

JUNIOR HIGH STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

Stages of Student Development I

Youth Workers' Training • September 10, 2005

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Introduction

1. Physical

- Growing rapidly
 - Provide recreation
 - Provide rest and relaxation
- Girls grow more rapidly than boys
 - Don't embarrass them (public kidding not so good)
 - Don't pick on physical features that stand out
- Many internal and external physical changes (puberty, etc.)
 - Teach biblical view of sex properly and discreetly (parents job primarily)
 - Help them be comfortable with their physical features
- Awkward and Uncoordinated
 - Help them understand these changes are normal
 - Be able to laugh at yourself and put them at ease
- Boundless energy alternated with periods of fatigue
 - Don't interpret genuine fatigue as laziness

Key Physical Characteristic: Rapid Growth

2. Mental

- Keen memory
 - Challenge them to memorize Scripture
 - Consider having a Scripture memory game in class
 - Interested in imagination, adventure, and discovery (especially reading)
 - Encourage good books and Bible study
 - Use stories to captivate their attention and teach truth
 - Capable of real thinking (begin to question why?)
 - Challenge with good questions
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- Begin to challenge them to truly discover their faith
- Begin to question authority (extension of last point)
 - Give Scripture answers
 - Motivate with sound reasons for the Word
 - Don't be shocked by questions
- Make snap judgments and draw quick conclusions
 - Teach maturity and patient understanding
 - Expect quick vacillation at times
- Strong sense of humor
 - Teach them when and how to be serious
 - Be willing to laugh and enjoy with them
 - Use humor to teach truth

Key Mental Characteristic: Strong Sense of Humor

3. Social

- Want to be grown up
 - Don't call them boys and girls
 - Treat them with respect and keep the standard high
 - Don't put with juniors or with older kids
 - Beginning to desire independence of adults
 - Provide good, sound away from home trips
 - Allow friendships that are right and supervised
 - Want to belong to a group of peers (social needs)
 - Club-like spirit in youth group should be developed
 - Team sports can help develop character and social skills
 - Strong sense of loyalty
 - Should direct loyalty to family, to Christ and to church
 - Self-conscious with physical changes (complexion, etc.)
 - Don't bring to attention what makes them self-conscious
 - Don't embarrass them in front of others
 - Help draw their attention away from self to others
 - Early signs of attraction to opposite sex (may reveal internal issues)
 - Provide some boy-girl activities in a controlled church activity
 - Discourage dating or emotional connection
 - Hero-worshiper
 - Sunday school teacher should be a worthy example
 - Emphasize Bible characters and spiritual leaders as their role models
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- Discourage TV stars and athletes as heroes

Key Social Characteristic: Self-Conscious

4. Emotional

- Often is misunderstood or feels misunderstood
 - Expect difficulty in communication (can't express what they are going through)
 - Listen well with sensitivity and don't get frustrated
 - Take time to understand them and their needs
 - Seek Holy Spirit guidance and discernment to see beneath the surface
- Emotions fluctuate radically and rapidly
 - Expect variety of moods and instability
 - Understand this is more physiological than spiritual
 - Help them understand the mood swings and anchor themselves to Christ
- Lack control of emotions
 - Don't appeal primarily to emotions, appeal to spirit
 - Emphasize truth and consistency
 - Teach how to tame emotions to the obedience of Christ
- Emotions are intense (extreme highs and extreme lows)
 - Expect emotional bursts and irrationality
 - Deal calmly with emotional outbursts
 - Don't react—respond (initiate)

Key Emotional Characteristic: Intense Emotions

5. Spiritual

- Wants a practical religion
 - Make Bible study and Sunday school practical
 - Use creative illustration to teach truth
 - Demonstrate it in your life
 - Has a vision for service
 - Give them work and service projects
 - Begin to train in soulwinning
 - Provide odd jobs around church
 - Involve in music and creative programs
 - Has many religious doubts (especially with salvation)
 - Don't be shocked to uncover doubts
 - Give scriptural answers
 - Show them their salvation should be based on the Word of God, not on feelings
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- Seeks an ideal (very impressionable spiritually)
 - Point them to Christ as the ideal
 - You be an ideal Christian before them

Key Spiritual Characteristic: Spiritually Impressionable
