

Developmental Milestones for Eighth Grade Ages 13-14

The Thirteen -Year-Old

Physical Development

- Wide differences in the rate of physical growth among individuals; girls 95% of mature height is average; boys - voice change; growth about a year behind girls
- Skin problems emerging; hygiene a key issue
- Eating patterns change
- Uneven coordination
- Worry about being normal, physically
- Feel awkward about body
- Most social/emotional/cognitive developments directly related to physical changes
- Hormonal/physical demands of puberty may slow intellectual growth
- Short term thinking may predominate over long term planning
- Abstract reasoning and "formal operations" begin to be functional in some thirteen year olds.

Social and Emotional Development

- Concerned about physical attractiveness to others; the mirror is their best friend and worst enemy
- Struggle with sense of identity:
- Increased distractions from doing homework: Sports, dress, telephone, computer, video games
- Music becoming a major preoccupation
- One word answers to adult questions (minimal feedback)
- Feel unique, believing that no one has ever felt as they do, suffered so much, loved so deeply, or been so misunderstood
- Peer relations/peer pressure (being "cool"):
- Parent relationships:

Intellectual Development

- Hormonal/physical demands of puberty may slow intellectual growth
- Short term thinking may predominate over long term planning
- Abstract reasoning and "formal operations" begin to be functional in some thirteen year olds.
- Not willing to take big learning risks (adolescent insecurity)
- Like to challenge answers
- Withdrawn and sensitive nature is protective of developing self-concept and intellectual ideas that are not fully formed yet
- Tentative approach to difficult intellectual tasks; not willing to take big learning risks; this has usually caused the fears and self-consciousness of adolescence
- Risk-taking behaviors spring from lack of cause-effect thinking
- Concerns with rules/fairness; idealistic

The Fourteen -Year-Old

Physical Development

- High energy and need for physical exercise and snacking
- Generally healthy; want to be able to participate with peers
- Girls: full development is nearly complete
- Boys: growth spurt continues; upper body strength begins to develop in boys
- Feel awkward about body
- Worry about being normal

Social and Emotional Development

- Concerned about physical attractiveness to others
- Like to do as much as possible--cram as much into the day as they can
- More of their own adult personality evident
- Loud
- Close friendships gain importance
- Search for new people to love in addition to parents
- Show-off qualities
- Rules and limits are tested
- Feel unique: No one else has ever felt as they do, suffered so much, loved so deeply, or been so misunderstood
- Focus on self, alternating between high expectations and poor self-concept
- Often embarrassed to be seen with parents; critical of parental dress, habits, friends, ideas
- Struggle with a sense of identity
- Peer group influences interests and clothing styles
- Striving for independence and autonomy is greatly increased
- Complain that parents interfere with independence; rules and limits are tested
- Resent criticism and put-downs even though they use them themselves

Intellectual Development

- Developing formal operational thinking, but also thinks in concrete terms
- Learn best when actively involved with ideas connected to their personal lives
- Learn well in cooperative groups
- Respond well to academic variety and change
- Interested in technology and how things work
- Easily "bored"
- Idealistic, offering "ideal" solutions to complex problems
- More consistent evidence of conscience
- Often the greatest experimental, risk-taking time.
- Undeveloped understanding of cause and effect as well as feelings of omnipotence and invulnerability ("It can't happen to me.") may lead to the inability to link behaviors to negative consequences
- Do not distinguish between what others are thinking and what they are thinking themselves; assume every other person is as concerned with their behavior and appearance as they are
- Want to try new things; but are often afraid because of fear and self-consciousness
- May question parents' political beliefs, religious beliefs, and values
- Have a longer attention span (up to 30 or 40 minutes) than younger children
- Are better at planning than carrying out the plan