

Conflict is Normal: Ages 10-14



In this stage, adults need to see themselves as guides—almost “gatekeepers”—for children. Even though children can take on more responsibility for themselves in this stage, parents need to be available both physically and emotionally as much as possible. Adults also need to see themselves as mentors of behaviors for this stage.

What to Expect:

- Children in this stage have the ability to think like adults without the life experiences of adulthood. They want independence but still need guidance.
- Acceptance is a big deal at this stage! Teens especially need to know that they fit in somewhere, and peer acceptance becomes very important in middle school and high school.
- Relationships can be hard to negotiate at this stage as friendships and romantic feelings begin to blend.
- Cliques become prevalent at this stage as children and teens start to identify themselves with one group or another.

How to help tweens in this stage:

- **Create Family Identity:** Because acceptance is such an important part of this stage, children need to feel that there is one place where they feel unconditionally accepted—a place where they have an identity.
- **Encourage Multiple Interests:** Parents and teachers can combat clique development by noticing children’s interests and helping them to pursue them.
- **Talk It Out:** Adults need to prepare themselves for this stage because it may be filled with a lot of words. These conversations are very important as children need to start putting reasons behind almost every decision that is made.

For more information about conflict and bullying, please visit:

<http://www.parentfurther.com/high-risk-behaviors/bullying/normal-behavior-vs-bullying-behavior>