



Characteristics of a Middle School Student

Adolescents are young people who straddle the fence between childhood and adulthood. They have one foot secured in childhood and one foot moving into the world of adulthood.

Adolescence is a unique period of the human life span. In fact, no other developmental period, with the possible exception of infancy, is characterized by so many complex changes.

Changes include:

Physical

- Very fast physical growth
- Hormonal changes
- Development of facial hair
- Changes in body proportions

Social and Emotional Development

- Struggle with sense of identity
- Feeling awkward or strange about one's body
- Moodiness
- Realization that parents are NOT perfect
- Less overt affection shown to parents, with occasional rudeness.
- Tendency to return to childish behavior, particularly when under stress
- Increased interest in the opposite sex
- Strong need for acceptance of peers
- Engaging in risky behavior

Intellectual Development

- Motivation to learn and achieve when challenged and engaged
- Ability to think more critically
- Moving from concrete to abstract thinking
- Interest in working with peers during learning activities
- Preference for active over passive learning experiences

For information on parenting an adolescent please view the following books and web sites:

- Benson, Peter, Ph.D. and Espeland, Pamela, *What Teens Need to Succeed* (Free Spirit Publishing Inc., 1998)
- Walsh, David, Ph.D., *Why Do They Act That Way, A Survival Guide to the Adolescent Brain for You and Your Teen*, (Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2004)
- National Middle School Association: <http://www.nmsa.org>
- iVillage: <http://parenting.ivillage.com>