

UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S AGES AND STAGES

Purpose: To increase and/or reinforce participants' knowledge of child development from birth through adolescence.

Materials: Index cards and Trainer Resource, *Statements for Ages and Behavior Cards*

Time: 45 minutes.

Planning Notes:

1. This is a fun and engaging way to review some basic information about child development. Use the following process to make the Ages & Behaviors cards:
 - Write each of the behavior statements listed on the Trainer Resource on a separate index card. Bind the statements for each age together with a paper clip. You will end up with 6 clipped stacks of behavior cards because there are 6 ages that they need to be matched with.
 - Write each of the age cards on a separate index card. Bind all of the age cards together with a paper clip.
 - Make 2-3 sets of the ages and behaviors cards so that you have a set of cards for each team. Make sure the teams have no more than 8 people.
2. Make the following chart:

Ages:

- Birth-14 Months (Newborn & Infant)
- 14-36 Months (Toddler)
- 3-5 Years (Preschool)
- 6-8 Years (School Age)
- 9-12 Years (Preteen)
- Teens

If you have any concerns about reading levels, you can either ensure that there are 1-2 strong readers on each team or use the variation described at the end of the Procedure. You won't need the ages and behaviors cards if you use the variation.

Activity created by Pamela M. Wilson, MSW, Consultant and Trainer.
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Procedure:

1. Divide participants into 2-3 teams depending on the size of your group. Make sure each team is sitting around a table and that they are composed of no more than 8 people.
2. Distribute a set of ages & behaviors cards to each team and give the following instructions:
 - This is going to be a friendly competition. You will identify common behaviors or issues for children at 6 different ages/stages of development. (Review the chart you made.)
 - Each team has gotten a set of age cards and behavior cards. Your mission is to match each set of behavior cards with the appropriate age card.
 - Lay out your age cards on the table. Someone needs to volunteer to be the reader. Start reading the sets of behavior cards. Decide as a group what age you typically see these behaviors. Match the behavior cards with the right age card.
 - The team that finishes first and matches all the cards correctly wins. So let me know as soon as you finish.
3. Circulate throughout the room to make sure the teams are on track. Provide assistance only if absolutely necessary. When the first team finishes, quickly check their matches to see if they are correct. If they are correct, stop all the groups and announce the winning team. Have the team that finished first, read the first age—Newborn and Infant—and matching behaviors. Ask these processing questions:
 - Other teams, did you get this right?
 - What stands out in your mind about your own children at this stage?
4. During the discussion, make it clear that guidelines about child development are general and not set in stone. Some children might be a little ahead, some a little behind. Keep the processing brief because you have to discuss each of the ages/stages. Limit the conversation to 2-3 brief comments. Let participants know that they will continue to discuss these issues for the entire session. Go on to the next age—Toddler—and follow the same process for this and the remaining ages.

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5. When you have discussed all of the stages, ask these final processing questions:
 - How easy was it to match the age and behavior cards?
 - What's one new thing you learned today about child development?

Variation:

1. Review the 6 ages/stages on your chart. Divide the group into teams. Use this process:
 - Identify 2-3 behaviors from each of the age/stage categories on the Trainer Resource.
 - Take turns reading a behavior to each team. Give them 1 minute to confer and then ask for their final answer about which age the behavior fits into.
 - If they get the answer right they get one point.
 - If they get the answer wrong, one of the other teams can answer the question for a bonus point.
 - The team with the most points wins.
2. After the game, go back and give an overview of each stage. Ask participants to offer comments and memories from their time with their child during that stage of development. Ask fathers to compare and contrast experiences if they were absent from their children's lives for certain developmental stages.

Trainer Resource*

STATEMENTS FOR AGES AND BEHAVIORS CARDS

Birth-14 Months (Newborn & Infant)

I smile and babble a lot. By the end of this stage I can say a few words like “bye-bye” and “da-da.”

I need my parent to meet all my needs so that I can begin to trust that I will be taken care of.

I have teeth coming in and sometimes get irritable during this teething time.

Touch and physical contact is a primary way that I connect with people. I have “skin hunger.”

I begin to sit up, crawl, and by the end of this stage, I’m usually walking.

I communicate my needs by making faces, crying or maybe pointing to what I want.

14-36 Months (Toddler)

I like trying to do things myself and am prone to tantrums. My favorite words are “no” and “why.”

I run, jump, and climb well. I like to pull and push toys and furniture around.

I’m curious so I like to get into cabinets and take everything out.

By the end of this stage I’m just about toilet trained but I still have accidents.

I do not like to share my toys and I say “mine” or “me” if other kids try to play with them.

My brain is developing at a fast pace. When my parents talk, sing, and read with me, I increase my ability to learn. (Note: This is true for newborns, infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.)

I’ve gone from babbling to having a vocabulary of about 40 words. It helps me when parents use a lot of different words with me.

*Revised by Pamela M. Wilson, MSW, Consultant and Trainer

3-5 Years (Preschool)

I repeat pretty much everything I hear; so it's important for parents to talk the way they want me to talk.

I can use grown up expressions correctly but don't usually know what it really means.

I have a great imagination and like to imitate grown-ups when I play.

I have a lot of new skills—for example, I can dress and undress with help, ride a tricycle, stand on one foot, hop, and climb the monkey bars.

I know what sex I am and I'm very curious about differences between boys and girls.

I can sit and listen to my father read story books with a lot of words. I often want the same story read to me over and over again.

I often have fears, for example, being separated from my parents, the dark, or dogs.

6-8 Years (School Age)

I'm getting my permanent teeth, have a good sense of balance, and can tie my shoes.

I understand concepts of left and right, days of the week, and time.

I have a longer attention span and enjoy performing well and doing things right.

It's difficult for me to handle failure or to be criticized.

I'm a concrete thinker and tend to see things as right or wrong, good or bad, with no middle ground.

I'm spending more routine time away from the family; friends have become more important.

I tend to prefer play with children of my own sex. If I'm a boy, the pressure to always be tough and "act like a man" has gotten intense and is reinforced by my male friends.

9-12 Years (Preteen)

My closest friends are almost always of the same sex but I'm probably showing more interest in the other sex.

I don't think I need an adult to supervise my daily activities. I may defy adult authority.

I use slang, the telephone, text messaging, and Face Book or My Space to connect with friends and distance myself from adults.

I've become more modest and self focused. I often feel awkward and worry if I am normal.

I'm going through a lot of physical, emotional, and social change. If I'm female, I'm 1-2 years more mature than guys my age.

If I'm a girl, I'm probably feeling more pressure than ever to look and act a certain way to be attractive to boys.

Teens

Early in this stage, I can be pretty selfish and want my needs met right away.

The part of my brain that connects actions to consequences is still developing so I don't always make wise decisions.

I'm often moody, irritable, self conscious, and argumentative.

Toward the end of this stage, I can reason better, think into the future and consider consequences before acting. With my new skills, I need parents to listen more to my thoughts and ideas.

I want and need more independence and can take on increased responsibilities such as babysitting or summer jobs.

I probably spend a lot of time on the phone and hanging out with friends. My friends are very important but my parents still influence important decisions in my life.

I'm feeling romantic and sexual attractions and will probably be interested in going out or dating.

I'm facing some of the biggest decisions of my life regarding sex, alcohol, drugs, etc.