

Early Adolescence (12–14 years)



Emotional development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
CHANGES IN THE EXPERIENCE OF EMOTIONS		
<p>Emotional brain centres are developing earlier than other brain regions</p>	<p>Experiences emotions more intensely</p> <p>May be more emotional, have mood swings and have more intense responses to issues or events such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having a fight with a friend • winning or losing at sports • experiencing discipline, rules or fighting with parents <p>These intense emotions can be acted out in erratic, dramatic, or challenging behaviour (for example, acting aggressively)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much of this emotion is biological—try not to take it personally • Acknowledge that emotional “ups and downs” related to conflicts with friends or romantic partners are real and intense • Offer to provide constructive help and support to youth when they are engaging in tasks that can be emotionally challenging (for example, experiencing conflict with a peer, when writing a resume) • Affectionate, caring adult influences can support positive and healthy management of negative emotions. Be a supportive influence, or incorporate opportunities for youth to access supportive role models. Some ways to do this include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Validating feelings through comments such as “I understand how that could really upset you” or “That would have affected me too” - Acknowledging that they are upset and that they are not alone - Talking about your own related past experiences and how you managed the situation - Being a role model and demonstrating how to manage emotions and stay calm - When developing new programs or services, think about how to connect youth to positive adult influences
<p>The ability to read body language is still improving</p>	<p>Becoming able to read and understand other people’s displays of emotion</p> <p>May not yet be able to properly identify facial expressions of fear (which can sometimes be confused with anger)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly communicate feelings through words, as well as through body language
DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-REGULATION		
<p>Emotional self-control increases</p>	<p>Begins to suppress outward signs of emotion (for example, stifling giggles, trying not to cry)</p> <p>May begin to cope with negative situations more effectively by applying thinking skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities to encourage the development of strategies to control and address emotions, such as: reframing the situation; refocusing on something happier; trying to think positively about the issue; putting things into perspective; and accepting the situation • Some strategies include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing space to be alone, relax and reflect - Taking time to talk, listen and appreciate their feelings - Doing something productive (for example, exercise, supportive humour or art) • Provide or connect youth to information about stress reduction techniques like meditation and relaxation training, which can help young people manage emotional fluctuations and stress
<p>Motivation becomes more internalized</p>	<p>Begins to do things that are not necessarily enjoyable because it is personally important (for example, doing homework not only to avoid punishment, but because getting good grades is important to future success)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide positive feedback for everyday accomplishments • Create opportunities for discussion about personal ambitions and challenges. Young people tend to stick with challenging tasks when members of their support system demonstrate interest in them • Encourage exploration of things that youth enjoy to learn through experience what motivates them
DEVELOPMENT OF EMPATHY		
<p>Empathy for others begins to increase</p>	<p>Begins to feel empathy for others as a result of understanding their perspectives and having concern for their feelings (however, not yet likely to experience personal distress about others’ predicaments)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote perspective-taking to encourage the development of empathy and recognizing the difference between a youth’s own situation and that of other people (for example, someone from a different cultural background) • Encourage youth to take an interest in other people and/or topics (for example, volunteering with a community organization) • Introduce diverse perspectives, concepts and lifestyles through movies, books, biographies, case studies and music