

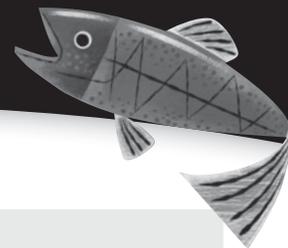
Teaching All Young People

During adolescence, many young people are capable of comprehending more complex ideas and concepts. As catechists, we show our respect for God's creation by accepting all young people as they are and by mentoring them as they grow in their personal relationships with God. In addition to recognizing each individual's unique qualities, we are mindful that young people are also experiencing physical, social, intellectual, and emotional changes. We acknowledge that developmental age may not always coincide with chronological age. Because different kinds of learners are in our groups, we stay alert for opportunities to meet the needs of young people who have special needs. *Finding God: Following Jesus* effectively links faith formation to young people's lives and their real-world experiences by using lessons and activities designed to appeal to a variety of learning styles and developmental levels.

Getting to Know a Seventh-Grade Young Person (Ages 12–13)

Although no two people are alike, some general characteristics apply to many young people ages 12 through 13. Seventh graders are transitioning from childhood through adolescence and eventually into adulthood. Navigating the changes they are experiencing can be challenging. Probably more than ever, peers exert a strong influence. At the same time, key adults continue to play crucial roles in young people's lives. For this reason, establishing trust and open communication with young people is extremely important.

Most seventh graders are capable of more abstract thinking and critical reflection. Receiving moral guidance and encouragement to follow their faith traditions provides structure and stability during a time when they are experiencing many changes. Additionally, because of our fast-paced technological age, many young people face new pressures and situations. As they strive to become independent and self-reliant, they still need generous doses of loving guidance from responsible adults.



PSYCHOLOGICAL AND INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Young people in seventh grade often

- ▶ think both abstractly and logically.
- ▶ strive to formulate a sense of identity.
- ▶ seek to balance their uniqueness with conformity.
- ▶ search for independence but still require support, guidance, and encouragement.
- ▶ benefit from hands-on activities, simulations, role-playing, and service learning experiences.
- ▶ experience moodiness because of physical and hormonal changes.
- ▶ develop at extremely different rates from one another, resulting in great diversity of abilities within a group setting.
- ▶ are in the process of learning decision-making skills but may be unable to consistently make good choices. (The area of the brain responsible for planning, reasoning, attention, and decision making is not yet fully developed.)

MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Young people in seventh grade often

- ▶ seek peer approval.
- ▶ preoccupy themselves with appearance.
- ▶ distance themselves from family while extending interests beyond home and school.
- ▶ involve themselves with social media and communication technology, such as cell phones, texting, and social networking.
- ▶ remain vulnerable to the influence of social media and need to understand its ethical and moral implications.
- ▶ test the limits of acceptable behavior and challenge adult authority.
- ▶ need support from family and significant adults.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Young people in seventh grade often

- ▶ enjoy being with a wide variety of people, such as family, friends, teachers, and coaches.
- ▶ look for acceptance by the Church and are keenly aware of inclusion in peer groups.
- ▶ enjoy cooperative learning activities, and boys and girls gradually begin to work together.
- ▶ enjoy being noticed and rewarded for their accomplishments.
- ▶ seem moody, sensitive, or act silly.
- ▶ enjoy helping others, such as tutoring younger children.
- ▶ begin to challenge previously accepted adult norms; love to argue and test the limits of rules and norms and are genuinely surprised that these challenges appear rude to adults.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Young people in seventh grade often

- ▶ exert their independence by doubting, questioning, and challenging their faith as they seek a deeper understanding of it.
- ▶ reevaluate religious teachings about God, faith, and the Church.
- ▶ develop their spiritual identity based on their own religious experience.
- ▶ eagerly participate in service projects that help build community.
- ▶ become more aware of conscience formation.
- ▶ desire a strong personal relationship with Jesus and see him as a role model.
- ▶ respond to encouragement, humor, respect, and trust and thrive in a group atmosphere that fuels their need for self-expression and independence.