

# Welcome to Pre-Adolescence

(Gr. 6-8)

## What's Happening Now? (Typical)

- **Physical:** body changes and spike in hormones with the onset of puberty, bone growth occurs faster than muscle growth causing lack of coordination, awkwardness, sometimes earlier for girls than boys; early puberty leads to early stress
- **Cognitive:** growing awareness of self in relation to the world, start of a period of vital brain development, further capacity for abstract vs. concrete thought, increased ability to take another's perspective, growing understanding of power and influence
- **Social/Emotional:** increased sensitivity to the opinions and reactions of others, making them especially susceptible to peer pressure, conflicting loyalties to peer group and family, increase in risk-taking behaviors

MONROE COUNTY  
**PWC**  
Prevention & Wellness Coalition  
monroepwc.org

## Help Children "Feel Good in their Own Skin" Appreciate & Value Differences

- Provide many opportunities for kids to explore their own interests and talents
- Encourage your early teen to express his viewpoint and distinctive ideas; allow him to explore new interests; pay attention to a loss of interest in an activity he used to enjoy
- Let your child know that you love her unconditionally, even when you don't like an action or behavior; focus on the behavior, not on character traits
- Take a genuine interest in your child's activities; make time to do things with him that HE enjoys doing
- Praise good choices/behaviors you want to see repeated; this will help her have the courage to sometimes be alone in making good choices
- Make a commitment to genuine human interaction with friends/family and opportunities to be in community with others



CONTENT BY



Food for Thought

## Manage Stress & Anxiety Develop Resilience

- Model positive, healthy ways to manage stress; be especially aware of your own behavior and language about using alcohol or substances to reduce stress
- Help your child to recognize triggers for stress (i.e.: transitions from vacation to school, upcoming tests, Sunday nights) and provide strategies to relieve that stress such as breathing exercises, mindfulness practice, taking a long walk, listening to music
- Allow your child to sit with disappointment and delayed gratification; the ability to manage these things helps with resistance to alcohol and other drugs
- Acknowledge your child's emotions without trying to diminish or "fix" them; be a compassionate listener

TO DO

## Establish Expectations, Set Boundaries and Appropriate Consequences

- As you allow for more independence, be sure to revisit expectations and family rules around things like homework, when you expect them home, how and when to check in with you
- Set aside time and engage your child in making a family contract to set expectations specifically around substance use with your focus being on their health and safety
- Your child is continuing to push boundaries to see where you will be flexible and where you will not; boundaries and expectations are not meaningful without consequences
- Connect consequences to the action or transgression; if your child has not come home on time, take away the privilege of being out unsupervised, this keeps the focus on the behavior you want to see
- Be mindful of your own behaviors and model the ones you want to see; despite outward appearances, you still have a tremendous ability to influence your child
- Make explicit rules about no use of drugs and alcohol for reasons of health

## Balance the Need for Autonomy with the Need for Parental Supervision

- Allow your child flexibility to make his own choices in areas where he has demonstrated the ability to do so; continue to provide guidance in areas where he has not
- Know your child's friends and their parents; volunteer to be the parent who drops kids off and picks them up from events to monitor activity
- Be aware of your child's technology habits/use and utilize filters and parental controls according to your child's maturity level and your family values and beliefs
- Provide opportunities for your tween/early teen to make mistakes in low risk situations; help her reflect on her choices and how she could make different ones in the future
- Reinforce desired behaviors; praise good choices and gradually allow greater freedom
- Remind your child that safety will always be prioritized over the desire for privacy

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## Want to Know More?

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[samhsa.gov](https://samhsa.gov)  
[powertotheparent.org](https://powertotheparent.org)  
[onechoiceprevention.org](https://onechoiceprevention.org)  
[drugabuse.gov/publications](https://drugabuse.gov/publications)



[RYEACT.com](https://RYEACT.com)

 **One Choice**

 Drug-Free Communities