# Stages of Adolescent Development

Developed by: Wayne Pawlowski, ACSW, and Gayle Hamilton

## General (period of high moodiness)

**Early**
- Girls: 11 – 13
- Boys: 12 – 14
- Mood Swings
- Great highs and great depressions

**Middle**
- Girls: 13 – 16
- Boys: 14 – 17
- Mood Swings
- Great highs and great depressions

**Late**
- Girls: 16 – 19
- Boys: 17 – 19
- Mood Swings
- Great highs and great depressions

## Physical Development (Sexual Maturation)

**Early**
- Puberty: onset of physical and sexual development
- Confusion
- Sense of loss of control
- Fear and Anxiety
- Experimentation with body begins

**Middle**
- These are the “classical” teenagers
- Body changes are in full swing
- Intense sexual feelings develop
- This is the stage of “puppy love”
- Dating begins and becomes primary
- Average age (16 or younger) by which 50% of adolescents have had first sexual experience
- Risk of pregnancy is high

**Late**
- Physical changes leveling off and ending
- Less confusion regarding body and changes
- Greater sense of self control
- Better, more realistic sense of self; looks, body image, how one compares to others
- Sexual behavior more prominent

## Cognitive Development (How adolescents think)

**Early**
- Time of concrete thinking
- World is “here and now,” the present
- The “future” is now, not tomorrow, or next week
- Unable to plan or think into the future

**Middle**
- Abstract thinking begins
- Connections between “today” and “tomorrow” begin
- Intellectual curiosity develops
- Period of experimentations
- Period of idealistic thinking
- Period of being a “know – it – all”
- Feelings of omnipotence and no fear of death

**Late**
- Adult thinking has developed
- Future goals more clearly and realistically defined
- Ability to think abstractly has developed
# Stages of Adolescent Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Early Girls: 11 – 13</th>
<th>Middle Girls: 13 – 16</th>
<th>Late Girls: 16 – 19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psycho-Social Development: Identity (personality)</strong></td>
<td>“Am I normal?”</td>
<td>Friends, rather than parents, define who you are, what you do, and what’s “cool”</td>
<td>Arriving at concept of self as an adult</td>
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<td>“What am I turning into?”</td>
<td>Egocentric – “I satisfy me!”</td>
<td>Need to accept the self that has emerged</td>
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<td>“I’m not ready for this.”</td>
<td>Identity changes from day – to – day, from friend – to – friend, and from groups – to – group</td>
<td>Reflecting back to earlier years to gain better picture of present self</td>
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<td>Beginning to look outside of the family for self-definition</td>
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<td>Decreased importance of peer group; individual is now primarily self-identified and less other-identified</td>
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</tbody>
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| Psycho-Social Development: Integrity (Values) | Own values not defined; values are still those of parents, but beginning to be questioned | This is the time for developing and testing own values. To do this, kids must reject parental values; as a result, this is a time of great conflict with parents and other adults | Refining and clarifying of values – large swings and inconsistencies less common |
|                                             | Right and wrong still seen as black and white issues; greys do not exist | | Internal controls which are based upon moral principles and conscience are now more fully developed |
|                                             | Internal control not developed | | |
|                                             | Clear limits and boundaries are necessary | | |

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## Intimacy (Sexual Relationships)
- Same sex play begins  
- Intimacy is defined through “best friends” and peer group membership  
- Friends begin changing because of variations in rate of development  
- Cliques develop  
- Pairing begins  
- Sexual activity begins  
- Friends and peer group are the core of life  
- “Love object” is the most important thing in the world  
- Pairing more realistic and less changeable  
- Mating begins  
- Relationships more stable and increasingly based upon “real” people and real qualities  
- Peer group membership is important but one – to – one relationships are more important  
- Movement from “I” to mutuality and real sharing  
- Satisfaction of other(s) can be as important as satisfaction of self

## Independence
- Friends begin becoming more important than family  
- Complaints about lack of privacy begin and increasing “alone” time (time away from parents) and time with friends begin  
- Fluctuation between clinging to adults and rebelling against them  
- Classic rebellion against and conflict with family  
- Separation continues in earnest  
- Period where most parents feel that they “can’t win” and that they “can’t do anything right”  
- Separation from parents becomes complete (Psychologically, if not physically)  
- Beginning of self-sufficiency and care