



5 Facts About Teen Identity Development



1

Teens are asking themselves, "Who am I?"

- Teens are trying to figure out how they are similar and different from their parents, siblings, and friends.
- This question prompts teens to test limits and try on different "hats."
- They may test different identities in how they dress or present themselves on social media.
- Many teens spend time thinking about what their social identities mean to them, including their racial or ethnic identity, religion, gender, and sexuality.

2

Teens are asking themselves, "Do I fit in? Am I normal?"

- Teens determine if they fit in or are "normal" by looking around at the important people in their lives, like parents/caregivers, peers, and mentors, as well as representations of themselves in the media. This is a critical part of their development.
- Teens are more likely to thrive if they are surrounded by people who notice and reinforce their strengths rather than focus on their weaknesses.
- Identity development and self-acceptance moves at its own pace for each teen. It's important to highlight the strengths of teens with learning, physical, or health differences, without ignoring their challenges. These teens often have deep wells of resilience, compassion, and loyalty.



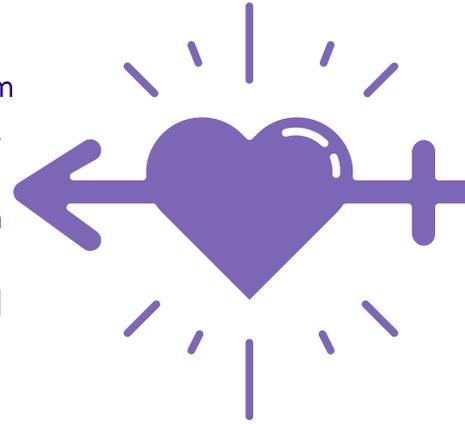


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3

When teens are about 11-14 years old...

- They experience physical changes from puberty, making them think about whether they're normal and fit in with their peers.
- They become more aware of groups that have different identities. This could be cliques at school or groups based on race, ethnicity, sexuality, or gender.
- They begin to seek more independence from their family and search for their identity in relation to their peers.
- They may be more sensitive to feedback and criticism.



4

When teens are about 14-18 years old...

- They begin to see themselves and their beliefs in relation to how groups are organized in society, like by gender, race, sexuality, and religion.
- Their awareness of stereotypes of certain groups and the harms caused by them increases.
- They may take stronger stances on social, ethical, or moral issues.

5

When teens are about 18-24 years old...

- They begin to define their identity in terms of their adult roles or career goals.
- They think about what kind of partner they want to be in romantic relationships.
- They dream about who they will be as a grown-up and are developing the practical skills needed to make that dream a reality.
- They can make strong commitments to personal and social group identities that continue evolving throughout adulthood.
- They form stronger connections in their community, which aids in their lifelong identity development.

