



Teaching All Young People

During their adolescent years, 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 all qualities that make each individual unique, we recognize that young people are also experiencing physical, social, intellectual, and emotional changes. We acknowledge that developmental age may not always coincide with chronological age. We stay alert for opportunities to meet the needs of young people who have special needs. *Finding God: Celebrating Church* effectively links faith formation to the lives of young people 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 an Eighth-Grade Young Person (Ages 13–14)

Young people in eighth grade are transitioning from childhood through adolescence and eventually into adulthood. Navigating physical, social, intellectual, and emotional changes can be challenging both for them and for the adults who care for them. Establishing trust and open communication with young people is extremely important for teachers, catechists, parents, or other adult caregivers. The peer group remains a strong influence. Eighth-grade girls often place great importance on close friendships, whereas boys tend to socialize in groups.

Many eighth-grade young people comprehend complex ideas and concepts. Most can think in abstract terms and are capable of critical reflection. Receiving moral guidance and encouragement to follow their faith tradition provides structure and stability in the midst of many changes. Additionally, because we live in a fast-paced, technological age, many young people confront extra pressures and confusing 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 eighth grade often

- ▶ think both abstractly and logically.
- ▶ are highly energetic.
- ▶ have short attention spans but retain intense curiosity about a wide range of issues.
- ▶ seem moody because of physical and hormonal changes.
- ▶ feel peer pressure regarding dress, music, and friends.
- ▶ 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.)
- ▶ struggle with self-esteem.
- ▶ are sensitive to criticism.

MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Young people in eighth grade often

- ▶ experience confusion and discouragement while searching for identity and self-worth.
- ▶ experience a conflicted conscience as a result of increasing independence.
- ▶ criticize adult inconsistency while being inconsistent themselves.
- ▶ have a strict and literal regard for religion and principles.
- ▶ have idealistic tendencies.
- ▶ show concern for fairness.
- ▶ develop a social conscience and are passionate about social justice.
- ▶ remain vulnerable to the influence of social media and need to understand its ethical and moral implications.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Young people in eighth grade often

- ▶ are strongly influenced by their peers.
- ▶ respond poorly to adult lectures and have a “know-it-all” attitude.
- ▶ feel self-conscious and avoid the expression of feelings and involvement in situations that require emotional risk.
- ▶ need support and direction from family and significant adults.
- ▶ test the limits of acceptable behavior.
- ▶ are loud or overreact in certain situations.
- ▶ work well in cooperative groups.
- ▶ benefit from a wide variety of hands-on and technology-based activities.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Young people in eighth grade often

- ▶ challenge adult authority to explore their personal values.
- ▶ respond well to past and present role models of faith.
- ▶ seek and understand matters of faith on a deeper level.
- ▶ discern by doubting, questioning, and challenging their faith.
- ▶ consider complex moral and ethical issues but remain unsure of how to deal with them.
- ▶ enjoy exploring moral issues through writing and discussion.
- ▶ thrive in a group atmosphere that exhibits encouragement, humor, respect, and trust.