



CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

8- to 10-Year-Olds

Physical Characteristics

1. Very active, busy, full of enthusiasm
2. Bone growth is not yet complete
3. Some may mature early; may be insecure about appearance or size

Social and Emotional Characteristics

1. Interested in people and differences
2. Start to develop close ties with friends outside of the family
3. Start to seek independence
4. Care about acceptance and approval of friends and family
5. Competitive
6. Sensitive to praise, recognition, and criticism
7. May experience conflicts between adults' rules and friends' rules
8. Capacity for self-evaluation
9. Strong sense of right and wrong
10. Like to discuss; often outspoken and critical of adults

Mental Characteristics

1. Care about fairness
2. Eager to answer questions and look for a positive response to their ideas
3. Curious
4. Reading abilities vary widely

Suggested Activities with Mentors

1. Learn about different cultures and new experiences
2. Video, board, and educational games
3. Craft projects and drawing

11- to 13-Year-Olds

Physical Characteristics

1. Small-muscle coordination is good
2. Bone growth is not yet complete
3. Concerned with their appearance and self-conscious about growth
4. Diet and sleep habits can be bad or inconsistent - may result in low energy levels
5. Girls may begin menstruation

Adapted from materials provided by Mentoring Partnership of Long Island, Virginia Mentoring Partnership, and Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, Child Development Seminar, August 1990.



Social and Emotional Characteristics

1. Acceptance by friends and peer norms become important
2. Cliques may develop
3. Crushes on members of the opposite sex are common
4. Feel a real need to conform
5. May use manipulation (i.e., "Mary's mother said she could go. Why can't I?")
6. Interested in earning own money
7. Starting to develop ideas of their future
8. Need individual praise to distinguish themselves
9. Loud behavior may hide lack of self-confidence
10. Looks at the world more objectively

Mental Characteristics

1. Perfectionists
2. Don't know their limitations
3. Want more independence
4. Still need guidance and support
5. Attention span can be lengthy
6. Exploring boundaries and discovering consequences of behavior

Suggested Activities with Mentors

1. Help with homework.
2. Creative writing
3. Conversation
4. Share aspects of professional life and rewards of achieving in work.

14- to 16-Year-Olds

1. Testing limits, "know-it-all" attitude.
2. Facing challenges of developing mentally and physically.
3. Vulnerable, emotionally insecure, fear of rejection, mood swings.
4. Often project competence while lacking full ability.
5. Identify with an admired adult, or often reject adults in exchange for friends.

Physical Characteristics

1. Concerned and self-conscious with appearance and growth
2. Diet and sleep habits can be bad or inconsistent - may result in low energy levels
3. May experience rapid weight gain
4. Enormous appetite
5. Important to learn good personal hygiene and grooming

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Social and Emotional Characteristics

1. Peer norms are important
2. Concerned with conforming
3. Concerned with opinions of others
4. Go to extremes; emotional instability with “know-it-all” attitude
5. Fear of ridicule and being unpopular
6. Girls are usually more interested in boys than vice-versa
7. Caught between being an adult and a child
8. Loud behavior hides their lack of self-confidence

Mental Characteristics

1. Can better understand moral principles
2. Development of personal voice
3. Attention span can be lengthy
4. Argumentative behavior may be part of “trying out” an opinion

Suggested Activities with Mentors

1. Shared community service projects and volunteering
2. Help with homework
3. Discussion

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