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Ages & Stages: 11-13 Year Olds

Our Bodies: *Physical Development & Abilities*

- We are fast approaching adulthood and our bodies are changing rapidly.
- There is a wide variation about how we are physically developing—some of us have hit growth spurts and some of us have not.
- Due to the rapid changes of puberty, we often feel uncomfortable about our bodies.
- For those of us, especially girls, who have physically matured earlier, we are sometimes the subject of unwanted attention from adolescents and adults. Just because our bodies seem more adult does not mean we are.

Our Minds: *Cognitive Development*

- Our thinking has become more complex, and we realize that most things don't have single, simple answers. We can think more abstractly, without needing concrete examples or demonstrations.
- We are becoming interested in the adult world, including political, social and environmental issues. Our sense of fairness and justice is often quite strong.
- Although we can plan ahead, we are still mostly unable to think in long-range terms and to consider the seemingly far-off future.
- We may challenge rules or attempt to manipulate adults, but we still want and need firm limits.

Our Ears and Mouths: *Language and Development*

- Our vocabulary and language skills are expanding.
- We enjoy discussing and debating particularly concerning issues of fairness and justice.
- We are beginning to realize that sometimes the way we speak at home or with our friends is not necessarily appropriate in every setting.

Our Hearts and Souls: Social and Emotional Development

- Our friends are very important to us. We have begun to develop a few lasting close friendships. We also occasionally have conflicts with friends and power struggles in groups. These issues can seem like the most important thing in the world.
- We want privacy with our friends to discuss the changes we are going through.
- We are interested in boys or girls and curious about sex and sexuality.
- We do not want to be associated with anything that we consider to be for kids, However, we may actually still enjoy playing games and hearing stories.
- We want opportunities to contribute.
- We experience many mood swings and varying energy levels, along with the rapid physical changes we are going through.

Tips for Educators: 11-13 Year Olds

- Provide opportunities for us to discuss issues that are important to us and to express our opinions.
- Give us our space. Respect our privacy while still letting us know if you are available to us.
- Do not single us out in front of our peers for praise or criticism.
- Provide opportunities for us to participate in community service, work in groups, and make things creatively.
- Help us plan for our futures by providing guidance on and exposure to career and post-secondary options.
- Don't make comments criticizing our appearance. Give us opportunities to critically examine media messages about what is considered "normal."
- Answer our questions and give us information about sex, relationships, and health without judging or minimizing our opinions.