DAY TWO

Understanding Youth Development

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Theme: Understanding Youth Development

Focus: Applying characteristics and developmental tasks of youth 6–19 to youth development programming. Understanding the implications of risk and protective factors for youth development programs.

8:00 Group Process Who Am I in a Group?

8:30 Session IV Experiential Learning Model
Objective:
- To introduce the model that this training will follow.
- To provide a model for working with youth.

9:00 Session V Characteristics and Developmental Tasks of Youth Ages 6–19
Objectives:
- To increase understanding of characteristics and developmental tasks of 6- to 19-year olds.
- To understand the implications of characteristics and developmental tasks of 6- to 19-year olds to youth development program efforts.

10:00 BREAK

10:15 Session V continued...

12:00 LUNCH

1:00 Session VI Essential Elements to Support Youth and Create Opportunities for Growth
Objectives:
- To understand the framework of support and the concept of protective factors as a basis for meeting needs of youth.
- To understand the concept of risk factors and how they erode support and protective elements.

2:45 BREAK

3:00 Session VI continued…

4:15 Reflecting and Applying

4:45 Team Time: Community Mapping

5:00 Close for the Day

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SESSION IV:

Experiential Learning Model

- Group process: Who am I in a group?
- The experiential learning cycle

GROUP PROCESS
Who Am I in a Group

Individuals make up groups. Each individual arrives with his/her own values, feelings, personalities, and experiences. The blending of the individualities begins as group members get to know one another. It is important for the group to develop a feeling of "we-ness," to become aware that they are a congregation of individuals whose common goal or interest unites them into one unique group (Newman & Newman, 2001; Nesdale & Flesser, 2001).

New Group Members

When you find yourself in a group of strangers, how are you going to act? You will have questions about:

Identity: Who am I in this group? How do I act with these strangers?
What do they think of me?

In a new group, your usual way of acting with others doesn't work because the situation isn't familiar. You find yourself holding back while waiting to see what others are going to do. Not only is the situation strange, but it is unclear what others think is proper behavior. The result is that you feel uncomfortable. In a sense you are having an identity problem. You know who you are but not who you are in relation to the others in your group.

Goals: How can this group help me? Can any of my needs be met?
To which of the group's goals can I attach myself?

Your needs and goals may be different from those of others in your group. You may think that outside goals will answer the needs of the group and yourself. Goals imposed from outside the group, however, may not be acceptable. Each member must be committed to the goals of the group. If the group chooses a goal not acceptable to all its members, many will withdraw from participating. The group's work must be interesting to all involved.

Acceptance: Does the group accept me? Do I accept them?
Do they like me? Do I like them? How close to others do I want to become? Can I trust them?

Being in a new group, you may immediately begin to like or dislike individual members. You may have questions about how to present yourself so that you are liked and not rejected. The group may not have clear rules on what is acceptable or unacceptable behavior. Fear of not being accepted, fear of being lost in a group, and fear of being left out are all important feelings to deal with.

All of these questions create tension and uneasiness in you. How you behave is

the product of trying to answer each of these questions. You will find that members react in different ways to these tensions.

The remarks and actions of group members are responses to their adjustments to uncomfortable situations. They are attempts to check out others and jockey for position in the group; in other words, to answer the questions of identity, goals, and acceptance.

Each group will be similar to other groups in some respects because members face the same sorts of questions. Each is also unique because different members bring their own individual variety of responses depending on their personalities.

USING THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING MODEL TO DELIVER Positive Youth Development Opportunities

Youth development professionals are expected to create environments that provide the basic needs of youth and to incorporate methods that are effective in helping youth learn the life skills (competencies) needed to be successful adults. Life skills are best learned through practice, which means that multiple situations must be offered that provide opportunities to practice these skills.

The use of the discovery process is an effective way to teach life skills; however, experiences that use the discovery process (learn by doing) must be planned and processed well or they will not result in the targeted learning (Brown, 2004). Youth interpret their experiences based upon the experiences they have had in the past and the conclusions they have reached about those experiences (Dewey, 1910/1998). We are tempted to conclude that when a group of young people have participated together in an activity they will share the same interpretation of that experience. However, because no one shares the same set of background experiences, a common activity will not result in a common interpretation. In addition, because young people have limited life experience, their conclusions may not be accurate.

As a youth development professional, you are expected to be skilled in facilitating group discussion to help youth clarify the concepts learned for the activities offered (Sugerman, Doherty, Garvey, & Gass, 2000). A teaching model that will help you do this is the experiential learning model that we will be exploring during this session. The sequential steps of this model help youth identify what they have learned from an experience or activity and to apply that learning to other experiences or situations. The model requires that the "teacher/leader" be very clear about the skill or concept targeted and that the experience and the processing questions are designed to support that learning.

The sequence of the model involves the participants in the following steps:
1. Experiencing an activity; that is, they perform or do it
2. Sharing the experience by describing what happened
3. Processing the experience to determine what was most important
4. Generalizing from the experience to their daily lives
5. Applying what they learned to a new situation

Providing an experience alone does not create experiential learning. Experiences lead to learning if the participant understands what happened, sees patterns of observations, generalizes from those observations, and understands how to use the generalization again in a new situation (Chapman, 1995). Advantages for adult/youth helpers (volunteers) in using the experiential learning process in group settings include opportunities to:

- assess youth's knowledge of or experiences with a subject and build upon it
- serve as a coach in a learning setting
- use a variety of methods to involve youth in the experience
- learn together with youth in a cooperative way

Benefits for youth participating in the experiential learning process, no matter what their individual learning style, include opportunities to:

- learn from each other; sharing knowledge and skills
- work together; sharing information and evaluating themselves and others
- take responsibility for their own learning
- relate experiences to their own lives

Reviewing the Five Steps of the Experiential Learning Model

1. Experience - Note the model begins with an experience. Action! This immediately focuses the attention on the learner rather than the teacher. The leader should provide guidance throughout the experience, but not be directive—the goal is for youth to "experience" the activity in order to develop the targeted life skills. When the learner is encouraged to learn by doing, opportunities are presented for a wide variety of life skills to be practiced depending on the method used to engage the youth in the experience.

Many types of activities can be used to provide a learning experience. The experience chosen will depend on the life skills being targeted and the way the learners can become involved with the content. If the intent is to have youth practice decision making, then the experience needs to provide opportunities to practice decision making as the subject matter is explored.

Reflecting upon the Experience
To learn from an experience, youth must have time to reflect upon it—if no time is designated for that purpose, the reflection rarely happens. Debriefing the experience is what moves an experience from an activity to a learning experience, allowing youth to integrate their learning and by providing a sense of closure or completeness to their experience.
The leader can assist in this process by:

- Setting aside enough time to reflect on the experience(s)
- Asking the right questions
- Listening to the youth carefully
- Planning appropriate opportunities to help youth reflect on their experiences
- Supporting each youth's unique learning

The questions used to walk youth through the reflection process are critical and must be determined as part of the preparation process for the activity or experience. The format they follow is also critical to the learning process.

2. Share - Sharing is accomplished by simply asking the group or individuals to reflect upon what they did. Ask questions that help them think about:
   - What they did
   - What they saw, felt, heard, smelled, tasted, etc.
   - What part of the experience was the most difficult and what was the easiest for them

This step should generate information leading to the process step.

3. Process - In this step, the questions and discussion focus on the process of the experience or activity. Participants are asked to think about how the experience was conducted or how the activity was performed. Questions should lead youth to think about:
   - What procedures or steps they used in doing the activity
   - What problems or issues came up as they did the activity

- How they dealt with these problems
- Why the life skill they practiced is important

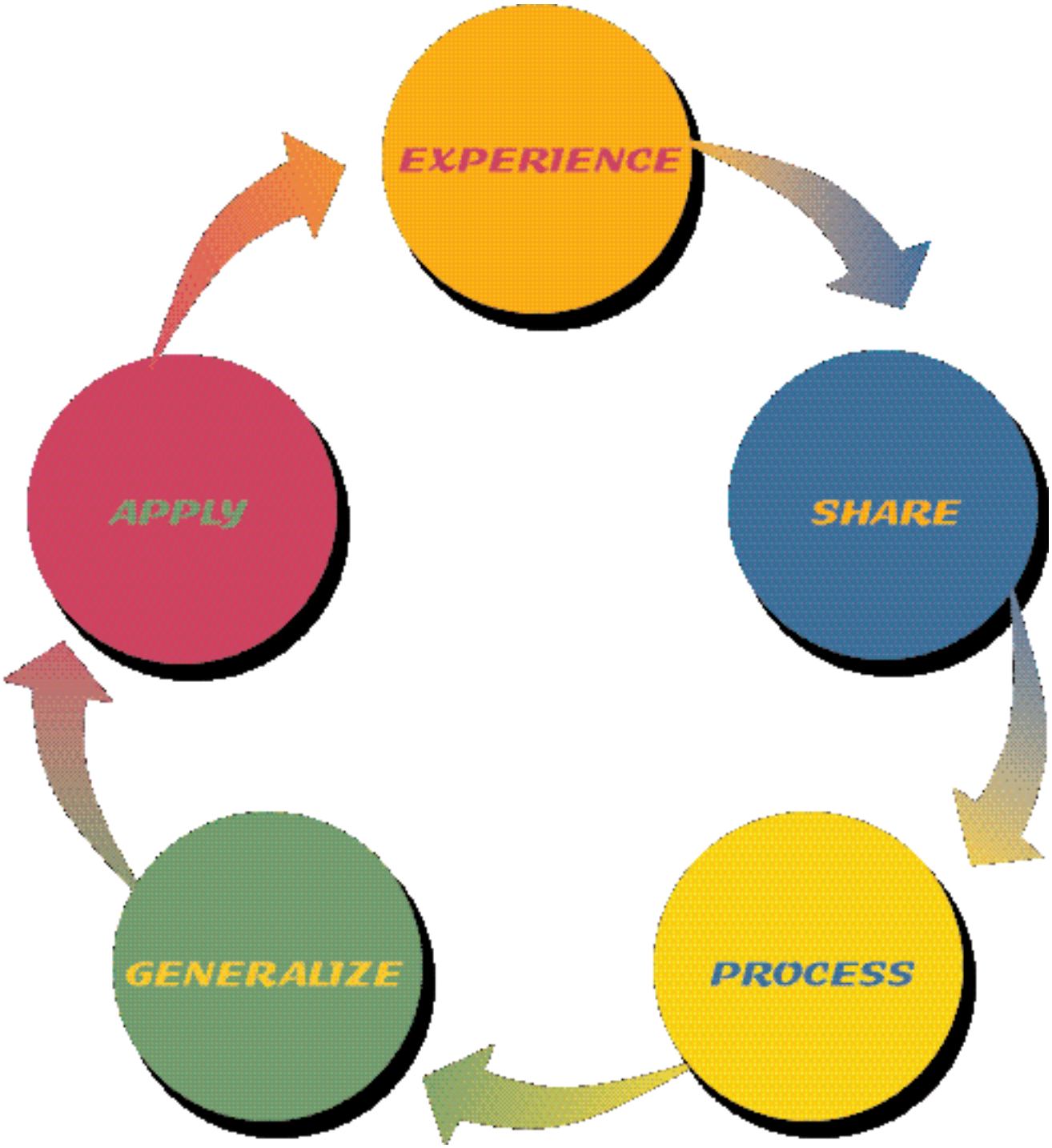
4. Generalize - In this step, the discussion becomes more personal and focuses on what the experience meant to the participant and what was learned from it. For example, if the method employed required the youth to work in teams to complete the activity, then questions about teamwork would be appropriate. If the methodology requires youth to communicate, then communication skills are discussed. Questions should lead youth to determine:
   - What they learned about (the activity objective) from the experience
   - How this learning relates to other things they have been learning
   - What similar experiences they have had (with this life skill or subject matter)

5. Apply - This final step in the experiential learning model directs youth to apply what they learned to their lives. They are asked to think about how the learning from this experience could be used at another time or under other conditions. They are lead to think about how what they have learned might change the way they approach a similar task. Application of learning can be processed for both the life skill practiced as well as the subject matter skill. Questions are structured to address:
   - How what they learned relates to other parts of their lives
   - How they can use what they learned
   - How they can apply what they learned to future situations

Asking the right questions is, in itself, a skill to be learned. Sometimes a short activity in which everyone answers the same question or simply finishes a sentence will get everyone focused. Finishing a statement like “I learned that…” or “I felt…” will stimulate discussion. As you facilitate the processing of the experience you will want to be very aware of the stage or step of the experiential model in which the group is working and be prepared to move the group to the next step when they are ready. Adjust your questions based upon the responses youth give. Continue to help them build on their experiences.

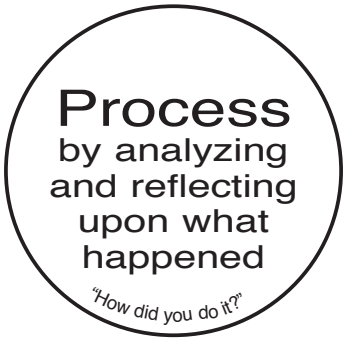
The most important outcome of an experiential learning experience is that group members demonstrate that they have gained new knowledge or skills in the area targeted. The questions discussed in the processing and application steps of the experiential model will often provide excellent feedback. If you use experiential learning successfully over time, you will observe youth demonstrating their learning as they apply new skills in their everyday lives.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE

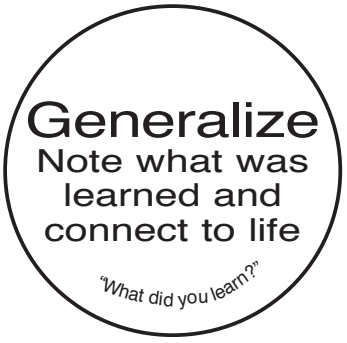


- Begin with a concrete experience that:
  - Can be an individual or group experience, but involves doing.
  - Most likely will be unfamiliar to learner or first-time activity.
  - Pushes learner beyond previous performance levels.
  - May be uncomfortable to learner.
  - Includes the risk of failure.

- Get participants to talk about experience.
- Share reactions and observations.
- Discuss feelings generated by the experience.
- Let the group (or individual) talk freely and acknowledge ideas generated.



- Discuss how the experience was carried out.
- Discuss how themes, problems, and issues are brought out by the experience.
- Discuss how specific problems or issues were addressed.
- Discuss personal experiences of members.
- Encourage the group to look for recurring themes.



- Find general trends or common truths in the experience.
- Identify "real life" principles that surfaced.
- Identify key learnings.
- List key terms that capture the learning.

- Discuss how new learning can be applied to other situations.
- Discuss how issues raised can be useful in the future.
- Discuss how more effective behaviors can develop from new learning.
- Help each individual feel a sense of ownership for what is learned.

SESSION V:

Characteristics and Developmental Tasks of Youth Ages 6–19

"Let's Start Where They Are!"

- Program implication worksheets
- Applying knowledge of characteristics and developmental tasks to the delivery of positive youth development programs
- Continuum of growth toward mastery
- Puzzles of the five age groups

SESSION V
"Let's Start Where They Are!"

This session focuses on understanding the developmental characteristics and tasks of youth from six to nineteen years of age. An understanding of these characteristics will make it possible for you to provide opportunities and experiences for the youth with whom you work that are appropriate to their ages and to their stages of development.

To examine these characteristics and tasks, five age groupings will be used. These are: six through eight, nine through eleven, twelve though fourteen, fifteen through seventeen; and eighteen through nineteen. It is important to note that, while the growth patterns discussed in this unit are common to most young people in these age groups, each person is unique in his/her developmental pattern (Steinberg, 2004). Consequently, young people may not always fall into the stage of development typical of their age. Nevertheless, the knowledge of the range of characteristics common to any one age group will provide a framework for designing programs that are appropriate to the abilities and interests of the youth in your program.
In addition, this knowledge will assist staff in forming realistic expectations for the behavior and skills of the youth with whom they work.

Within age groupings, growth and development is typically studied through four major areas of development: physical, social, emotional, and intellectual (cognitive). Just as growth patterns by age may differ, growth within areas of development will vary for individual youth. Growth may be occurring at typical age-level expectations in one area of development and ahead of or behind typical age-level expectations in other areas (Steinberg, 2004). By understanding the continuum of growth, however, you will be better able to provide a seamless flow of growth experiences for young people at all age levels of your youth development program.

Specific characterisitics and/or tasks are presented in each of the five areas of development for each age group. The information presented is not intended to be exhaustive - rather it is intended to provide a sample of how characteristics and tasks vary by age. These tasks and characteristics are consistent with reports from the following researchers: Bell, & Bromnick, (2003); DuBois, Burk-Braxton, Swenson, Tevendale, Lockerd, & Moran (2002); Greene, Krcmar, Walters, Rubin, Hale, & Hale (2000); Harter, Bresnick, Bouchey, & Whitesell (1997); Hartup & Abecassis (2002); McDowell & Parke (2000); Newman & Newman (2001); Pellegrini (2002); Pons & Harris (2005); Rogol, Roemmich & Clark (2002); Schulman & Kipnis (2001); and Williams & Currie (2000).

SESSION V
Program Implications Worksheet
Ages 6–8 (Early Elementary)

Task or Characteristic	Program Implications
Physical Growth	
Experience slow, steady physical growth	
Are learning to use their bodies and master physical skills; skills are not yet polished	
Cognitive (Thinking) Growth	
Are more interested in the process than the product	
Are learning to sort things into categories	
Are very concrete thinkers; can make choices from a group of concrete options	
Social Growth	
Are learning how to be friends; may have several "best friends" at a time	
Are better able to observe others and are more aware of peers and peer opinions	
Can depend on adults other than their parents; need clearly defined and monitored rules	
Emotional Growth	
Are learning about and wrapped up in self	
Want approval of parents; parents and family are primary role models	
Enjoy playing games but are not yet ready to accept losing	

Program Implications Worksheet
Ages 9–11 (Middle School)

Task or Characteristic	Program Implications
Physical Growth Experience slow, steady physical growth; puberty may be starting for some early maturing girls	
Are very active and enjoy activities that involve movement; are not comfortable sitting still for long periods of time	
Cognitive (Thinking) Growth Are still concrete thinkers but are beginning to think more logically; are able to generate concrete options in decision making	
Understand their world in absolutes; right or wrong, good or bad	
Are curious and open to exploring many interests	
Social Growth Are beginning to identify with peers; enjoy being in clubs	
Have difficulty understanding another person's thinking, but are beginning to recognize the benefit of making others happy	
Complete work to gain approval of adults and follow rules out of respect for adults	
Emotional Growth Are learning about who they are as girls or boys and how to get along with same gender peers	
Admire and imitate older youth; teens serve as role models	
Prefer cooperative activities; comparison with others has negative impact	

Program Implications Worksheet
Ages 12–14 (Young Teens/Early Adolescence)

Task or Characteristic	Program Implications
Physical Growth Experience a growth spurt which occurs across a wide range of ages with girls maturing before boys	
May be uncomfortable with their body image due to their rapid changes in appearance	
Cognitive (Thinking) Growth Are moving from concrete to abstract thinking; can set short term goals, generate options, and predict outcomes	
Tend to reject ready-made solutions from adults in favor of their own	
Regard justice and equality as important issues	
Social Growth Are moving away from dependence on parents; enjoy participating in activities away from home	
Are shifting from dependence on opinions of adults to dependence on opinions of peers; role models are adult public figures	
Are learning about who they are in relation to the opposite sex and to feel at ease with members of the opposite sex	
Emotional Growth Want to be part of something important	
Are beginning an emotional roller coaster ride	
Experience challenges to their self-concept	

Program Implications Worksheet
Ages 15–17 (Middle Teens)

Task or Characteristic	Program Implications
Physical Growth Have completed most of their growth; have reached maximum height	
Are accepting the physical changes that have occurred; recognize their physical abilities	
Cognitive (Thinking) Growth Are maturing in abstract thinking; may still have difficulty understanding compromise	
Reject goals set by others	
Can set long-term goals, generate options, and determine strategies for carrying them out	
Are beginning to explore and prepare for future careers	
Social Growth Enjoy belonging to groups but want to be recognized as unique individuals within the group	
Want acceptance by members of the opposite sex	
Dating increases	
Emotional Growth Actively search for independence and personal identity	
Seek emotional autonomy from parents	
Lose patience with meaningless or “busy work” activities	

Program Implications Worksheet
Ages 18–19 (Older Teens/Young Adults)

Task or Characteristic	Program Implications
Physical Growth	
Are no longer preoccupied with body changes and body image	
Are perfecting performance levels in sports	
Cognitive (Thinking) Growth	
Are mastering abstract thinking; can set long-term goals, generate options and strategies to reach those goals, and implement those strategies	
Choose to participate in activities that are in line with goals they have for the future	
Desire meaningful roles in the community	
Social Growth	
Become preoccupied with the need for intimacy; some will marry at this age	
Find that employment and education fill the need for social relationships which were earlier filled by club and group activities	
Control their own activities; still appreciate respectful adult guidance	
Emotional Growth	
Have achieved identity formation and established their sense of independence	
Feel they have reached the stage of full maturity and expect to be treated as adults	
Leave home for education and employment; are establishing their own households, separate from parents	

APPLYING KNOWLEDGE OF CHARACTERISTICS AND DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS TO THE DELIVERY OF POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Positive youth development programs offer experiences designed to help youth acquire skills that lead to mastery of those competencies critical to successful transition to adulthood. These experiences must be appropriate to the characteristics and developmental tasks that correspond to the age of the group being served. Because each stage of development builds upon the growth of the previous stage, youth development professionals must understand the characteristics and developmental tasks of each stage
of development. They must know the skills that youth at any point in their program are building upon and the skills they are building toward. Youth development professionals must be able to explain how and why the opportunities, choices, and delivery structure they provide will promote competence that is developmentally appropriate for the age group they serve. The following summary of the implications of stages of growth to youth development programming will assist in both program design and justification.

Six- to Eight-Year-Olds (Early Elementary)
Six- to eight-year-olds are experiencing a period of slow steady growth after leaving the rapid changes of the infant/preschooler behind. This slow growth period provides time to learn to use the body that has just developed. Six- to eight-year-olds are and need to be very physically active to improve control of their large muscle structures. Provide lots of very active time for this group to assist in this skill development. It will also be important to provide time to practice small muscle structure development, although most six- to eight-year-olds will not enjoy spending as much time with small muscle activity as with large, so allow a shorter period of time for these in your program. And be prepared for messy, less-than-perfect results while use of these muscles is developing. Six- to eight-year-olds will typically not be upset about these results since they are more interested in the process of doing something than in the way the product turns out or whether it is completed. They are moving out of what Erik Erikson has called the “stage of initiative” and into the “stage of industry” (Erikson, 1963). Choose adults to work with this age group who can be comfortable with messy and uncompleted work.

Early elementary age children think in concrete terms and if they have never seen it, heard it, felt it, tasted it, or smelled it, they will have a hard time thinking of it. Plan lots of hands-on activities and demonstrate directions for the activity rather than simply giving instructions verbally. Another cognitive skill developing at this age is the ability to sort things into categories, so activities involving gathering and sorting things will be fun for this group. The development of decision-making skills can be started and supported by providing several options for activities and allowing them to choose what they will do from this set of options.

Six- to eight-year-olds need and seek the approval of parents. Parents and family are still their primary role models. They are beginning to be more secure when away from parents, however, and are learning about who they are as individuals apart from their

parents. This developmental task requires that they be pretty wrapped up in thinking about themselves. In addition, their cognitive development has not reached a level that allows much imagination about what others might think or feel. Be aware of the activity choices and interactions of the six- to eight-year-olds in your program and provide feedback that will help them recognize their successes, their interests, and their feelings. As they begin to recognize these aspects of themselves they will be preparing to recognize the interests, feelings, and successes of others as well. Some initial exposure to the process of empathizing with others can be started through dramatic play during which they pretend to be someone else.

Elementary school activities take children away from home and parents, some for the first time, and create a need to transfer total dependence on parents to some dependence on another adult. Teachers and youth program leaders may become central figures. Youth development professionals who work with this age group need to be visibly present at all times and alert to opportunities to provide support. They must also provide a structure that will assure physical and emotional safety. Clearly stated rules of expected behavior that are fairly enforced will help children feel more secure. Review your participation rules with the group and use a picture format to post the rules as reminders.

Six- to eight-year-olds are just learning how to be friends and may have several “best friends” at a time. Boys and girls will enjoy playing together at this age, although by the end of this period they may choose to be with friends of the same gender. In this process, they are beginning to observe other people better and to use those observations in relating to others. Fighting may occur as relationship skills are learned but it seldom has lasting effects.The youth development professional can assist this learning by offering lots of supervised small group activities and by observing and pointing out behaviors in those settings that promote positive relationships. Youth in this age group love games and are comfortable with the rules and rituals of games. But they are not yet secure enough with themselvesto accept losing well. It is better to provide this group cooperative games in which every child wins. Competition is not appropriate at this age level. Provide feedback that lifts up some measure of success in every experience and that minimizes the failures.

Nine- to Eleven-Year-Olds (Middle School)
Nine- to eleven-year-olds are still experiencing steady growth, but growth patterns will differ and some early maturing girls may experience puberty (Archibald, Graber & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). It is still important to offer very active kinds of experiences that strengthen these developing bodies. Nine- to eleven-year-olds do not like to be still for long periods of time. Activities involving running, catching and throwing, swimming, skating, dancing, etc., are enjoyed and will assist physical development. Plan a variety of activities that involve doing something or making something. Hands-on involvement with objects and crafts projects can be enjoyed now, because small muscle development has increased and continues to improve. The key word here is “improving.” The products from craft projects are still subject to developing skills. Field trips to museums or parks are enjoyed, but only if they are not expected to stay confined to one area or do one thing for a long period of time. Long driving/travel times are not recommended for this age and program offerings that involve long periods of sitting and listening will not be productive.

Nine- to eleven-year-olds are beginning to think logically and symbolically. They are still primarily concrete thinkers and can handle ideas better if they are related to something they can do or experience with their senses, but they are moving toward understanding abstract ideas. However, ideas and experiences are understood as absolutes. Things are right or wrong, good or bad, disgusting or fabulous. There is very little middle ground and ambiguity is a difficult concept for this age. This group will not understand sarcasm since what is said is taken literally. Because children at this stage still depend upon adults for approval, the use of sarcasm with them can be damaging.

Middle school children are curious, with a wide range of interests, and will usually respond positively to an opportunity to explore something new. It will be important and rewarding to offer many kinds of short-term experiences for this group and to involve them in generating ideas for some of the activities they will pursue. This involvement is the next step in the sequence of skills that will lead to competence in decision making. Because they are not yet doing abstract thinking they will not be skilled at predicting probable outcomes for the options they generate, but you can ask questions that will help them think about what might result from the options they generate.

As six- to eight-year-olds, these youth were learning about self as separate from their parents. From nine to eleven years, they are learning who they are as girls or boys. Consequently, they are interested in being with same-gender friends. It will be important to avoid any stereotyping of activities as “girl” projects or activities or “boy” projects or activities so that a wide range of possibilities for both genders is recognized. Their relationship with peers in general has moved from being aware of peers to the beginnings of identifying with peers; and they like to be in organized groups of others similar to themselves. As part of this process they often will join or form their own clubs. Since this age still enjoys collecting things, a club built around a common collection interest could appeal. Code languages, passwords, clothing, etc., that represent the group are enjoyed.

While six- to eight-year-olds were learning to understand the feelings of others, nine- to eleven-year-olds are beginning to recognize and understand other’s thinking, and are beginning to discover the benefits of making other people happy. Primarily, they are developing an “I’ll scratch your back if you scratch mine” philosophy. Near the end of this stage of development they begin to realize the benefits of pleasing others apart from immediate self-reward. This pleasing focus extends to completion of projects or activities more in order to please adults than for the value or importance of the activity itself. Six- to eight-year-olds model after parents, but nine- to eleven-year-olds tend to select older teens as role models. Since teens are admired and imitated, they make great teachers and leaders for this age group. However, it is important that you provide teens with training in ways to work with nine- to eleven-year-olds before giving them these leadership roles.

Involved adult leadership with this age is extremely important. While middle school children are beginning to identify with peers, they still look to adults for guidance. This age group will appreciate having some input into the rules that are used to make their environment physically and emotionally safe. They will trust adults to enforce these rules. Rules should be posted and reviewed periodically. When children join the group, review the rules with the entire group so that all children have the same understanding of what is expected. Monitor rules fairly without favoritism.

Middle school-age children have a strong need to feel accepted and worthwhile. School becomes increasingly difficult and demanding and out-of-school pressures increase. Be vigilant in finding and acknowledging the positive behaviors and accomplishments of each child. Comparison with the success of others is difficult for children this age. It tends to erode self-confidence. In addition, it can cause problems in dealing with peers at a time when they are trying to understand and build friendships. Never compare children with other children. Build positive self-concepts by helping them see the progress they have made in performance from one time to the next. Cooperative activities are enjoyed and preferred over competitive ones by this age group so offer lots of opportunities to work together in groups to accomplish something.

Twelve- to Fourteen-Year-Olds (Young Teen/Early Adolescence)
A growth spurt occurs at the beginning of adolescence with girls maturing before boys Archibald et al., 2003). Boys reach about 80 percent of their height during this time and girls reach 90 percent of their height. However, growth patterns vary greatly. Some boys of thirteen may still be the size of eleven-year-olds while others the same age may have grown six inches. Plan activities for this group in which size is not a factor in success. Activities like canoeing, hiking, environmental stewardship experiences, etc., are examples of physical activities that early teens can participate in equally. Rapid physical changes are often a source of embarrassment for teens. Hands and feet grow first which often causes clumsiness. The face a young person is used to seeing in the mirror may be changing due to the more rapid growth of nose and ears and sometimes the appearance of acne. Voice changes and unpredictable menstrual cycles all set up situations of great embarrassment. At the same time, slower developing teens may become uneasy about the lack of physical changes. Twelve- to fourteen-year-olds are experiencing significant changes in cognitive, social, and emotional development, but the physical changes are so readily observed that they dominate the attention of teens, creating a new focus on self and self-consciousness. Try to minimize this self-consciousness by never calling attention to any physical characteristics (size, shape, etc.) of the teens with whom you work, even when the comments seem positive. It will also be important to ignore what may seem to be excessive grooming by these young teens as they attempt to gain some sort of control over their bodies.

Early teens are moving from concrete to abstract thinking and enjoy playing with ideas (Byrnes, 2003). They speak in longer sentences, understand multiple levels of meaning, and have increased vocabulary. If a subject is of interest it will be intensely explored. They will be able to play more complex games and to use more complex plays in sports activities. It will be important to incorporate these advanced skills into your program offerings. Twelve- to fourteen-year-olds are learning to think about thinking, but they still tend to think in all-or-nothing terms. It will be important to involve them in predicting and problem solving by asking leading questions: “What could happen if we did this?” “What if this doesn’t work?” These skills in predicting outcomes move them forward in mastering the decision-making process.

Ready-made solutions from adults are often rejected in favor of finding solutions on their own. Offer opportunities to test ideas in small groups which are less intimidating to these self-conscious teens than are large groups. Leaders who can provide supervision without interference can have a great influence. Provide opportunities to question ways of doing things in the program or to explore the values and beliefs of the organization.

Young teens are in the process of moving away from dependence on parents toward eventual independence, and are no longer afraid of being away from parents so will enjoy participating in activities away from home (Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins, 2003). Involve them in planning trips to places they are interested in exploring. The recognition from adults that they sought at earlier stages shifts at this stage to the seeking of recognition from peers. Groups and clubs provide an opportunity for early teens to feel social acceptance. They are beginning to develop mature friendship skills. Twelve- to fourteen-year-olds are discovering who they are in relation to members of the opposite sex (Bouchey & Furman, 2003), so they need opportunities to be with those peers in situations that are comfortable. For most activities, boys will still cluster with boys and girls with girls, although they will be very interested in what the other group is doing. Involve teens in planning mixed-gender work and interest groups and social events. These activities are most successful when teens are involved in the planning.

With the onset of puberty, emotions begin the roller coaster ride that characterizes adolescence. Changes in hormones and changes in ways of thinking contribute to these mood swings (Archibald et al. 2003). The early teen years are a time when youth begin to test values as well (Smentana & Turiel, 2003). If youth know that you are accepting and willing to listen and talk with them about values and morals you can have a lasting effect on their lives. This period seems to present the biggest challenge to a young person's self-concept. They are faced with so many changes — entering a new school, changes in thinking processes, redefining social relationships, and developing a new and unfamiliar body — that young people may find it hard knowing who they are. This is a time for adults to help with self-knowledge and self-discovery activities. It is still important to avoid comparing young people with each other and to help youth compare present performance to past accomplishments. Be especially careful not to embarrass a teen.

Young teens need to be a part of something important. An activity that provides good things for others and demonstrates the teens' growing sense of responsibility is ideal. Find avenues for them to contribute to the group.

Fifteen- to Seventeen-Year-Olds (Middle Teens)
During the middle teens most young people will have begun to be comfortable in their bodies and will have overcome the clumsiness of the rapid growth period just completed (Archibald, 2003). Some boys may still be growing rapidly and may still suffer from some awkwardness. Boys will gain muscle cells during this stage and most will reach their maximum height by age sixteen. Girls reach maximum height by age fourteen, and those who did not reach puberty before age fifteen will complete that development during this stage. Middle teens' physical reaction time has reached a high and helps them as they pursue new skills such as driving a car.

As they are accepting the way their bodies have developed, they will enjoy and benefit from experiences that enhance image and improve physical health. Offer opportunities to explore grooming, exercise and nutrition, hair styles, etc., based upon interest input from teen participants. Most middle teens are aware of the physical abilities and talents they have to work with and may enjoy activities that help them perfect specific skills. Some will focus on athletic talent and engage in intense hours of training and competition. Group activities that involve using their bodies will again be enjoyed and they will enjoy planning and experiencing activities that involve them in mixed-gender groups such as hiking and canoe trips, dancing, environmental outings, etc.

Fifteen- to seventeen-year-olds are maturing in abstract thinking skills and improving in study skills (Byrnes, 2003). They are able to write longer and more complex sentences and can adapt language to different contexts, often enjoying using teen slang. It is important to understand and accept the slang they enjoy, but to continue to use the language of the world teens will join when they move into adulthood in your own speech. The increased ability of middle teens to think in abstract terms allows them to consider long-range goals and objectives. They can generate options, predict possible outcomes of those options, and determine strategies to reach the desired outcome. Because they are able to handle long-term goals and objectives, the middle years of adolescence are a time when teens can initiate and carry out their own tasks without much supervision. They are able to practice the decision-making skills that they have been developing up to this point. Middle teens set goals based on feelings of personal need and priorities. Any goals set by others are apt to be rejected. In fact, teens "vote with their feet" and if they have not planned an event they will likely not attend the event. Adult support is still necessary while these leadership skills are being perfected, but direct supervision is rarely beneficial or appreciated. Involve them in planning and carrying out group goals and activities and in leadership roles as full partners/members of advisory boards and councils. Projects requiring research and creativity give teens the opportunity to demonstrate

to themselves and others how much they have learned and how much they can accomplish on their own. You can be especially helpful to teens at this age by suggesting new experiences in areas of interest.

Fifteen- to seventeen-year-olds are beginning to be able to think about the future and make realistic plans. Their interest in future vocational goals will influence the activities they choose to participate in. The middle teen years are a time of exploration and preparation for future careers. College visits, part-time jobs, field trips to factories and businesses, and conversations with college students and adults working in a wide variety of fields can assist teens with making education and career decisions.

Middle teens can imagine things that never were in a way that challenges, and sometimes threatens, many adults. They are learning to accept ambiguity and enjoy discussion around ideas. They still may have difficulty understanding compromise, and may label adult efforts to cope with the inconsistencies of life as "hypocrisy." Plan some group time during which they can discuss ideas and abstract concepts such as current political issues and current issues within the organization.

At this stage teens are capable of understanding much of what other people feel, yet they are often wrapped up in themselves. Relationship skills are usually well developed, however, and friendships formed at this stage are often sincere, close, and long-lasting. Middle teens are learning to cooperate with others on an adult level. Acceptance by the opposite sex is of high importance, and the task of learning to interact with members of the opposite sex may preoccupy teens. Dating increases. Among most middle teens, group dates gradually give way to double dates and couples-only dates. Provide opportunities for teens to plan and conduct social events that provide a dating venue.

Recreation choices continue to move away from the family and from large group activity. Activities such as sports and clubs are still enjoyed, though. Teens want to belong to the group but now want to be recognized as individuals within the group. They are ready to explore their own uniqueness and are less dependent on the security of looking and acting like their peers. Consequently they are more likely to enjoy being "up front" in groups and are ready to take on more obvious leadership roles. Because they are role models for the nine- to eleven-year-olds, they can be ideal leaders for that group. It will be important to provide them with adequate training to work with these younger children, however.

The middle teen years are a peak time for leadership in clubs but also a time of possible declining interest in past activities as jobs, school, and dating competes for their time and energy. The priorities teens set for themselves will determine how active they remain in organizations they have belonged to in the past. Middle teens are focused on independence and identity, although neither will be achieved completely during this time period. Achieving these goals will involve a satisfactory adjustment to sexuality and a definition of career goals. Time is precious to them. If your program offerings are filled with "busy work" or meaningless activities, these teens will lose patience and interest. In general, fifteen- to seventeen-year-olds will pride themselves on their increased ability to be responsible in the eyes of themselves, peers, and adults. Your relationship with this age group will change from director/follower to advisor/independent worker. Provide consistent support as teens move closer to adulthood. Remember that they are still learning the skills they will need as adults and have not yet mastered them.

Eighteen- to Nineteen-Year-Olds (Older Teens/Young Adults)
Youth in this age group are making the transition to adulthood. Their physical growth has tapered off and they are no longer as preoccupied with body image and body changes. They still, however, have an interest in heath and fitness and enjoy participating in activities that enhance health and fitness. In most ways they have adult bodies. However, they may not be prepared entirely for adulthood and consequently may not always exhibit adult behavior. It is important that you remember that the move from youth to adult is gradual and successful transition requires support from caring adults.

These young adults are completing or have completed high school and are moving on to college, jobs, marriage, and other adult responsibilities. They will be interested in participating in activities that support the goals they have for themselves for the future. You can assist older teens in this transition to adulthood by providing opportunities to explore the job market and the education and skills needed for jobs in which they are interested. You can also assist teens in locating information they need to explore educational options (college, vocational training, etc.) they may choose to pursue. If possible, connect teens to an adult who will take the time to guide them through the qualification requirements. As teens prepare for jobs, advanced schooling, and scholarship opportunities, an adult leader who knows the members well can be a valuable resource for references.

Older teens are cognitively able to set long-term goals, generate options and strategies to reach those goals, and implement those strategies (Byrnes, 2003). Only general directions are needed when they are assigned familiar tasks. Because they can determine their own schedules, they will participate only in those things in which they are interested. Older teens want to be involved in meaningful roles in the community. You can help them by making community leaders aware of the resources these teens bring to community issues and projects and assisting in “plugging” youth into significant volunteer roles and advisory board positions.

These young adults are preoccupied with the need for intimacy and will form close relationships at this stage (Bouchey & Furman, 2003). The search for intimacy will include enhancing all levels of relationships, including friends and family, and is not limited to sexual intimacy, although sexual relationships are primary concerns at this age. Some older teens will marry. Part-time jobs or advanced schooling may fill the need for social relationships that were filled by club activities in the past.

As older teens make and carry out serious decisions, the support and guidance of adults still are needed, but must be offered with respect for their independence. Act as a resource person for this age group and stimulate thinking, but leave the final decisions to the teens. Late teens feel they have reached the stage of full maturity and expect to be treated as such. This is a time when many young adults enjoy looking back on their achievements in the organization and may receive special recognition for their leadership activities.

Continuum of Growth Toward Mastery

To support the growth and development of young people, youth development professionals must be aware of the level of skill development that is typical of the age of the group with which they are working and must know the developmental tasks that preceded and that follow that level. This piece illustrates the importance of helping youth master skills at each step of the process. If the skills best mastered a 6–8 are ignored, the next skill in the sequence can't be mastered at the 9–11 stage.

The following is a review of the sequence of tasks that lead toward mastering competencies in four areas of development and the age groups in which those tasks are typically addressed. Remember, the age at which these tasks occur may vary, but the sequence of tasks will remain the same.

Competency in Decision Making

Can choose from a small group of concrete options. ..... Ages 6–8

Can generate concrete options. ..... Ages 9–11

Can set short-term goals and generate options for reaching those goals. Beginning to predict possible outcomes of those options. ..... Ages 12–14

Can set long-term goals, generate options for reaching those goals, predict possible outcomes, and determine strategies to reach desired outcomes. .... Ages 15–17

Can identify probable as well as possible outcomes for options to reach goals, and can independently implement action to obtain the desired goals. ..... Ages 18–19

Competency in Relationships

Learning about self as separate from parent. ..... Ages 6–8

Identifying with and learning to interact with same-gender group. ..... Ages 9–11

Learning about and interacting with peers of the opposite sex. ..... Ages 12–14

Interested in dating relationships and relationship skills. ..... Ages 15–17

Searching for intimacy and increased relationship skills. ..... Ages 18–19

Intellectual Competency

Are concrete thinkers. Can think about things they can see, touch, taste, and smell. ..... Ages 6–8

Still thinking primarily in concrete terms. Understand their world in absolutes; right or wrong with little middle ground. ..... Ages 9–11

Beginning to think abstractly. Can discuss ideas and concepts. ..... Ages 12–14

Maturing in abstract-thinking skills and improving in study habits. Can accept ambiguity and enjoy discussions about ideas. ..... Ages 15–17

Mastering abstract-thinking skills. Can enjoy discussions about abstract concepts. Accept as human the mistakes of adults. ..... Ages 18–19

Competency in Understanding Self

Act out roles with which they are familiar. Role models are parents and family. ..... Ages 6–8

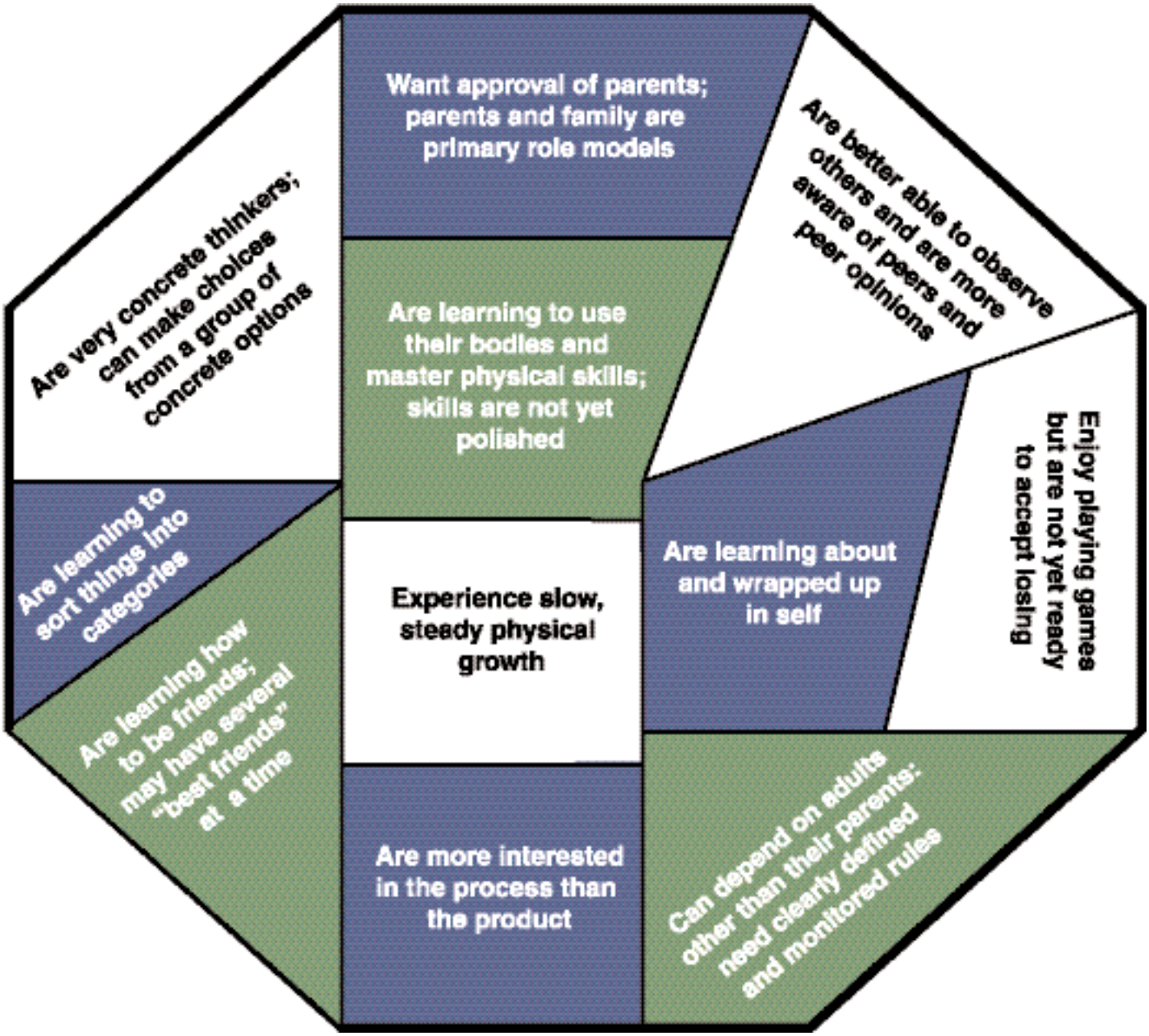
Have many interests and are able to fantasize about adult roles in those interests. Role models are older teens. ..... Ages 9–11

Have moved from fantasy to realistic focus on life possibilities. Role models tend to be public figures. ..... Ages 12–14

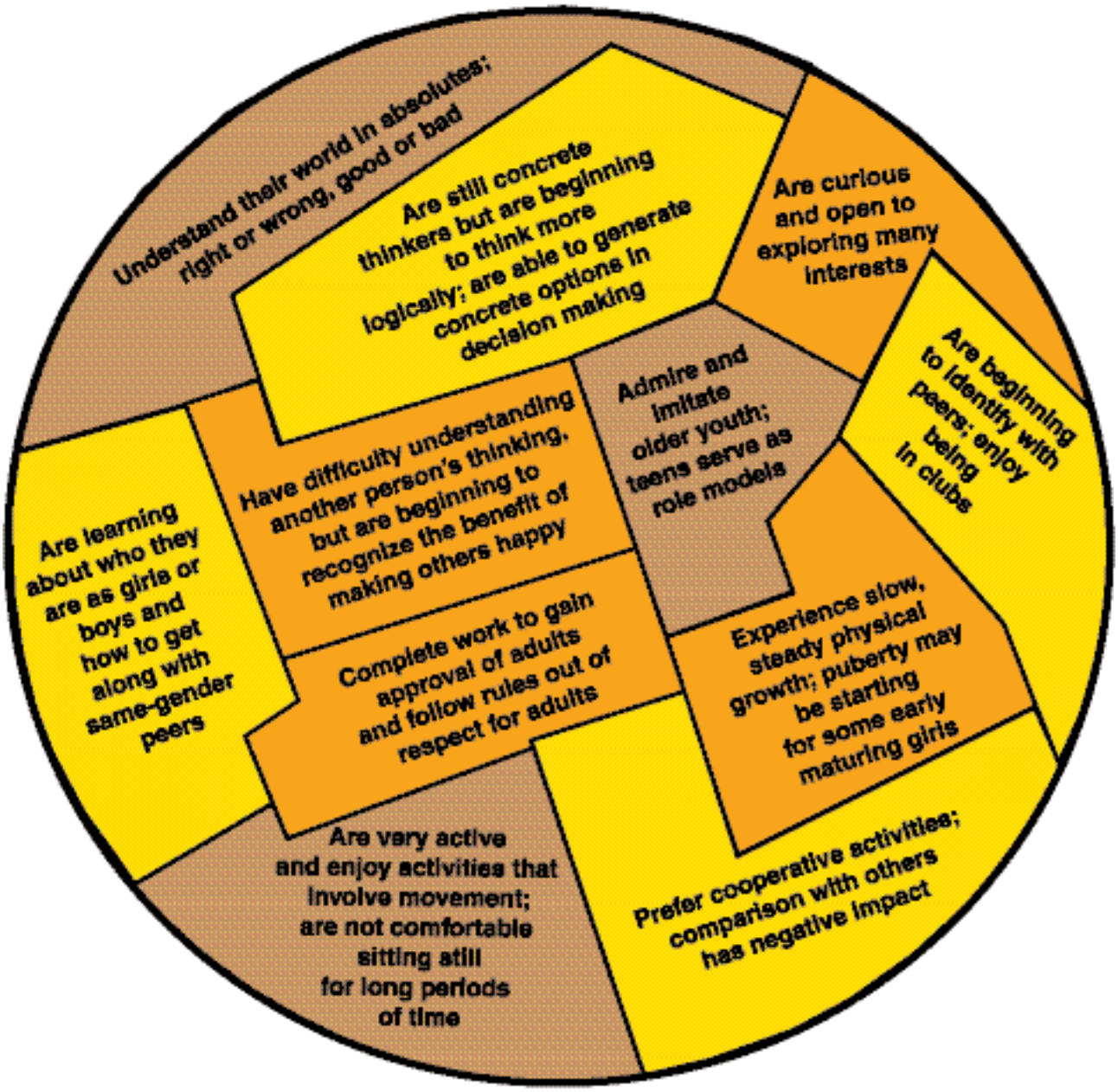
Searching for career options. Are eager to be role models for younger youth. ..... Ages 15–17

Independence and identity formation are achieved. ..... Ages 18–19

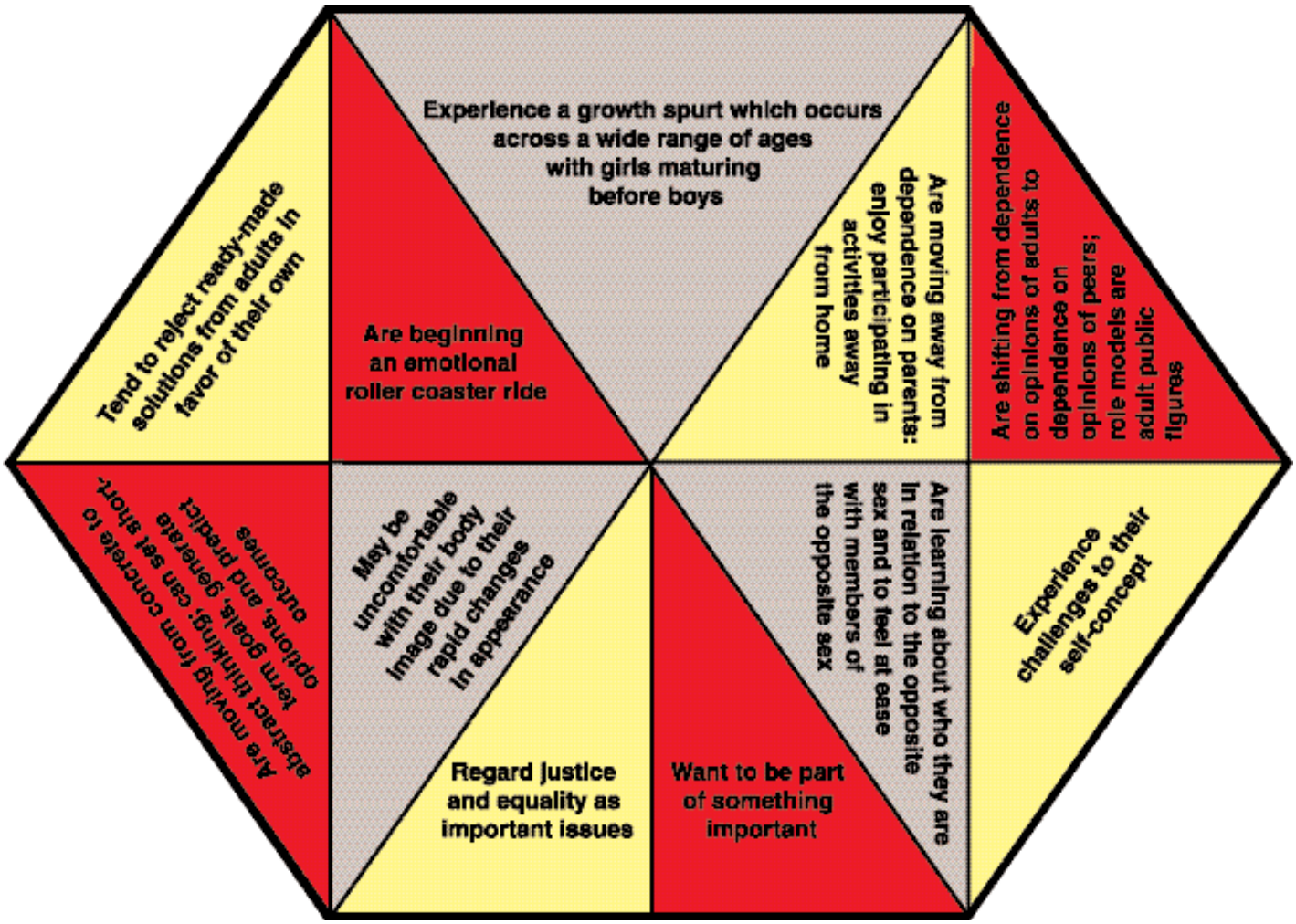
PUZZLE FOR AGES 6-8
EARLY ELEMENTARY



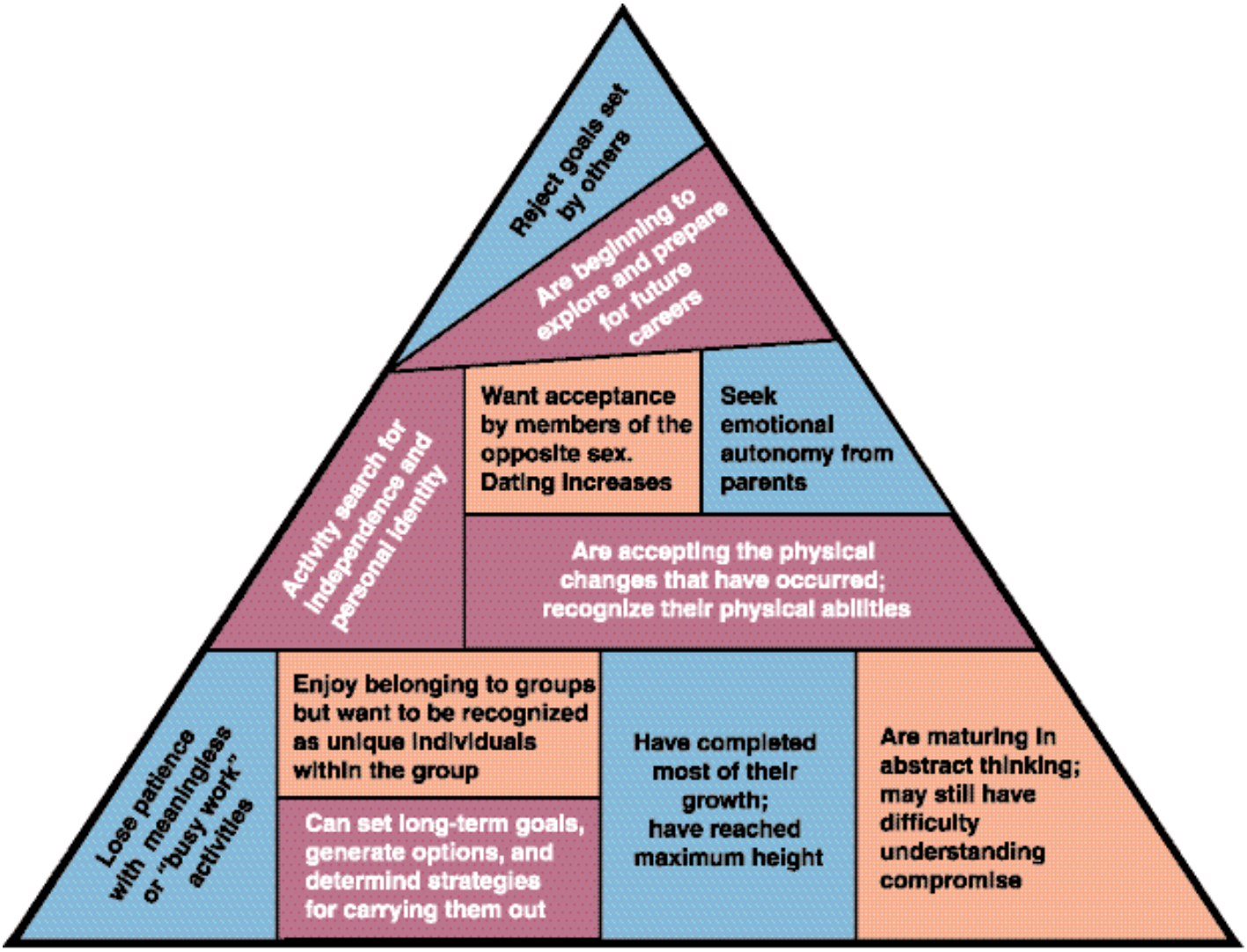
PUZZLE FOR AGES 9-11
MIDDLE SCHOOL



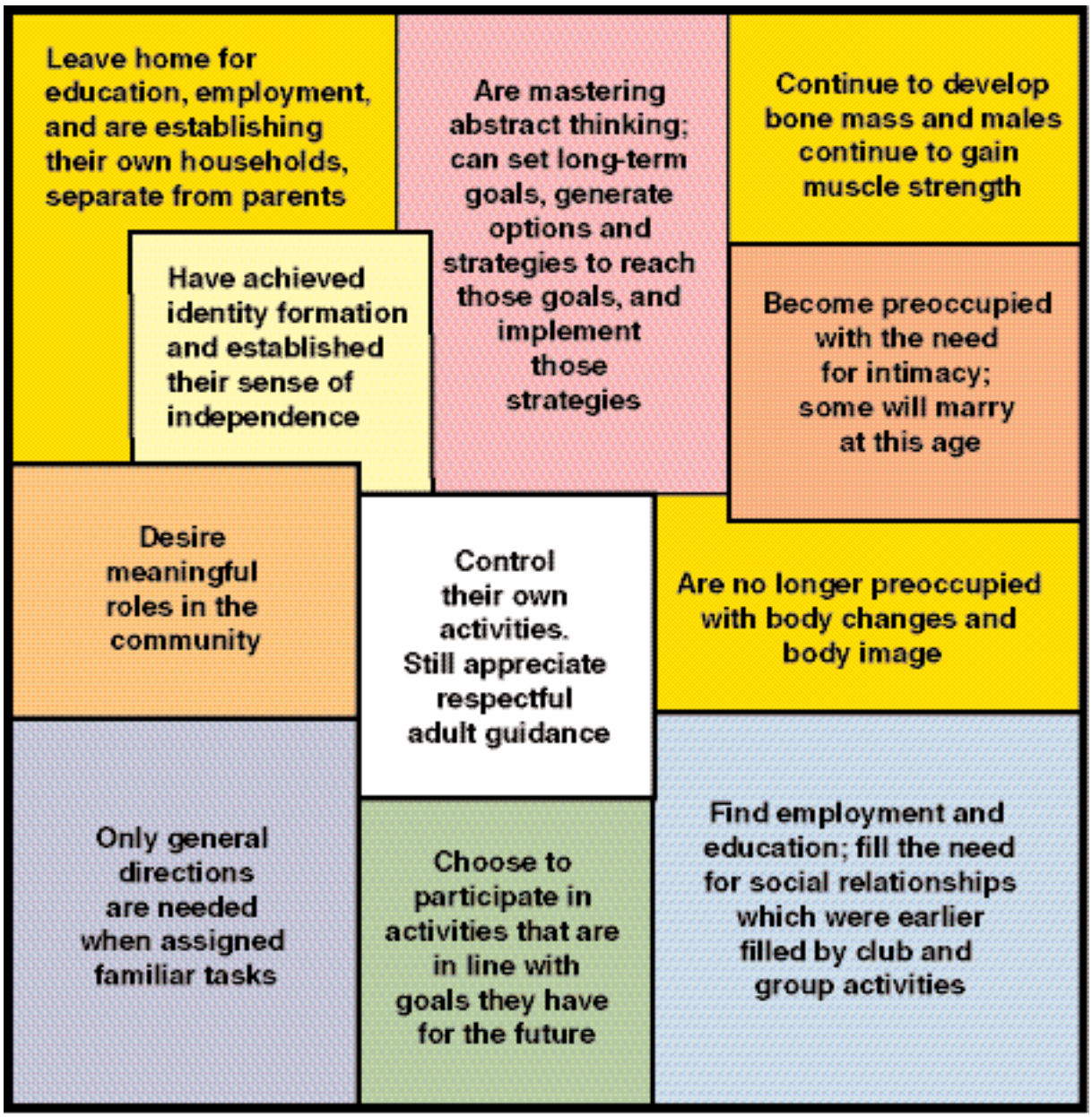
PUZZLE FOR 12-14
YOUNG TEENS, EARLY ADOLESCENCE



PUZZLE FOR 15-17
MIDDLE TEENS



PUZZLE FOR 18-19
OLDER TEENS, YOUNG ADULTS



SESSION VI:

Essential Elements to Support Youth and Create Opportunities for Growth

- Five levels of youth development
- The ecological view of youth at risk
- Risk and protective factors
- Community mapping – worksheet

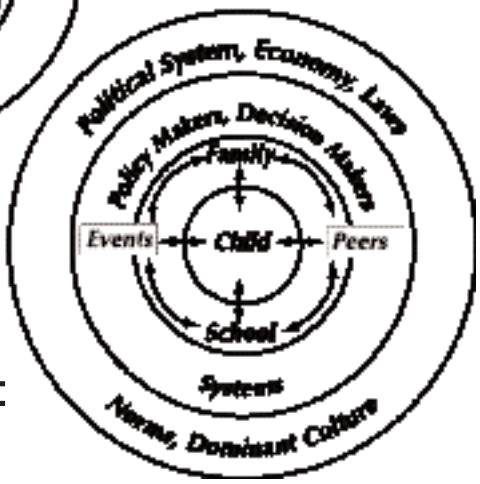
SESSION VI
Five Levels of Youth Development

Level One:
The Child

Level Two:
Immediate Setting

Level Three:
Connections

Level Four:
Systems with Power



Level Five:
Society

SESSION VI
The Ecological View of Youth at Risk

Youth grow up in families that live in communities. The context in which we place youth at risk can determine how we view this issue, the problems, solutions, and prevention. This session provides a framework in which to consider the causes and consequences of youth at risk. What are the causes of the problems youth face and experience? When do problems begin? What can be done to prevent and treat problem behaviors? The context becomes very important as answers to these questions are sought.

A brief look into the history of developmental studies and related fields illustrates the evolution of an ecological view of youth at risk. Betts (1996) provides us with a comprehensive summary of this history:

In 1946, Rene Spitz conducted his now famous work with infants who had been living in French orphanages. While the infants received good physical care, there were not enough caregivers to give each baby individual attention. Spitz found that some of the babies that were old enough to be sitting, pulling to standing, laughing, and playing had lost interest in the world and behaved like infants many months younger. Of 121 infants who were deprived of mothering, 19 developed severe depression characterized by failure to grow and develop, 23 developed moderate depression, and 79 were not diagnosed with depression. One of the conclusions of this study was that infants need love to develop and thrive. The infants with depression were studied, and the etiology or causes of depression in infancy were described. The emphasis on prevention and cure was paramount. The traditional approach to prevention tried to infer antecedents of disorders by studying people who already had the problem. Notice that the 42 infants who were diagnosed with depression were studied in retrospect, which made it difficult or impossible to determine whether the differences between these depressed infants and the 79 normal infants were causes or consequences of the disorder. In other words, were the depressed infants neglected because they were already different in some way, or did they become depressed because they were neglected?

The difference between causes and consequences is an important distinction in this discussion of youth at risk.

The Health Care Analogy to Youth at Risk

The disease orientation to the problems of development, behavior, illness, and even society characterize the thirty years of developmental studies that followed Spitz's work. This disease orientation can be characterized by the following process:

- Define the problem.
- Study those with that problem or disease to discover what caused the problem and how to "fix" it.

- Finally, look for ways to prevent the problem or immunize against it, based on inferred causes.

An examination of American society from the period following World War II until the mid-1970s demonstrates recurrence of this pattern in many facets of our life. Medicine is a good example. The proliferation of medical specialties in physician training and the formation of organizations designed to raise funds to help find cures for specific diseases occurred during this time. Pediatricians and family practice physicians such as the "old family doctor" were devalued during this time of specialization. Patients saw an internist for one problem, a neurologist for another, and an orthopedic surgeon for yet another. Each viewed the patient in terms of the presenting problem and asked little if anything about the patient's life or health practices other than those factors with direct relationships to the problem. Organizations raised funds to find "the cure" for heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and other diseases. The biological causes and effects of disease were studied while social, psychological, and behavioral dimensions of health were largely disregarded.

Things began to change in the mid-1970s and medical care became more integrated. During the last fifteen to twenty years, there has been a major shift from specialization to an examination of health, wellness, and disease in the context of our lifestyles. The cure or prevention of heart disease rests more often in our control of diet, stress, and exercise than in a drug or treatment. Health maintenance organizations are designed to promote healthy lifestyles and practice preventive medicine with use of specialists only upon referral by a primary care physician. Drug and treatment interactions are closely monitored. Problems are viewed in the context of the patient's life, total health picture, and support system. In summary, the shift from a disease orientation to an examination of health status in a context of the total life encouraged a more comprehensive approach to prevention, treatment, and education.

Models of Competence

Another important change is the way social problems, wellness, and disease are studied. In contrast to the disease orientation, models of competence try to explain the nature and causes of positive developmental outcomes. What went "right" or at least did not "go wrong" to cause the success of this group of individuals? Prospective studies follow a given sample of people over time, with appropriate observations and measures, to examine those factors, processes, characteristics, and behaviors that are associated with different outcomes at the end of the study.

What would have happened if before Spitz knew about the devastating effects of the orphanage care on babies, he had decided to study the development and health of infants in the French orphanage from the time of their placements there? How would he have explained the avoidance of depression by 79 infants? What would he have discovered about the temperaments of the babies who were and were not depressed? About their abilities to influence their caregivers? About their interests in and abilities to influence their environments? About the preferences of the caregivers and their behaviors toward the babies? What would have happened if Spitz looked at the interrelationships of the caregivers and infants and their environment, that is, the ecology? Ecology is the study of how the individual and its habitat shape the development of each other. In the context of human life, each person has an effect on the people and objects with whom he interacts, but those people and objects also influence the person.

"Fix-It" Programs

A similar methodological path has been followed in the way we work with youth, promote positive youth development, and treat youth problems. In the past, we tried to fix problems of teen pregnancy, drug use, delinquency, and dropping out of school. Usually this approach was not successful for two main reasons. First, rarely do young people experience one problem in isolation. If a young woman drops out of school, she is more likely to get pregnant. If a young person is using drugs, he or she is more likely to be sexually active. Second, these are consequences or negative outcomes, not the causes of youth at risk. Fix-it programs try to treat the symptoms, not the root causes of problems. Consider school drop-out prevention or retrieval programs. If they attempt only to fix dropping-out, and do not offer special services and support for students who have children, or who need drug or alcohol treatment, or have always failed in school and cannot read, they will not be successful.

In some communities this still may be the case. Many of our systems and institutions offer services that are fragmented by different mandates from the schools, courts, welfare and foster care systems. Different treatment, intervention or prevention philosophies, such as psychoanalytic versus behavioral versus drug treatment, and different service models, such as child guidance versus community mental health versus private practice, combined with different backgrounds of service providers further fragment service delivery and effectiveness. Few communities offer a clear-cut continuum of care in which the initial identification of problems leads directly to the most appropriate type and level of help.

This session moves away from these old models of fragmented services designed to "fix" one of many problems and focuses on the ecological approach to youth development. The wildlife artist Audubon never painted birds flying against a blue sky. He always painted them on a branch, bush, or tree that represented the environment in which they lived. Each bird is perched in an essential part of its habitat, in a tree that it nests in or feeds from. While the bird and tree are separate species, they are fundamentally related and each affects the other. This discussion will paint children in the same way. The habitat of the developing child includes family, friends, neighborhood, place of worship, school, the physical environment and the laws, institutions, and values of the community. The most important characteristic of the ecological view is that it helps us examine the child and the environment for questions and explanations about the child's behavior and development. The relationships between those characteristics that a child brings into the world and the way the world treats the child are the keys to understanding the ecological perspective. Both the child and the environment (and the people in it) change over time and each adapts in response to changes in the other. Different people react in different ways to the same environment and different environments react differently to the same person.

SESSION VI
Risk and Protective Factors

Within the ecology of youth development we can examine those factors or processes that put children and young people at risk of not developing to their full potential to become caring, contributing members of our society. Youth at risk refers to children who have individual characteristics, live in environments, or have (or lack) relationships with others which do not support their successful development. The more risk factors present in a child's life, and the longer the periods of time during which those factors are present, the more likely that the child will experience problems. If caring adults, policymakers, program administrators, and those in positions to make a difference work to reduce the risk factors children and families face, the prospect of negative outcomes for children declines.

Conversely, there also are protective factors or processes that serve to reduce risk and are associated with reduced probabilities of negative outcomes such as school failure, delinquency, and drug use. We are learning more and more about the effects of protective factors that are related to:

- personality characteristics, such as autonomy and self-esteem;
- quality of relationships including family cohesion and warmth;
- available resources, such as external support systems that encourage and reinforce a child's efforts to cope with adversity; and
- background experiences in the child's life.

Protective factors help explain why some children are functioning competently in the face of extremely stressful experiences. Risk intensifies and protection ameliorates the reaction to a situation that normally leads to a negative outcome. Protective factors do not necessarily make a child feel good. They protect against risk just as an immunization exposes a child to a small or modified dose of an infectious agent with which the child's body successfully copes. Protection comes from successful coping and adaptation to risk, not from avoidance of risk altogether.

Risk and Protective Factors in Context

Risk and protective factors operate in three contexts: biological, societal, and psychological. Children are coping well in the biological context if their behavior contributes to their chances of survival and health. For example, a child who is physically healthy, eats well, is immunized, and receives and follows health and safety education advice is likely to survive and cope well in the biological context. Successful coping in the societal context contributes to the survival and well-being of others, while success in the psychological context leads to well-being of the self. Children are survivors when they are happy about themselves, are healthy, are skilled, and are learning to be contributors to their immediate society.

Resilience can be defined as the ability to quickly recover strength, spirits, and good humor. The resilient child survives and copes well even in the face of very disadvantageous life events. Resilience is the active role individuals take to do something about their plight. Resilience is not a fixed characteristic or measure of personal strength or weakness. If the circumstances or risks change, the responses also change and the resilience is altered.

Much of the research on risk and protective factors and resiliency in childhood has been done in the mental health field, specifically with children of schizophrenic parents. Sources of risk in early childhood were studied with these samples. In general, it was found that children of schizophrenics are at high risk, but no more so than children of other severely mentally ill mothers. Poor families and children of color are at even greater risk for general developmental problems than are families with maternal mental illness.The combined risks of illness and low social status produce the worst child outcomes.Children exposed to continuous family and life disruption become increasingly unable to develop in a healthy, competent direction and become more vulnerable to severe problems. While the specific risk factors may differ from family to family, the same degree of risk can predict problem outcomes. It does not matter if the exact risk factors are the same from one child to another; if both face relatively low risk, the probability of negative outcomes is not very great. On the other hand, if both face many risk factors over time, even if the specific risks differ, the probability of negative consequences increases.

Levels of Environmental Contexts

It may be helpful at this point to delineate the five levels of the individual and environment that help conceptualize risk and protective factors in the ecological framework. The first two levels concern the individual and the close environment of family, friends, and home. The third level concerns the connections children and parents make with all of the people, events, and institutions in the lives of children, while the fourth and fifth levels are more concerned with broader political power and society.

Level One: At the first level is the individual and all that he brings to life: temperament, physical health status, skills, and abilities. Across the life span, some characteristics of the individual will serve as risk factors and some will serve as protective factors. A demanding, difficult child is at risk of not developing closeness with others. A child with less than average intelligence is at risk of not developing the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in school. The bright, happy child may find that his intelligence and attitude are protective factors when he interacts with others in hostile environments.

Level Two: The immediate setting in which the child develops forms the second level. This includes the people, objects, and events that interact directly with the child. The single most important issue at this level is emotional climate. Positive emotional climate contributes to success and gives the child self-confidence, while negative emotional climate makes children easily discouraged by everyday problems. The relationships a child forms with parents, siblings, and peers are important at this level.

Level Three: The third level concerns the number and quality of connections between the different people and groups in a child's life. For example, do parents know their child's friends? Do parents visit school? Risk occurs when there are few connections or when there are conflicts of values between connections. For success, it is important that home and school are well connected. When a child enters a new setting, new connections develop. Healthy connections are produced by healthy development and also cause further healthy development. When the people in a child's life work together to form strong connections, children benefit. When they work in isolation or opposition, youth are at risk. Children who start school with no previous experience or orientation to learning, reading, or rules will have a difficult time being successful. They and their parents have made no connections between their own experiences at home and new experiences in the new school setting.

Level Four: The fourth level influences development but in indirect ways through the systems that have power over the lives of children. At this level, risk and protection occur in two manners: first, when parents are treated in ways that impoverish (risk) or enhance (protect) their behavior at home; and second, when decisions are made that affect the child's everyday life. Risk occurs when youth lack advocates in decision-making bodies. When parents cannot take leave from work at the birth or adoption of a child, when parents do not have access to a phone at work to check in with children after school, when parents cannot find affordable day care, youth are at risk.

Level Five: Finally, the broad patterns of a society that reflect the shared assumptions about how things should be done constitute the fifth level. The type of economic and political system, and a person's place in that system and their culture, have tremendous influence on the person's relation to family, community, and country. Discrimination based upon race or gender presents risks to healthy development. Many Americans accept some level of domestic violence as normal and define abuse differently from punishment. Societal support of violence represents sociocultural risk because it presents and condones violence as a stress outlet.

To enhance human development, a good fit is needed between the person and the setting. The characteristics, needs, and developing competencies of the person must be matched, with the best fit possible, to the people, events, and objects in the social setting. An infant's world is most influenced by the parent or adult caregiver that meets his or her immediate physical, emotional, social, and learning needs. As children grow up, their worlds widen and the connections they make with friends, school, places of worship, recreation, work, and leisure become more important and influential. At all ages, both the policies and politics associated with the decision makers and the society can, and do, influence the quality of family life and the course of the child's development. Consider the life-threatening consequences to a low birth-weight infant born to poor, disenfranchised parents who cannot or do not know how to access prenatal care, immunizations, and infant health care.

SESSION VI
Risk and Protective Factors

Protective

Aspects of youth's life that can increase his/her ability to withstand negative influences and develop healthy life skills.

Protective factors can be present at multiple levels in a youth's life.

Out of school, informal youth programs play a major role in helping develop or strengthen protective factors at each of these levels.

Risk

Aspects of school-age child or teen's life that can create barriers to the development of healthy life skills increase susceptibility to negative influences.

Risk factors can be present at multiple levels in a youth's life.

When two factors are present, risk is likely. When additional factors are involved, risk increases.

SESSION VI
Protective Factors

at the Individual level

- Strong problem-solving and communication skills
- Positive self-perceptions
- Confidence in oneself and one's abilities
- Responsibility and self-discipline
- Social and interpersonal skills
- Religious commitment

at the Family level

- Close relationship with at least one family member
- Parents provide guidance, support, and nurturance
- Parents know where their children are, what they are doing, and who they are with
- Family expectation, rules, and discipline strategies are communicated and implemented clearly and fairly
- Parents provide positive examples of appropriate and healthy behavior

at the Peer level

- One or more close friends
- Friends who have healthy values and attitudes, and engage in positive behaviors
- Positive interactions with other youth
- Opportunities to learn to respect and be respected by other youth

at the School level

- Positive school climate
- Educational aspirations
- Achievement motivation
- Involvement in extracurricular activities

at the Work level

- Required helpfulness

at the Community level

- Opportunities to rely on supportive adults, such as teachers, youth workers, 4-H leaders, and others
- A supportive neighborhood or community
- Opportunity to make meaningful contributions to community-based projects and activities
- Bonding to family, school

SESSION VI
Risk Factors

at the Individual level

- A variety of negative attitudes towards self and others
- A tendency to engage in problem behaviors
- Social isolation

at the Family level

- Distant, uninvolved and inconsistent parenting
- Unclear family rules, expectations, rewards
- Severe or inconsistent punishment
- Poor role modeling with regard to alcohol, drugs, and other high-risk behaviors

at the Peer level

- Association with friends who engage in problem behaviors
- Negative peer pressure

at the School level

- School transition
- Academic failure
- Low commitment to school
- Absenteeism
- Desire to drop out

at the Work level

- Long hours of work

at the Community level

- Low socio-economic status
- Complacent or permissive community norms and standards
- Low neighborhood attachment and community disorganization
- High levels of violence and crime
- Media influences

SESSION VI
Community Mapping - worksheet

School Protective Factors

School Risk Factors

SESSION VI
Community Mapping - worksheet

Work/Community Protective Factors

Work/Community Risk Factors