

**National Health Education Week
2005**

**Healthy Choices: Family Life
Education**

Parent –Teacher Materials

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Advice on Teaching Early Adolescents

Introduction

Early adolescence is a time of rapid and dramatic change. Young adolescents experience physical, cognitive, social, and emotional changes that pervade their lives and often confuse them. A brief discussion of these aspects of development is useful to better understand the changes that occur during early adolescence and the overall experience of puberty for young people.

Physical Development

Changes in physical appearance are the most striking aspects of physical development. Other changes also take place, as young people become capable of producing children. Most of us who work with young adolescents will notice growth in height and weight. While many will notice the subtle changes in contour and shape, young adolescents will also experience internal changes. During early adolescence, the body begins to produce the hormones necessary for pubertal development. The reproductive system matures, making it possible for young adolescents to produce children.

Cognitive Development

The development of advanced intellectual processes or cognitive development begins during early adolescence. Between the ages of 10 and 15, many young people begin to develop the ability to think abstractly and reflectively. Younger children think concretely. Young adolescents may think about “what might be” instead of “what is.” They begin to develop the ability to understand metaphors and abstract mathematical concepts and to reason about ideals like justice, religion, or love. Those who work and live with young adolescents will notice some of the behaviors linked to these new cognitive abilities. For example, young teens may question accepted rules and may argue whether rules are reasonable and fair. They may question others’ beliefs and values because they are able to comprehend that not everyone thinks the same way they do about social or moral issues. Young people start to see the future in terms of years, so they may relate their interests and present circumstances to the roles they will play as adults. These cognitive abilities develop slowly, so your students may behave in ways that show both abstract and concrete thought.

Socioemotional Development

Young adolescents begin to learn new social skills as they expand their social world. They also learn to cope with the excitement and confusion that accompany the changes of early adolescence. In expanding their social world, young people begin to learn how to develop and maintain close, mutually supportive relationships with others their own age. This social skill is essential for a normal, socially competent adult and is cultivated by involvement in a group. In addition to close relationships with friends, relationships with family and other adults are necessary for healthy development. Although young adolescents look to peer groups for companionship and for guidance in some aspects of behavior, such as dress, hairstyle, and entertainment, they look to their families for affection, identification, values and decision making. Young adolescents frequently seek the company of other adults, such as teachers, relatives, club leaders or neighbors, who serve as role models or advisers.

During early adolescence, young people want more autonomy in dress, curfew, selection of friends, or how they spend their free time. They are not seeking complete independence but rather limited independence with a voice in determining specific rules and limitations. Young adolescents often appear quite absorbed by their

experiences, appearance and behavior. They tend to feel that an “imaginary audience” notices and passes judgment on their actions and appearance. Therefore, they must look and act like their peers. It is painful to be “different.”

Experiencing Puberty

Growth in physical development, cognitive abilities, social skills and emotional maturity does not occur at the same rate. For example, early physical developers do not always demonstrate early intellectual and socioemotional growth.

Young adolescents change at different rates, according to highly individual internal “clocks.” A 12-year-old who looks like a young woman is as “normal” as peers who are just beginning to mature physically, and a 13-year-old concrete thinker is as normal as peers who are capable of abstract thinking. You should emphasize that every individual is unique in terms of physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development.

Most young adolescents are pleased by the body changes (or the expected body changes) that make them look more adult. At the same time, they are concerned about whether their bodies are “normal.” A young girl may be convinced that something is wrong with her if her developmental timetable or even her feelings are different from those of her friends. A girl who develops early may delight in being the first one who has to wear a bra or she may be self-conscious about her womanly body. Some girls worry because they have not begun to menstruate while their classmates already have their periods; others may not be the least concerned. A young boy may be convinced that he has a medical problem if he doesn’t start puberty with his friends. A boy who develops early may be proud of his physical development or he may feel embarrassed because he looks so different.

There is a wide range of possible reactions and responses to growing up; all of them are normal. It is easy to talk about the events of puberty in an academic fashion until we think back to our own adolescence and remember how pimples, a nose that was too big, breasts that would not grow, or lack of athletic prowess seemed to turn all of life sour.

Early adolescence is a period of great change and growth, altering the expectations that others hold for adolescents. When adolescents begin to show signs of physical growth, adults tend to expect more mature social and emotional behavior. Adjusting to dramatic body changes and altered (and sometimes conflicting) expectations from others makes young adolescents especially vulnerable to bouts of low self-esteem, moodiness, and intense emotionalism.

As they pass through puberty, young people see themselves differently when they look in the mirror, live with their new bodies, and experience adults’ altered expectations. Because young adolescents are more self-conscious, they view themselves and their relationships in a new way.

In Closing

Young adolescents are a challenging group because they are so variable, both as individuals and as a group. As they grow accustomed to body changes, gradually master new cognitive abilities, learn “adult” social skills, and cope with these changes, individual young adolescents may feel, act, and want to be treated like children one minute and grown-ups the next. They are drawn to people who like and respect them for who they are right now and who respond sensitively to both their present joys and confusion and their dreams and worries about the future.

For more detailed information on teaching teens go to www.teachingteens.com.

**Books on Blended Families
Grades K-2**

Title	ISBN	Author	Illustrator	Year	Publisher	Topic
Happy Adoption Day!	0-316-60323-6	McCutcheon, J.	Paschkis, J.	1996	Little, Brown and Company	Adoption, by singing
Mom and Dad Don't Live Together Any More	0-920236-87-1	Stinson, K.	Reynolds, N. L.	1984	Annick Press	Parental divorce, separation
At Daddy's on Saturdays	0-8075-0473-4	Girard, L. W.	Friedman, J.	1987	Albert Whitman and Company	Parental divorce, Meeting a father
It's Not Your Fault, Koko Bear	0-916773-47-7	Lansky, V.	Prince, J.	1998	Book Peddlers	Parents who are going to divorce
You're not My Real Mother!	0-316-60553-0	Friedrich, M.	Hale, C.	2004	Little, Brown and Company	Love between adoptive parents and a child
My New Family	0-7641-2461-7	Thomas, P.	Harker, L.	2003	Barron's	Adoptive and foster families
I Don't Have Your Eyes	0-9726244-2-2	Kitze, C. A.	Williams, R.	2003	EMK Press	Adoption, Different looks but same way of living

Resources: URL of Picture Book Companies Grades K-2		
Company Name	URL	Specialties
Albert Whitman and Company	http://www.awhitmanco.com/	Multiculturalism, holiday themes, adoption, family, composition, HIV/AIDS, etc.
Barron's Educational Books	http://www.barroneduc.com/	Art, English language, family & health, crafts, history/biography, pets, sports and recreation, etc.
Harper Collins Children's Books	http://www.harperchildrens.com/hch/	Books with tapes, boardbooks, Spanish picture books, TV & movie characters books.
Holiday House	http://www.holidayhouse.com/	Animals, art/architecture, biography, disabilities, dinosaurs, ecology and environment, folk tales, etc.
Lee and Low Books	http://www.leeandlow.com/	Multicultural books (Asian, African, Latino, Native American), Spanish versions also available.
Little, Brown and Company	http://www.twbookmark.com/children/	Crafts, animals, holiday celebrations, poetry and rhythms, legends, counting, sports, families.
Magination Press	http://www.maginationpress.com/	Children's special concerns: divorce, disability, death and dying, medical problems, depression, etc.
Scholastic	http://www.scholastic.com/index.asp	Poetry, math with literature, software, phonics, science, geography, development, etc.
SimonSayKids.Com (Simon and Schuster, Inc.)	http://www.simonsays.com/content/index.cfm?sid=183	Juvenile fiction, legends/folk tales, history, biography, health and fitness, family and relationships.

Star Bright Books	http://www.starbrightbooks.org/	In 13 languages, multicultural, classic tales, inclusion and ASL, photoflaps and boardbooks.
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Resources on Relationships and Growing-Up

BOOKS

Author	Title	Year	ISBN	Publisher	Topic
Bourgeois, P. & Wolfish, M	Changes in You and Me: A Book About Puberty Mostly For Girls	1994	0836228154	Somerville House Books Ltd	<i>Ages 9-12.</i> Nine detailed chapters on adolescent changes presented in a non-threatening manner, targeting a mostly female audience.
Kahaner, Ellen	Everything you Need to Know about Growing up Female	1991	0823912183	The Rosen Publishing Group	<i>Ages 9-12.</i> This work does an excellent job of including many aspects of growing up female. It addresses old myths and speaks to modern truths. The differences and similarities between males and females are spoken about, to make the emotional, psychological, and physical changes during puberty seen as common/universal events.
Madaras, Area and Lynda	My Body, Myself: For Boys	2000	1557042306	Newmarket Press	<i>Young Adult.</i> This book provides boys with information and facts that will help ease their transition from boyhood into manhood. The often-asked questions are answered with various solutions, helping the reader understand the physical and emotional changes that they will or are experiencing. It includes “over 100 quizzes, checklists, games, and journal pages about your growing body”.
Meredith, Susan	Growing Up: Adolescence, Body Changes, and Sex	1997	0794507646	Usborne Publishing Ltd.	<i>Ages 9-12.</i> Meredith’s award winning book speaks of every aspect of a child’s maturation into adulthood, from contraception to puberty.

Meyers, S. and Sanders, P.	What Do You Know About Puberty and Growing Up?	1999	0749638141	Copper Beech Books	<i>Ages 9 and up.</i> This book discusses the physical and emotional changes associated with puberty in both boys and girls. The text is accompanied by real-life photographs, as well as comic book-like illustrations.
SIECUS	Families are Talking	2005	N/A	SIECUS	<i>Adolescents and their parents.</i> Monthly Newsletter, also available in Spanish.

VIDEOS

<i>Author</i>	Title	Minutes	Ordering Information	Topic(s)
<i>Discovery Channel School</i>	Reality Matters: Becoming an Adult	24	www.shopping.discovery.com 1-877-900-8830	This program explores how adolescence is the entry into adulthood, along with the many pitfalls for those who try to grow too fast.
<i>Discovery Channel School</i>	Reality Matters: Family and Friends	24	www.shopping.discovery.com 1-877-900-8830	This program will explore the different facets of these very important relationships.
<i>Discovery Channel School</i>	Reality Matters: Big Decisions	24	www.shopping.discovery.com 1-877-900-8830	This video focuses on the decisions kids make every day and how to make the best ones possible.
<i>Discovery Channel School</i>	Puberty for Girls: Amazing Changes Inside and Out	28	United Learning www.shopping.discovery.com 1-877-900-8830	This video, often funny, sometimes touching, always honest, helps your students understand what soon will be happening to their bodies as well as their feelings and thoughts.
<i>Discovery Channel School</i>	Puberty for Boys: Amazing Changes Inside and Out	21	United Learning www.shopping.discovery.com 1-877-900-8830	This program helps them to understand all of the new physical, psychological, and emotional changes that they may soon experience.
<i>HRM</i>	Feeling Good About Growing Up	28	N/A	Important information to help pre-teens gain knowledge about puberty and feel more comfortable with the process of moving toward adulthood. Offers information about physical and emotional changes.
<i>Media Education Foundation</i>	Killing Us Softly- 3	34	N/A	Jean Kilbourne reviews if and how the image in advertising has changed over the past 20 years.

Pritchard, Michael	Big Chances, Big Choices (series)	26	Live Wire Media (800) 359-5437 www.goodcharacter.com	Decision making, values, character, sex
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<i>Author</i>	Title	Minutes	Ordering Information	Topic(s)
United Learning	Puberty for Boys	21	N/A	Video addresses the new physical, psychological and emotional changes that occur as boys grow into adulthood. Dozens of teen boys share their thoughtful, humorous and insightful stories and discoveries.
United Learning	Puberty for Girls	21	N/A	Video addresses the new physical, psychological and emotional changes that occur as girls grow into adulthood. Teen females share their thoughtful, humorous and insightful stories and discoveries.
Sunburst	Talking About Sex: Am I Normal?	34	N/A	The video covers the basics about sexual development both physical and emotional emphasizing that everyone matures at different rates. There are two versions. The video (with mention) briefly mentions STD's and masturbation. The other version (without mention) does not. 2001.
Aims Multimedia	Teen Files Flipped: Boyfriend/Girlfriend	21	N/A	A teen couple has misconceptions about each other's lives so they are "flipped" for 24 hours into each other's gender, jobs etc. which offers increased perspectives and appreciation for each other. 2001
Marsh Media	We're Growing Up	12	N/A	Designed for a co-ed audience, this video presents essential information in an upbeat format. Narrators discuss growth patterns from contraception through adolescence and provide a review of male and female anatomy and sexual development.
ETR Associates	Family Relationships	N/A	N/A	Offers strategies for resolving conflict and deal with the stress of family change. 1996

WEBSITES

<i>Company</i>	URL	Specialty
Allan Guttmacher Institute	www.agi-usa.org	Current statistics and publications
Center for Chronic Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)	http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/index.htm	Government website for teens about health issues
Rutgers University	www.sxetc.org	Peer written website covering the topics of love, sex, relationship, HIV/AIDS, violence, abuse and other health-related issues
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)	www.siecus.org	Sexuality information, resources and curriculum guidelines

Online Resources

? **National Institute of Mental Health Publications**

Publications on various children's mental and emotional health topics are available at <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/publisting.cfm?dID=23>.

? **Child, Adolescent, and Family Branch (CAFB) of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Mental Health Information Center**

CAFB has a comprehensive community mental health services program for children and their families.

<http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/KEN95-0016/default.asp>.

? **The Center for Health and Health Care in Schools (CHHCS)**

Contains a Parents' Resource Center that provides information on children's emotional and physical health issues as well as tips for keeping your child safe and healthy. <http://www.healthinschools.org/parents/learn.htm>.

National Health Information Network

A site recommended for teachers and parents to help them communicate more effectively with their children about various health concerns.

<http://www.neahealthinfo.org/home.htm>

? **Wired for Health**

A site sponsored by the United Kingdom's Department of Health and the Department of Education and Skills. It contains a variety of mental and physical health information for students, teachers and health professionals.

<http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/home.php?catid=872>

? **Family Doctor. Org**

A site sponsored by the American Academy of Family Physicians. It contains a sections for parents and kids on understanding emotional and physical health.

<http://familydoctor.org/590.xml>.

? **Child |Development Institute**

A site that contains information on health, parenting issues and child safety.

<http://www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/about.htm>.

? The Whole Child

A site sponsored by the Public Broadcasting Service on child development. It provides information for parents and early care providers on emotional health.

<http://www.pbs.org/wholechild/providers/dealing.html>.

