

Stages of Development

Look What I Can Do: Uniteens (11 to 14 Years)

Preteens are going through huge physical and emotional changes. They can be unpredictable and hard to read as they swing between childhood and adulthood. They are making an attempt to move into adulthood but can still be drawn to things in their childhood. Preteens are excited to be moving into the teen years but also scared of the unknown. They are exploring who they are and their peers are very important to them. We can help them by providing lots of opportunities for them to interact with their peers because their peer opinions are beginning to be of more importance than those of their teachers or parents. They are becoming more concerned with their personal appearance and need time and space to discover who they are and what is important to them. While they challenge authority they can also be open to guidance from adults who are not their parents or teachers.

Physical

- Kids are extremely sensitive about their differences at this age.
- They are full of energy but they tire easily and require more rest.
- Strenuous activity requires more recovery time.
- Overly tired kids will be unable to control their emotions, tongues and attitudes.
- They are devastated when they feel awkward and gain great satisfaction from mastering new skills.
- Are very concerned with their appearance and where they fit into the group. They need to feel a sense of belonging.

Cognitive

- Able to enjoy abstract thinking and like to explore many sides of an issue.
- They have well developed critical-thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Like to focus on things they think are important and tend to be careless with things that they think are unimportant like cleaning their room.
- Are impulsive and don't yet have the full capacity to think things through in detail.
- They are beginning to question authority figures. They prefer to reason things through for themselves.

Moral

- Hormonal changes create mood changes and out of control emotions without apparent provocation.
- We need to remain calm and model mature emotional responses.
- Anger emerges due to fatigue, feelings of inadequacy, rejection and uncertainty.
- Forgiveness needs to characterize the teacher/student relationship.
- Fear often manifests as worry. They feel adults tend to dismiss their fears thinking they should have grown out of them.

Social

- It is normal for them to have a very close friend of the same gender.
- All boys tend to become rambunctious and rude, and a group of all girls will be "cliquish," gossip and catty. Most will respond to the teacher to stay on task.
- They are preoccupied with themselves. Even entering a room can be traumatic.
- Loners and less popular kids may need special help with social skills.

- Service projects are especially powerful in breaking the self-absorption.
- Need rituals that help them to mark turning points in their lives.
- Need opportunities to take on major responsibilities in the classroom.

Curriculum Focus for this Age Group

- To know they are inherently good and to help them understand that they have choices as to how they can show up in this world.
- To understand that Jesus was a human being who lived and is also the example of God moving in and through us.
- To begin to lead affirmative prayers and experience longer meditations.
- To begin to understand that Jesus is our elder brother and way-shower and to understand that we can do as Jesus did.

Stages of Development

Look What I Can Do: Y.O.U. (14 to 18 Years)

Teens are going through rapid changes and continued growth spurts. They face a lot of temptations and constant peer pressure. They spend a great deal of time worrying about how others view them. They are beginning to want to be treated as adults. They have the ability to think through problems on their own and want to be respected for who they are. Their emotions are often mixed, sometimes feeling like an adult and ready to assume more responsibility and sometimes feeling like they can't handle anything. They need healthy outlets for all of the emotions they are experiencing and to be around adults to offer guidance, support and love.

Physical

- Complete puberty and the physical transition from childhood to adulthood
- Reach nearly their adult height, especially females, males continue to grow into their twenties
- Sexually maturity

Cognitive

- Need the opportunity to explore how they personally feel about what they study in class
- Are able to engage in abstract thinking and discussion
- Want their opinions to matter
- Alternate between moments of brilliance and moments of “what were you thinking?”
- Need adults who will help them think through choices for their lives.
- Want to be respected for who they are no matter what that appears to be.
- Enhanced mental development and self-awareness
- Can consider hypothetical possibilities
- Increased ability to express and communicate personal values, ideas, beliefs and loyalties
- Need adult affirmation that their dreams for their lives are possible.
- Need adults to model positive behavior.

Moral

- Learning to regulate their own behavior based on values and principles of Universal Good, law, order and compassion.
- Some are reviewing established rules
- Competing moral values between, peers, family, school, church, etc...
- Concern for maintaining social order
- Moral judgment is motivated by a need to not be criticized by a true authority figure
- Understand their own feelings and have the ability to analyze why they feel a certain way.
- Begin to place less value on appearance and more on personality.

Social

- Want to spend time with their friends
- The task is to develop an integrated sense of self
- Failure to help an adolescent establish a sense of personal identity may lead to inadequacy, isolation and indecisiveness and role confusion.
- May resist commitments, wanting to be open for what the future may bring.
- Questions the desire to be an individual or part of the crowd.
- Behavior is influenced strongly by peers and cultural trends.
- Wants to be valued by adult authority figures.

Curriculum Focus for this Age Group

- To be receptive to the idea that God is a mental attitude that works in and through us and to gain the ability to look past the literal appearance of a situation and to focus on the good the situation brings.
- To know that the Kingdom of God is within and that Jesus, the Christ is the fullest expression of who we are.
- To understand that they are the creator of their own world through the thoughts they give power to and what they choose to see and believe.
- To continue to explore the power of prayer and to not only experience meditation but to also begin to lead and create them.
- To know that each has the power to live and do and Jesus did.