

(Summary Transcript) Adolescent Development

By Larissa Rook

There are significant changes from childhood to adolescence. Children have reached the end of childhood. It can come as a surprise to parents - but our children are very ready.

For the past six years development has been fairly slow. They've been fairly consistent.

Now there is a push in their development toward adolescence. By the end of this time - when they're 18 - they'll be driving, starting their first job, leaving home to work or study. They need to be prepared for that over the next six years.

Right now - children moving into adolescence take with them the security and confidence of who they are right now. They have a good sense of their strengths and weaknesses and they know what strategies work and don't work.

Heading into their adolescent years - the adolescent environment is very different as the students are very different. In Senior Primary, students have a prepared environment but in Adolescence their needs need to be met in a different way. Their internal disorder will be met by more external structure. More scheduling, lessons with adults who are experts within their fields.

In Primary, there is less adult interaction for learning so the child can make their own choices. Guides give a presentation then back off. In Adolescence, adults need to be closer. They need to stick by them. There are more adults and they work side by side with students, working together.

In these adolescent years, it's about building confidence in new skills so students understand how they can contribute to their community, how they can eventually make money and leave home.

Adolescents are drawn to be independent from the family. They're stretching out like they haven't done before.

It doesn't mean they don't need you - but they need you like the adolescent teacher, allowing them to stretch out and make mistakes, and to catch them and be there to talk things through over a cup of tea when things don't go well. Keeping the lines of communication open with the adolescent is very important.

We can see the physical development, sometimes almost overnight. They can fall off chairs and trip over. It's not uncommon for the limbs to take some time to coordinate with the rapid growth that's taking place.

It's the emotional growth that requires things like having routines, such as having dinner together to talk about their day, their friends and how things are going in general. As adults, we need to be open about our days and our lives as adults as well.

One thing adolescents often say is they can't sleep. We know as adults they need more sleep, and sometimes they will get that. But often adolescents struggle to sleep as the influx of hormones can make them restless during the night and they wake up tired. They often experience lethargy. They can't run and run like a child anymore.

One way we can support our adolescents is to make sure their schedule isn't too much and to help them prioritise some things in their lives so they are rested enough for school.

Transition will happen in the final week of Term 4. There will be a celebration within the Senior Primary environments to recognise the right of passage as they move from childhood to adolescence. That will happen in Week 8 and in Week 9 they will move to the Adolescent Program. So when they come back in 2021 they will feel secure, they will know the environment and the people around them in the first weeks.

Odyssey is one of the first events of the year. Two weeks of being away just the adolescents and adolescent staff together. It is a really important time, especially when they're in a space of pulling away from the family and getting to know their peers. It's a time to be together, to allow people to understand who they are.

Because of COVID-19 we don't know what the start of 2021 will look like, but there will be opportunities for community events, to be together and share who they are in their community.

Adolescence is a time of great patience for us as parents. We can remember how we wished to be treated, as that adult we are becoming.

Be kind to yourself. Have conversations with other parents also going through adolescence with their families. They are going to want to explore, and make choices for themselves, and have freedoms in the world.