

Ages & Stages of Development

IN A NUTSHELL

Grades 4th- 8th

	Youth may experience:	Leaders may need to:
Physical Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hyperactivity (moving all the time) • Females maturing before males • Growth spurt (marking the beginning of adolescence) • Menstruation & ejaculation beginning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide active learning • vary activities (avoid purely competitive events) • Prepare for “firsts” to occur during overnight trips (pack pads and tampons) • Avoid critiques or comments about physical stature
Social Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for belonging and inclusion (Joining clubs is popular) • Lack of always understanding others’ points of view • Moodiness • An urgency for justice and equality for all • A desire to please adults • Bullying (as the giver or receiver) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on group belonging and team building • Use group learning • Encourage older mentors to work with youth • Avoid comparing youth to each other • Model and teach positive problem solving skills
Cognitive Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concrete thinking until about age 11 • Abstract thinking beginning at age 11 (while some may never experience it) • Obsession in subjects of interest • Independent decision making; often rejecting solutions given by adults 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use simple, short directions • Offer a wide range of activities • Learn to apply the Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development • Give limited choices



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IN A NUTSHELL

Grades 9th- 12th

	Youth may experience:	Leaders may need to:
Physical Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The acceptance of physical changes • Continued growth - most females reach maximum height by 14 and males by 16 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid critiques or comments about physical stature • Vary activities so that size doesn't influence success
Social Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-centeredness with capability of feeling empathy • The importance of acceptance by romantic interest • The need for belonging and inclusion while still needing to be recognized as unique • Increased time working and going to school • The desire to be autonomous from parents • Imaginary Audience Syndrome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let teens plan their own programs • Establish a climate conducive to peer support • Emphasize personal development whenever possible • Let teens assume responsibility while expecting follow through • Help in individual skill development
Cognitive Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision making • Continued cognitive development (Youth are still learning that actions have consequences -this portion of the brain is still forming.) • Mastery of abstract thinking • The desire to set their own goals based on their needs • Exploration and preparation for future roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide real life problem solving opportunities • Let teens make decisions and evaluate outcomes • Provide opportunities for positive risk • Encourage service and career exploration

Regardless of age, leaders should:

- Correct misbehavior or code of conduct violations privately and appropriately- in the presence of another adult leader
- Recognize effort with public encouragement

