

# Handout: Developmental Milestones

## Infants: (0-18 months)

### Developmental Milestones

#### Physical:

##### 0 -3 months

- Sucking, grasping reflexes
- Lifts head when held at shoulder
- Moves arms actively
- Is able to follow objects and to focus

##### 3- 6 months

- Rolls over
- Holds head up when held in sitting position
- Lifts up knees, crawling motions
- Reaches for objects

##### 6-9 months

- Sits unaided, spends more time in upright position
- Learns to crawl
- Climbs stairs
- Develops eye-hand coordination

##### 9-18 months

- Achieve mobility, strong urge to climb, crawl
- Stands and walks
- Learn to walk on his or her own
- Learns to grasp with thumb and finger
- Feeds self
- Transfers small objects from one hand to another

#### Emotional/Social:

- Wants to have needs met
- Develop a sense of security
- Smiles spontaneously and responsively
- Likes movement, to be held and rocked
- Laughs aloud
- Socializes with anyone, but knows mother or primary caregiver
- Responds to tickling
- Prefers primary caregiver
- May cry when strangers approach
- Commonly exhibits anxiety

- Extends attachments for primary caregivers to the world
- Demonstrate object permanence; knows parents exist and will return (helps child deal with anxiety)
- Test limits

Intellectual/Cognitive:

- Vocalizes sounds (coos)
- Smiles and expresses pleasure
- Recognizes primary caregiver
- Uses both hands to grasp objects
- Has extensive visual interests
- Puts everything in mouth
- Solves simple problems, e.g., will move obstacles aside to reach objects
- Transfers objects from hand to hand
- Responds to changes in environment and can repeat action that caused it
- Begins to respond selectively to words
- Demonstrates intentional behavior, initiates actions
- Realizes objects exist when out of sight and will look for them (object permanence)
- Is interested and understands words
- Says words like “mama”, “dada”

# Toddlers: (18-36 months)

## Developmental Milestones:

### Physical

- Enjoy physical activities such as running, kicking, climbing, jumping, etc.
- Beginnings of bladder and bowel control towards latter part of this stage
- Are increasingly able to manipulate small objects with hands

### Emotional/Social

- Becoming aware of limits; says “no” often
- Establishing a positive, distinct sense of self through continuous exploration of the world
- Continuing to develop communication skills and experiencing the responsiveness of others
- Needs to develop a sense of self and to do some things for him/herself
- Making simple choices such as what to eat, what to wear and what activity to do

### Intellectual/Cognitive

- Limited vocabulary of 500-3,000 words and only able to form three to four word sentences
- No understanding of pronouns (he, she) and only a basic grasp of prepositions (in, on, off, out, away)
- Can count, but from memory, without a true understanding of what the numbers represent
- Cognitively, children in this age are very egocentric and concrete in their thinking, and believe that adults know everything. This means that they look at everything from their own perspective.
- Assumption that everyone else sees, acts, and feels the same way they do, and belief that adults already know everything. This results in their feeling that they don't need to explain an event in detail.
- Toddlers might have a very clear picture of events as they relate to themselves but may have difficulty expressing thoughts or providing detail. Because of this, most of the questions will need to be asked of their caregivers.
- Ability to relate their experiences, in detail, when specifically and appropriately questioned
- Learning to use memory and acquiring the basics of self-control

# Pre-School: (3-6 years old)

## Developmental Milestones:

### Physical

- Is able to dress and undress self
- Has refined coordination and is learning many new skills
- Is very active and likes to do things like climb, hop, skip and do stunts
- "At the start of early childhood, the brain has attained about 50% of its adult weight. By the time children are 6, it has grown to 90% of its full weight (Cole et al, 2005; Huttenlocher, 1994)

### Emotional/Social

- Develops capacity to share and take turns
- Plays cooperatively with peers
- Is developing some independence and self-reliance
- Is developing ethnic and gender identities
- Learning to distinguish between reality and fantasy
- Learning to make connections and distinctions between feelings, thoughts and actions

### Intellectual/Cognitive

- Ability to understand language usually develops ahead of their speech
- By age 6, vocabulary will have increased to between 8,000 and 14,000 words but it is important to remember that children in this age group often repeat words without fully understanding their meaning
- They have learned the use of most prepositions (up/down, ahead/behind, beside) and some basic possessive pronouns (mine, his, ours), and have started to master adjectives
- "In the period between 2 and 6 years of age, children's mental and social lives are totally transformed by an explosive growth in the ability to comprehend and use language. [...] 6 year old children are competent language users." (Cole et al, 2005)
- "Between 2 to 6, children begin to use a great many new constructions that conform to the 'grammatical rules'... ; [...] "language is the medium through which children learn about their roles in the world, acceptable behaviour and their culture's assumptions about how the world works. Simultaneously language enables children to ask questions, to explain thoughts and desires, and to make more effective demands on the people around them." (ibid)
- Pre-school children continue to be egocentric and concrete in their thinking. They are still unable to see things from another's perspective, and they reason based on specifics that they can visualize and that have importance to them (i.e. "Mom and Dad" instead of "family").

- When questioned, they can generally express who, what, where, and sometimes how, but not when or how many. They are also able to provide a fair amount of detail about a situation.
- It is important to keep in mind that children in this age range continue to have trouble with the concepts of sequence and time. As a result, they may seem inconsistent when telling a story simply because they hardly ever follow a beginning-middle-end approach

# School-Age Children (7- 9 years old)

## Developmental Milestones:

### Physical

- Have increased coordination and strength
- Enjoy using new skills, both gross and fine motor
- Are increasing in height and weight at steady rates

### Emotional/Social

- Increased ability to interact with peers
- Have more same-sex friends
- Increased ability to engage in competition
- Developing and testing values and beliefs that will guide present and future behaviors
- Has a strong group identity; increasingly defines self through peers
- Need to develop a sense of mastery and accomplishment based upon physical strength, self-control and school performance

### Intellectual/Cognitive

- By early elementary age, children start logical thinking, which means that rather than accepting what they see as true, they begin to apply their personal knowledge and experience to a particular situation to determine whether it makes sense or not
- Temporal concepts greatly improve in this age range, as early elementary children start to understand the idea of the passage of time, as well as day, date and time as a concept as opposed to a number
- Most early elementary aged children have acquired the basic cognitive and linguistic concepts necessary to sufficiently communicate an abusive event
- They can also copy adult speech patterns. As a result, it is easy to forget that children in this age range are still not fully developed cognitively, emotionally, or linguistically

# Early Adolescence (10 – 12 years old)

## Developmental Milestones:

### Physical

- Have increased coordination and strength
- Are developing body proportions similar to those of an adult
- May begin puberty—evident sexual development, voice changes, and increased body odor are common

### Emotional/Social

- Increased ability to interact with peers
- Increased ability to engage in competition
- Developing and testing values and beliefs that will guide present and future behaviors
- Has a strong group identity; increasingly defines self through peers
- Acquiring a sense of accomplishment based upon the achievement of greater physical strength and self-control
- Defines self-concept in part by success in school

### Intellectual/Cognitive

- Early adolescents have an increased ability to learn and apply skills
- The early adolescent years mark the beginning of abstract thinking but revert to concrete thought under stress
- Even though abstract thinking generally starts during this age period, preteens are still developing this method of reasoning and are not able to make all intellectual leaps, such as inferring a motive or reasoning hypothetically
- Youth in this age range learn to extend their way of thinking beyond their personal experiences and knowledge and start to view the world outside of an absolute black-white/right-wrong perspective
- Interpretative ability develops during the years of early adolescence, as does the ability to recognize cause and affect sequences
- Early adolescents are able to answer who, what, where, and when questions, but still may have problems with why questions

# Middle Adolescence (13 – 17 years old)

## Developmental Milestones:

### Physical

- 95% of adult height reached
- Less concern about physical changes but increased interest in personal attractiveness
- Excessive physical activity alternating with lethargy
- Secondary sexual characteristics

### Emotional/Social

- Conflict with family predominates due to ambivalence about emerging independence
- Strong peer allegiances – fad behavior
- Experimentation – sex, drugs, friends, jobs, risk-taking behavior
- Struggle with sense of identity
- Moodiness
- Rejection of adult values and ideas
- Risk Taking – “it can’t happen to me”
- Experiment with adult roles
- Testing new values and ideas
- Importance of relationships – may have strongly invested in a single romantic relationship

### Intellectual/Cognition

- Growth in abstract thought reverts to concrete thought under stress
- Cause-effect relationships better understood
- Very self absorbed