



Make Prevention a CHOICE

What's "Normal" About...Adolescence

Adolescence is generally defined as the time of life, from approximately age 12 to 18, when a person experiences the most rapid physical, intellectual and emotional changes of their entire life.

Physical Changes:

- Development of secondary sex characteristics (body hair, breasts, broad shoulders, deeper voice, etc.)
- Maturation of reproductive system. Ability to conceive/bear children.
- Rapid growth and physical maturity. Boys usually reach full height between ages 18 to 20; girls between 16 and 17.

Intellectual Changes:

- Begin to move from concrete to abstract thinking:
Questions and tests adults' statements and values
Imagine what their future could be like.
Begin to explore ideas such as fairness, justice, etc.
- Self-absorbed, self-conscious, self-centered:
Imagine themselves to be the center of attention of an imaginary audience that passes judgment on their appearance actions and behaviors.
Imagine that others are as interested in their behavior as they themselves are.
- Sense themselves to be unique or special.
"No one understands how I feel" or I can't talk to anyone."
Emphasis on individuality, worth, and loneliness.
Sometimes results in feelings of immunity to consequences of their actions - "That won't happen to me."

NOTE: New thinking skills are often uneven - they can reason abstractly in some areas but not others. For example, they can understand what they have learned in health class about preventing illness, but may be unable to apply what they have learned to their own behavior.

As adolescents move from early to middle stages, they begin to realize their ability to distinguish between their thoughts and the thoughts of others. They realize that they have many feelings in common with other people and that they are actually vulnerable to harm.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- Struggle between desire for independence and continued need for adult affection, guidance, and help in setting limits.
- Disturbances in self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Seek friends to meet emotional needs that in the past were met only by parents.
- Increased need for privacy.
- Strong desires to commit to causes and people.
- Development of new interests and abilities coupled with a need for mastery, achievement, and competency.
- Questioning and re-evaluating family/spiritual/social beliefs and values.
- Struggle towards establishing a sense of identity as a unique human being.
- Confusion due to facing new desires, opportunities, and decisions.

NOTE: As adolescents move into the middle and late stages of their development, they begin to move towards making career/life style changes. Often they can begin to place themselves in context as a part of the “big picture”, and can show more self-confidence and decision making skills.

How to Contact Us:

Naval CBC Gulfport Center

Phone: (228) 871-2581/3000

Fax: (228) 871-3610/2384

Navy at Stennis Space Center

Phone: (228) 813-4070

Fax: (228) 688-5561

Toll Free: (800) 342-3525