

Adolescence (13–19 years)



Emotional development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
CHANGES IN THE EXPERIENCE OF EMOTIONS		
Emotional responses increase	Continuing to experience heightened emotions Emotional information becoming more important and meaningful May be experiencing mood fluctuations May be more vulnerable to stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend time listening, talking and practicing healthy communication (for example, staying calm) • Provide youth with the opportunity for their own time and space to reflect and relax in a way they choose (for example, music, reading, drawing, writing) • Provide motivation, support and encouragement through difficult times • Create/promote opportunities to help youth redirect their energy to something productive (such as exercising or helping to organize and run an event)
Emotional self-regulation matures	Becomes better able to use thinking strategies for emotional self-regulation (for example, trying to put a positive spin on things, focusing thoughts on things that are more happy and pleasant, planning and developing solutions, or accepting the situation) Begins to believe in their ability to regulate emotions and becomes aware of the personal strategies that work best	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support on how to cope with stress. Stress reduction techniques like relaxation and meditation can help to improve mental health and also immune function • Talk openly about mental health issues. If you are concerned about a young person's emotional stability, connect him or her with available supports and information (such as Kids Help Phone, family physician, websites, an appropriate mentor or counsellor)—the negative stigma around mental health often discourages people from seeking support
The ability to read body language further improves	Is better able to read and understand other people's emotions, including displays of fear and anger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to clearly communicate feelings through words as well as through body language
Motivation is increasingly internalized	Demonstrates ability to set their own goals and stay on task with less prompting from others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide encouragement. Youth of this age want to know that parents, teachers and other role models are interested in their activities and ambitions but still need the freedom to set and achieve goals on their own • If it appears a youth is struggling, offer to help them get started but don't complete whole task for them
DEVELOPMENT OF EMPATHY		
Empathy continues to develop	Able to understand information from differing perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote perspective-taking to encourage the development of empathy, and help a youth recognize the difference between their own experience and that of others (for example, someone from a different cultural background) • Encourage youth to spend time focusing on other people and/or topics (for example, volunteering with a community organization)