Ages and Stages

Characteristics of 6-8 year olds

Physical
- Are mastering physical skills. Have better control of large muscles than small muscles.

Social
- Are learning how to be friends and may have several best friends at a time. Are becoming more aware of peers and their opinions and are beginning to better observe other people.
- Are beginning to experience empathy for others, but still learning about and wrapped up in self. Are still family oriented.

Emotional
- See fairness as being nice to others so they will be nice in return.
- Seek parental approval but are becoming emotionally steadier and freer from parents.
- Tend to behave in ways to avoid punishment.

Intellectual
- Generalize from own experiences and are more interested in process than product.
- Base their thinking in reality and accuracy.
- Are learning to sort things into categories and arrange in a series. Are beginning to develop sense of cause and effect. Handle well only one mental operation at a time.
- Can distinguish between reality and fantasy-but may be afraid of scary figures.

Characteristics of 9-11 year olds

Physical
- Experience steady increases in large muscle development, strength, balance and coordination.
- Are quite active with boundless energy.
- Are maturing at differing rates between the sexes. Girls will be maturing faster than boys and some may be entering puberty.
- Are increasing in manual dexterity, small muscle coordination.

Social
- Generally see adults as authority.
- Believe punishment should be a direct consequence of misdeeds. Follow rules out of respect for authority.
- Feel loyalty to group, club, gang. Enjoy code language and passwords.
- Identify with same sex group. May prefer to be with members of the same sex. Prefer working in groups in cooperative activities.
- Expand and use reasoning skills to solve problems, negotiate and compromise with peers.

Emotional
- View right behavior as "obeying" rules set by those in power. Accept parent/family beliefs.
- Admire and imitate older boys and girls. Are developing decision-making skills.
- Are making some movement toward taking responsibility for own actions. Emphasize similarities between self and friend(s). Are beginning to question parental authority. Look to adults for guidance and approval. Need involvement with a caring adult.
- Find comparisons with the success of others difficult and eroding of self-confidence.

Intellectual
- Vary greatly in academic abilities, interest and reasoning skills.
- Have increased attention span, but have many interests which change rapidly. Are beginning to think logically and symbolically. Still prefer concrete ideas. Are learning to use good judgment.
- Judge ideas in absolutes; right or wrong, fabulous or disgusting, etc. Do not tolerate much middle ground.
- Want to use their skills to explore and investigate the world. Have interests in collections and hobbies.
- May express feelings through creative writing.

Characteristics of 12-14 Year Olds

Physical
- Exhibit a wide range of sexual maturity and growth patterns between genders and within gender groups.
- Experience rapid changes in physical appearance.
- Growth of hands and feet, nose and ears may be faster than arms and legs and face causing concern for appearance and clumsiness.

Social
- Are interested in activities involving the opposite sex; learning to live with opposite sex.
- Are looking more to peers than parents. Seek peer recognition. Seek acceptance and trust.
- Tend to regard sex in a depersonalized way.
- Search for adult role models; may belong to fan clubs.
- Tend to reject ready-made solutions from adults in favor of their own. Question authority and family values.

Emotional
- Compare themselves to others.
- Are concerned about physical development and emerging sexuality. See themselves as always on center stage.
- Are working on forming a sense of continuity between inner and outer self. Body changes can set up situations of great embarrassment.
- Are concerned about social graces, grooming and being liked by friends. Abandon view of parents as all powerful.
- Strive for independence, yet want and need parents help. Need information for making decisions. Seek privacy from parents /adults.
- Want to be part of something important.

Intellectual
- Find justice and equality to be important issues. Think abstractly and hypothetically.
- Are developing skills in the use of logic. Can understand cause and effect. Can solve problems that have more than one variable. Can imagine consequences. Can think about thinking.
- Are ready for in-depth, long-term experiences.
- Have moved from fantasy to realistic focus on their life's goals. Challenge assumptions.
- Want to explore the world beyond their own community. Are curious about the environment.

Characteristics of 15-18 Year Olds

Physical
- Are concerned about body image.
- Exhibit smaller range in size and maturity among peers.
- Tend to have realistic view of limits to which body can be tested.

Social
- Tend to romanticize sexuality, but are moving toward a more realistic understanding. Search for intimacy.
- Test sexual attractiveness. Make commitments.
- Can commit to follow through with service. See adults as fallible. Desire respect.
- Are apt to reject goals set by others. Renegotiate relationships.
- Want adult leadership roles.

Emotional
- Desire respect.
- Are beginning to accept and enjoy their own uniqueness, but still seek status and approval of peer group. Look for confidence of others in their decisions. Develop their own set of values and beliefs. Take on multiple roles. Gain autonomy.
- Are introspective.
- Can see self from viewpoint of others. Take fewer risks.
- Can initiate and carry out their own tasks without the supervision of others. Search for career possibilities.
- Desire a role in determining what happens in their world.

Intellectual
- Are mastering abstract thinking. Can imagine impact of present behavior on the future.
- Enjoy demonstrating acquired knowledge.
- Can consider many perspectives of a given issue. Develop theories to explain how things happen. Create new possibilities from information.
- Will lose patience with meaningless activity.

USDA/Army School-Age & Teen Project
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