

DEVELOPMENTAL PROFILE FOR 7TH-9TH GRADE STUDENTS AGES 12-14

Physical Development

- Major physiological or body changes occur compared to all other periods of growth during childhood except infancy.
- Skeletal growth is marked in long bone and joint plates. Bone and skeletal attachment damage can easily occur, so suggesting less zealous sports would be appropriate.
- Hormones change the body's ratio of fat to muscle. The increase in muscle development provides of sense of strength.
- If physiological change is rapid, the child may feel and be temporarily clumsy and awkward.
- Boys take divergent paths in terms of caring for the self. Athletes tend to be conscious and even consumed at times with diet and health, while others may see attention to diet as being "square".
- Girls also have a change in food consumption. A slim body is a national or cultural mental picture that many girls seek desperately to attain. Poor eating practices interchanged with crash diets and pills may result.
- Body awareness is normal and assistance with self-acceptance is really important.

Emotional Development

- This age marks a new tension in harmonizing the past with hope for the future.
- Dreams may be seen as prophesy so that reality and being real seem shadowy and unimportant.
- Boasting of abilities and skills, especially around peers, becomes a typical way to mask inadequacy and feelings of insecurity.
- The outlook of the child might be summed up in this way: "I am what I imagine myself to be."
- There is a crucial shifting in the personality that may result in the child feeling he or she is in a chaotic crisis. The child works to define the self, identity, roles he or she plays in each dimension of life, relationships with other people, sexual identity and personal beliefs/principles.

Philosophical/Moral Development

- So many things are in flux that the chaos becomes a battleground as well. The person is generally at the "good boy" or "nice girl" stage. Referents, or people the child wants to "please", shift from parents to peers as the social authority.
- The student is often overwhelmed with the chaos and restructuring, so rules and expectations become a "bother" and area negated as, "nothing but social notions."
- The pursuit of a personal belief system is confusing due to parental parameters and demands, peer beliefs, and a sense of powerlessness to change one's life direction. Often this confusion leads to rebellious actions of or an unwilling adherence to "shoulds" and "oughts".
- The child benefits from the establishment of simple expectations that are worked out with the student and are consistently followed. Doing this provides the child with a safety net.

Social Development

- The difficulty in trying to meet both parental expectations and peer norms begins or intensifies.
- Peers are the most important referent (individuals the child wants to "please").
- Belonging and being accepted take on looming proportions.
- The "pre-adult" child tends to resent parental limits and frequently rebels.
- Running away from or escaping "problems" becomes commonplace. It may take the form of a symbolic tuning out, a physical act, substance/sex abuse, etc..
- The child's preoccupation with self, appearance, and others' possible perceptions of self may literally plague the youngster.
- Mood swings and personal goals may appear to be unpredictable and out-of-control.
- The way out of the "forest" is to keep working toward being real and accepting the "true self". Adults who help in this task are loved.

Intellectual/Cognitive Development

- Formal operations usually begins during this time period (when mental operations can be performed without concrete objects and abstract thinking begins).
- During the initial period of early adolescence, the child is often so overwhelmed with other areas of development that it makes it difficult to focus on intellectual and cognitive development on a deeper level.
- The latter part of this stage should result in new abilities to add dimension to ideas and to think in greater depth with more "power".
- The student often has the ability to construct a formal or logical theory for events that is independent of one specific concept and considers the addition of new concepts.
- Virtuosity (great technical skill as in the practice of a fine art) becomes possible for some.