

# Welcome to Pre-Adolescence

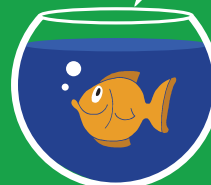
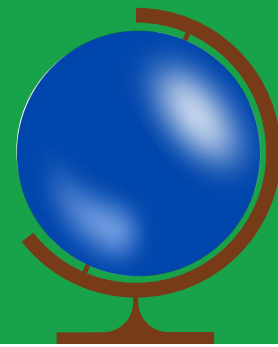
(Gr. 6-8)

## 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

## 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



CONTENT BY



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

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

## 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

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