

Fifteen to Nineteen Years

Developmental Tasks

Creating a personal identity based upon the integration of values

Developing a sense of self in relation to society, other individuals, the opposite sex, the future, personal vocation, ideas, and the cosmos



What's Happening in the Brain?

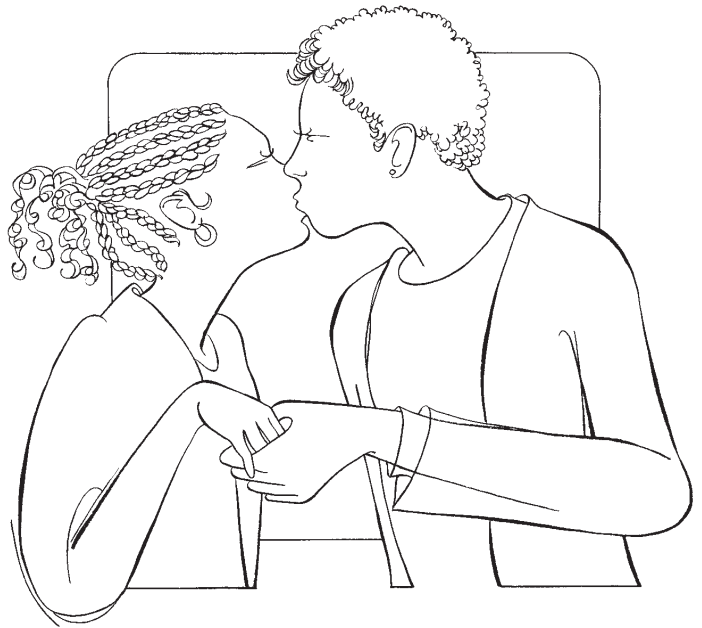
During this stage, the child's brain undergoes significant changes as it "rewires" during adolescence, which impacts behavior, emotions, and thinking.

Specifically, there is still:

- ❖ Heightened response to incentives, while at the same time there is a slowing of impulse control—which is why so many teens take unnecessary risks and make poor decisions
- ❖ A flood of reproductive and stress hormones that impact all domains of development
- ❖ Change in the way the brain regulates sleep, which affects attention, fatigue, and irritability

And in late adolescence, there is also:

- ❖ Growth in both white and gray brain matter after some initial loss in early adolescence, which leads to a major gain in processing power
- ❖ More control from the prefrontal cortex of the emotional center of the brain; as teens mature, they should be more capable of planning actions and making better judgments and less impulsive
- ❖ An increased capacity for abstract reasoning, which helps inform teens' developing sense of self in relation to others. Teens move from a focus on the self in early adolescence to one of self in the world, which accounts for growing idealism



Domains

Physical

Typical Characteristics

Suggested Behaviors
for Effective Parenting

Has essentially completed physical maturation; physical features are mostly shaped and defined

Recognize and compliment the youth's physical maturity.

Experiences increased probability of acting on sexual desires

Provide accurate information about the consequences of sexual activity; discuss birth control and HIV prevention.

Emotional

Worries about failure

Be available to talk and to listen.

May appear moody, angry, lonely, impulsive, self-centered, confused, and/or stubborn

Accept feelings, and don't overreact; jointly establish limits, but don't revert to childhood restrictions.

Experiences conflicting feelings about dependence/independence

Avoid making fun of inconsistent behaviors; accept the need for separation.

Social

Has relationships ranging from friendly to hostile with parents

Try to maintain good relationship; be respectful and friendly.

Sometimes feels that parents are "too interested"

Try not to pry.

Usually has many friends and few confidants; varies greatly in level of maturity; may be uncomfortable with or enjoy activities with the opposite sex; dates actively; may talk of marriage

Recognize and accept current level of interest in opposite sex; encourage experiences with a variety of individuals (younger, older, from different cultures, etc.).

May be strongly invested in a single, romantic relationship

Avoid disapproval; discuss needs and expectations that are met in the relationship.

	Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
Mental	May lack information about or self-assurance regarding personal skills and abilities	If necessary, help arrange for aptitude testing, evaluation, and guidance.
	Becomes seriously concerned about the future; begins to integrate knowledge leading to decisions about future	Encourage talking about and planning for future.
Moral	Is confused and disappointed about discrepancies between stated values and actual behaviors of family and/or friends; experiences feelings of frustration, anger, sorrow, and isolation	Be sensitive to youth's feelings and thoughts and try to bring them out in the open; be sure to understand your own values.
	May be interested in sex in response to physical/emotional urges and as a way to participate in the adult world (but not necessarily an expression of mature intimacy)	Be open to discussion and appreciate possible differences in values and needs; communicate your own feelings about sexual relations, but don't moralize; accept sexual experimentation as normal and healthy; provide correct information on human sexuality, sexually-transmitted disease, HIV and AIDS, birth control, intimacy, and safe types of sexual experimentation (although until a cure for HIV is found, discourage unprotected coital sex).

Indicators Related to Developmental Lag or Potential Trauma

Delays in physical and sexual development

Depression, sense of isolation, loneliness

Extreme self-consciousness or fear of being abnormal

Suicide attempts; psychosis

Impulsiveness, extreme rebellion; pathological lying; truancy, running away

Denial of feelings, fantasy as an escape from problems

Fantasizing or discussing revenge or retribution for real or perceived harm

Poor hygiene

Alcohol/drug abuse

Eating disorders: anorexia nervosa, bulimia, obesity

Sexual activity to provide missing nurturance; pregnancy; early marriages that are likely to fail

Juvenile delinquency, stealing, prostitution