

Developmental Expectations

7th - 8th Grades

12-14 years old

The 12 Year Old

- More capable of organizing his energy
- Will “push through” to meet a goal
- Leisurely, noncommittal “hanging around”
- Enthusiasm is especially given to sports
- May suddenly feel very tired
- It may take them a couple of days to revitalize
- A calming down of motor drivenness
- More thoughtful in how he responds
- Answers are clear, spontaneous and interesting
- Less clowning, dramatization and making faces
- Emotionally is happier and less moody than at 11 years old
- Good natured and warm

Physical Development and Sexual Awareness

- Wide range of physical growth among this age group
- Pubertal fat period often begins at 12 years. It helps them to know this is only temporary
- They think they have all the information they need about sex
- Beginning to become aware that sexual activity is separate from the conception of babies
- Some interest in girls – like social gatherings that include girls
- Erections occur often
- Visual stimuli as well as intense emotion such as fear and rage can cause an erection
- May be interested in sex and he wants factual information and often seeks this information from magazines, the internet for sex words. This can easily take them to porn sites
- They are quick to swap stories and information with their peers

The 13 Year Old

- This year of development usually marks a sudden and sharp turn in behavior
- They turn inward, withdraw, are less communicative, uncertain about self and others as well as the world in general
- Feels like and often will express your “prying into my privacy”
- They are introspective and reflective – often retreating to their rooms, listening to music or staring at the ceiling for hours on end
- Parents often see this as negative when in fact it is necessary and constructive – the development and awareness of their personality; pondering their beliefs and the incongruities of the world around them
- They try to convince themselves they are not afraid, but many 13 year olds may be afraid of crowded areas or being hemmed in
- Their response to adults may be clipped, surly or rude. They don’t hear this in their conversations or responses and will often say “what do you mean?”
- They are hardest on moms. They are pushing away for this stage so that they know they can make it without mom. They also want to spend more time with dad. Hanging out with dad, going to work with dad, even yard work with dad. They are looking for how dad behaves in order to model his own behavior
- This age group can become very angry with teachers, justly or unjustly, and become rebellious in the classroom or with their class work

Physical Development and Sexual Awareness

- At 13 most boys experience pronounced physical growth – both height and genitalia
- Erections occur so frequently and for no apparent reason that some boys will choose to wear an athletic supporter all of the time
- Because their focus is turned inward they do not ask many questions or make random conversation about girls or social curiosity
- He may or may not be interested in girls at this age
- This is not a particularly pleasant stage of development for the 13 year old or his parents

14 Year Old

- This age has once again become more available emotionally and socially. He is full of life, energy and excitement
- Along with 12 and 13 year olds, 14's are still in the throws of forming their identity
- Parents and other adults are seen as antiquated by their teen
- Deep down this age group still loves their parents and want to be a part of family life
- Fourteens do fall back into periods of niceness and yet they continue to exert their independence in gruff, critical ways
- In public this same child presents himself as energetic, lively, dramatic, daring and ready for anything
- They still take directions from Fathers better than Mothers
- Peers are very important and being "alike" is paramount
- It is most helpful if parents are able to stay in the background offering guidance only when absolutely necessary. Allowing this age group the room to make decisions and learn from them is most helpful in their gaining confidence and trusting themselves to learn from their mistakes and move forward
- As parents and surrounding adults it is important to communicate that you believe he has the ability to resolve the challenges he is dealt, whether you consider them to be successful or not
- The majority of children in this age group drink alcohol and experiment with drugs. As a parent your job is to be clear about your expectations and consequences around these issues and to follow through promptly without anger or lectures. Directly and calmly allows them to take responsibility for their actions instead of focusing on your emotions or tuning out your lectures

Physical Development and Sexual Awareness

- This is a transition phase for most boys. The physical growth spurt has peaked and they no longer look like 10 year old boys, but instead they look much more like men
- They are muscled and leaner. Their voices have deepened and body hair is apparent and denser. The genitalia has developed to a nearly mature level

- Whereas in the past couple of stages erections were quite common, ejaculation is first experienced in most 14 year olds
- Masturbation and nocturnal emission are common. Most boys have received adequate information about sexual development that they are not disturbed by the maturation process
- Further sex education is needed and eagerly received by this age group
- Topics such as AIDS, STD's, prostitution, pornography, intercourse – both premarital and marital, and teen pregnancy are all subjects that this age group questions and evaluates
- It is important for parents to have discussed first with each other and then your teen the belief system you have about these topics and why. Your 14 year old is trying to believe the value system that accompanies these relational/sexual issues
- Be clear, answer their questions honestly and without judgment
- In our culture today, sexual exploration of any kind is acceptable at this age. Prior to their 20's they have little maturity physically, mentally or emotionally to handle the relational consequences of ongoing sexual activity
- Parents are needed more than ever during the teen years to provide guidance and wisdom that offers the bigger picture of social/emotional relationships. Of course you must believe and be living what you teach. Do not expect them "to do what you say and not as you behave". They will see the hypocrisy of your position and often times will challenge the incongruity of your words and deeds