

AGE-RELATED CHARACTERISTICS

These age-related characteristics may help you with the age group you are working. Use these descriptions to help you understand the youth a little better.

Five-Year Olds

They are:

Friendly, helpful, funny, cooperative, worriers, sometimes bossy with peers, slapstick comics, showoffs, procrastinators, and outgoing.

They fear:

The dark, loss of mother or nurturing figure, getting lost, school, and being mocked.

They may:

Name call and insult peers, protect personal belongings, identify stereotypes, seek praise, and tell jokes they think are very funny.

They need:

Approval, acceptance, and love especially from parent figures. They need opportunities to return to younger behaviors, information clarified, given in different ways and more than once. Self-image boost, exploration of their own cultural identity and an audience.

Six year olds

They are:

Active, accident prone, competitive, jealous of siblings and peers, aggressive physically and verbally, generous, compassionate, lonely, defiant, sensitive to disapproval.

They fear:

Thunder and lightning, ghosts, goblins, embarrassment, being left out, change and death.

They may:

Tease, magnify small problems, use shock words, think and behave rigidly, have temper tantrums, and be greedy.

They need:

Reassurance that they are loved, guided opportunities for increased independence, strategies for decision making, reassurance and discussion about fears, to clearly understand expectations, the ability to explore culture and beliefs of peers.

Seven year olds

They are:

Moody and sulky, pleasers, modest, thoughtful, moving from fantasy to reality, empathetic, adventurers, tellers of tales, intensely involved in activities, less aggressive than six's.

They fear:

New situations, disruption of routine, disapproval from peers and parents, highly organized competition, lack of privacy, own inability to handle pressure from adults.

They may:

Have idols, be unhappy and pensive, engage in attention-getting behavior for long periods of time, name-calling, enjoy dramatic play, resent interruptions.

They need:

Short, clear messages regarding expectations, uninterrupted periods of time for activities, recognition from peers and parents, increase opportunities for long-term responsibility, (such as pet care), privacy, realistic toys and tools.

Eight year olds**They are:**

Independent, collectors, sexually curious, developing own interests, impatient, critical, and sensitive but cry less, appreciate humor, cheerful, lonely without interactions with friends.

They fear:

Staying alone for long periods of time. Failure to perform and meet own expectations, enemies, and losing special friends.

They may:

Be critical of self and others, be impatient, enjoy scary stories, get feelings hurt easily, and begin to resent parental authority but be more respectful of other adult authority. They like to catch people making mistakes.

They need:

Information about faraway places, differences among people, similarities among people. More responsibilities with concrete rewards and consequences remain close to family, genuine acknowledgement of accomplishments, reassurance regarding their own abilities, and a close friend.

Nine year olds**They are:**

Curious, rebellious, hero worshippers, independent, dependable, loyal and protective, aggressive verbally but less physically. Not interested in creative pursuits, humorous, and engaged in sex-segregated play.

They fear:

Loss of dignity, or propriety, differences in physical traits, being treated unfairly, being seen as liking the opposite sex.

They may:

Dislike interruptions but will resume an activity afterwards. Push aside parents and other adult's ideas, demand personal rights, especially in the areas of fairness. Scare each other, engage in spying and hiding, develop a strong belief in themselves, and express a variety of emotions.

They need:

Adult protection and understanding, opportunities to be needed and useful. Clubs, groups, organizations to join, safe ways to test independent thinking, longer periods of time for activities, and to be treated fairly.

Ten-Year Olds**They are:**

Happy, seldom sad, practical jokers, rarely in tears, not able to take jokes about themselves. They move or shy away and have a tendency to be shy in new situations. They are secret tellers, into cliques, and empathetic.

They fear

Not doing so well in school, being late, not being able to understand homework, the rapid changes in their bodies, being ridiculed, and being different.

They may

They tell puns and riddles, don't get mad easily, rebel at authority, and want to be part of a team or gang. They begin to focus or worry about the opposite sex, and do the unexpected.

They need:

Responsibility, adults to talk to, stable relationships, reassurance regarding their scholastic abilities, and opportunities to be helpful to others.

Eleven and Twelve year olds**They are:**

Able to show respect to authority, physically developing quickly (especially the girls), interested in exclusive relationships with the opposite sex, interested in social order being maintained in family, school, and community, interested in world events, ancestry, geography, and history, aware of cultural and political values, confident in some of their life skills and their ability to learn, unpredictable at times, anxious to be seen as behaving correctly, eager to be grown up.

They fear:

Injustice for themselves and others, being made fun of by the opposite sex, being left out, helplessness in the face of world problems, physical inadequacy.

They may:

Join gangs, have girlfriend and boyfriends in the romantic sense, be struggling with sexual identification, worry about sexual feelings and development, be self-righteous, be very shy and withdrawn.

They need:

Opportunities for social action and activities, adults to give them correct information about their developing bodies, chances to feel needed, adults who are loyal to them, adults who take their ideas and opinions seriously, love and understanding from adults and peers.

Thirteen to Fifteen year olds

They are:

Concerned about physical development, preoccupied with being liked by friends, seeking independence, like fan clubs, wanting to get outside of their own communities and explore, interested in sports and active games, self-conscious, getting over the age of fantasy in relation to future career goals, unclear of needs and values, ready for in-depth, longer learning experiences.

They fear:

Injustice for themselves and others, being made fun of by the opposite sex, being left out, being singled out, helplessness in the face of world problems, physical inadequacy

They may:

Join gangs, not immediately trust authority figures, be seemingly unmotivated, have girlfriend and boyfriends in the romantic sense, be struggling with sexual identification, worry about sexual feelings and development, be self-righteous, have inferiority complexes about physical attributes, be strongly influenced (positively or negatively) by same age or older peers, be very shy and withdrawn

They need:

Opportunities for social action and activities, positive role models/mentors (adults, or, sometimes, older teens), to experience different environmental settings, meaningful leadership opportunities (amongst peers and others), independence (with guidance), to be praised for a job well done, chances to feel needed, cooperative learning experiences, consistent limits, adults who are loyal to them, adults who take their ideas and opinions seriously, love and understanding from adults and peers.