



Office of Children  
and Family Services

# Child Development Guide



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### **Acknowledgement**

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# Preface

This guide is divided into two separate parts: Part I, Child Development, provides an overview of how children develop, including the tasks they must accomplish, what's happening in the growing brain, typical characteristics and suggested behaviors for effective parenting, and indicators of possible developmental lags or trauma.

Part II, The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children, is presented in chart form. It describes (again by age group) what things the typical child might be expected to say or do at that age or stage, and what the typical child can be expected to know and how the child thinks and interacts with the world, along with suggestions for caseworker and caregiver responses. Along with the previous information, appropriate cautions are also listed for each age group, as well as behaviors that may signal possible developmental problems and/or trauma in a child.

This guide is intended to be useful and beneficial for caseworkers (child welfare professionals and others who provide services to children and families) and caregivers (birth parents, foster parents, adoptive parents, kin, and others who meet the daily needs of children) as they strive to understand and support the development of children.

We hope that it will continue to be a valuable resource for yet another generation of children and youth.



# Part I: Child Development

## Introduction

### Assessment of Child Development

When using Part I to assess child development and respond to an individual child's needs, caseworkers and caregivers need to consider the developmental tasks associated with each stage of development. They must also be alert to certain behaviors (or lack of certain behaviors) in order to determine whether a child is progressing in a way that would be considered typical for a particular age or stage, or whether a factor that may signal some developmental problem(s) or be indicative of trauma exists. (An example of the former would be a child whose development lags because of fetal alcohol syndrome associated with parental substance abuse; an example of the latter would be a child whose development lags because of exposure to domestic violence.) These two sections bookend each stage.

### The Growing Brain

In recent years, the fields of pediatrics, psychology, and neuroscience have made important contributions to understanding how children's brains grow and develop across childhood. The first three years of life are an especially intense period of growth in all areas of a child's development. New content that is supported by research has been added to the guide to reflect the significance of brain development. Specifically, facts about the brain are presented for each age, and additional information has been distributed across the domains that relate to these facts, including new suggested behaviors for effective parenting.

### The Five Areas of Development

Arranged according to age group, the various subsections provide an overview of common behaviors that can be expected of children and youth whose developmental progress would be considered typical for each of the age groups. These behaviors are further divided into five separate domains, or areas of development: physical, emotional, social, mental, and moral. Each area of development includes brief descriptions of common behaviors associated with that area of development, along with suggested caregiver responses that can be used to encourage growth (and, in some cases, monitor typical but sometimes difficult behaviors).

When referring to the first two subsections of this part of the guide (Birth to Six Months and Six Months to One Year), users will notice that the fifth area of development (moral) is not included for children who are younger than one year because they are not able to distinguish between right and wrong until they progress beyond infancy.

## Variations in Child Development and the Role of Trauma and Resiliency

The tasks and indicators listed for each age group may be more observable at certain times and/or in certain individual children. It is important to appreciate that inevitably there will be overlap among the ages and stages described here.

Children engaged by the child welfare system, especially those who have been removed from their birth families, have likely experienced traumatic events in their young lives, thereby impacting their development. A removal leading to the separation of the family, in and of itself, can cause trauma. Trauma to a child "results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being" (SAMHSA, 2014). Children's relationships, behaviors, and sense of self may all be impacted. Adverse effects of trauma may be immediate or have a delayed onset. Recent revisions to this guide include indicators of trauma for each age and stage in order to support caseworkers in trauma-informed assessments and responses, and to help caregivers understand that some behaviors in children may be a result of trauma.

It is important to note that not all children who are involved in or witness traumatic events develop traumatic stress responses. Some children are able to adapt and cope with trauma better than others, especially if intervention is early.

### Sources

Much of the original information in this guide was adapted with permission from *Adoption of Children with Special Needs* (Allen 1982). The information related to trauma and child traumatic stress was drawn from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). See the reference list beginning on page 87 for specific citations from these sources and other works that have informed the development of this guide.



# Birth to Six Months

## Developmental Tasks

Learning to trust others and be secure in the world

Learning (at an unconscious level) how to get personal needs met



## What's Happening in the Brain?

During this stage, the child's brain is:

- ❖ A “work-in-progress” as it's been impacted in the womb by nutrition and chemicals (e.g., medication, tobacco, alcohol, other drugs)
- ❖ Only 25% of the size of an adult's brain
- ❖ More developed in the lower region, which controls reflexive behaviors like grasping, crying, sleeping, and feeding
- ❖ Ready to be shaped by interactions with caregivers and surroundings
- ❖ Very vulnerable—trauma, even in infancy, can affect development of attention, memory, language, and thinking

## Domains

**Physical**

Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
Develops own rhythm in feeding, sleeping, and eliminating	Adapt schedule to baby's rhythms as much as possible.
Grows rapidly; doubles birth weight at six months	Supply adequate food.
Gains early control of eye movement	Supply visual stimuli such as mobiles and bright colors.
Develops motor control in orderly sequence: balances head, rolls over, pulls self to sitting position, and briefly sits up alone	Exercise baby's arms and legs during bathing and changing.
Begins to grasp objects	Let baby grasp your finger as you pull him/her.

<b>Emotional</b>	Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
	Shows excitement through waving arms, kicking, and wiggling; shows pleasure in anticipation of being fed or picked up	Hold child's arms and legs and help the child move; smile back to acknowledge the child's anticipation.
	Expresses distress through crying in different ways when cold, wet, or hungry	Learn to “read” the different cries and offer consistent responses, e.g., when you offer food, the child begins to feed; don't be afraid of “spoiling” the infant. (Crying is the only way an infant has to express needs.)
	Fears loud or unexpected noises and sudden movements; strange objects, situations, or persons; and pain	Respond to the child's fears by talking in a calm manner and by picking up and cuddling the child.

<b>Social</b>	Discriminates primary caregiver (usually mother) from others and is more responsive to that person	Do not change primary caregiver before six months.
	Imitates movements, gazes at faces, and smiles to be friendly	Play pat-a-cake and peek-a-boo with baby.
	Likes to be played with, tickled, and jostled	Bounce the child on your knees.
	Smiles at self in mirror	Provide a mirror for gazing.

<b>Mental</b>	Learns through senses (sounds of rattles, feelings of warmth, etc.)	Provide objects to see, hear, and grasp. It is especially important to hold, cuddle, and touch newborns.
	Coos and vocalizes spontaneously; babbles in nonsense syllables	Talk and sing to the child a great deal, repeating many words (not just sounds).

## **Indicators Related to Developmental Lag or Potential Trauma**

Feeding problems: rejection of breast or bottle; excessive vomiting, colic, or diarrhea that results in weight loss

Inability to see or hear

Inconsolable crying

Developmental regression: unresponsiveness; failure to smile, show pleasure, or cuddle; rejection of others' efforts to provide comfort

Inability to track caregivers' eyes over time

Loud noise sensitivity and heightened startle response



# Six Months to One Year

## Developmental Tasks

Learning to trust others and be secure in the world

Improving muscle coordination and becoming mobile

Acquiring increased control of head, hands, fingers, legs, etc., as the nervous system continues to develop

Learning spatial concepts (up, down, near, far) and how to manipulate and move in the surrounding environment

Learning to adjust to short periods of separation from the primary caregiver



## What's Happening in the Brain?

During this stage, the child's brain is:

- ❖ Rapidly developing, especially the higher level cerebral cortex, which influences fine motor skills like a pincer grasp, as well as color vision, attachment, and the motor pathways
- ❖ Sensitive to nutrition—when infants do not receive adequate protein and calories in their diet, their physical and mental health is affected
- ❖ “Wired” to learn all the languages in the world; however, babies between 6 and 12 months now prefer the sounds of the language(s) spoken by their caregivers

**Domains**

**Physical**

Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
From 8 months, begins to crawl; from 9 months, may begin to walk	Provide experiences that involve arm and leg exercise, but be sure dangerous objects are out of reach.
Learns to let go of objects with hands	Playing at “dropping things” helps the child learn about the physical world, so be patient about picking things up and enjoy the game.
Puts everything into his/her mouth	Provide child with opportunity to use hands and fingers (finger foods, water play, toys, etc.).
Begins teething	Be especially patient with child's crankiness; provide things on which to chew.
Is physically unable to control bowels	Do not attempt to potty train at this time.

**Emotional**

Needs to feel sure that someone will always take care of him/her	Consistently meet the child's needs related to hunger, cleanliness, warmth, sensory stimulation, being held, and interacting with an adult (and don't listen to those who claim you will “spoil” him/her by doing so).
Becomes unhappy when mother or primary caregiver leaves	Expect fussiness during mother or primary caregiver's absence; provide comfort.
Draws away from strangers	Proceed slowly in introducing the child to strangers.
Needs to be held and cuddled with warmth and love	Generously provide physical comforts. (No baby was ever “spoiled” by too much physical contact. If you don't agree, watch puppies or kittens nestle near their mothers; they quickly become independent in caring for themselves.)

**Social**

Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
Finds mother (or primary caregiver) extremely important	Provide consistent care by one person.
"Talks" to others, using babbling sounds	Talk to the child (using simple words), and both verbally and nonverbally acknowledge and respond to the child's efforts at communication.
Starts to imitate behaviors of others	Model the behaviors you want the child to copy.
Eating becomes a major source of interaction with the world	Provide a diet varied in color and texture. When able to sit upright, include the infant at the table at family meal time in a high chair. Be sure to strap child in securely.
Does not "play nicely" with other infants, but will instead poke, pull, and push	Don't expect the child to play well with others, because other children merely appear as objects or toys and not as equal human beings.

**Mental**

Needs adequate nutrition to support brain and body development	Continue to breast or bottle feed; discuss with pediatrician when it is appropriate to offer healthy solid food choices. Provide a diet varied in color and texture.
Learns through the physical senses, especially by way of the mouth	Provide toys and games that involve and stimulate all five senses.
Likes to put things in and take things out of mouth, cupboards, boxes, etc.	Keep toys with loose parts and other small objects away from the child.
Likes to repeat the same behaviors, but also likes to see new things	Repeat words and favorite activities and begin to introduce the child to new activities (grocery shopping, trips to the park, etc.).
Likes to hear objects named and begins to understand familiar words ("eat," "ma-ma," "bye-bye," "doggie")	Say the names of objects as the child sees or uses them, and begin to look at very simple picture books with the child.
May not speak until age one or later	Don't be overly concerned when a child doesn't talk quite as soon as others.

## **Indicators Related to Developmental Lag or Potential Trauma**

### Seizures

Crying frequently and easily

Passivity; withdrawal; lack of initiative; lack of response to stimulating people, toys, and pets

(Note: Such problems are often interrelated: the passive child is less likely to develop the skills needed to explore the world, such as climbing and crawling, and the resulting limited experience may manifest itself in slow learning and inability to take risks.)

Rejecting contact/avoiding being touched



# One to Two Years

## Developmental Tasks

Discovering and establishing a distinct sense of self through continuous exploration of the world

Developing communication skills and experiencing the responsiveness of others

Learning to use memory and acquiring the basics of self-control



## What's Happening in the Brain?

During this stage, the child's brain:

- ❖ Builds neural pathways by repeating and practicing tasks (e.g., holding a spoon, changing from crawling to walking)
- ❖ Has matured enough to recall actions or events that occurred earlier in the day (i.e., has memories)
- ❖ Is focused on learning language
- ❖ Is vulnerable to permanent changes through exposure to toxins such as lead or stressors such as domestic violence in the home
- ❖ Needs high levels of fat in diet (from breastfeeding, formula, or whole milk after age one) for continued growth

## Domains

<b>Physical</b>	<b>Typical Characteristics</b>	<b>Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting</b>
	<p>Begins to walk, creep up and down stairs, climb on furniture, etc.</p> <p>Enjoys pushing and pulling things</p>	<p>Provide large, safe spaces for exercising arms and legs, and teach the child how to get down from furniture, stairs, etc.</p> <p>Provide push-and-pull toys, which aid the child in learning to balance self and objects.</p>

continued →

**Physical**

Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
Is able to stack two or three blocks, likes to take things apart, and likes to put things in and take things out of cupboards, mouth, boxes, etc.	Provide toys or games that can be stacked, taken apart, nested or put into each other, squeezed, pulled, etc., and which are clean and not sharp or small enough to swallow.
Takes off pull-on clothing	Allow the child to try to dress and undress him/herself.
Begins to feed self with a spoon and can hold a cup	Allow the child to feed him/herself food that can be easily eaten (wearing a bib and with a cloth under the high chair, which should have a stable footing).
Is still unable to control bowels	Do not try to potty-train yet.

**Emotional**

Needs the warmth, security, and attentions of a special adult	A special, caring adult should regularly look after the child.
Is learning to trust and needs to know that someone will provide care and meet needs	Respond to the needs of the child consistently and with sensitivity.
Sucks thumb, a behavior that peaks at around 18 months	Ignore thumb sucking, as drawing attention to it may encourage the behavior.
May have many temper tantrums	Do not be rigid and demand compliance all the time; do not give in to the child's demands, but do not discipline, as the child is expressing him/herself the only way he/she knows how.
Is generally in a happy mood	Enjoy the child's behavior and keep up the good work!
May become angry when others interfere with certain activities	Accept the child's reaction as normal and healthy, and not as a threat to your authority; if necessary, modify the environment to reduce the need to interfere in the child's activities.
May become frustrated because of an inability to put wishes into words	Be patient in trying to interpret/understand the child's wishes.

**Social**

Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
Enjoys interaction with familiar adults	Include the child in activities (as appropriate).
Copies adult behaviors	Be sure to be a good role model!
Begins to be demanding, assertive, and independent	Establish clear boundaries necessary to ensure child's safety; understand that boundaries help the child test limits and divide the world into manageable segments.
Still finds mother (or primary caregiver) very important	Ensure that a special person provides most of the care.
Waves "bye-bye"	Wave back.
Plays alone but does not play well with others the same age	Be sure an adult is close by to observe all the child's activities.
Is possessive of own things	Don't force the child to share, since sharing can be learned later.

**Mental**

Learns through the physical senses	Provide toys and play games involving different textures, colors, and shapes (pots, pans, boxes, blocks, etc.). Model pretend play with these objects.  Caution: Stimulation in the environment, while important, must also be balanced. Many babies will "turn off" (i.e., withdraw or cry) if they are overstimulated.
Is curious, likes to explore, and pokes fingers into holes	Allow the child to explore, but first be sure the area is safe.
Is able to name some common objects	Talk to the child often, saying the names of objects seen and used and discussing activities such as bathing and getting dressed.
Uses one-word sentences ("No," "Go," "Down," "Bye-Bye"); points to and names body parts and familiar objects	Teach the names of body parts and familiar objects; tell stories, read picture books, and repeat familiar nursery rhymes.
Is able to understand simple directions	Give simple, clear directions and praise the child when the directions are followed.
Begins to enjoy simple songs and rhymes	Provide rhythmic songs that are repetitive and low in key.
Demonstrates limited capacity for decision making	Offer simple choices: "Banana or blueberries?"

**Typical Characteristics**

**Suggested Behaviors  
for Effective Parenting**

Is inwardly sensitive to adult approval and disapproval despite tantrums and bursts of anger

Acknowledge behaviors that you find pleasing or acceptable; when expressing disapproval be sensitive and mild-mannered but also firm and consistent.

**Indicators Related to Developmental Lag or Potential Trauma**

Overly withdrawn, passive, and/or fearful

Obsessive head banging, finger sucking, and/or rocking

Lack of interest in objects, environment, or play

Excessive temper tantrums: hitting, biting, and hyperventilating and/or constipation or smearing of feces (stool) as an expression of anger

Easily startled

Low weight, poor appetite, and/or digestive issues

Continuous screaming or crying

# Two to Three Years

## Developmental Tasks

Discovering and establishing a positive, distinct self through continuous exploration of the world

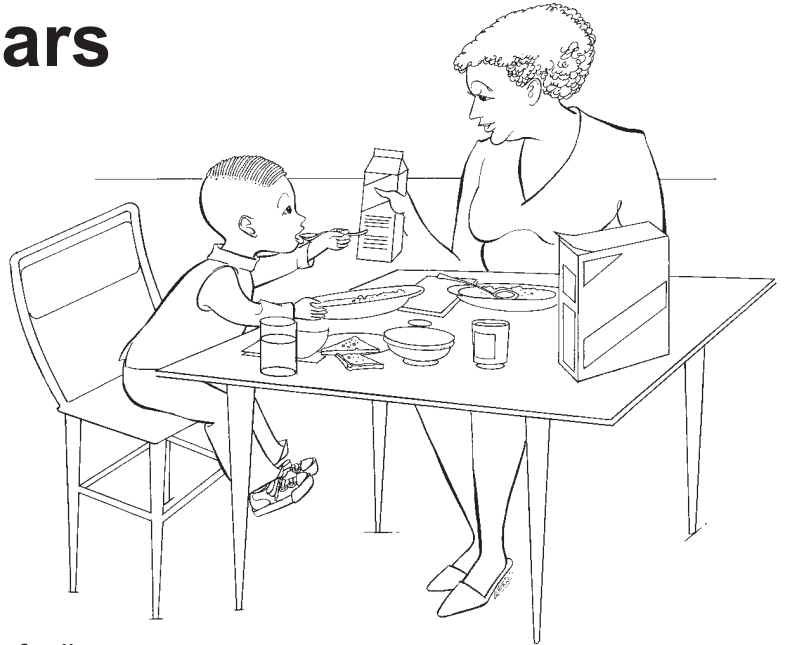
Developing communication skills and experiencing the responsiveness of others

Using memory and acquiring the basics of self-control

Learning to separate thinking from feeling through experiencing opportunities to make choices

Becoming aware of limits

Creating personal solutions to simple problems (choosing foods, clothes, activities, etc.)



## What's Happening in the Brain?

During this stage, the child's brain:

- ❖ Strengthens its motor circuits so walking, eating, climbing, pinching, jumping, and zipping all improve.
- ❖ Begins problem solving.
- ❖ Remains open and flexible to learning other languages because the language center is still so active.

**Domains**

	<b>Typical Characteristics</b>	<b>Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting</b>
<b>Physical</b>	Runs, kicks, climbs, throws a ball, jumps, pulls, pushes, etc.; enjoys rough-and-tumble play	Provide lots of room and many active experiences that promote use of arms and legs.
	Is increasingly able to manipulate small objects with hands; likes to scribble; eats easily with a spoon; helps to dress self; and can build a tower of 6 to 7 blocks	Provide activities that involve the use of fingers: playing with clay, blocks, and finger-paint; using large crayons and pickup and stacking toys; dressing self and dolls.
	Begins to control bowels, with bladder control occurring slightly later	Gradually start toilet training; consult pediatrician, nurse, or other professional if unsure how to begin.
<b>Emotional</b>	Needs to develop a sense of self and to do some things for him/herself; enjoys praise	Provide simple experiences in which the child can succeed; praise often.
	Tests his/her powers; says “No!” often; shows lots of emotion: laughs, squeals, throws temper tantrums, cries violently	Be firm in following through with your instructions, but do not discipline the child for expressing feelings and showing independence as s/he is not deliberately being “bad” but cannot control feelings until they have been expressed.
	Fears loud noises, quick moves, large animals, and departure of mother (or primary caregiver)	Avoid sudden situations involving such fears; do not force or make fun of the child.

**Social**

Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
Still considers the mother (or primary caregiver) very important; does not like strangers	Don't force child to relate to strangers.
Imitates and attempts to participate in adult behaviors such as washing dishes, mopping floors, applying make-up	Allow the child time to explore and begin to do things for him/herself.
Is able to participate in activities (such as listening to a story) with others	Provide brief experiences with other children, but don't expect much equal interaction.

**Mental**

Continues to learn through senses; is still very curious	Provide sensory experiences; allow the child opportunities to explore (with limited "no-no's").
Has a short attention span	Don't make the child do one thing for more than a few minutes. When the child becomes frustrated by a task, assist the child just as much as they need to accomplish the task.
Uses three- to four-word sentences	Talk with the child, and provide simple explanations when questions are asked.
Begins to sing simple songs and make rhymes	Provide low-key, rhythmic songs and rhymes to enjoy and learn.
Enjoys (sometimes demands) consistent repetition of activities and experiences, e.g., has a bedtime routine.	Accept the need for ritual. Tell the same stories and sing the same songs over and over as long as the child desires it.

**Moral**

Usually appears self-reliant and wants to be good but is not yet mature enough to be able to carry out most promises	Accept the child's limited ability to carry out promises; understand that noncompliance is not deliberate, just the child's way of expressing independence.
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## **Indicators Related to Developmental Lag or Potential Trauma**

Overly withdrawn, passive, and/or fearful

Obsessive head banging, finger sucking, and/or rocking

Lack of interest in objects, environment, or play

Excessive temper tantrums: uncontrollable hitting, biting, and hyperventilating and/or constipation or smearing of feces (stool) as an expression of anger

Excessive stubbornness and/or consistent overreaction to reasonable limits

Weak sense of positive, distinct self (shown as not making choices, meekly accepting the impositions of others, etc.)

Memory problems

Regressive behaviors (such as thumb sucking that stopped a year ago or not speaking anymore)



# Three to Four Years

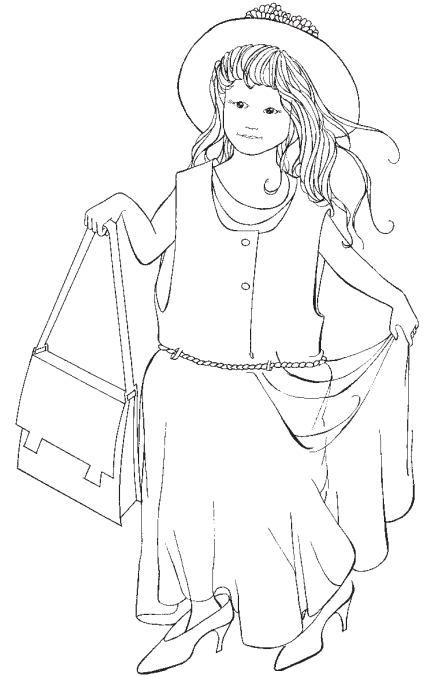
## Developmental Tasks

Learning to distinguish between reality and fantasy

Becoming comfortable with personal sexual identity

Learning to make connections and distinctions between feelings, thoughts, and actions

Learning to solve problems by initiating and creating



## What's Happening in the Brain?

During this stage, the child's brain:

- ❖ Has increased to 80% of its adult weight
- ❖ Is refining neural connections made through regular stimulation. Connections used frequently will grow stronger, while connections will weaken if used infrequently (e.g., a child exposed to English and Spanish at home is more apt to be bilingual than a child only exposed to English at home and Spanish at school).

## Domains

**Physical**

Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
Runs, jumps, and begins to climb ladders; may start to ride tricycles; tries anything; is very active; tends to wander away	Carefully supervise physical activities; set necessary limits.
Scribbles in circles; likes to play with mud, sand, finger paints, etc.; may begin to put together simple puzzles and construction toys	Provide materials and activities to develop coordination (sand, crayons, paint, puzzles).
Dresses him/herself fairly well, but still cannot tie shoes	Provide opportunities for child to select clothing and dress him/herself.

continued →

	Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
<b>Physical</b>	Is able to feed self with a spoon or fork	Let the child feed him/herself.
	Takes care of toilet needs more independently; stays dry all day (but perhaps not all night); becomes very interested in his/her body and how it works	Label all body parts without judgment, and answer questions about body functions simply and honestly.

<b>Emotional</b>	Is sensitive about the feelings of others toward him/herself	Develop a warm relationship with the child, and demonstrate love for and confidence in the child through words and actions.
	Is developing some independence and self-reliance	Encourage independent activities.
	May have fear of unusual people, the dark, animals, etc.	Don't make fun of the child, provide a night light, and never force the child to participate in activities which are frightening to the child.
	Is anxious to please adults and is dependent on their approval, love, and praise	Give approval through facial expressions, gestures, and verbal responses; emphasize the family's love for the child and avoid negative remarks about him/her. (Note: Some temporary regression and jealousy are common when a new baby arrives.)
	May strike out emotionally at situations or persons when having troublesome feelings	Offer love, understanding, and patience; help the child work with and understand his/her emotions.

<b>Social</b>	<b>Typical Characteristics</b>	<b>Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting</b>
	Mother (or primary caregiver) is still very important, but the child is able to leave her for short periods	Express interest in what the child has been doing while away from caregiver(s).
	Imitates adults and begins to notice differences in the ways that men and women act	Model the behaviors you want the child to copy, since at the start of gender role development the child will imitate adults.
	Starts to be more interested in others and begins group play, though groups are not well formed; likes company, but is not ready for games or competition	Provide enough toys/materials so that several children can use them together; as necessary, help the child find socially acceptable ways of relating to others.

<b>Mental</b>	Continues to learn through the physical senses	Provide many sensory experiences (sand, water, pictures).
	Uses imagination a lot; starts dramatic play and role playing; likes to play grown-up roles (Mommy, Daddy, fire-fighter, astronaut, superhero, etc.)	Provide props for dramatic play (old clothes, shoes, make-up).
	Begins to observe and recognize cause-and-effect relationships	Point out and explain common cause-and-effect relationships (how rain helps flowers grow, how dropping a glass makes it break, how hitting hurts a person, etc.).
	Is curious and inquisitive	Explain things in terms understandable to the child, answer questions honestly, and help the child put feelings and ideas to work.
	Shows interest in words and writing	Say nursery rhymes and do finger plays together. Encourage four-year-olds to tell stories to younger children and expose child to other languages.

Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
Begins to know right from wrong	Provide clear limits and enforce them consistently (but not harshly).
Finds others' opinions of him/herself to be important	Praise the child whenever you can do so honestly; focus on specific behavior(s) and offer clear, specific feedback. (Say: "You ate all the peas, and peas are good for you," or "That drawing has such wonderful, bright colors," instead of "I like that drawing.")
Is more self-controlled and less aggressive	Notice and reinforce instances of self-control (the ability to wait, to share belongings, etc.).
Uses extreme verbal threats ("I'll kill you!") without understanding the full implications	Don't take threats personally or too seriously.

**Indicators Related to Developmental Lag or Potential Trauma**

Excessive fears (especially of adults and strangers) and/or extreme separation anxiety

Shyness and/or lack of interest in others; not playing

Threatening or bullying peers

Excessively repetitive behaviors (especially around food)

Persistent speech problems

Bedwetting; toileting problems

Imitating abusive or upsetting behaviors witnessed in adults, especially during play (e.g., hitting dolls, drug play, etc.)

Regular sleep disturbances including night terrors and nightmares

# Four to Five Years

## Developmental Tasks

Learning to distinguish between reality and fantasy

Becoming comfortable with personal sexual identity

Learning to make connections and distinctions between feelings, thoughts, and actions

Learning to solve problems by initiating and creating



## What's Happening in the Brain?

During this stage, a child's brain benefits from make-believe play. This type of play builds important pathways in the brain and allows children to:

- ❖ Build the foundation for abstract thinking by creating symbols (e.g., by using a hairbrush as a microphone)
- ❖ Develop empathy by putting themselves in others' shoes (e.g., how do teachers or doctors feel, think, and act?)
- ❖ Practice categorization and sorting skills (e.g., how many "vegetables" should go into the "soup"?)

## Domains

	Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
<b>Physical</b>	Is very active, consistently "on the go," and sometimes physically aggressive	Provide plenty of play space (both indoors and outside) and (as child tires easily) adequate rest periods.
	Has rapid muscle growth	Provide adequate nutrition (especially ample protein).

	<b>Typical Characteristics</b>	<b>Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting</b>
<b>Emotional</b>	Exhibits a great deal of name calling; can be demanding and/or threatening	Maintain a sense of humor.
	Is often bossy, demanding, and aggressive; goes to extremes (bossy, then shy); frequently whines, cries, and complains	Provide outlets for emotional expression through talking, physical activity, and creative outlets.
	Often “tests” others to see who can be controlled	Establish limits and then adhere to them.
	Is frequently boastful, especially about him/herself and family	Provide opportunities for talking about him or herself and family.
	Has growing confidence in him/herself and world	Strengthen positive self-esteem by pointing out the things child can do for him/herself.
	Is beginning to develop some feelings of insecurity	Assure the child that she or he is loved.

<b>Social</b>	Really needs to play with others; will be selective about playmates when playing in groups and often has stormy relationships	Ensure the child is involved in a preschool, playgroup, or Head Start program; if that is not possible, encourage group play, but don't be surprised by disagreements or negative behaviors toward certain playmates.
	Has good imagination and likes to imitate adult activities	Allow child to participate in adult activities that s/he can manage (dusting, simple cooking, feeding pets, etc.).
	Relies less on physical aggression and is learning to share, accept rules, and take turns	Expect the child to assume some responsibilities and follow simple rules (such as taking turns).

**Mental**

Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
Has large vocabulary (1,500 to 2,000 words), and is fascinated by words and silly sounds	Introduce new, interesting “big” words and tell stories with the child as the main character; play word games.
Recognizes familiar words in simple books or signs (e.g., STOP sign), may be able to print own name, begins to count things	Read aloud each day and encourage the child to look at books. Provide paper and crayons to encourage creativity, and display the child’s art. Count out loud.
Likes to shock adults with “bathroom” language	Ignore such language, since paying attention to it only reinforces it.
Is continuously curious; talks all the time and asks lots of questions	Answer questions patiently.
Experiences nightmares	<p>Accept the fright as real, and try to help the child gain power over the experience (by providing a “magic” light to freeze the monsters, etc.).</p> <p>Caution: If the child has persistent sleep disturbances with regular nightmares, consult your pediatrician, as this may be an indicator of potential lag or trauma.</p>
Has imaginary friends and an active fantasy life	Don't make fun of the child (or underestimate the importance of fantasy in the child's life).

**Moral**

Is becoming aware of right and wrong; usually has the desire to do right, but may blame others for personal wrongdoing(s)	Help the child learn to be responsible and discover the consequences of his/her behavior(s); be aware of your feelings and try to understand the child's perspective.
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## **Indicators Related to Developmental Lag or Potential Trauma**

Excessive fears (especially of adults and strangers) and/or extreme separation anxiety

Shyness and/or lack of interest in others; not playing

Threatening or bullying peers

Excessively repetitive behaviors (especially around food)

Persistent speech problems

Bedwetting; toileting problems

Imitating abusive or upsetting behaviors witnessed in adults, especially during play (e.g., hitting dolls, drug play, etc.)

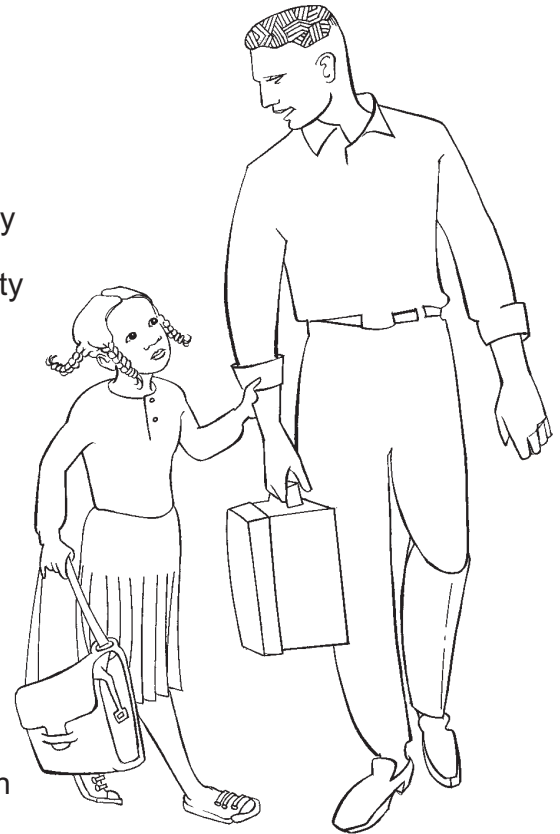
Regular sleep disturbances including night terrors and nightmares



# Five to Six Years

## Developmental Tasks

- Learning to distinguish between reality and fantasy
- Becoming comfortable with personal sexual identity
- Learning to make connections and distinctions between feelings, thoughts, and actions
- Learning to solve problems by initiating and creating



## What's Happening in the Brain?

During this stage, the child's brain:

- ❖ Is nearing adult volume and size
- ❖ Is in the middle of a critical growth period, which is why school districts routinely screen children entering kindergarten to understand their mental, social, and emotional development
- ❖ Should be primed for reading in this and the coming year, as the language center continues to help children make meaning of their world

## Domains

Physical

Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
Is able to dress and undress him/herself	Allow independence in getting dressed/undressed.
May be farsighted, a common condition that often causes eye/hand coordination problems	Accept awkwardness as a normal condition at this stage; if the problem persists, have the child's eyes examined.
Is able to care for personal toilet needs independently	Encourage hygienic behaviors (washing hands, etc.).

continued →

Physical	Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
	<p>Prefers plain cooking but accepts wider choice of foods; may have increased appetite</p>	<p>Do not force-feed the child. Rather, offer appealing varieties of food in adequate amounts. Use natural rewards and limited choices to encourage child to eat, e.g., “You can have dessert when you eat the vegetables on your plate” or “Do you want to eat the chicken or the beans?”</p>

Social	<p>May fear the mother (or primary caregiver) won't return (with mother/primary caregiver still being the center of his/her world)</p>	<p>Avoid leaving until the child is prepared for the departure and later return of mother or primary caregiver.</p>
	<p>Copies adults and enjoys their praise</p>	<p>Model appropriate behaviors and provide lots of praise and reassurance.</p>
	<p>Plays with other boys and girls; is calm, friendly, and not too demanding in relations with others; is able to play with one child or a group of children (though prefers members of the same sex)</p>	<p>Rejoice and provide opportunities for group play!</p>
	<p>Enjoys conversation during meals</p>	<p>Allow and respond to child-initiated conversation.</p>
	<p>Knows differences between the sexes and becomes more modest</p>	<p>Don't shame child for interest in sexual differences or for touching him/herself.</p>
	<p>Is interested in where babies come from</p>	<p>Offer a simple, accurate explanation.</p>
	<p>May develop nausea and start vomiting to avoid going to school (when school is not liked)</p>	<p>Encourage the child to find enjoyable activities at school.</p>
	<p>Is experiencing an age of conformity and is critical of those who do not conform</p>	<p>Help the child learn tolerance and the value of individual differences.</p>

	Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
<b>Emotional</b>	In general, is reliable and well-adjusted	Be grateful!
	May show some fear of dark, falling, dogs, or bodily harm (though this is not a particularly fearful age)	Don't dismiss fears as unimportant.
	If tired, nervous, or upset, may exhibit the following behaviors: nail biting, eye blinking, throat clearing, sniffing, nose twitching, and/or thumb sucking	Try not to appear overly concerned, since an increase in nervous habits is temporary and normal; deal with the cause of the tension rather than the habit exhibited (by structuring the child's time to include quiet play and rest, reading the child a story, etc.).
	Is concerned with pleasing adults	Show your love by recognizing positive behaviors.
	Is easily embarrassed	Be sensitive about situations that may be embarrassing and help the child avoid them.
<b>Mental</b>	May stutter if tired or nervous; may lisp	Do not emphasize any language disturbance, since it is probably only temporary.
	Tries only what s/he can accomplish; will follow instructions and accept supervision	Reinforce mastered skills and provide opportunities to be successful in new, simple activities.
	Knows colors, numbers, etc.; may be able to print a few letters and possibly learn to read a little independently	Encourage identification of colors and numbers, as well as printing of own name and short names of favorite people and objects. Introduce words when reading to child, e.g., explain that the letters D-O-G make up the word "dog" and see if the child can find the word in a story you are reading.
	Likes to explore all kinds of new and different activities, e.g., enjoys a different playground, a new book, a new joke, or a new hands-on game.	Patiently provide as many new learning experiences and challenges as possible; these are like "nutrients" that build the brain's connections and help it grow.
	Can identify appearance and significance of various coins	Provide opportunities for child to make change (in restaurants, stores); give the child a piggy bank.

Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
Is interested in being good, but may tell untruths or blame others for personal wrongdoings because of intense desire to please and do right	Help the child learn to accept responsibility for personal actions in a positive, caring manner. Do not be shocked by untruthfulness; instead gently help the child understand the importance of honesty.
Wants to do what s/he believes is right and avoid doing what is wrong	Acknowledge attempt to act in accordance with personal beliefs, and don't discipline him/her for the inability to behave properly at all times.

**Indicators Related to Developmental Lag or Potential Trauma**

- Excessive or specific fears (especially of adults and strangers) and/or extreme separation anxiety
- Shyness and/or lack of interest in others; not playing
- Threatening or bullying peers
- Excessively repetitive behaviors (especially around food or toileting)
- Persistent speech problems
- Bedwetting; toileting problems
- Persistent concern for safety, including self and others
- Extreme difficulty concentrating in school
- Attention seeking, emotional swings

# Six to Seven Years

## Developmental Tasks

Learning to distinguish between reality and fantasy

Becoming comfortable with personal sexual identity

Learning to make connections and distinctions between feelings, thoughts, and actions

Learning to solve problems by initiating and creating



## What's Happening in the Brain?

During this stage, the child's brain:

- ❖ Continues refinement linked to motor skills, which leads to better handwriting
- ❖ Expands its capacity for “working memory,” meaning short-term memories are made and are accessible for recall (this helps with reading, among other things)
- ❖ Intensifies its focus on concrete thinking as children shift from make-believe play to real-world concerns

## Domains

**Physical**

Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
Is vigorous, full of energy, and generally restless (foot tapping, wiggling, inability to sit still)	Provide opportunities for a variety of physical activities.
Has growth spurts; may be clumsy due to poor coordination and/or be in an “ugly duckling” stage	Don't point out or emphasize clumsiness or changes in appearance.
May occasionally wet or soil him/herself when upset or excited	Accept accidents calmly and avoid embarrassing the child.

continued →

**Physical**

Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
Has marked awareness of sexual differences; may want to look at bodies of opposite sex (“playing doctor,” “playing house,” etc.); touches and plays with genitals less frequently; will accept the idea that a baby grows in the womb	Calmly give simple, honest answers to any questions.
Has unpredictable preferences and strong refusals; often develops a passion for peanut butter	Provide balanced meals, but don't be overly concerned with child's preferences or passions.
Eats with fingers and talks with mouth full	Don't overreact; set a good example.
Suffers more colds, sore throats, and other illnesses (common because of exposure at school)	Be aware of disease symptoms, and remember that crankiness may precede an illness; provide plenty of rest and balanced meals.

**Emotional**

Feels insecure as a result of a drive toward independence	Provide adequate time, opportunities, and freedom to practice being independent.
Finds it difficult to accept criticism, blame, or punishment	Be patient and understanding.
Is center of own world and tends to be boastful	Accept apparent selfishness as common at this stage.
Is generally rigid, negative, demanding, unadaptable, and slow to respond; exhibits violent extremes, with tantrums reappearing	Set reasonable limits, provide suitable explanations for them, and help the child keep within the limits.
Often makes accusations that others are “cheating” (when not the winner at games, etc.)	Discourage games that designate a winner and provide alternate activities.

**Social**

Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
May blame mother for anything that goes wrong (boys identifying strongly with father)	Provide consistent, caring responses to child's blame or over-identification with any caregiver.
Doesn't like being kissed in public (especially boys)	Be sensitive about preferences and act accordingly.
Identifies with adults outside the family (teacher, neighbors, etc.)	Accept such identification as part of normal development.
May have unstable friendships and be unkind to peers; is a tattletale	Provide guidance with regard to making and keeping friends.
Must be "the winner," and may "change the rules" to fit own needs; may have no group loyalty	Help him/her to be a good loser.
May develop problems in school if expectations are too high; has trouble concentrating; may fool around, whisper, or bother other children	Keep in touch with the school, and be alert for feelings of frustration and failure in the child.
Mealtimes may become difficult because perpetual activity, with breakfast commonly the most difficult meal	Allow extra time for breakfast.

**Mental**

The child's brain is "like a sponge"	If at all possible, support learning a second language. Also support memorization, recall, and number problems by helping the child learn his or her phone number and address.
May develop stuttering, especially when under stress	Remember that language disturbances are temporary and may disappear of their own accord.
Wants "all of everything" and finds it difficult to make choices	Provide opportunities for making decisions, but limit choices to two or three.
Begins to have organized, continuous memories; most children learn to read and write (although some do not until after age seven)	Promote reading and writing (encourage letters to relatives and friends, provide opportunities to create stories, etc.).

<b>Moral</b>	<b>Typical Characteristics</b>	<b>Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting</b>
	Is very concerned with personal behavior, particularly as it affects family and friends; sometimes blames others for own wrongdoings	Teach the child to be concerned and responsible for personal behavior(s), and assure the child that everyone makes mistakes.

### **Indicators Related to Developmental Lag or Potential Trauma**

Excessive fears (especially of adults and strangers) and/or extreme separation anxiety

Shyness and/or lack of interest in others; not playing

Threatening or bullying peers

Excessively repetitive behaviors (especially around food)

Persistent speech problems

Bedwetting; toileting problems

Persistent concern for safety, including self and others

Extreme difficulty concentrating in school

Reversion to younger behaviors, emotional swings, attention seeking



# Seven to Eight Years

## Developmental Tasks

Acquiring a sense of accomplishment centered on achieving greater physical strength and self-control

Increasing own ability to learn and apply skills, deal with peers, and engage in competition

Developing and testing personal values and beliefs that will guide present and future behaviors



## What's Happening in the Brain?

During this stage, the child's brain:

- ❖ Grows enormously in the frontal and temporal lobes, which leads to improved cognitive functions (e.g., memorization, math, thinking about the concrete world instead of make-believe) and better control of emotions
- ❖ Increases its capacity for moral reasoning—children can generally distinguish between right and wrong and have some understanding of consequences

## Domains

Physical

Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
Drives self until exhausted	Assist child in changing activities to avoid complete exhaustion; be aware of the child's physical limits and teach the child to be aware of them as well.
May frequently pout	Be patient, as the child is not necessarily unhappy or dissatisfied but is only going through a stage.
Shows well-established hand/eye coordination and is likely to be more interested in painting and drawing	Provide opportunities and materials for drawing and painting.
May have minor accidents	Ensure a safe environment; provide reassurance while bandaging cuts and scrapes.

continued →

	Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
<b>Physical</b>	Is less interested in sex play and experimentation; may be very excited about new baby in family	Encourage child-infant relationship (if applicable).
	Has fewer illnesses, but may have colds of long duration; appetite decreases	Provide rest and treatment as needed.
	May develop nervous habits or assume awkward positions (sitting upside down on couch, constant foot tapping, etc.)	Be patient with annoying habits, and don't draw attention to any awkwardness.
<b>Emotional</b>	May complain a lot ("Nobody likes me," "I'm going to run away," etc.)	Provide reasonable sympathy.
	May not respond promptly or hear directions; may forget and/or be easily distracted	Remind and check as necessary.
	May withdraw or not interact with others (in an attempt to build sense of self)	Provide personal support and reassurance.
<b>Social</b>	Will avoid and withdraw from adults; has strong emotional responses to teacher and may complain that teacher is unfair or mean	Show understanding and concern.
	Enjoys/wants more responsibility and independence; is often concerned about "doing well"	Assign responsibilities and tasks that can be carried out successfully, and then praise child's efforts and accomplishments; help the child accept his/her own performance without negative judgment.
	Participates in loosely organized group play	Encourage and provide opportunities for group activities.

continued →

<b>Social</b>	<b>Typical Characteristics</b>	<b>Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting</b>
	Is concerned with self (may fear being late and/or having trouble on the playground) and may complain about the reactions of others (“The other kids are cheating!” or “Teacher picks on me!”)	Help child evaluate his/her perceptions of the behaviors of others.
	May use aggression as a means of solving problems	Attempt to prevent conflicts before they erupt.
	Girls play with girls/boys play with boys	Accept such behavior as typical of this stage.

<b>Mental</b>		
	Uses reflective, serious thinking and becomes able to solve increasingly complex problems, using logical thought processes; is eager for learning	Ask many thought-provoking questions; stimulate thinking with open-ended stories, riddles, and thinking games; provide opportunities for discussions about decision making and selecting what he/she would do in particular situations.
	Enjoys hobbies and skills-based activities; likes to collect things and talk about personal projects, writings, and drawings	Encourage the pursuit of hobbies and interests.
	Favors reality over fantasy	Provide biographies to read, and suggest other books with realistic characters, plots, and settings.

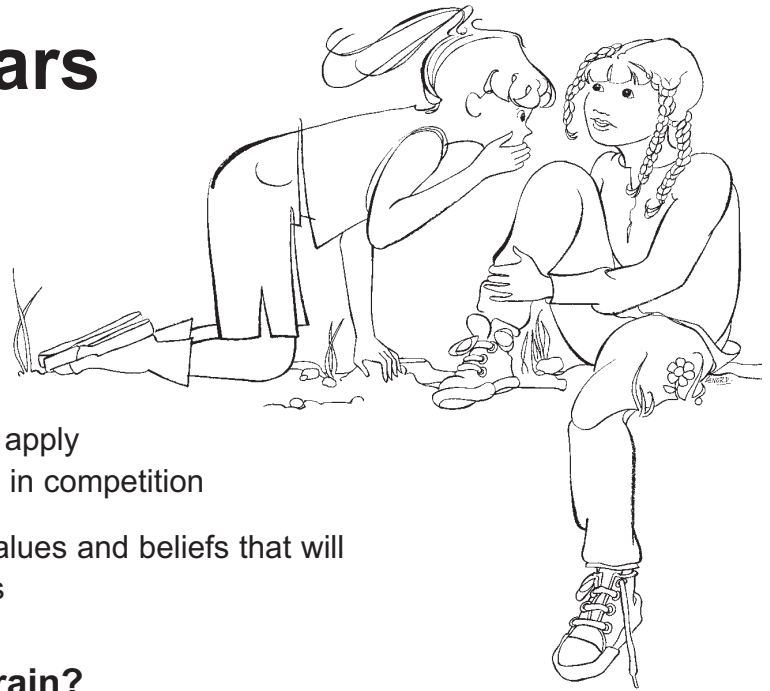
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	<b>Typical Characteristics</b>	<b>Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting</b>
<b>Mental</b>	<p>Understands basic mathematical concepts such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computing the number of objects in a group</li> <li>• Knowing that a particular number of objects has a fixed value despite the size or nature of those objects</li> <li>• Grasping relative size and being able to sort objects by size and shape</li> <li>• Following a sequence of two- and three-step commands</li> <li>• Performing simple addition and subtraction computations</li> </ul>	<p>Pay attention to the child's progress with math concepts and create opportunities to reinforce these concepts, e.g., have the child count the number of boxes of cereal on the shelf, remove one, then ask the child to compute the remainder. Seek help from his or her school if the child is having a hard time with simple computations or with following word problems.</p>
<b>Moral</b>	<p>May experience guilt and shame</p>	<p>Acknowledge and support the child's standards, discuss the reasonableness of personal expectations, and encourage self-forgiveness; if/when negative behaviors occur, work on changing the behavior but focus on the worth of the child rather than the behavior itself.</p>

### **Indicators Related to Developmental Lag or Potential Trauma**

- Excessive concerns about competition and performance (especially in school)
- Extreme difficulty concentrating in school
- Physical symptoms (headaches, nervous stomach, ulcers, nervous tics, bedwetting, etc.)
- Procrastination (unconcern with completion of tasks)
- Overdependence on caregivers for age-appropriate tasks (combing hair, going to the store, tying shoes, finding a restroom in a restaurant, etc.)
- Social isolation and lack of friends and involvements; few interests
- Inappropriate relationships with "older" people (teenagers)
- Stealing, pathological lying, fire-setting, or other reckless or dangerous behavior

# Eight to Nine Years



## Developmental Tasks

Acquiring a sense of accomplishment centered on achieving greater physical strength and self-control

Increasing own ability to learn and apply skills, deal with peers, and engage in competition

Developing and testing personal values and beliefs that will guide present and future behaviors



## What's Happening in the Brain?

During this stage, the child's brain is:

- ❖ In a critical period of development; focused on setting goals and processing information
- ❖ Still vulnerable to trauma (both physical and psychological)

## Domains

**Physical**

Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
Is busy and active; has frequent accidents	Provide care for bumps and bruises, along with comfort and sympathy. Protect the child's brain by always requiring that she or he wear a helmet when riding bikes, scooters, or playing sports. Follow your state's laws about booster seats and seat belts.
Makes faces, wiggles, and clowns around	Don't take such behaviors seriously.
May urinate frequently (as a result of anxiety)	Be tolerant and understand that loss of control is not deliberate.

continued →

**Physical**

**Typical Characteristics**

**Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting**

Has good appetite: may accept new foods, often “wolfs” down food, and belches spontaneously

Except for belching, rejoice!

Has improved health, with just a few short illnesses

Maintain a healthy lifestyle; provide treatment for minor illnesses.

**Emotional**

Has more “secrets”

Provide the child with a locked drawer or box.

May be excessive in self-criticism, tends to dramatize everything, and is very sensitive

Encourage efforts, and do not criticize; point out that others also make mistakes.

Has fewer and more reasonable fears

Acknowledge and discuss real concerns.

May argue and resist requests and instructions, but will eventually obey

Keep directions simple and straightforward; avoid “I already know” responses by not overdirecting.

Likes immediate rewards for behaviors

Provide small but meaningful rewards for accomplishments.

Is usually affectionate, helpful, cheerful, outgoing, and curious, but can also be rude, selfish, bossy, demanding, giggly, and silly

Allow expression of negative emotions while maintaining limits; be patient with giggling and accept humor.

<b>Social</b>	<b>Typical Characteristics</b>	<b>Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting</b>
	Demands love and understanding from caregiver(s)	Provide love and acceptance.
	Makes new friends easily, works at establishing good two-way relationships, develops a close friend of the same sex, and considers clubs and groups important	Encourage development of friendships; assist with scouting or sport groups.
	Enjoys school, doesn't like to be absent, and tends to talk more about things that happen there	Listen to the child's anecdotes about school; be a part of his/her school life, and attend school activities such as shows and concerts.
	Is not interested in family table conversations, but instead wants to finish meals in order to get to other business	Remain tolerant and understanding of child's needs and feelings.
	May "peep" at peers and parents; tells dirty jokes, laughs, and giggles	Set reasonable limits, and do not overly focus on behaviors.

<b>Mental</b>	Wants to know the reasons for things	Answer questions patiently.
	Often overestimates personal abilities; generalizes instances of failure ("I never get anything right!")	Direct child toward attempting what can be accomplished, but continue to provide challenges; stress what the child has learned in a process and not the end product.
	Wants more information about pregnancy and birth; may question father's role	Continue to be available to answer questions.
	Has some mastery of basic math facts and computations (e.g., 3+2=5) and begins to grasp the concept of multiplication	Understand that in order for the child to succeed in math, he or she must use memory to recall rules and formulas and to recognize patterns. Support the child in reading instructions carefully, using sequential ordering to solve problems with multiple steps, and teach her or him how to seek help (e.g., from a teacher) when needed.

Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
May experience guilt and shame	Acknowledge and support the child's standards, encouraging self-forgiveness and (if necessary) discussing the reasonableness of personal expectations; if negative behaviors occur, work on changing the behavior but focus on the worth of the child rather than on the behavior.

### Indicators Related to Developmental Lag or Potential Trauma

Excessive concerns about competition and performance (especially in school) Extreme rebellion

Extreme difficulty concentrating in school

Physical symptoms (headaches, nervous stomach, ulcers, nervous tics, bedwetting, etc.)

Procrastination (unconcern with completion of tasks)

Overdependence on caregivers for age-appropriate tasks (combing hair, going to the store, tying shoes, finding a restroom in a restaurant, etc.)

Social isolation and lack of friends and involvements; few interests

Inappropriate relationships with “older” people (teenagers)

Stealing, pathological lying, fire-setting, or other unusually reckless or dangerous behavior



# Nine to Ten Years

## Developmental Tasks

Acquiring a sense of accomplishment based upon the achievement of greater physical strength and self-control

Increasing the ability to learn and apply skills, deal with peers, and engage in competition

Developing and testing personal values and beliefs that will guide present and future behaviors



## What's Happening in the Brain?

During this stage, the child's brain is:

- ❖ Responding to a more challenging academic environment
- ❖ Building the capacity for greater attention span and perspective
- ❖ Influenced by violence on television and video games

**Domains**

	<b>Typical Characteristics</b>	<b>Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting</b>
<b>Physical</b>	Engages in active, rough-and-tumble play and has great interest in team games	Provide many opportunities for physical activities (including team games) to sustain interest.
	Has good body control; is interested in developing strength, skill, and speed	Encourage participation in games and physical activities.
	Likes engaging in crafts and work-related tasks; may have developed basic computer skills	Provide opportunities for developing skills through handicrafts and household tasks. Encourage the development of technology skills, but limit screen time to no more than two hours a day. Play video games with your child to monitor what she or he is viewing.
	Differences in physical maturation rates develop (girls before boys)	Do not compare boys and girls or force them to interact; start teaching about bodily changes and explain menstruation to both sexes.
<b>Emotional</b>	May have some behavior problems (especially if not accepted by others)	Let the child know you accept him/her, even though you may not approve of certain specific behaviors.
	Is becoming very independent, dependable, and trustworthy	Provide many opportunities for exercising independence and dependability, and praise those positive characteristics when they are shown through behaviors.

**Social**

Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
Boys and girls differ markedly in personality, characteristics, and interests, with most being interested in being part of a group or club (but always with same sex); sometimes silliness emerges within groups	Accept the natural separation of boys and girls; recognize and support the need for acceptance from peer group.
Begins to test and exercise a great deal of independence (especially boys)	Establish and enforce reasonable limits; be warm but firm.
Is most interested in friends and social activities; likes group adventures and cooperative play	Encourage friendships and provide help to the child who may have few or no friends.

**Mental**

Has definite interests and lively curiosity; seeks facts	Adjust learning opportunities to child's interests and increased attention span; provide specific information and facts when requested, but don't give all the answers.
Is capable of prolonged interest and increasingly abstract thinking and reasoning	Encourage mental exploration, and allow adequate time for thinking, reflection, and discussion.
Individual differences become more marked	Respect and be aware of individual differences when making assignments and identifying responsibilities.
Likes reading, writing, and using books and references	Provide opportunities for reading, writing, and using reference materials while at the same time being careful not to overburden the child.
Likes to collect things	Encourage hobbies and help with collections.
Recalls basic mathematical facts (including multiplication tables) and concepts (e.g., estimating quantities and rounding off numbers) with increasing ease	Pay attention to the child's progress in developing and using math skills; collaborate with his or her school to determine the best course of action if the child seems to need additional support and reinforcement in order to succeed in math.

**Moral**

Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
Is very conscious of fairness, is highly competitive, and argues over fairness	Be fair in all dealings and relationships with the child.
Has difficulty admitting mistakes but is becoming more capable of accepting failures and mistakes and taking responsibility for them	Provide opportunities for competing, but help the child see that losing is a part of playing; do not put the child down for making mistakes; instead, help the child learn to take responsibility for personal behaviors. Be a model by saying you are sorry to the child when you are wrong.
Is clearly acquiring a conscience and is aware of right and wrong; generally wants to do right, but sometimes overreacts or rebels against these same standards	Express love and support for the child who falls short of meeting your personal standards of right and wrong.
Is better equipped to see other people's perspectives	Encourage the child to learn about people whose culture or needs are different from your own, through exposure to multicultural activities. Teach your child to help others. Build media literacy skills that engage the child to consider how messages are being portrayed to him or her.

**Indicators Related to Developmental Lag or Potential Trauma**

- Excessive concerns about competition and performance (especially in school)
- Extreme difficulty concentrating in school
- Physical symptoms (headaches, nervous stomach, ulcers, nervous tics, bedwetting, etc.)
- Procrastination (unconcern with completion of tasks)
- Overdependence on caregivers for age-appropriate tasks (combing hair, going to the store, tying shoes, finding a restroom in a restaurant, etc.)
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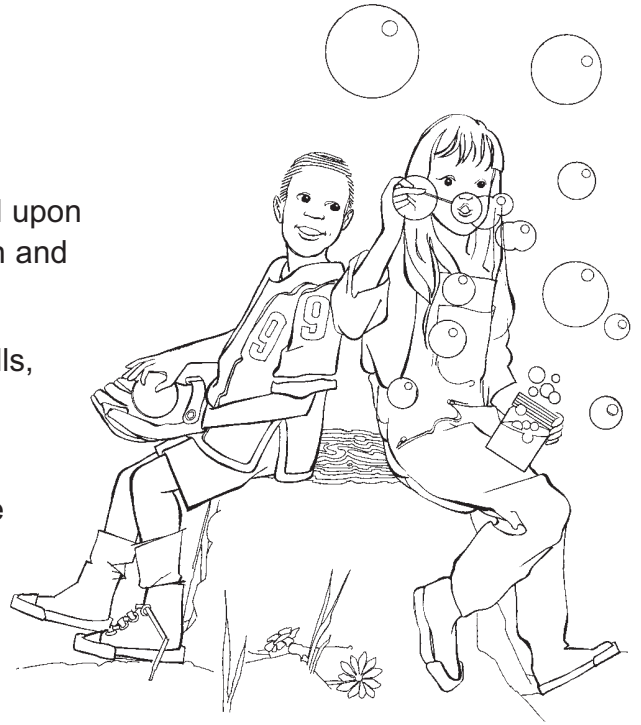
# Ten to Eleven Years

## Developmental Tasks

Acquiring a sense of accomplishment based upon the achievement of greater physical strength and self-control

Increasing own ability to learn and apply skills, deal with peers, and engage in competition

Developing and testing personal values and beliefs that will guide present and future behaviors



## What's Happening in the Brain?

During this stage, the child's brain:

- ❖ Is less open to new connections but is faster with those it has already built; this means learning comes more quickly, as do emotions
- ❖ Continues to develop a sense of individual identity through perspective-taking (i.e., "walking in someone else's shoes")
- ❖ Prepares to move from concrete thinking to abstract thinking

## Domains

### Physical

#### Typical Characteristics

Children who are in a better physical condition do better on tests of relational memory—the ability to remember and integrate various types of information—than their less fit peers.

Continues to develop motor skills

#### Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting

Encourage the child to engage in physical activity and to be physically fit; provide healthy meals and do not make sugary snacks or beverages available on more than an occasional basis.

Provide opportunities for rough and tumble play, but also teach about being careful not to hurt others or damage property.

**Emotional**

Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
Becomes concerned with style (especially girls)	Allow personal selection of clothes and hairstyle (within a firm budget).
Is casual and relaxed	Allow for casualness and relaxation (but not to the point of avoiding responsibilities).
Likes privacy	Provide locked drawer, cupboard, or box for treasures and a “Keep Out” sign for bedroom door.
Maturation rates differ (girls faster than boys)	Adjust expectations accordingly.
Seldom cries, but may cry when angry; while this is not an angry age, when anger comes it is violent and immediate	Recognize and accept angry feelings, tears, and outbursts of temporary duration.
Is concerned and worried about school and peer relationships	Be aware of school life, and open your home to the child's friends.

**Social**

Is affectionate with parents; has great pride in father and finds mother all-important	Be sure to spend adequate time with the child.
Is highly selective in friendships and may have one “best” friend; finds it important to be “in” with the gang; may develop hero worship	<p>Accept child's need for (and choice of) friends and need to feel “in” with a particular group.</p> <p>Be aware that because of perspective-taking ability, the child may now be more capable of suffering emotionally if she or he feels excluded from group.</p>

	Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
<b>Mental</b>	Is alert, poised; argues logically; is frequently concerned with fads	Encourage/teach the value and use of logic in thinking and problem solving (a good time to discuss issues such as drug abuse).
	May like to read	Provide books geared to interests.
	Has many interests of short duration, but may begin to show talent in a particular field.	Provide lessons in music, art, and other interests.
<b>Moral</b>	Has strong sense of justice and a strict moral code	Recognize that sense of justice is generally limited to the child's own world; don't belittle the code, but instead accept rigidity and support the child's concerns about right and wrong.
	Is more concerned with what is wrong than what is right	Encourage a sense of proportion, but also encourage genuine efforts to change what is wrong to what is right.

### Indicators Related to Developmental Lag or Potential Trauma

Excessive concerns about competition and performance (especially in school)

Extreme rebellion

Extreme difficulty concentrating in school

Physical symptoms (headaches, nervous stomach, ulcers, nervous tics, bedwetting, etc.)

Procrastination (unconcern with completion of tasks)

Overdependence on caregivers for age-appropriate tasks (combing hair, going to the store, tying shoes, finding a restroom in a restaurant, etc.)

Social isolation and lack of friends and involvements; few interests

Inappropriate relationships with "older" people (teenagers)

Stealing, pathological lying, fire-setting, or other unusually reckless or impulsive behavior





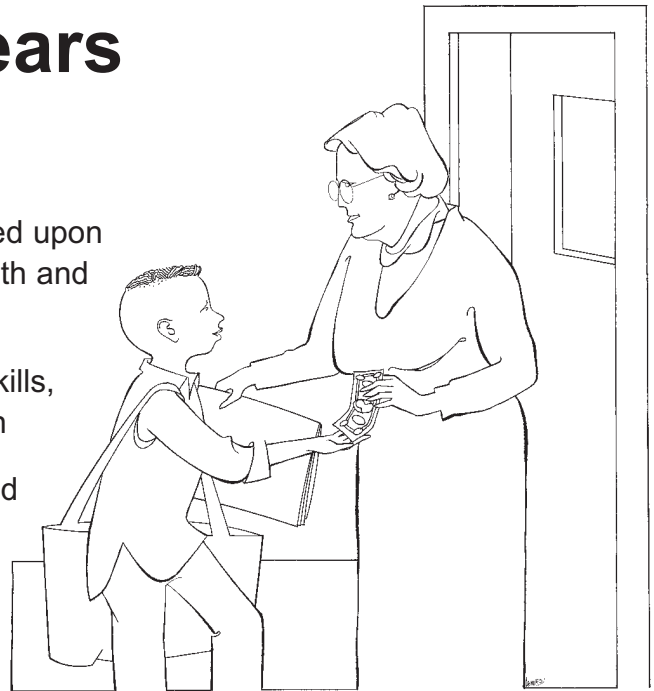
# Eleven to Twelve Years

## Developmental Tasks

Acquiring a sense of accomplishment based upon the achievement of greater physical strength and self-control

Increasing own ability to learn and apply skills, deal with peers, and engage in competition

Developing and testing personal values and beliefs that will guide present and future behaviors



## What's Happening in the Brain?

During this stage, the child's brain is:

- ❖ Shifting from concrete thinking to formal operational thinking, meaning the child can now use logic and reasoning to solve problems instead of relying on observation
- ❖ Growing again in the language center, allowing the child to learn up to 5,000 new words
- ❖ Preparing for the transition into adolescence; hormonal changes may already be taking place

## Domains

Physical	Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
	Is increasingly aware of own body	Answer questions about bodily changes openly and honestly.
	May have increased possibility of acting on sexual desires	Be aware of where youth is and with whom; encourage group activities and discourage solo dating.

continued →

	<b>Typical Characteristics</b>	<b>Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting</b>
<b>Physical</b>	Begins to show secondary sex characteristics (in girls)	Ensure that girls understand menstruation and appropriate hygiene.
	Appetite increases, along with endurance and muscular development (in boys)	Don't nag boys about food intake and seeming "laziness," as rapid growth may mean large appetite but less energy.
	May experience a lack of self-confidence in learning new skills	Provide support and encouragement for youth's quest for new skills, and don't minimize or dismiss his/her lack of confidence.

<b>Emotional</b>	May often be angry; resents being told what to do and rebels at routines	Help youth set the rules and determine personal responsibilities, and allow frequent opportunities to make personal decisions.
	Often is moody; dramatizes and exaggerates own expressions ("You're the worst mother in the world!")	Don't overreact to moodiness and exaggerated expressions.
	Experiences many fears, many worries, and many tears	Be understanding and supportive through stormy times.

<b>Social</b>	Is critical of adults and may be obnoxious to others in the household	Be tolerant: all things pass!
	Strives for unreasonable independence	Set limits, but give opportunities for independence whenever possible.
	Has intense interest in teams and organized, competitive games; considers memberships in clubs important	Provide for organized activities in sports and/or clubs.

<b>Typical Characteristics</b>	<b>Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting</b>
Challenges adult knowledge; has increased ability to use logic	Don't become defensive, as the child is not really challenging your authority.
May have interest in earning money	Encourage pursuit of earnings through a paper route, household chores, or other small jobs.
Is critical of own artistic products	Accept youth's feelings but try to help youth evaluate his/her work more objectively and without negative judgments.
Is becoming interested in the outside world and community and may like to participate in community activities	Support interest in walkathons, helping neighbors, etc.
Is likely reading non-fiction, poems, or plays at school and may be learning how to identify facts, opinions, and ways to set up an argument.	Pay attention to how much your child understands. Read the same books she or he brings home and talk about them. Ask: What happened? Why?

**Mental**

**Moral**

Has strong urge to conform to peer-group morals	Recognize the youth's need to belong to a peer group outside the family; be aware of the values of the group and (without condemnation) assist youth in examining peer group morals and in understanding the consequences of making personal choices among group values.
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## **Indicators Related to Developmental Lag or Potential Trauma**

Excessive concerns about competition and performance (especially in school)

Extreme rebellion

Extreme difficulty concentrating in school

Physical symptoms (headaches, nervous stomach, ulcers, nervous tics, bedwetting, etc.)

Procrastination (unconcern with completion of tasks)

Overdependence on caregivers for age-appropriate tasks (combing hair, going to the store, tying shoes, finding a restroom in a restaurant, etc.)

Social isolation and lack of friends and involvements; few interests

Inappropriate relationships with “older” people (teenagers)

Stealing, pathological lying, fire-setting, or other unusually reckless or impulsive behaviors

# Twelve to Fifteen Years

## Developmental Tasks

Creating a personal identity based upon the integration of values

Developing a sense of self in relation to society, other individuals, the opposite sex, the future, personal vocation, ideas, and the cosmos



## What's Happening in the Brain?

The child's brain undergoes significant changes as it "rewires" throughout adolescence, which impacts behavior, emotions, and thinking. Research has demonstrated that the capacity for learning is never greater than during these early teen years. But like newborns, the adolescent brain is still a "work-in-progress."

Specifically, there is now:

- ❖ Heightened response to incentives, while at the same time there is a slowing of impulse control—which is why so many teens take unnecessary risks and make poor decisions
- ❖ Loss of gray matter as connections are refined and hardwired into the developing adult brain (which is why the more teens participate in activities—positive or negative—the more likely they will continue into adulthood, e.g., playing sports, dancing, acting, or drinking and drugging)
- ❖ Change in the way the brain "reads" nonverbal communication and faces (which is why your teen might accuse you of being angry at him or her when you are not)
- ❖ A flood of reproductive and stress hormones that impact all domains of development, especially physical growth and emotions
- ❖ Change in the way the brain regulates sleep, which affects attention, fatigue, and irritability

**Domains**

	<b>Typical Characteristics</b>	<b>Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting</b>
<b>Physical</b>	Experiences sudden and rapid increases in height, weight, and strength with the onset of adolescence	Provide more food and ensure adequate nutrition.
	Maturation rates differ (with girls gradually reaching physical and sexual maturity and boys just beginning to mature physically and sexually)	Explain changes in physical development; discourage comparison with peers, but be aware of problems associated with late maturation.
	May be concerned about appearance of acne (especially with certain types of skin)	If necessary, provide a special diet and/or medication to treat acne; provide assurance that blemishes will clear up eventually.
	Is concerned with appearance	Comment favorably on youth's concern with appearance.
	Experiences increased likelihood of acting on sexual desires	Provide accurate information on consequences of sexual activity; discuss birth control and safe sex practices.

<b>Emotional</b>	Commonly sulks; may direct verbal anger at authority figure	Understand that such behavior is typical of this stage.
	Is concerned about fair treatment of others, is usually reasonably thoughtful, and is generally unlikely to lie	Demonstrate respect for the youth as an emerging adult.

<b>Social</b>	Withdraws from parents (who are invariably called "old")	Don't feel hurt or take labels personally: remember you are still important, but not in the same way that you were.
	May often resist any show of affection (especially boys)	Respect boundaries, but continue to be affectionate.
	Usually feels parents are too restrictive; rebels	Set clear, firm, but flexible limits.

continued →

	<b>Typical Characteristics</b>	<b>Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting</b>
<b>Social</b>	Needs less family companionship and interaction than previously	Allow youth more opportunities for independent social activities.
	Has less intense friendships with those of the same sex; usually has a gang of friends (with girls showing more interest in boys than boys in girls at this age)	Don't criticize the youth's need for friends or particular friends.
	May be annoyed by younger siblings	Accept the youth's feelings and help younger siblings cope with rejection.

<b>Mental</b>	Seeks new experiences that may involve unhealthy or even dangerous risks, e.g., using drugs or alcohol or joyriding in a car	Understand that the teen brain is naturally impulsive and struggles with good decision making. Talk openly with the youth about risks involved in certain choices; stay involved and involve her or him in determining limits.
	Thrives on arguments and discussions	Encourage debate, but don't let discussions become arguments; be careful not to put down the youth's ideas.
	Is increasingly able to memorize, to think logically about concepts, to reflect, to probe into personal thinking processes, and to plan realistically	Encourage exploration of thought and deed; provide books, library card, etc.
	Needs to feel important in world and to believe in something	Encourage youth to join causes, attend religious and community groups, etc.
	May read a great deal	Talk to youth about reading; offer suggested readings.

<b>Moral</b>	Knows right and wrong; tries to weigh alternatives and arrive at decisions alone	Facilitate the youth's decision making.
	Is concerned about fair treatment of others; is usually reasonably thoughtful; is unlikely to lie	Demonstrate esteem and respect for the youth as an emerging adult.

## **Indicators Related to Developmental Lag or Potential Trauma**

Delays in physical and sexual development

Depression, sense of isolation, loneliness

Extreme self-consciousness or fear of being abnormal

Suicide attempts; psychosis

Impulsiveness, extreme rebellion; pathological lying; truancy, running away

Denial of feelings, fantasy as an escape from problems

Fantasizing or discussing revenge or retribution for real or perceived harm

Poor hygiene

Alcohol/drug abuse

Eating disorders: anorexia nervosa, bulimia, obesity

Sexual activity to provide missing nurturance; pregnancy

Juvenile delinquency, stealing, prostitution



# Fifteen to Nineteen Years

## Developmental Tasks

Creating a personal identity based upon the integration of values

Developing a sense of self in relation to society, other individuals, the opposite sex, the future, personal vocation, ideas, and the cosmos



## What's Happening in the Brain?

During this stage, the child's brain undergoes significant changes as it "rewires" during adolescence, which impacts behavior, emotions, and thinking.

Specifically, there is still:

- ❖ Heightened response to incentives, while at the same time there is a slowing of impulse control—which is why so many teens take unnecessary risks and make poor decisions
- ❖ A flood of reproductive and stress hormones that impact all domains of development
- ❖ Change in the way the brain regulates sleep, which affects attention, fatigue, and irritability

And in late adolescence, there is also:

- ❖ Growth in both white and gray brain matter after some initial loss in early adolescence, which leads to a major gain in processing power
- ❖ More control from the prefrontal cortex of the emotional center of the brain; as teens mature, they should be more capable of planning actions and making better judgments and less impulsive
- ❖ An increased capacity for abstract reasoning, which helps inform teens' developing sense of self in relation to others. Teens move from a focus on the self in early adolescence to one of self in the world, which accounts for growing idealism

**Domains**

	<b>Typical Characteristics</b>	<b>Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting</b>
<b>Physical</b>	Has essentially completed physical maturation; physical features are mostly shaped and defined	Recognize and compliment the youth's physical maturity.
	Experiences increased probability of acting on sexual desires	Provide accurate information about the consequences of sexual activity; discuss birth control and HIV prevention.
<b>Emotional</b>	Worries about failure	Be available to talk and to listen.
	May appear moody, angry, lonely, impulsive, self-centered, confused, and/or stubborn	Accept feelings, and don't overreact; jointly establish limits, but don't revert to childhood restrictions.
	Experiences conflicting feelings about dependence/independence	Avoid making fun of inconsistent behaviors; accept the need for separation.
<b>Social</b>	Has relationships ranging from friendly to hostile with parents	Try to maintain good relationship; be respectful and friendly.
	Sometimes feels that parents are "too interested"	Try not to pry.
	Usually has many friends and few confidants; varies greatly in level of maturity; may be uncomfortable with or enjoy activities with the opposite sex; dates actively; may talk of marriage	Recognize and accept current level of interest in opposite sex; encourage experiences with a variety of individuals (younger, older, from different cultures, etc.).
	May be strongly invested in a single, romantic relationship	Avoid disapproval; discuss needs and expectations that are met in the relationship.

<b>Mental</b>	<b>Typical Characteristics</b>	<b>Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting</b>
	<p>May lack information about or self-assurance regarding personal skills and abilities</p>	<p>If necessary, help arrange for aptitude testing, evaluation, and guidance.</p>
<p>Becomes seriously concerned about the future; begins to integrate knowledge leading to decisions about future</p>	<p>Encourage talking about and planning for future.</p>	

<b>Moral</b>	<p>Is confused and disappointed about discrepancies between stated values and actual behaviors of family and/or friends; experiences feelings of frustration, anger, sorrow, and isolation</p>	<p>Be sensitive to youth's feelings and thoughts and try to bring them out in the open; be sure to understand your own values.</p>
	<p>May be interested in sex in response to physical/emotional urges and as a way to participate in the adult world (but not necessarily an expression of mature intimacy)</p>	<p>Be open to discussion and appreciate possible differences in values and needs; communicate your own feelings about sexual relations, but don't moralize; accept sexual experimentation as normal and healthy; provide correct information on human sexuality, sexually-transmitted disease, HIV and AIDS, birth control, intimacy, and safe types of sexual experimentation (although until a cure for HIV is found, discourage unprotected coital sex).</p>

## **Indicators Related to Developmental Lag or Potential Trauma**

Delays in physical and sexual development

Depression, sense of isolation, loneliness

Extreme self-consciousness or fear of being abnormal

Suicide attempts; psychosis

Impulsiveness, extreme rebellion; pathological lying; truancy, running away

Denial of feelings, fantasy as an escape from problems

Fantasizing or discussing revenge or retribution for real or perceived harm

Poor hygiene

Alcohol/drug abuse

Eating disorders: anorexia nervosa, bulimia, obesity

Sexual activity to provide missing nurturance; pregnancy; early marriages that are likely to fail

Juvenile delinquency, stealing, prostitution

# Part II: The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children

## Introduction

### **The Challenge of Communicating with Children**

Communicating with children can be challenging as well as exciting.

How children convey their thoughts and feelings, their needs, their understanding of their relationships, and their problems depends on their developmental level and their ability to use language.

Understanding what children are trying to convey also depends upon your own sensitivity to their cues, your skills at observation and assessment, and your ability to relate to them meaningfully and effectively.

### **Communicating for Risk Assessment**

All comprehensive interviews in child abuse/maltreatment investigations should be conducted by specially trained child interview specialists, preferably in a multidisciplinary interview center.

However, caseworkers have ongoing responsibility for assessing children's safety and/or risk of harm. Part of the assessment will rest on the things that children tell caseworkers and caregivers as well as on what caseworkers observe when they meet children in their natural settings.

The information in the “What you should say or do” column is appropriate for use in both individual settings and in family groups.

### **The Variability of Children's Developmental Progress**

Child development is characterized by enormous variability. The following chart presents the research findings of many experts in the field of child development, especially as found in *Clinical and Forensic Interviewing of Children and Families* (Sattler 1998), a fine, highly detailed resource that districts may wish to purchase as a reference for staff. Additional information about language development was also derived from a Newsweek article, “The Language Explosion” (Cowley 1997). See also Fernald, Marchman, and Weisleder, 2013.

However, individual children all follow their own individualized developmental clocks. If concerns arise about the appropriateness of a child's developmental progress in a given area, supervisors and caseworkers should be consulted to determine whether outside professional evaluation of the child should be sought.



# 0-2 Months

## *The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children*

<b>What the typical child might say and do:</b>	<b>What the typical child knows or thinks:</b>	<b>What you should say or do:</b>	<b>Cautions:</b>
<p>Makes small, throaty sounds that turn into cooing by the end of the first month</p> <p>Turns head to follow sounds, especially mother's voice</p> <p>Cries to get all needs met</p>	<p>Can distinguish one language from another (Russian babies respond more to hearing spoken Russian, while French babies respond more to spoken French, etc.)</p> <p>Knows and responds to mother's voice</p> <p>Begins to make simple associations (such as that crying leads to being fed)</p>	<p>Speak softly, with a high vocal pitch, and use short, simple sentences/phrases. ("Sweet baby...")</p> <p>Hold baby and observe whether s/he responds to your tone of voice.</p> <p>Rock or stroke baby to comfort him/her.</p>	<p>Avoid making loud sounds as you approach the baby.</p> <p>Avoid sudden or startling movements.</p>

### **Indicators of possible developmental problems:**

Doesn't cry, babble, or respond to stimuli

# 3-6 Months

## *The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children*

<b>What the typical child might say and do:</b>	<b>What the typical child knows or thinks:</b>	<b>What you should say or do:</b>	<b>Cautions:</b>
<p>Chuckles, gurgles, squeals, whimpers, and makes vowel-like noises (“ooh-ooh, eeeh”)</p> <p>Babbles routinely to self and others</p> <p>May raise voice as if asking a question by end of sixth month</p> <p>Cries to signal needs, distress, and/or desire for company</p> <p>Imitates sounds and facial expressions</p>	<p>Memory begins to build; distinguishes who's who in his/her life</p> <p>May recognize mother in a group of people</p> <p>May perceive cause-and-effect relationships (if the rattle is shaken, it will make a sound) by end of sixth month</p>	<p>Speak with a soft voice and use simple sentences.</p> <p>Address baby by name. (“How's Amanda today?”)</p> <p>Hold baby, make eye contact, and observe baby's response to being held.</p>	<p>Avoid loud noises and sudden, startling movements.</p>

### **Indicators of possible developmental problems:**

Doesn't turn toward voices

Crying seems unrelated to needs

Isn't vocalizing



# 6-9 Months

## *The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children*

<b>What the typical child might say and do:</b>	<b>What the typical child knows or thinks:</b>	<b>What you should say or do:</b>	<b>Cautions:</b>
<p>Starts to imitate a broader range of sounds</p> <p>May say “da-da” or “ma-ma” by ninth month</p> <p>May remember how to respond to specific words/phrases (raises arms to be lifted after hearing the words “picked up,” etc.)</p> <p>Listens intently to conversations around him/her</p> <p>Responds to own image in mirror</p>	<p>Memory improves (may anticipate that a jack-in-the-box pops up at the end of the song, etc.)</p> <p>May begin to be shy with strangers</p> <p>Clearly knows mother, family members, and other significant individuals</p> <p>Intentionally summons others by crying or yelling</p>	<p>Approach the child very slowly and gently.</p> <p>Use a soft voice and speak slowly.</p>	<p>Don't startle or surprise baby with sudden movements.</p>

### **Indicators of possible developmental problems:**

- Stops babbling
- Isn't imitating sounds, gestures, or expressions
- Doesn't look at objects shown by adults

# 9-12 Months

## *The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children*

<b>What the typical child might say and do:</b>	<b>What the typical child knows or thinks:</b>	<b>What you should say or do:</b>	<b>Cautions:</b>
<p>Adds gestures to words; may wave “bye-bye”</p> <p>Babbles short sentences only s/he understands (beginning of patterned speech)</p> <p>Expresses frustration, hunger, illness, and boredom with specific emotional cries (each with a distinct sound)</p> <p>Responds to own name</p>	<p>Says an average of 3 words (but understands many more) by 12 months</p> <p>Begins to show signs of self-recognition</p> <p>Realizes that objects exist even when they can't be seen</p>	<p>Approach the child very slowly and gently.</p> <p>Use a soft tone of voice and speak slowly.</p>	<p>Don't startle or surprise baby with sudden movements.</p>

### **Indicators of possible developmental problems:**

- Doesn't engage in baby games
- Doesn't wave “bye-bye”
- Doesn't take turns vocalizing

# 13-18 Months

## *The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children*

<b>What the typical child might say and do:</b>	<b>What the typical child knows or thinks:</b>	<b>What you should say or do:</b>	<b>Cautions:</b>
<p>Says about 22 words by 18 months</p> <p>Increases use of gesturing for communicating (pointing, waving, etc.)</p> <p>May use words to express needs (says “up” to be held, etc.)</p> <p>Enjoys pointing at pictures and objects and likes hearing them named</p> <p>May overextend word meanings (calls all adult men “da-da,” etc.)</p>	<p>Uses expressive information from mother’s face to guide own behaviors</p> <p>Enjoys songs, rhymes, and simple games</p> <p>Knows that words represent objects that can be acted upon</p> <p>May obey simple commands (“Come here,” “Don’t touch!” etc.)</p>	<p>Approach the child slowly.</p> <p>Expect the child to be shy and possibly afraid.</p> <p>If child is toddling, get down on the floor at his/her level.</p> <p>Give the child time and space to explore you (touch your earrings or the buttons of your shirt, etc.)</p> <p>Make simple statements. (“You are wearing a blue shirt today.”)</p>	<p>Don’t startle or surprise baby with sudden movements.</p> <p>Don’t expect a toddler to provide you with specific, reliable information.</p> <p>Begin by connecting with the child, and then proceed to assess developmental status through observation and interaction; don’t attempt to “interview” in the traditional manner.</p>

### **Indicators of possible developmental problems:**

- Doesn’t talk, or uses only a few words
- Repeats sounds noncommunicatively, e.g., barking, screeching
- Doesn’t respond to own name
- Doesn’t respond to simple requests

# 18-24 Months

## *The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children*

<b>What the typical child might say and do:</b>	<b>What the typical child knows or thinks:</b>	<b>What you should say or do:</b>	<b>Cautions:</b>
<p>Has a vocabulary of 272 words (on average) by age 2</p> <p>May express frustration or anger through the use of words or may resort to screams and tears</p> <p>Combines words to create simple sentences (“All gone!” “Go bye-bye?”)</p> <p>Imitates words and gestures</p> <p>Knows (and works with!) the word “no”</p>	<p>Experiences a language acquisition explosion, with some children learning up to 12 new words a day</p> <p>Knows the names of own body parts and clothing items; identifies common animals and the sounds they make</p> <p>Knows that everything has a name</p> <p>May follow simple directions (but still has a fleeting attention span)</p> <p>Knows own name and the names of family members</p>	<p>Speak slowly and give the child enough time to respond.</p> <p>Talk about objects that are familiar to the child. (“Is this your dolly?”)</p> <p>Listen patiently.</p> <p>Approach the child on his/her own level.</p>	<p>Don't pressure the child to speak. (Stranger anxiety usually peaks around 17 months but may last until nearly the second birthday.)</p> <p>Don't rush into the child's space.</p> <p>Do not expect the child to give you much (if any) reliable information, since the use of memory is still a new and shaky skill.</p>

# 18-24 Months *(cont.)*

## *The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children*

### **Indicators of possible developmental problems:**

Stops talking

Doesn't develop use of gestures

Doesn't talk, or uses only a few words

Doesn't respond when addressed by name

# 2-3 Years

## *The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children*

<b>What the typical child might say and do:</b>	<b>What the typical child knows or thinks:</b>	<b>What you should say or do:</b>	<b>Cautions:</b>
<p>Uses three- to four-word sentences, including the pronoun “I” (“I want milk!” “I don’t wanna nap!”)</p> <p>Asks “why” and remembers short answers</p> <p>Is able to describe own physical states using simple words (“thirsty,” “wet,” etc.)</p> <p>May chatter constantly</p> <p>Shows emotions: laughs, squeals, cries violently, throws tantrums</p> <p>Has difficulty verbalizing feelings and thoughts</p> <p>Conveys feelings with concrete remarks (says “Bad mommy!” when required to pick up own messes)</p>	<p>May sort out toys by shapes and colors by age 3</p> <p>May understand concepts such as “soon” or “after dinner” but has very limited grasp of the meaning of days and times and has no sense at all of the length of a year</p> <p>Cannot understand an issue from more than one viewpoint (one-sided reasoning)</p> <p>Experiences flourishing imaginative life</p> <p>Follows story lines; remembers ideas and characters from books</p>	<p>Approach the child gently and quietly.</p> <p>Make yourself comfortable in his/her physical space (by sitting on the floor with the child, etc.).</p> <p>Ask questions in simple terms.</p> <p>Before speaking with the child, be sure to obtain parental permission in front of the child. (“Chad, your mommy says it’s fine if I sit here and you and I play for a little while. Isn’t that right, Mrs. Colley?”)</p> <p>Check to be sure you understand. (“So you went to the store with Mommy?”)</p> <p>Use props such as puppets or crayons to play with the child.</p>	<p>Don’t expect the child to give you specific, reliable information.</p> <p>Don’t expect the child to tell you when something happened.</p> <p>Don’t pressure the child to talk with you.</p>

# 2-3 Years *(cont.)*

## *The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children*

### **Indicators of possible developmental problems:**

Appears to be mute

Speaks only intermittently

Repeats certain words/phrases (such as a TV commercial) to the exclusion of all other communication (echolalia)

Leads adults by the hand when trying to communicate needs

Shows no interest in the conversations of others

Doesn't play with others

# 3-5 Years

## *The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children*

<b>What the typical child might say and do:</b>	<b>What the typical child knows or thinks:</b>	<b>What you should say or do:</b>	<b>Cautions:</b>
<p>Has a vocabulary of approximately 900 words by age 3; increases vocabulary to 1,500 to 2,000 words by age 5</p> <p>May count to 20 or more and can recognize most letters of the alphabet by age 5</p> <p>Uses increasingly complex sentences (including verb tenses, plural forms, prepositions, possessives, and contractions) to convey meaning (A 3-year-old may say: "I bringed home two toy mouses," while the 5-year-old could report: "I brought home two toy mice.")</p> <p>Can describe <i>who</i> did <i>what</i> to <i>whom</i> ("The Power Ranger made the bad guys give back the gold and go away.")</p>	<p>Develops gross and fine motor coordination; uses crayons or markers to color and prints own name by age 5</p> <p>Sees feelings as an "all-or-nothing" proposition</p> <p>Believes that a given event causes the same feelings in all people</p> <p>Bases judgments of "right" and "wrong" on "good" or "bad" consequences and not on intention</p> <p>Mixes wishful thinking and fact</p> <p>Understands time in a rudimentary way, but has difficulty distinguishing morning from afternoon or remembering days of the week</p>	<p>Establish rapport by playing a game or showing an interesting toy.</p> <p>Encourage the child to take the lead ("Let's play with these puppets. Choose one and say anything you like.") while setting firm limits regarding not hitting or breaking things ("You can hit the pillow, but you can't hit me.").</p> <p>Use short, concrete questions to help expand upon or clarify the child's concerns.</p> <p>Be friendly, positive, and reassuring.</p> <p>Convey your genuine concern for the child.</p>	<p>Don't expect the child to give you reliable, specific information.</p> <p>Don't expect the child to consistently describe <i>when</i> or <i>how often</i> something happened or to describe a traumatic event in any logical sequence.</p>



# 3-5 Years *(cont.)*

## *The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children*

<b>What the typical child might say and do:</b>	<b>What the typical child knows or thinks:</b>	<b>What you should say or do:</b>	<b>Cautions:</b>
<p>Asks about the meanings of words and the uses of various objects</p> <p>Rhymes words and remembers songs</p> <p>Recognizes some words on a page and “reads” familiar stories by age five</p> <p>Likes to make silly sounds; uses foul language to shock adults</p> <p>Is boastful</p> <p>Calls other children by mean or silly names</p> <p>Normal nonverbal communication includes being active, distractible, and wiggly; not sustaining eye contact; and sometimes falling down for no apparent reason</p>	<p>Doesn't fully understand kinship relationships, though terms (mother, uncle, grandmother) may be commonly used as labels</p> <p>Can remember pictures and events</p> <p>Notices discrepancies and when things are out of place</p> <p>Is eager for adult approval</p> <p>Describes others in global, egocentric, and subjective terms (“She's nice cuz she gave me a sucker!”)</p> <p>Believes that s/he is the cause of the emotions or actions of others (“If I was a good girl, Mommy wouldn't hurt me.”)</p>		

# 3-5 Years *(cont.)*

## *The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children*

<b>What the typical child might say and do:</b>	<b>What the typical child knows or thinks:</b>	<b>What you should say or do:</b>	<b>Cautions:</b>
	Likes the company of others, but can't always manage harmonious relationships		

### **Indicators of possible developmental problems:**

Doesn't speak

Regresses to "baby-talk" or quits talking

Doesn't answer simple "who?" "what?" and "where?" types of questions

Repeats certain words/phrases (such as a TV commercial) to the exclusion of all other communication (echolalia)

Cannot be understood by persons outside of his/her family

Is not able to use brief (four-word) sentences to express self

Uses abnormal rhythmic patterns and/or vocal tones when speaking

# 6-8 Years

## *The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children*

<b>What the typical child might say and do:</b>	<b>What the typical child knows or thinks:</b>	<b>What you should say or do:</b>	<b>Cautions:</b>
<p>Experiences a rapid increase in vocabulary and may reach 20,000 words by age 8</p> <p>Structures sentences much as adults do, following standard conventions of grammar</p> <p>Uses concrete word definitions</p> <p>Tattletales, boasts, and mixes fantasy with fact to fulfill wishes (When trying to make friends with another child, a child with no ponies may say “I have two ponies and my mother says you can come and live with me and ride my ponies.”)</p> <p>Complains; can be very negative, demanding, and judgmental (“That’s not fair!”)</p>	<p>Makes the transition from childhood “magical” thinking to reasoned thinking based on a concrete, fact-based understanding of the world</p> <p>Learns to tell time and can identify day of week, and month of year</p> <p>Can give temporal information about symptoms or events (such as how long the stomachache lasted or how long it takes to get to school)</p> <p>Defines morality based on outside authority and rules</p> <p>Develops a sense of fairness</p> <p>Understands that another person’s perspective may be different than his/her own point of view</p>	<p>Try to create an environment that feels safe and friendly to the child, and position yourself on his/her level during interactions.</p> <p>Convey interest in the child’s (self-centered) world by asking about and listening as s/he talks about personal items (favorite books or shows, games, places to go, etc.).</p> <p>Use a friendly, low-key approach and give concrete explanations for speaking with the child. (“I would like to hear what you did on your visit with your dad yesterday.”)</p>	<p>Don’t confuse seemingly adult conversational ability with adult abstract thinking ability: the 7-year-old child who reports “Mom’s boyfriend dumped her because she was always drunk” may have his facts right, but s/he still needs to be reassured as a child. (In such instances, an adult might wonder, “What’s going on with Mom?” On the other hand, the child’s real concern is “What’s going to happen to me?”)</p>

# 6-8 Years *(cont.)*

## *The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children*

<b>What the typical child might say and do:</b>	<b>What the typical child knows or thinks:</b>	<b>What you should say or do:</b>	<b>Cautions:</b>
<p>Can take some responsibility for household chores</p> <p>Normal nonverbal communication includes wiggling, fidgeting, jiggling one leg, hopping from foot to foot, etc.</p>	<p>Recognizes his/her own emotions but may have difficulty describing them (“I have a stomachache” really means “I am feeling scared.”)</p> <p>Is acutely aware of pressure from parents, teachers, and others</p>	<p>Provide reassurance that the child is doing the right thing by talking with you (including securing parental permission and support as appropriate).</p>	

### **Indicators of possible developmental problems:**

- Regresses in language skills
- Doesn't speak or stops speaking
- Begins to stutter
- Appears incoherent, illogical, pressured, and/or poorly connected to reality when speaking
- Has tantrums and goes to violent extremes

# 8-10 Years

## *The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children*

<b>What the typical child might say and do:</b>	<b>What the typical child knows or thinks:</b>	<b>What you should say or do:</b>	<b>Cautions:</b>
<p>Develops vocabulary of approximately 40,000 words by age 10</p> <p>Greatly increases reading ability</p> <p>Refines conversational strategies and uses synonyms, jokes, metaphors to convey/reinforce meaning</p> <p>Initiates friendships, talks on the phone, and listens to other points of view.</p> <p>Acts silly and giggly when in a group</p> <p>Can describe own values (“It’s not right to steal because the Bible says it’s wrong and because if everybody stole, people would have to stay home and watch their stuff all the time and it just wouldn’t work out.”)</p>	<p>Becomes increasingly logical and objective when thinking</p> <p>Begins to be able to take on the perspective or role of another and put him/herself in someone else’s place when judging actions and intentions</p> <p>Understands that effort influences outcome</p> <p>Accepts the simultaneous existence of two conflicting emotions (one may want to live at home while at the same time be afraid of living at home with a parent who sometimes becomes abusive)</p>	<p>Use a low-key, friendly, but serious approach.</p> <p>Let the child set the pace of the interaction.</p> <p>Emphasize your respect for the child by addressing him/her in an adult manner: identify yourself, explain your job title, and share your expectation that the child has important things on his/her mind (mastery and self-confidence being increasingly important at this stage).</p> <p>Convey patience to the child through your words and actions.</p> <p>Invite the child to describe relationships with peers and teachers and to discuss personal interests.</p>	<p>To avoid creating anxiety, allow the child to talk through his/her narrative unrushed.</p> <p>Remember that even when some children seem very mature, they still need reassurance that they don’t have to make adult decisions.</p>

# 8-10 Years *(cont.)*

## *The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children*

<b>What the typical child might say and do:</b>	<b>What the typical child knows or thinks:</b>	<b>What you should say or do:</b>	<b>Cautions:</b>
<p>Mixes shows of affection, cheerfulness, and outgoing behaviors with instances of rudeness, selfishness, and bossiness</p> <p>Normal nonverbal communication includes: fidgeting, twisting hair, wiggling, etc.</p>	<p>Recognizes that events in the lives of his/her parents influence their emotions and no longer assumes personal responsibility for how others feel/act</p>		

### **Indicators of possible developmental problems:**

Regresses in language use/skills

Doesn't speak or stops speaking

Cannot sustain conversations with adults or peers

Speaking is incoherent, illogical, pressured, or blocked

Stutters excessively

Has great difficulty with reading and/or appears to show no interest in reading

# 10-12 Years

## *The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children*

<b>What the typical child might say and do:</b>	<b>What the typical child knows or thinks:</b>	<b>What you should say or do:</b>	<b>Cautions:</b>
<p>Increasingly able to gather facts, discuss problems, and make plans</p> <p>Argues logically</p> <p>Shows interest in other people's ideas (at times)</p> <p>Enjoys peer and slang vocabulary</p> <p>Dramatizes and exaggerates</p> <p>Has highly developed vocabulary</p> <p>Normal nonverbal behaviors less obvious; is able to sustain good eye contact, sit quietly, and focus on a task, but still has enormous physical energy and needs outlets for it</p> <p>Can understand and apply health and hygiene rules</p>	<p>Thinks logically and objectively</p> <p>Grasps “double” meanings of words (puns)</p> <p>Sees others in more individualized and detailed ways (“T.J. is always in trouble because <i>he just doesn't get it</i>. He's stubborn and he acts stupid, but he's not really.”)</p> <p>Comprehends years as well as specific dates and understands historical chronology (“I was born in West Seneca, then when I was three we moved to Olean, then when I was 10, we moved to Troy.”)</p> <p>Recognizes that emotions come from “inner experiences”</p> <p>Experiences many fears and worries</p>	<p>Use the same strategies described in the previous entry, but refine them in the context of the child's increased ability to think logically and to be treated with respect.</p> <p>If a conversation is about something that might be highly emotionally charged for the child, allow ample time to “warm up” and to “cool down” after your interview.</p> <p>Take timing cues from the child's verbal and nonverbal behaviors.</p> <p>Give the child permission and encouragement to share whatever information s/he thinks you should have. (“Is there anything else you would like me to know about?”)</p>	<p>Don't rush the child into discussions of highly charged, emotional material.</p>

# 10-12 Years *(cont.)*

## *The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children*

### **Indicators of possible developmental problems:**

Regresses in language use/skills

Doesn't speak or stops speaking

Cannot sustain conversations with adults or peers

Has a short attention span

Is inhibited; withdraws



# 12-15 Years

## *The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children*

<b>What the typical child might say and do:</b>	<b>What the typical child knows or thinks:</b>	<b>What you should say or do:</b>	<b>Cautions:</b>
<p>Has an adult-level vocabulary</p> <p>Points out inconsistent logic and behaviors on the part of adults</p> <p>Likes to think and discuss ideas</p> <p>Incorporates abstract conceptions (such as of temperament) into self-assessments (“I’m loyal to my friends.”)</p> <p>Compares and contrasts others (“Mary is smarter than Bill, even though Bill works harder.”)</p> <p>Is sarcastic in speech</p> <p>Spends hours talking with friends</p> <p>May display erratic work and play patterns and transient mood swings</p>	<p>Has the ability to reason abstractly, use problem solving strategies, think sequentially, and generalize</p> <p>Realizes that s/he knows him/herself better than do his/her parents (or anyone else)</p> <p>Exhibits self-consciousness, self-centeredness, and preoccupation with own thoughts</p> <p>Feels unique and special</p> <p>Is susceptible to shame and self-doubt</p> <p>Views behaviors that harm society as wrong</p>	<p>Treat the young person respectfully.</p> <p>Join in the youth's activities and show your interest in his/her concerns and needs.</p> <p>Be direct and honest about the purpose of your interactions.</p> <p>Be sensitive to the young person's acute fear of embarrassment and fear of being seen as “weird” by peers for talking to you; whenever possible, plan to see him/her in a private setting.</p> <p>Be patient, as it may take a long time for a young person to open up and share real concerns.</p>	<p>Don't rush into the relationship.</p> <p>Don't be easily persuaded that everything is “just fine” when the youth seems reluctant to talk.</p>

# 12-15 Years *(cont.)*

## *The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children*

<b>What the typical child might say and do:</b>	<b>What the typical child knows or thinks:</b>	<b>What you should say or do:</b>	<b>Cautions:</b>
<p>Becomes annoyed by siblings and often puts them down</p> <p>May specialize in one-word answers to questions from parents or other adults by age 14 or 15 (“Where did you go?” “Out.” “What did you do?” “Nuthin.” “Did you have a good time?” “Uh-huh.”)</p>			

### **Indicators of possible developmental problems:**

- Regresses in language use/skills
- Doesn't speak or stops speaking
- Cannot sustain conversations with adults or peers
- Has a short attention span
- Is inhibited; withdraws
- Experiences extreme isolation, even from peers

# 15-18 Years

## *The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children*

<b>What the typical child might say and do:</b>	<b>What the typical child knows or thinks:</b>	<b>What you should say or do:</b>	<b>Cautions:</b>
<p>Thinks and discusses issues and concerns much like an adult</p> <p>Uses abstract reasoning</p> <p>Is able to test new ideas and opinions verbally</p> <p>May be argumentative</p> <p>Makes strong push toward independence</p> <p>Displays inconsistent behaviors</p> <p>May be very critical of self and others</p>	<p>Develops greater understanding of and preoccupation with the future</p> <p>Emphasizes relationships with friends and peers over relationships with family</p> <p>Recognizes and accepts responsibility for how his/her opinions may affect others</p> <p>May fluctuate between having adult opinions and ideas and acting on childlike (or hedonistic) impulses</p>	<p>Join and engage with the youth as with an adult, conveying the core conditions of empathy, respect, and genuineness.</p> <p>Be a good listener.</p> <p>Be willing to be a “sounding board” and offer your attentions and responses as appropriate.</p> <p>Extend your understanding of the reality that the young person is somewhere between the (liberated and scary) world of adults and the (stifling and theoretically safe) world of childhood.</p>	<p>Don't rush into the relationship.</p> <p>Don't be easily persuaded that everything is “just fine” when the youth seems reluctant to talk.</p>

# 15-18 Years *(cont.)*

## *The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children*

### **Indicators of possible developmental problems:**

Regresses in language use/skills

Doesn't speak or stops speaking

Cannot sustain conversations with adults or peers

Has a short attention span

Is inhibited; withdraws

Experiences extreme isolation, even from peers

Doesn't make any attempts toward independence

Doesn't plan for the future

Shows no interest in social relations with peers of the same or opposite sex

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