

Physical Development

Most children aged six to eight will:

- Experience slower growth of about 2 ½ inches and eight pounds per year
- Grow longer legs relative to their total height and begin resembling adults in the proportion of legs to body
- Develop less fat and grow more muscle than in earlier years
- Increase in strength
- Lose their baby teeth and begin to grow adult teeth which may appear too big for their face
- Use small and large motor skills in sports and other activities

Cognitive Development

Most children aged six to eight will:

- Develop the skills to process more abstract concepts and complex ideas (e.g., addition/subtraction, etc.)
- Begin elementary school
- Spend more time with the peer group and turn to peers for information [They need information sources outside of family, and other adults become important in their lives.]
- Be able to focus on the past and future as well as the present
- Develop an increased attention span
- Improve in self-control, being able to conform to adult ideas of what is "proper" behavior and to recognize appropriateness in behavior
- Understand the concepts of normality/abnormality, feel concern with being normal and curiosity about differences
- Begin to develop as an individual
- Think for themselves and develop individual opinions, especially as they begin to read and to acquire information through the media

Emotional Development

Most children aged six to eight will:

- Become more modest and want privacy
- Develop relationships with and love people outside the family as their emotional needs are met by peers as well as family
- Develop less physically demonstrative relationships and express love through sharing and talking [They may be embarrassed by physical affection.]
- Need love and support, but feel less willing to ask for it
- Understand more complex emotions, such as confusion and excitement
- Want more emotional freedom and space from parents
- Become better at controlling and concealing feelings

- Begin to form a broader self-concept and recognize their own strengths and weaknesses, especially with regard to social, academic, and athletic skills
- Have friends and sustained peer group interactions

Stages of Psychosocial Development

Competence: industry vs. inferiority (5–12 years)

- Existential Question: Can I make it in the World of People and Things?

The aim to bring a productive situation to completion gradually supersedes the whims and wishes of play. The fundamentals of technology are developed. The failure to master trust, autonomy, and industrious skills may cause the child to doubt his or her future, leading to shame, guilt, and the experience of defeat and inferiority.

"Children at this age are becoming more aware of themselves as individuals." They work hard at "being responsible, being good and doing it right." They are now more reasonable to share and cooperate. Allen and Marotz (2003) also list some perceptual cognitive developmental traits specific for this age group. Children grasp the concepts of space and time in more logical, practical ways. They gain a better understanding of cause and effect, and of calendar time. At this stage, children are eager to learn and accomplish more complex skills: reading, writing, telling time. They also get to form moral values, recognize cultural and individual differences and are able to manage most of their personal needs and grooming with minimal assistance. At this stage, children might express their independence by talking back and being disobedient and rebellious.

Erikson viewed the elementary school years as critical for the development of self-confidence. Ideally, elementary school provides many opportunities for children to achieve the recognition of teachers, parents and peers by producing things- drawing pictures, solving addition problems, writing sentences, and so on. If children are encouraged to make and do things and are then praised for their accomplishments, they begin to demonstrate industry by being diligent, persevering at tasks until completed, and putting work before pleasure. If children are instead ridiculed or punished for their efforts or if they find they are incapable of meeting their teachers' and parents' expectations, they develop feelings of inferiority about their capabilities.

At this age, children start recognizing their special talents and continue to discover interests as their education improves. They may begin to choose to do more activities to pursue that interest, such as joining a sport if they know they have athletic ability, or joining the band if they are good at music. If not allowed to discover their own talents in their own time, they will develop a sense of lack of motivation, low self-esteem, and lethargy. They may become "couch potatoes" if they are not allowed to develop interests.

Stages of Faith Development

- **Stage 0** – "*Primal or Undifferentiated*" faith (birth to 2 years), is characterized by an early learning of the safety of their environment (i.e. warm, safe and secure vs. hurt, neglect and abuse). If consistent nurture is experienced, one will develop a sense of trust and safety about the universe and the divine. Conversely, negative experiences will cause one to develop distrust with the universe and the divine. Transition to the next stage begins with integration of thought and languages which facilitates the use of symbols in speech and play.
- **Stage 1** – "*Intuitive-Projective*" faith (ages of three to seven), is characterized by the psyche's unprotected exposure to the Unconscious, and marked by a relative fluidity of thought patterns. Religion is learned mainly through experiences, stories, images, and the people that one comes in contact with.
- **Stage 2** – "*Mythic-Literal*" faith (mostly in school children), stage two persons have a strong belief in the justice and reciprocity of the universe, and their deities are almost always anthropomorphic. During this time metaphors and symbolic language are often misunderstood and are taken literally.
- **Stage 3** – "*Synthetic-Conventional*" faith (arising in adolescence; aged 12 to adulthood) characterized by conformity to authority and the religious development of a personal identity. Any conflicts with one's beliefs are ignored at this stage due to the fear of threat from inconsistencies.
- **Stage 4** – "*Individuative-Reflective*" faith (usually mid-twenties to late thirties) a stage of angst and struggle. The individual takes personal responsibility for his or her beliefs and feelings. As one is able to reflect on one's own beliefs, there is an openness to a new complexity of faith, but this also increases the awareness of conflicts in one's belief.
- **Stage 5** – "*Conjunctive*" faith (mid-life crisis) acknowledges paradox and transcendence relating reality behind the symbols of inherited systems. The individual resolves conflicts from previous stages by a complex understanding of a multidimensional, interdependent "truth" that cannot be explained by any particular statement.
- **Stage 6** – "*Universalizing*" faith, or what some might call "enlightenment." The individual would treat any person with compassion as he or she views people as from a universal community, and should be treated with universal principles of love and justice.