

Adolescent Developmental Considerations:

The following bullet points summarize elements of adolescent development specific to early-, mid-, and late-adolescence. The ages given are a generalization and are not intended as true in all cases. Additionally not all elements necessarily change at the same rate. The chart is intended as a general guideline only.

Also, the information in this chart was developed specifically in reference to adolescents in the USA. Cultural determinants in other parts of the world may significantly alter the expression of these elements.

Early Adolescence: Ages 11-13

- Physical changes (including puberty) alter, threaten, and/or undermine their sense of self.
- They crave, yet reject and/or feel embarrassed by, emotion and physical closeness, attention, touch.
- Many intense and oppositional, quickly-changing feelings (some sexual) are felt.
- The bridge begins between concrete and abstract thought.
- They become increasingly articulate, logical, critical, and interested.
- They are concerned with peer acceptance and friendship, but don't easily give or acquire acceptance. The "herd mentality" is dominant, and the need to be part of the perceived norm is important.
- They need fairness, consistency, firmness, structure, clarity, and directness.
- They are trying to balance the need for independence with the need for adult advocacy and involvement.

Mid Adolescence: Age 14 – 16

- They are still growing and changing and are concerned with body and appearance.

- They are becoming more introspective, less quick to react, and with fewer oppositional emotions. Feelings are still intense, often sexual.
- They are fully in abstract thought, and can plan for and imagine a future for self.
- They need discussion and experience fewer power struggles.
- They look for a sense of self as being needed and important to others and to causes.
- They seek more responsibility and independence.
- They are possible sexually active, and issues of sexual identity and activity are prominent.
- They need and want consistent friends, develop loyalties and exclusions, and engage in more long-term relationships.
- They use peers to weigh decisions and choices.
- They experience issues of trust, honesty, and reliability for self and with others.

Late Adolescence: Age 17-19

- They look adult and become legally adult for many purposes, although in the USA, not for the purchase of alcohol.
- They need to talk about the future and often worry about it.
- Plans for career and further education are important and often need support and/or counseling.
- They are probably sexually active.
- Those who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, transsexual are having a harder time maintaining self-denial, if that had been a way of dealing with earlier feelings. Those who were earlier aware of their sexual orientation or gender minority status, but did not get support or feel safe enough to seek it earlier will often look for opportunities to find support during these years.
- They generally have friends of both sexes more often, and have learned to give and receive feedback more easily.
- They have an established moral code, but don't always follow it.
- Emotionally, they are very independent, but generally are still financially dependent upon others.
- Issues about the present and the future begin to combine. They begin to have a personal sense of history.

