

12-15 Years

The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children

What the typical child might say and do:	What the typical child knows or thinks:	What you should say or do:	Cautions:
<p>Has an adult-level vocabulary</p> <p>Points out inconsistent logic and behaviors on the part of adults</p> <p>Likes to think and discuss ideas</p> <p>Incorporates abstract conceptions (such as of temperament) into self-assessments (“I’m loyal to my friends.”)</p> <p>Compares and contrasts others (“Mary is smarter than Bill, even though Bill works harder.”)</p> <p>Is sarcastic in speech</p> <p>Spends hours talking with friends</p> <p>May display erratic work and play patterns and transient mood swings</p>	<p>Has the ability to reason abstractly, use problem solving strategies, think sequentially, and generalize</p> <p>Realizes that s/he knows him/herself better than do his/her parents (or anyone else)</p> <p>Exhibits self-consciousness, self-centeredness, and preoccupation with own thoughts</p> <p>Feels unique and special</p> <p>Is susceptible to shame and self-doubt</p> <p>Views behaviors that harm society as wrong</p>	<p>Treat the young person respectfully.</p> <p>Join in the youth's activities and show your interest in his/her concerns and needs.</p> <p>Be direct and honest about the purpose of your interactions.</p> <p>Be sensitive to the young person's acute fear of embarrassment and fear of being seen as “weird” by peers for talking to you; whenever possible, plan to see him/her in a private setting.</p> <p>Be patient, as it may take a long time for a young person to open up and share real concerns.</p>	<p>Don't rush into the relationship.</p> <p>Don't be easily persuaded that everything is “just fine” when the youth seems reluctant to talk.</p>

12-15 Years *(cont.)*

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What the typical child might say and do:	What the typical child knows or thinks:	What you should say or do:	Cautions:
<p>Becomes annoyed by siblings and often puts them down</p> <p>May specialize in one-word answers to questions from parents or other adults by age 14 or 15 ("Where did you go?" "Out." "What did you do?" "Nuthin." "Did you have a good time?" "Uh-huh.")</p>			

Indicators of possible developmental problems:
<p>Regresses in language use/skills</p> <p>Doesn't speak or stops speaking</p> <p>Cannot sustain conversations with adults or peers</p> <p>Has a short attention span</p> <p>Is inhibited; withdraws</p> <p>Experiences extreme isolation, even from peers</p>