping trips, vacations, going for walks)</li> <li>Communicate that you are available so youth feel free to come to you for help or to ask questions</li> </ul>
<b>Moral reasoning may begin to shift to a focus on moral or ethical principles</b>	<p>May increasingly make moral decisions based on self-chosen moral and ethical principles</p> <p>May begin to make decisions out of concern for equality, human rights, dignity, and life, regardless of the consequences for own self</p> <p>May continue to make decisions based on a “law and order” orientation with a focus on upholding laws in order to maintain social order</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be conscientious in your own moral reasoning—youth are shown to replicate styles of moral reasoning in role models</li> <li>Encourage interactions in which adolescents and young adults engage in challenging conversations on relevant issues where conflicting views are raised and discussed</li> <li>Support opportunities for active discussion of moral dilemmas (for example, concerning discrimination, oppression and bias) to stimulate reasoning and problem-solving skills</li> </ul>
<b>Self-sufficiency continues to strengthen</b>	<p>Able to maintain close connections while still maintaining a separate sense of identity</p> <p>May leave family home to live independently</p> <p>Continues to gain financial independence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remember that many young adults move in and out of their parental home before making a final transition to independence</li> <li>Provide advice and share personal experiences related to gaining independence</li> <li>Provide advice and share personal experiences related to “firsts”, like getting a first full-time job, moving out of the family home, buying a car or first major relationship break-up</li> </ul>