

Welcome to Childhood

(Gr. K-3)

What's Happening Now? (Typical)

- Physical: continued development and application of fine motor skills, increased coordination and ability to use large muscle groups
- Cognitive: increased memory and ability to focus improves, enhanced sense of reality, ability to express thoughts and attend to information
- Social/Emotional: increased ability to regulate emotions independently, increased sense of self and awareness of strengths and weaknesses across contexts; primary attachment to parents and family



Help Children "Feel Good in their Own Skin" Appreciate & Value Differences

- Celebrate successes and abilities with positive, confidence-building feedback "You did it all by yourself!" "You've made such progress with your reading this year!" Describe the specific behaviors you want to see again
- At times when your child is challenged, talk in terms of progress instead of perfection and set a goal for next time; express confidence in their ability to do it better next time (growth mindset)
- Structure situations to foster success: break tasks down for your child so they don't feel overwhelmed; make sure expectations are appropriate for your individual child
- Talk about ways for your child to escape from situations that make them feel bad about themselves or uncomfortable; this will help them manage peer pressure as it begins to arise
- Value differences in others and talk your child through difficult social interactions; but also let them know they doesn't have to stick with friends who don't support them



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Food for Thought

Manage Stress & Anxiety Develop Resilience

- School-aged children look to caring adults (parents, teachers) to help them navigate increasingly complex relationships. Reinforce a feeling that home is a place of safety and that, as a parent, you are there to take care of them
- The ability to manage stress comes from a child's ability to self-regulate internal reactions to emotions. The primary underpinning for this ability comes from strong attachment at home
- Help your child express and label emotions and understand that they can feel negative emotions without being overwhelmed by them
- Stress that health and safety is the most important thing and will always be prioritized over a desire for privacy
- Be aware of your own behaviors and model the ones you want to see from your child; when you lose control, use it as a teaching moment. Share your reflections on your own behavior and apologize

TO DO

Establish Expectations, Set Boundaries and Appropriate Consequences

- Provide developmentally appropriate and sensitive structures and routines; consider your individual child's needs: some children need a lot of quiet/down time, others need more stimulation
- Have a family meeting to create clear and easy to understand household rules, stated in positive terms, that describe the behavior you expect: "in our house we use kind words"
- Provide opportunities for children to be in helping roles through chores, self-care based on their ability to complete tasks; revise expectations to match their developmental capacities
- Don't globalize: Consequences should be logical, appropriate, and related to the action
- Think about discipline instead of punishment; primary aim of discipline is to guide your child and help them master new skills

Balance the Need for Autonomy with the Need for Parental Supervision

- Your child is just beginning to be ready for more autonomy, but they still rely heavily on parents for support
- Provide unconditional love and respect; even when an infraction occurs
- Get to know your child's friends and their parents
- Stress that their health and safety is the most important thing and will always be prioritized over a desire for privacy or autonomy

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Welcome to Middle Childhood

(Gr. 4-5)

What's Happening Now? (Typical)

- Physical: new burst of growth in height & weight with approach of puberty, increased coordination
- Cognitive: increased attention span, enhanced capacity for abstract thinking, improvement in problem-solving skills, improved ability for self-expression through speaking & writing, increased focus on the future as capacity for hypothetical reasoning improves
- Social/Emotional: attachment begins to move away from family and increasingly toward peers with growing independence, sense of identity begins to emerge, increased need for social acceptance, possible anxiety around body changes and move from elementary to middle school

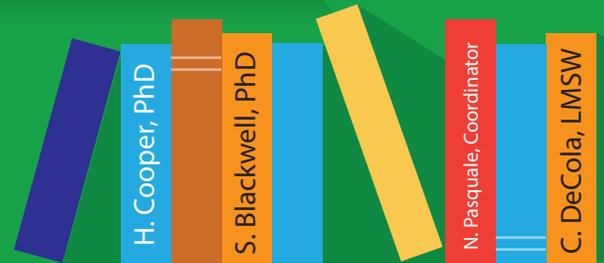


Help Children "Feel Good in their Own Skin" Appreciate & Value Differences

- Provide opportunities for your child to "try on" different things so they can discover who they are based on their own interests, skills, and abilities
- Praise effort and persistence, not just outcomes; practice a growth mindset; instead of "I can't do that", think in terms of "I can't do that YET..." and build a plan to get there
- "You must be so proud of yourself" vs. "I'm proud of you" — this small shift in language encourages self-reflection, builds not just self-confidence, but this important life skill as well
- Monitor your own attitudes and language; make a concerted effort to think about how you talk about yourself, your child, and others
- Validate your child's feelings but resist the temptation to "fix" negative emotions; remind your child that feelings and emotions are transient—we experience them, they don't define us
- Be an active and empathetic listener; tune in to your child



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Food for Thought

Manage Stress & Anxiety Develop Resilience

- Acknowledge your child's feelings; let them know that feelings of stress, anxiety, or sadness are normal emotional responses, not something to be "fixed"
- Model strategies for relieving stress in positive pro-social ways: go for a walk outside, practice mindfulness, meditation, yoga, or deep breathing
- Make a household commitment to health: eat healthy, get enough sleep, physical activity, connection with nature, community with others
- Resist the temptation to numb feelings: examine your own relationship with food, substances & try to model the relationship you want your child to have
- Remind your child that feelings are transient; we experience them, but they don't define us

TO DO

Establish Expectations, Set Boundaries and Appropriate Consequences

- Children this age are more susceptible to peer pressure; talk early and often about making healthy choices, not just making choices to fit in, including choices about risky behaviors or substances
- Make a family contract or set of family rules "this is how we do it in our family"
- Model behaviors that you want to see
- Set loving limits and be consistent; this is a time when your child is starting to push boundaries to see which rules will be enforced
- Use discipline as an opportunity for learning and growth instead of punishment; consequences should be logical, appropriate, and connected to the action
- Establish guidelines and limits around technology and monitor your child's use and habits; use filters and parental controls when available

Balance the Need for Autonomy with the Need for Parental Supervision

- Provide appropriate opportunities for independence, but know where your child is and make sure a responsible adult is present or nearby
- Correlate autonomy with your child's ability to demonstrate she is ready for it; past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior
- Practice refusals skills with your child and develop an "exit plan" to help him get out of risky or uncomfortable situations
- Reinforce that your child's safety will always take priority over the desire for privacy
- As independence increases, make plans for how to touch base, when you expect her home, what to do if a plan changes

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Welcome to Pre-Adolescence

(Gr. 6-8)

Help Children "Feel Good in their Own Skin" Appreciate & Value Differences

- Provide many opportunities for kids to explore their own interests and talents
- Encourage your early teen to express their viewpoint and distinctive ideas; allow them to explore new interests; pay attention to a loss of interest in an activity they used to enjoy
- Let your child know that you love them unconditionally, even when you don't like an action or behavior; focus on the behavior, not on character traits
- Take a genuine interest in your child's activities; make time to do things with them that THEY enjoy doing
- Praise good choices/behaviors you want to see repeated; this will help them have the courage to sometimes be alone in making good choices
- Make a commitment to genuine human interaction with friends/family and opportunities to be in community with others

Food for Thought

Manage Stress & Anxiety Develop Resilience

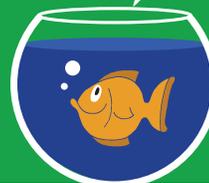
- Model positive, healthy ways to manage stress; be especially aware of your own behavior and language about using alcohol or substances to reduce stress
- Help your child to recognize triggers for stress (i.e., transitions from vacation to school, upcoming tests, Sunday nights) and provide strategies to relieve that stress such as breathing exercises, mindfulness practice, taking a long walk, listening to music
- Allow your child to sit with disappointment and delayed gratification; the ability to manage these things helps with resistance to alcohol and other drugs
- Acknowledge your child's emotions without trying to diminish or "fix" them; be a compassionate listener

Balance the Need for Autonomy with the Need for Parental Supervision

- Allow your child flexibility to make their own choices in areas where they have demonstrated the ability to do so; continue to provide guidance in areas where they have not
- Know your child's friends and their parents; volunteer to be the parent who drops kids off and picks them up from events to monitor activity
- Be aware of your child's technology habits/use and utilize filters and parental controls according to your child's maturity level and your family values and beliefs
- Provide opportunities for your tween/early teen to make mistakes in low risk situations; help them reflect on their choices and how they could make different ones in the future
- Reinforce desired behaviors; praise good choices and gradually allow greater freedom
- Remind your child that safety will always be prioritized over the desire for privacy

What's Happening Now? (Typical)

- Physical: body changes and spike in hormones with the onset of puberty, bone growth occurs faster than muscle growth causing lack of coordination, awkwardness, sometimes earlier for girls than boys; early puberty leads to early stress
- Cognitive: growing awareness of self in relation to the world, start of a period of vital brain development, further capacity for abstract vs. concrete thought, increased ability to take another's perspective, growing understanding of power and influence
- Social/Emotional: increased sensitivity to the opinions and reactions of others, making them especially susceptible to peer pressure, conflicting loyalties to peer group and family, increase in risk-taking behaviors



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TO DO

Establish Expectations, Set Boundaries and Appropriate Consequences

- As you allow for more independence, be sure to revisit expectations and family rules around things like homework, when you expect them home, how and when to check in with you
- Set aside time and engage your child in making a family contract to set expectations specifically around substance use with your focus being on their health and safety
- Your child is continuing to push boundaries to see where you will be flexible and where you will not; boundaries and expectations are not meaningful without consequences
- Connect consequences to the action or transgression; if your child has not come home on time, take away the privilege of being out unsupervised, this keeps the focus on the behavior you want to see
- Be mindful of your own behaviors and model the ones you want to see; despite outward appearances, you still have a tremendous ability to influence your child
- Make explicit rules about no use of drugs and alcohol for reasons of health

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Welcome to Adolescence

(Gr. 9-11)

Help Children “Feel Good in their Own Skin” Appreciate & Value Differences

- Remind your child that being beautiful means being themselves; show them that you love them exactly as they are
- Show a genuine interest in your child's ideas, their friends, and their personal values & goals
- Practice and model positive "self-talk" and respectful language about/attitudes toward others
- Help your adolescent have a realistic sense of their unique abilities and talents and encourage them to celebrate the abilities and talents of others
- Encourage your child to feel confident in their own values and decisions; teens with a strong sense of self have a greater capacity to resist risky or unhealthy choices
- Encourage genuine human connection with friends/family and opportunities for community with others

What's Happening Now? (Typical)

- Physical: growth tends to slow down for girls, but often continues for boys during this period, capable of reproduction at the end of puberty; body looks more like an adult, but the brain is still developing into the early twenties
- Cognitive: broader questioning of one's self in relationship to the world, greater capacity for abstract thinking, increased capacity for collaborative problem solving
- Social/Emotional: increased separation from parents as early adulthood is approaching



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Food for Thought

Manage Stress & Anxiety Develop Resilience

- Encourage your teen to use talking or journaling to express emotions; remind them that emotions are transient, they don't define us
- Help your teen become aware of things that trigger them and physical signs of stress such as rapid heart rate or body tension
- Discuss healthy ways to manage emotions and stress, such as deep breathing, mindfulness practice, a hot bath, playing music, going for a walk
- Remember the acronym HEAR ME: Health (treat illness), Exercise, Avoid mood altering drugs, Rest (balanced sleep), Mastery (rewarding activity), Eating (regular meals, healthy foods)
- Help your teen reflect on their own achievements and set expectations that are realistic

TO DO

Establish Expectations, Set Boundaries and Appropriate Consequences

- As your teen spends more time with friends, establish ground rules and expectations around when they can go out, when and how they will check in with you, when and where they can be with friends (including boyfriends/girlfriends) inside the house, peer choices, use of cars, or being in cars with others
- Help your teen establish their own boundaries by discussing what household rules should look like.
- Expect your teen to be an active participant in family activities and a contributing member of the household; connection to family is a strong protective factor against risky behavior
- Make explicit rules about no drug and alcohol use for your teen for reasons of health
- Reflect on your own relationship with substances and model the relationship you want your child to have
- Consequences should be logical and connected to the action; use discipline to guide your teen to make better choices in the future

Balance the Need for Autonomy with the Need for Parental Supervision

- Be willing to give your teen control over decisions in areas she has demonstrated the ability to make good choices
- Know your child's friends and make a concerted effort to connect with friends' parents; talk about limits you set and your attitudes about drug and alcohol use with those parents to provide a wider "safety net"
- Remind your child that safety will always be prioritized over the desire for privacy

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Welcome to Early Adulthood

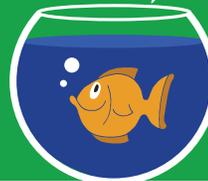
(Gr. 12+)

Help Children “Feel Good in their Own Skin” Appreciate & Value Differences

- Encourage your child to branch out and find opportunities to make new friends through clubs, sports, arts, or other interests
- Remind your child that being beautiful means being themselves; show them that you love them exactly as they are
- Practice and model positive “self-talk” and respectful language about/attitudes toward others
- Encourage genuine human connection with friends/family and opportunities for community with others

What’s Happening Now? (Typical)

- Physical: growth is generally complete, capable of reproduction, but the brain is still developing into the early twenties
- Cognitive: development of the prefrontal cortex responsible for planning, organizing, complex behavior, and personality continues to age 25
- Social/Emotional: possibility for increased stress and anxiety as young adults transition from home to the “larger world”, from childhood to adulthood



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Food for Thought

Manage Stress & Anxiety Develop Resilience

- Remind your child that they are capable of recognizing stress and anxiety and using tools they have learned to reduce it: mindfulness practice, deep breathing, yoga, eating well
- If your child is away at school, help them identify good places to relax and de-stress on campus, help them plan for some time alone if they share a dorm
- Make sure your child knows how to access campus resources such as counseling centers, health services, dean of their program/academic advisors, residence advisors, on-campus faith-based groups or local church/synagogue/mosque
- Teach your child to practice “TLC”: Talk to a friend, Look for the Silver Lining, Change the Channel

TO DO

Establish Expectations, Set Boundaries and Appropriate Consequences

- If your child is away at school or in a structured gap year program, be aware of their policies and resources you can access as a parent
- Discuss drug and alcohol use and give your child accurate facts about the health risks associated with them
- Set expectations and goals together and take time to reflect on how things are going when your child is home or when you connect by phone
- Let your child know you love them unconditionally and believe in their ability to take advantage of the opportunities ahead of them

Balance the Need for Autonomy with the Need for Parental Supervision

- Help your teen find the college or university environment that’s right for him
- Consider a “gap year”, part-time school, or work if you think your child needs a little more time to be ready for college
- While you can no longer supervise your child directly when she is away, you can make regular times to connect and check in
- Actively listen and give your undivided attention when he does reach out
- Respect and encourage your child’s ability to take care of things for herself
- Know what resources are available to parents and students should you have a concern

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