



God's Blessing of a 6th Grader



Two year olds say, "NO!" Middle schoolers say, "So???" What can you expect from your child in the coming year? If you have had a child pass through these preteen or junior high years, you may have some sense of what to expect. If not, these may be some helpful guidelines. The following profiles are taken from child psychologist David Elkind, author of *The Hurried Child*, *The Ties that Stress*, and other good resources on child development. Elkind cautions that no single child will conform to all of the emotional characteristics, and that emotional development seems to follow a pattern of "highs" and "lows".

Age 11 (grades 5/6)



- *is subject to emotional outbursts
- *is moody
- *is sensitive about oneself
- *is argumentative
- *is critical
- *is belligerent
- *is defensive (doesn't like to admit wrong)
- *is beginning to want independence from parents
- *feels picked on
- *feels insecure
- *experiences self-doubt
- *needs to be noticed
- *compensates with dreams and fantasies of being famous

Age 12 (grades 6/7)



- *is outgoing
- *is enthusiastic
- *is generous
- *is open
- *is friendly
 - *displays sense of humor
- *has emotional extremes
- *shifts between child-like and more mature behavior
- *is emotionally uncomplicated
- *is less self-centered than the eleven-year-old
- *is self-critical of personal appearance
- *has difficulty accepting praise

Young people in Jr. High can be very self-conscious. They often believe in an "imaginary audience" (everyone is looking at me) , "the personal fable" (it will never happen to me) and the "big lie" (I'm inadequate because I am different). They can be preoccupied with appearance, behavior, and perceived inadequacy.

...taken from Faith Alive: “Teaching the Faith to 6th Grade Students”

What are 6th-grade students like? Although God has given each child a unique pattern of growth, children generally follow growth patterns characteristic of their age group. You must know your child - as an individual and as a member of their class- in order to help them grow toward becoming independent and mature individuals.

Consider some of the common physical, social, psychological, intellectual, and faith development characteristics of children between the ages of 10 and 12. Remember that no child will display all the characteristics listed. Your child is growing at a different rate in different areas. A child who is exceptionally gifted in social skills may have difficulty with intellectual skills. Others may seem intellectually gifted, but lack spiritual maturity.

Physical Characteristics: -experience increased bone and muscle growth (they are often hungry and may become easily fatigued because of this rapid growth)
-differ physiologically-girls are about one year more mature than boys
-display improved fine-motor coordination and increasingly enjoy art, crafts, and music
-enjoy constant activity (they are often restless and wiggly)

Social Characteristics -often view their peer group rather than adults as a major source of behavior standards and recognition for achievements
-enjoy team sports (they are very competitive)
-have well developed group loyalties and show a strong class spirit
-display a favorable attitude toward the opposite sex
-seek adult models other than parents and worship heroes and heroines
-quarrel often with siblings
-see each other in the light of social position
-prefer membership in small clubs, teams, and groups of the same sex

Emotional Characteristics -increase in self-control and tolerance
-want to be independent while requiring adult guidance and support
display capacity for humor
-demonstrate capacity for decisiveness, responsibility, and dependability
-at times, have fears and worries about school work

Intellectual Characteristics -be curious about many things
-tend to be perfectionists and become frustrated when unable to live up to high standards
-think literally and in concrete terms
-be almost at the peak of memorization abilities
-have improved capacity to reason
-be mentally alert and imaginative

Faith-Development Characteristics -be capable of deep religious feeling
-have a strong sense of right and wrong
-have a developed conscience
-be open to the feelings of others
-seek a powerful influence in their lives
-have a questioning nature in religious matters
-expect immediate answers to prayer
-pray in a less egocentric and materialistic way than primary children