

Understanding Boys & Girls

Oklahoma 4-H Volunteer Development Series



Five Basic Needs of Youth

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All young people have five basic needs.

- Belonging
- Independence
- Achievement
- New Experiences
- Affection

Every young person has needs, interests, desires, values, strengths and weaknesses, which are going to affect his/her behavior. While all youth have different personalities, they are alike in many ways. All young people have five basic needs.

BELONGING

The desire to belong is natural and helps to bring youth in contact with others. Belonging to the group helps young people grow because part of their feeling of personal worth is gained from what others think.

INDEPENDENCE

Becoming independent of parents is a sign of growing up. The desire to be independent is often troublesome to parents and volunteers,

but it cannot be avoided if the boy or girl is to grow up normally. This desire is shown by impatience with an adult volunteers' guidance and a preference for making up their own mind.

ACHIEVEMENT

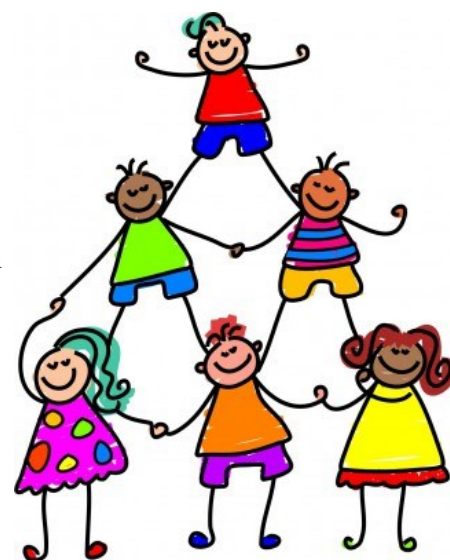
Youth want to know that their efforts are worthwhile and appreciated. Projects need to keep pace with ability since the rate of achievement varies with each child. Doing things for others as well as for themselves should be included.

NEW EXPERIENCES

Young people need and want to grow up and be engaged. They need new and different experiences to stretch their horizons.

AFFECTION

Affection or love is essential in personality development. We need to know that we are wanted and loved in spite of our shortcomings.





Four Areas of Development

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT is concerned with body growth. This includes the development of both large and small muscles. In general, children gain greater control of large muscles (such as those used for running and jumping) before they gain control of small muscles (such as those used for writing and manipulating objects). Physical development also includes the physical changes occurring during puberty.

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT encompasses the development of the child's intellect or thought process. "Reading, writing, and arithmetic" are all part of cognitive development. Learning to reason and communicate is a key component of this developmental process.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT takes into consideration the way children interact with other children and adults. The relative ease

or difficulties with which children relate to their environment (e.g., family, school, neighborhood, etc.) are part of the social development.

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT involves "feelings." How a child feels about themselves and others affects all areas of development. Unlike social development, which looks at the child's relationships with others, emotional development is concerned with the child's relationship with him or herself.

5 to 8 Year Olds

The five to eight year old period is a time to try out abilities and interests and to gain self-confidence and self-reliance. General characteristics of children this age include:

- The "try anything once" attitude, characteristic of most children at this age, urges them to use all their senses in impulsive ways.
- Their boundless energy requires much space for the development of skills, interests and activities stimulated by an aroused imagination.
- Belonging is

important. To be accepted, a child needs to "act his/her age" as defined and perceived by peers.

- Children need to feel approval and acceptance.
- Children must understand why they are being disciplined if it is to be meaningful, helpful and effective.

Activities should be designed to provide the following experiences:

- hands-on, using many different senses
- activities that can be completed in one meeting

- uncomplicated
- stimulating to the imagination
- varied and fun
- open-minded so children can approach them at their own levels
- cognitive, physical and social-emotional
- help to develop small muscle and fine motor -skills
- non-competitive activities
- keep topic discussion to 5 to 15 minutes at a time
- keep a low child/adult ratios (no more than 4 kids per adult), in projects where safety

Why Do Young People Behave as They Do?

In human development, most youth of the same age have some general characteristics. However, remember that each child develops at his/her own pace. These general characteristics will not be observed in all children at the same age or at the same stage of development. Remember that each person is a unique individual.

- is a special consideration, the youth/adult ratio may need to be even lower
- activities for children and parents to do together
 - incorporate learning activities into games,

songs, art projects, crafts, etc.

- utilize a variety of resources and materials



9 to 12 Year Olds

Late childhood (9-12 years of age) is the time to explore many areas until skills are found that catch interest and challenge ability. Members will want to demonstrate what they can do. Keep in mind individual talents and abilities.

Adults can help the children gain self-confidence and maturity. Comparison of their work with other youngsters is hard on them and does not help develop a healthy outlook on life.

At this age, interest is high in making things. Large muscle control is fairly well developed; fine finger control may not be accomplished until 12 years or later. Select

projects which use tools and equipment that encourage physical skills.

Group and club membership is very important. Use symbols, ceremonials, and songs.

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Youth are largely dependent on adults, but begin to want to do things through their own efforts. Develop leadership by assigning leadership roles when possible. Youth idealize adults and look to them as a source of authority. Give members security and the knowledge that they are loved and accepted.

Keep parents informed; they remain a strong influence. Young people have limited decision-making abilities; adult guidance will be needed in selecting and conducting projects.

Members will be active and energetic. Plan instruction carefully and in small doses. Activities should be chosen so the members will experience early success.



13 to 15 Year Olds



Young people 13-15 years of age want, most of all, to feel wanted by their

contemporaries. Provide situations where members feel at ease and have a chance to show their skills and grace before the group. Encourage coeducational groups that

are largely social and recreational.

Youth will be interested in skills with utility. Emphasize teaching one particular skill.

In the group stage, friends of the same age and sex become important. They want to dress, talk and do as the group does. Youth feel the need to belong to and be accepted by their peers.

Youth are striving for increased freedom from adult controls. Set reasonable boundaries of behavior. Let members help make decisions on rules and live within established boundaries.

Activities centering on personal grooming begin to be important. At this time there is a preoccupation with the body and a worry about belonging.

16 to 19 Year Olds

Teens 16-19 years old can plan and carry out activities on their own. Volunteers need to act as advisers at this stage of the youth's development, rather than as a leader or directors.

Teens often need someone to talk to outside of the family. Be willing to lend an ear to their problems.

Being part of a mixed group is important. Social

and recreational activities are of high interest.

Democratic group procedures and discussions of social and economic problems will help to develop

decision-making abilities and good judgment.



Understanding Boys and Girls

A summary of characteristics and implications for volunteers can be found on page 6.

Guidelines for Successful Leading

1. Be sensitive to feelings of members. See that an atmosphere of warmth and acceptance is provided to help members feel comfortable.
2. Work individually, as well as collectively with members. Provide some time to work with each member as an individual, especially in helping to set goals, plan activities and evaluate progress.
3. Individual integrity is encouraged when the member is considered for what he/she is, rather than for what he/she does. Accept youth as they are rather than as you wish them to be.
4. Recognize and allow for individual differences. Youth vary in ability, interests, desires, areas of sensitivity and goals.
5. The progress of the individual can best be rewarded by praise from the person working most closely with him/her, rather than by a comparison of his/her work with other members.
6. Records are only one way to evaluate progress. Recognize the value of self-evaluation methods and use them. Youth will compare themselves to others as they assess their progress. The leader must help them learn to evaluate their progress in comparison to their earlier efforts, rather than to others.
7. Recognize that competition can be cruel. Youth should be given the opportunity to elect individually whether or not to compete without being pressured.
8. Recognize that the ability and willingness to accept responsibility is learned through opportunity and practice.
9. Decision-making is learned through practice in reviewing alternatives, making a choice, setting goals and evaluating progress.
10. Use a democratic approach. Work with members to make decisions jointly.



Understanding Boys and Girls

Characteristics of Age Group	Implications for Volunteer
<p>5-8 year old</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Easily motivated and eager to try something new 2. Interest span is short. Learns best if physically active and involved in experiential learning. 3. All new learning involves language. 4. Don't accept failure well. Sensitive to criticism. Strong desire for adult affection and attention. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plan a wide variety of activities that take a short time to complete. Each experience should be concrete and build on the last. 2. Free time should be planned and encouraged. Alternate high and moderate activity with low. Hands on experiences: cutting with scissors, painting, pasting, brushing, assembling, running, moving, playing games, etc. 3. Be very specific and clear with instruction. Ask youth to give feedback as to what they heard. 4. Provide positive encouragement and assistance. Plan concrete learning activities in which success can be experienced. Set up situations that foster cooperation and teamwork rather than competition. Ratio of 1 adult to 3-4 youth.
<p>9-12 year old</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Active, with boundless energy. Likes group activity. 2. Short attention span for mental activity. 3. Like to be with members of their own gender. 4. Usually do best when work is laid out in small pieces. Eager to try new things. 5. Admire and imitate older boys and girls. 6. Do not like to keep records and do not see the value in them. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plan active learning experiences to develop physical skills. 2. Encourage many brief learning experiences. 3. Encourage learning experiences to be done with members of same gender. 4. Use detailed outlines of the learning experiences. 5. Encourage teen leaders to work closely with younger members. 6. Work closely with them in completing records of their leadership work.
<p>13-15 year old</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Concerned about physical development and being liked by friends, social graces, good grooming. 2. Coordination is better than with younger age groups. 3. Prefer action-oriented projects. 4. Greater ability for team work and enjoy activities involving boys and girls. 5. Wants to participate in decisions and be independent but still needs guidance. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage learning experiences related to self-understanding and getting along with others. 2. Encourage deeper exploration and concentrate on developing individual skills. 3. Encourage active, fun learning experiences. 4. Encourage learning experiences involving boys and girls. 5. Encourage working with adults and older teens to complete learning experiences.
<p>16-19 year old</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wants and needs a strong voice in planning their own programs. 2. Are developing community consciousness. 3. Have high social needs and desires. 4. Are beginning to think of leaving home for college, employment, marriage, etc. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Allow youth to plan activities that allow for differences in interests, needs and skills. 2. Encourage community service activities. 3. Focus some activities on the self, both physical and social. Help youth learn to accept themselves and develop self-confidence. 4. Apply leadership life skills to career exploration, especially decision-making.