Preparing for a Lifetime
It's Everyone's Responsibility

GRANDPARENT
TOOLKIT

Social Development

Social development is the process of learning how to interact with others by learning skills for communicating effectively, cooperating and collaborating, and resolving conflict.

The changes youth experience to their brain, emotions, and bodies prepare them to take on more responsibilities and complex social roles.

Positive social development is linked to better academic performance, higher self-esteem and self-confidence, and overall well-being.

New Commitments and Responsibilities

As youth are beginning to form their identity and learn more about their likes and dislikes, beliefs, interests, and talents, they may start expanding their current friend group as well as form new social circles that are related to those things.

Examples of new connections youth may form:
- sports teams
- youth leadership groups
- clubs
- romantic relationships

These new connections outside of the context of family allow youth to learn skills for empathizing with others, appreciating uniqueness and diversity, and how to maintain healthy relationships in different contexts.

Common Challenges Youth May Face

Peer Influence

Social Anxiety

Peer Influence

Peer relationships play a large role in adolescent development and can have both a positive and negative influence.

Youth often find themselves in situations of peer pressure, and without the help of their prefrontal cortex they are left vulnerable.

Negative peer influence can impact a young person's:
- self-esteem and self-confidence
- personal goals
- physical health
- mental health

Navigating Negative Peer Influence

- Encourage open and honest communication

- Teach them skills for boundary-setting, assertiveness, negotiation, and refusal

- Be present and engaged in their friendships and develop a relationship with their friends' caregivers

- Talk with them about how to stay safe and be a good digital citizen on the internet and social media

- Nurture their self-confidence by giving them opportunities to try new things and helping them recognize their strengths

Social Anxiety

As youth strive for greater independence and acceptance from peers, they begin putting themselves out there which could sometimes place them in uncomfortable situations.

Constant stress from uncomfortable situations could develop into social anxiety, mental health condition characterized by the overwhelming fear of being humiliated or judged by others.

Impacts of social anxiety on social development and overall well-being:
- emotional distress
- isolating behavior
- lowered academic performance
- unhealthy coping habits

Signs of Social Anxiety

- Fast heart rate, sweating, or trembling in situations not typically labeled as stressful

- Feel their "mind going blank," or feel sick to their stomach

- Nervous and/or closed body language

- Criticizing themselves after social interactions

- Worrying about social interactions hours, days and even weeks prior

- Avoiding places where a lot of people will be

Supporting Healthy Social Development

- Model healthy relationships and interactions

- Build a connection with them by learning about their interests and sharing yours

- Teach them the importance of empathy

- Provide them with opportunities to take on more responsibilities

- Have meaningful conversations about things happening in the world

- Provide guidance for facing peer pressure

Resources

keepconnected.searchinstitute.org

nami.org/Your-Journey/Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults/Social-Media-and-Your-Family

opa.hhs.gov/adolescent-health/healthy-relationships-adolescence

OKLAHOMA State Department of Health

Grandparents Raising Grandkids
Oklahoma.gov/health/grandparenttoolkit
Grandparent@health.ok.gov

Acknowledgement