

Adolescence (13–19 years)



Social development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
DEVELOPMENT OF IDENTITY		
Identity is actively explored	Actively exploring identity options (for example, questioning parents' values, and seeking information about potential career choices)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide structured settings outside of the family (for example, at a youth centre, youth council or school club) so that self concepts and identity can emerge through the association of positive like-minded peer groups and their supporting influence
Gender role flexibility increases	Begins to become less rigid about gender stereotypes as gender identity continues to evolve (for example, may be more empathetic to gender identity of others; may begin to express gender identity through clothing and image)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A warm, supportive relationship with a caregiver can allow young people to explore their varied identities without fear of being judged or criticized
Social group-esteem continues to increase	May seek information about their social groups by reading, talking with other group members, learning cultural practices, or attending cultural events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the exploration of cultural and social group traditions to help youth develop their sense of cultural identity and social group-esteem
Exploration of spiritual beliefs may increase	Begins to question and explore the foundations of spiritual beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If appropriate, support the exploration of religious/spiritual traditions to help develop a sense of spiritual identity
The concept of self becomes more complex and situation-dependent	<p>May start to notice that different contexts affect how they behave and perceive themselves (for example, I am deferential with my parents, a leader among friends and shy in class)</p> <p>May notice conflicts between the way they think of themselves and behave in different contexts (for example, I am quiet in class but vocal at soccer practice)</p> <p>May struggle with diverging self-concepts and express anxiety or stress about this internal conflict</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain to youth that it is okay to have diverging views about who they are Encourage youth to focus on their more positive self concepts
Self-appraisal skills improve	Demonstrates ability to think critically and be reflective (for example, able to see one's self from other people's [peers, parents] perspective)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage self-reflective activities (such as Career Trees as ways to begin considering potential career paths) Encourage youth to seek leadership roles (for example, through event organization) but to also understand that leadership requires cooperation and partnership with adult allies and other peers Be relatable—when helping set attainable goals relate to your own personal limitations and/or challenges Provide constructive feedback to encourage the development of self-appraisal skills
Self-efficacy increases	Beliefs about the ability to achieve goals grows stronger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage youth to create a list of short-term goals to foster an increased sense of accomplishment Model a confident understanding of your own skills and capabilities. Youth learn to be self-efficacious from the role models in their lives Promote the setting of goals and support attempts to reach those goals Provide realistic challenges for youth to tackle and provide support and counselling through these challenges Encourage youth to seek leadership roles in executing a challenging task (for example, family activities, social events, social justice projects) but to also understand that leadership requires cooperation and partnership with adult allies and other peers
Self-esteem continues to decline	Begins to feel less self-confident and more negative about themselves than they did in childhood or early adolescence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celebrate achievements and encourage youth to pursue interests, talents and hobbies Consistently demonstrate concern about a young person's well-being by making time to discuss successes and issues that arise Remember that having someone available who is willing to listen is very important to young people who are experiencing periods of stress

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Social development (cont'd)

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS, ROMANTIC PARTNERS AND FAMILY		
Understanding of varied perspectives deepens	<p>Begins to understand the effect of social roles in perspective-taking</p> <p>Begins to understand 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"> Encourage understanding of the experiences, challenges, and issues of others
Peer relationships are increasingly important	<p>Continues to engage in friendships that become closer and more intimate, and involve sharing of confidences and mutual support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage relationships that are positive and supportive, particularly in difficult times
Early romantic relationships emerge	<p>Begins dating in groups (forming couples but spending time together within the context of larger groups)</p> <p>Bases romantic relationships, either with the same or opposite sex, not necessarily on emotional intimacy but more often on fun and camaraderie</p> <p>Some expressions of emotional intimacy beginning to emerge</p> <p>May acknowledge same-sex romantic interests to trusted friends or family members</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide support and help guide decisions with romantic partners rather than trying to decide on behalf of youth Be aware of factors that may influence decisions about relationships (such as religion, media, past experiences, family and friends) when seeking to understand the choices being made by youth Stay connected and approachable, providing opportunities for questions and help when needed
Family relationships continue to evolve	<p>May experience intensified disagreements with parents as their sense of individuality and independence continues to develop but occurrences will begin to decline</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give youth space and time to reflect about disagreements Listen to the problem, help them to analyze it and propose potential solutions
Moral reasoning shifts to a focus on maintaining order	<p>Makes moral decisions on the basis of a “law and order” orientation</p> <p>May feel the need to uphold laws in order to maintain order within the wider society</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be conscious of your own moral stances—youth will replicate styles of moral reasoning in role models Encourage peer interactions to stimulate the development of higher forms of moral reasoning (for example, interactions in which adolescents and young adults engage in challenging conversations on relevant issues where conflicting views are raised and discussed) to promote and facilitate perspective-taking Provide opportunities for active participation in deciding between conflicting alternatives or moral dilemmas to stimulate reasoning and problem-solving skills Expose youth to moral dilemmas concerning discrimination, oppression and bias
Self-sufficiency increases	<p>Demonstrates desire for independence in decisions about relationships and activities</p> <p>Begins to gain financial independence through employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide advice and share personal experiences related to gaining independence (for example, financial skills)