



Stepping Stones

A RESOURCE ON YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



A message from the
Youth Development Committee

Welcome to *Stepping Stones*

We are the Youth Development Committee (YDC), 25 youth from across Ontario tasked with one very important assignment: ensuring this resource accurately reflects the voices of Ontario's youth.

As the members of the YDC, let us first assure you that we are in fact young people working with government. We come from across Ontario—from Weagamow to Windsor. Since the first time we met, developing this resource has been a journey into the rich diversity of Ontario. Each time we came together, we brought our own piece of Ontario with us: our families, friends, colleagues, neighbours, clubs, associations, communities, schools, foster homes, youth shelters, group homes, employers and our classmates; they all came with us.

The Youth Development Committee would like to thank everyone who influenced or contributed to this resource, particularly, the youth of Ontario. This committee strived to be inclusive of every one of you. It is with YOuth in our hearts and our minds that this work was done. We thank you for enriching this process with all of your brilliant feedback and perspectives; this will ultimately lead to the success of this work.

We would also like to thank the Government of Ontario for embarking on this new, unique project. Thank you for understanding the important role youth play in youth services; for having faith in the merits of this project throughout the process; for the ongoing work with youth in Ontario; and for seeing in each of us what we could offer. A special thank you goes out to the staff project team, with whom we had the privilege of collaborating throughout this journey. We were able to laugh, grow, debate, discuss and collaborate together—your tireless work to ensure our voices were heard has inspired and encouraged us to continue our own work with youth.

Lastly, we would like to thank each other. The YDC came together as peers, colleagues and collaborators, each representing a part of Ontario. What we learned from each other played a significant role in the formation of this resource—it also enhanced each of us personally. As our work comes to a close, we are absolutely humbled by this experience. We have been afforded a privilege that few are able to experience and for that we are exceptionally grateful.

We cannot foretell the future, but we do know that the youth of Ontario will be there, leading, learning, innovating, creating and achieving. It is with this resource we hope to help the youth of Ontario grow and achieve prosperity.

Truly and really,

Members of the Youth Development Committee



Stepping Stones

A RESOURCE ON YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Contents

5 PART 1: WELCOME!

- 6 About this resource
- 6 Who it is for
- 7 Look for these text features

9 PART 2: ABOUT STEPPING STONES

- 10 Context: Ontario's changing demographics
- 10 The implications
- 10 We need to provide positive supports
- 11 The call for action
- 11 How this resource was developed

15 PART 3: POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Understanding youth development

- 16 Ages and stages: about youth development
- 18 An overview: adolescence and early adulthood
- 18 Cognitive development
- 21 Emotional development
- 24 Social development
- 28 Physical development

Supporting youth development: developmental maps

- 30 About the youth developmental maps
- 31 What youth want you to know: five key themes
- 32 Early adolescence (12-14 years)
- 42 Adolescence (13-19 years)
- 52 Early adulthood (17-25 years)

63 PART 4: MOVING FORWARD

- 64 Make it relevant
- 66 A living document
- 67 Working together

68 APPENDIX A: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Welcome!

Across Ontario, hundreds of dedicated organizations and individuals are making a difference for youth every day. *Stepping Stones* is intended to support and enhance the work of these adult allies by presenting a shared understanding of how youth develop in a clear and cohesive way. While every person is unique, the stages of development between childhood and adulthood are consistent across populations and generations. However, today's youth, more than ever, face a complex and constantly evolving world. *Stepping Stones* has been created to serve as a tool to guide the development and delivery of high quality services and supports for youth province-wide. Together, we can ensure that all young people in Ontario are fully supported in becoming purposeful, involved and engaged members of our communities and our province.

- 6 About this resource
- 6 Who it is for
- 7 Look for these text features



About this resource

Stepping Stones: A Resource on Youth Development was created by the Ontario Government in broad consultation with researchers, youth, community leaders and service providers. It is designed to support those who work with youth aged 12 to 25 by providing:

An overview of youth development: A detailed look at the predictable developmental stages of youth aged 12 to 25, and the ways in which we can identify and respond to the needs of youth at each stage of their development.

Developmental maps: Chart-based summaries of key developmental events for early adolescents, adolescents and young adults, and suggested supports aligned with each developmental stage.

Tips for implementation: Examples of how to adapt, specialize and apply this information in a way that is relevant and meaningful in communities across Ontario.

Who it is for

This resource is for organizations and individuals who, either directly or indirectly, support and influence the well-being and development of youth:

- communities and community organizations
- youth organizations
- parents, families and caregivers
- physicians and health care organizations
- educators and education and training institutions
- policy makers and decision makers

Stepping Stones will be of interest to anyone who wants to deepen their knowledge of how youth develop (physically, cognitively, emotionally and socially), and the ways they can be supported through these transitions. It is important to acknowledge, however, that this resource is not a diagnostic tool designed to gauge a young person's progress against a set of targets, nor a screening tool to uncover potential developmental delays. A variety of tools exist for those purposes.

Look for these text features



In their own voices

What we heard from Ontario youth



Digging deeper

Information to deepen your knowledge



Insight

Helpful ideas to consider



INSIGHT: A COMMUNITY-WIDE PERSPECTIVE

Many individuals and organizations within your community have contact with, and support, youth at various stages of their development.

Consider encouraging all partners in your community to become familiar with *Stepping Stones* so that youth benefit from a consistent and cohesive approach to youth development across the community.



2

Part 2: *About Stepping Stones*

Ontario has made substantial investments in youth and the youth services sector does excellent work across the province. Collectively, we have made significant progress in achieving positive outcomes for youth. At the same time, there is broad consensus that a better understanding of how youth develop based on research evidence and the voices of young people would help to ensure that services and supports across the province are better coordinated and better able to maximize positive youth development.

***Stepping Stones* is informed by up-to-date research and dialogues with youth, community leaders and providers. The voice of Ontario's youth has shaped the creation of this resource—bringing rich dialogue, considerable expertise, and diverse perspectives on youth development to this work. Everyone involved has been motivated to create a resource that shares knowledge and experience about how youth develop to support them in achieving their highest potential.**

- 10 Context: Ontario's changing demographics
- 10 The implications
- 10 We need to provide positive supports
- 11 The call for action
- 11 How this resource was developed



DIGGING DEEPER: TODAY'S YOUTH

- Ontario's youth population makes up 16.2% of the total population
- By 2030, Ontario's working age population is projected to be 10.3 million or 61.6% of the population—down from 69.4% in 2009



DIGGING DEEPER: ABORIGINAL, NEWCOMER AND FRANCOPHONE YOUTH

- The Aboriginal population is young and growing. In fact, it is the fastest growing population in all of Ontario
- Of the population aged 15-24 in Ontario, 17.9% are immigrants
- More than one in six Francophones are youth aged 12-24
- The number of Francophone immigrant youth aged 15-24 increased by 18.6% between 2001 and 2006



DIGGING DEEPER: EXTENDED ADOLESCENCE

- As young people attend postsecondary education longer, and postpone marriage and starting a family, the period defined as "youth" has widened
- Over the past two decades there has been an increase in the number of young Canadians between the ages of 20-29 remaining to live with, or returning to live with, their parents

Context: Ontario's changing demographics

Ontario's population patterns are changing

Currently over 2.4 million youth aged 12-25 call Ontario home. This is an incredibly diverse group who face a world where changing social and family dynamics and an evolving labour market mean that many youth need extra support and opportunities to learn the skills they need for success. The province's population is also aging and, as a result, Ontario's prosperity is increasingly dependent on a smaller group of workers. These youth are the province's economic future.

Today, transitions are less predictable

Over the years, youth development has grown an added layer of complexity as the transition from adolescence into adulthood has become less clear and direct. For example, marriage is often no longer the reason for leaving the family home and few young people move from education/training directly into stable and long-term employment.

The implications

Our youth will need to be resilient

Today's youth will be more likely to work many jobs in their lifetime and perhaps have multiple careers. A different and larger set of skills is needed to ensure success in life and in the workplace so that youth are able to manage and respond to these challenges. We need youth who are:

- prepared and engaged economically, socially, and civically
- skilled across a variety of dimensions for life, work, and citizenship
- flexible and adaptable for a changing world

Changing family structures and an evolving labour market mean that many youth are more dependent on their broader community for support.

We need to provide positive supports

In order to prepare youth for success in this new context, parents, communities and decision makers should move beyond a deficit-focused model of youth development (ensuring that youth are "problem-free") and toward a coordinated and asset-focused approach that seeks to prepare youth to *thrive* as family and community members, leaders and contributors to the province and our future (Scales and Benson, 2004).

Attitudes toward adolescence have shifted

Adolescence has frequently been characterized as a period of "storm and stress". Too often, researchers, policy-makers and service providers have regarded young people as problems requiring a solution or intervention.

In recent years, however, a positive youth perspective has emerged that involves a more constructive understanding of development during the adolescent years, supported by the recognition that a deficit model of service provision (for example, how to deal with delinquency and drug addiction) is only one part of the equation. This perspective acknowledges the importance of the experiences young people are exposed to—both positive and negative—in their overall development and preparedness for success as adults.

Significant research has demonstrated that this asset-focused approach—supporting development across all developmental domains—is effective in improving youth outcomes.

About our approach

The developmental maps presented in Part III of this document are based on a positive youth development framework. The maps are meant to describe what develops and how we recognize that development is taking place.

This description is not intended to dictate specific outcomes. Its purpose is to provide young people, their parents and those who work to support youth development with clear information about what to expect and the experiences that can be helpful during adolescence and early adulthood.

The call for action

Ontario's Review of the Roots of Youth Violence report, released in November 2008, included a recommendation to government to develop an evidence-based youth policy framework that "is informed by research about the developmental and transitional stages through which youth pass".

How this resource was developed

This resource was developed through a multi-faceted process

The process of developing this resource involved:

- synthesizing current research on how youth (aged 12–25) grow and develop across cognitive, social, emotional and physical domains, to fill knowledge gaps and promote an asset-based, holistic view of youth
- combining that research with young people's own perspectives on what they need to succeed and successfully transition into adulthood
- working closely with community partners and experts in the youth services sector to ensure that this resource reflects the needs of those who support youth and is useful in supporting their work



INSIGHT: AN ASSET MODEL OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

It is important to recognize the difference between merely striving to ensure that youth are "free of problems" and the larger goal of ensuring they are "fully prepared" for success and engagement in life, work and citizenship. While the treatment of specific youth issues will always remain a critical component of youth development, *Stepping Stones* is intended to focus on developing the personal assets of our youth in a broad and rich way, rather than on the elimination of youth issues and challenges.



INSIGHT: THE REVIEW OF THE ROOTS OF YOUTH VIOLENCE REPORT

"The policy framework we see as the most promising would be based on the early childhood development model used in Ontario and elsewhere. That model, which has served to inspire and coordinate actions for children up to age six by governments and communities alike, is based on the developmental stages of children."
(2008; Volume 1, page 290)



IN THEIR OWN VOICES

"Listen to what I have to say and ask me questions because, if you don't ask me questions, I might as well not have a voice."

Research on youth development was compiled

The government issued an open call that resulted in 13 research papers that compiled up-to-date evidence on how youth develop. These papers were brought together with a cross-disciplinary literature review to form the “maps” of developmental stages that serve as the basis of this resource.

A youth dialogue strategy was developed

The government also launched a youth engagement process, which consisted of two core elements: creating a Youth Development Committee; and developing a youth dialogue strategy.

Youth Development Committee and Youth Network

In October 2010, recruitment for the Youth Development Committee was launched. The Committee’s primary task was to provide expertise and advice to support the design and execution of youth dialogues. Committee members were compensated out of respect for their time and expertise and to ensure that the group was representative.

Over 400 applications were received from Ontario youth. Through the support of an external selection panel, 25 young people were chosen to form the Committee. Committee members ranged in age from 18–25, came from across Ontario, and brought with them exceptional experiences and skills that represent the diversity of Ontario’s youth.

In addition to the Committee, interested youth had other opportunities for participation in the project. Over 500 youth registered for the Youth Network and received updates on the development of the resource. Youth participants who previously worked with government also participated in this process by providing advice about their own experiences working with government to the Youth Development Committee.

Extensive youth dialogues were held

The dialogues provided youth with an opportunity to consider their own lived experiences and engage in interactive conversations to identify the supports and opportunities they need for positive development.

The dialogues, developed in partnership with the Youth Development Committee, gave youth across the province an opportunity to provide advice on how the decision makers in their lives can best support their development. The strategy, called “Where’s your Voice At?”, provided four ways for youth to participate:

- “Workshop in a Box”: provided all the information and materials a youth or adult ally would need to run a dialogue session of their own with a group in their community

- Face-to-face dialogue sessions: interactive workshops were hosted by government in English and French across Ontario
- Online survey: enabled youth to provide their input in a simple, convenient way
- Online facilitated dialogue sessions: two sessions were organized (one each in English and in French) to provide an opportunity for youth to connect from across the province

Special efforts were made to ensure the voices of Aboriginal and Francophone youth were represented in the process. Efforts were also made to ensure that the face-to-face workshops were held across the province. Most face-to-face sessions were held in Youth Development Committee members' home communities.

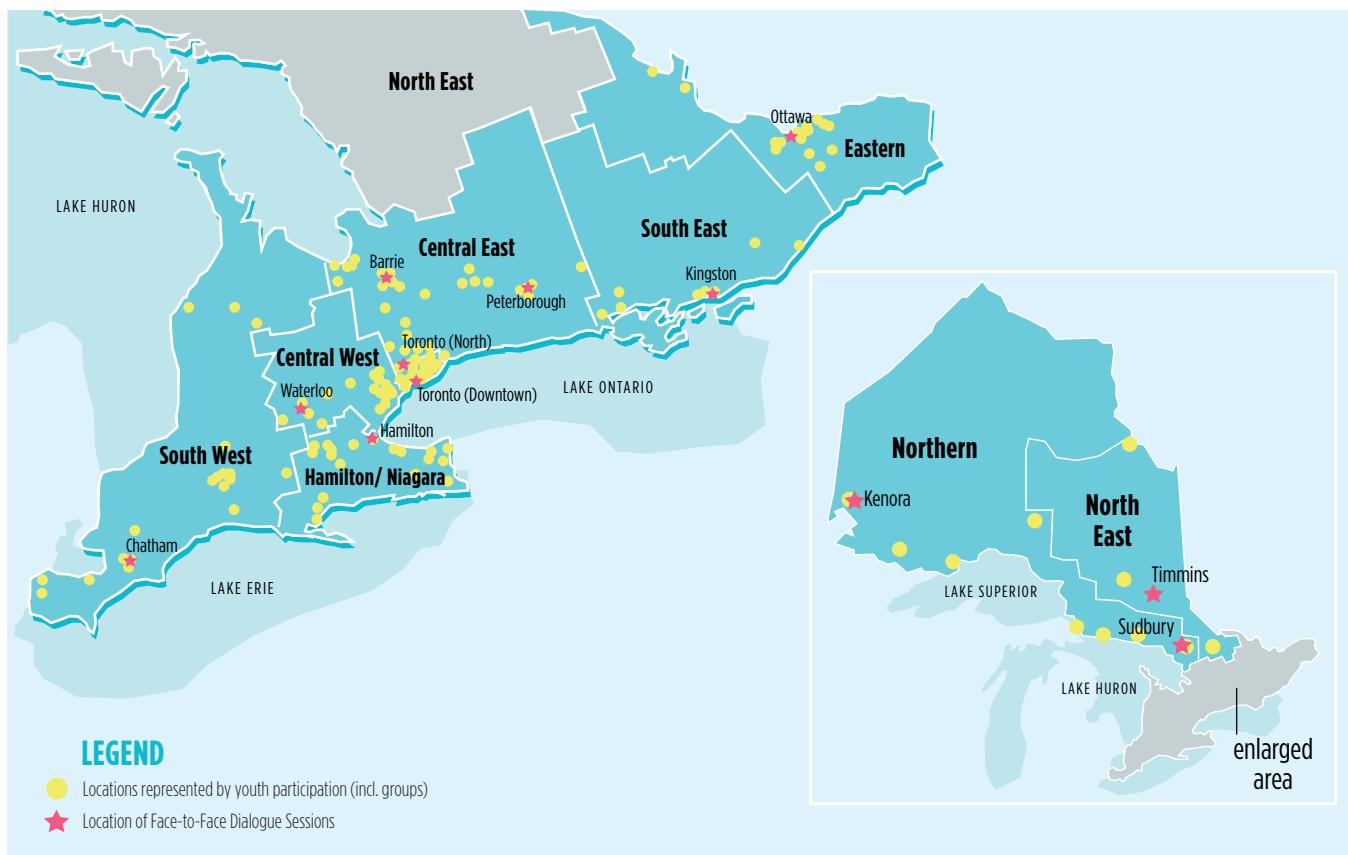
Over 600 youth from across the province participated in the *"Where's Your Voice At?"* dialogues, representing the communities in the map below. Their voices are reflected throughout this resource.



INSIGHT: YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

Youth dialogue participants reflected the diversity of Ontario's youth population as a whole. Many participants voluntarily identified themselves as representing a minority group:

- 9% were Aboriginal
- 3% were Francophone
- 41% identified as being a visible minority





3

Positive youth development

Supporting young people's successful transition to adulthood requires a clear understanding of the predictable stages of development. While every young person is an individual, with their own unique background, abilities, personal characteristics, life events and context, there are major developmental events that are common across young people and likely to occur in the transition from childhood to adulthood. The following is intended to provide practical, useable information about youth developmental milestones that can help identify the supports youth may need as they develop.

Understanding youth development

- 16 Ages and stages: about youth development
- 18 An overview: adolescence and early adulthood
- 18 Cognitive development
- 21 Emotional development
- 24 Social development
- 28 Physical development

Supporting youth development: developmental maps

- 30 About the youth developmental maps
- 31 What youth want you to know: five key themes
- 32 Early adolescence (12-14 years)
- 42 Adolescence (13-19 years)
- 52 Early adulthood (17-25 years)

Understanding youth development

Ages and stages: about youth development

Youth development occurs uniquely for each individual

While there are a number of developmental events that are common to today's youth, development is also affected by a multitude of individual factors. Some individuals will reach milestones at an early age, while others may take more time or might not reach certain milestones at all.

This resource outlines the progression of movement along developmental trajectories that are common for the majority of young people. It aims to help foster a common understanding of youth development and to cultivate interactions with young people that are positive and productive.

The developmental maps are *not* a "schedule" of development that follows a rigid timeline, nor do they represent the developmental trajectory of any individual youth.

From straight lines to circles

The developmental events presented in this section of the resource are packaged neatly into specific domains and age-specific segments to make the resource practical and easier to use. In reality, human growth is much more complex.

The interrelated and interdependent nature of human development can be considered as a circle (Figure 1), in which growth in one domain impacts and is connected to the others (Simard, 2011; Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, 2011). As you move through the developmental maps featured later in this section, it is important to remember that maturation always takes place as part of the whole. Healthy development of the mind, body and spirit is—as our Aboriginal partners have long affirmed—contingent on balance and interconnectedness. It is also important, regardless of the age of the youth you serve, to familiarize yourself with the events that might have already taken place, and with those that may be arriving shortly. By having a perspective of the overall developmental picture, you can better anticipate and support the growth that is to come.

Context matters!

Throughout conversations with researchers, community leaders, and youth across the province about youth development, one message was clear: context matters (Figure 2). It matters whether a young person is growing up in an urban or rural setting, a high or low socio-economic status neighbourhood, in a minority setting for a Francophone, or in a particular cultural community, for example, one of the many Aboriginal communities in Ontario. Environment, history and life events impact the experiences youth have, the challenges they face, the supports and opportunities they have access to and the choices that they make.

Figure 1

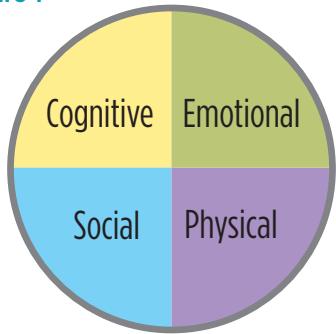
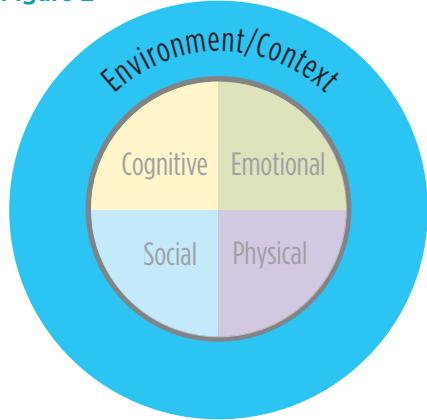


Figure 2



Sense of self: a core concept

Many researchers, youth and community leaders told us that, despite all the rapid and significant changes that take place as a child becomes an adult, there remains an enduring (yet changing) core or *sense of self* in each person (Figure 3). It is this “force of gravity” that connects aspects of development and experience together. The concept of self takes on different meanings for different people. For example:

- For some individuals of Aboriginal descent, the sense of self has a spiritual significance. Simard (2011) notes that “feeding the spirit is as equally important as feeding the body and both must be attended to in a caring manner”
- The self may take on a cultural meaning. Francophone youth, for example, may perceive their French heritage and language as a central component of their core self
- Some may consider their self to be religious in nature
- There may even be some young people who pay little attention to their sense of self

When thinking about the individual and contextual issues that influence youth development, it is important to keep this additional factor of self in mind. By acknowledging the core self, you can demonstrate sensitivity and greater understanding of a young person’s unique needs. And while the nature of a youth’s self may not be immediately apparent, the individual youth’s core self can often be discovered through discussion and attentive listening.

A young person’s sense of self can be a valuable platform for making youth development experiences relevant and engaging to them. It can also further their developmental growth (for example, identity formation, social group-esteem).

Engaging youth in a way that connects with their self should be done sensitively and thoughtfully. If you feel that you do not have the skills or knowledge, or feel comfortable, in engaging youth in this way, it can be helpful to seek out, and partner with, individuals (for example, elders, community leaders) or organizations that have this expertise.

Figure 3



INSIGHT: ENGAGING THE *SELF* IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Rites of passage, spiritual tasks and cultural ceremonies can be important activities in both marking and supporting developmental growth.

As an example, in present day Anishinaabe culture, youth undergo a Naming Ceremony to get their spiritual/Anishinaabe name. This supports the young person’s formation of their identity so that they can move forward in fulfilling their purpose in life (Simard, 2011).



INSIGHT: CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC IDENTITY

Research on young Francophones in a minority setting reveals their complex and hybrid identities. They claim both Francophone and Anglophone cultures, while still being attached to their “Francophoneness”. Increasingly, they define themselves through a truly bilingual identity. (Dallaire and Denis, 2005; Gérin-Lajoie, 2003).



INSIGHT: STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

For the purpose of this resource, “youth” has been divided into three developmental stages:

- Early adolescence (ages 12–14)
- Adolescence (ages 13–19)
- Early adulthood (ages 17–25)

These developmental stages overlap as a reminder that development occurs at different rates for every youth.

This path or that?

We do not assume that there is a single path to success. Every person starts their journey from a unique position and may likewise be headed toward a unique destination. Individual attributes, life choices, and environmental factors interact to set a young person’s general direction in life. While some pathways may lead to more successful outcomes than others, this doesn’t imply that there is only one road to adulthood. A young person who is headed down one path can, with guidance and support, always chart a new course—this resource helps to provide a map.

An overview: adolescence and early adulthood

Adolescence is a period of rapid change

Adolescents and young adults experience many changes, often occurring simultaneously or in rapid succession. Beginning with puberty, youth undergo major physical changes at the same time that:

- their capacities for thinking and reasoning begin to mature
- their emotional responses become more intense
- their social worlds expand as peer groups become more important and romantic relationships begin

While negotiating these changes, young people also grapple with their emerging identities, make important decisions about the future, and face a number of transitions:

- into and out of high school
- into post-secondary education and/or the job market
- reaching legal driving age and then legal adulthood
- leaving their family home and establishing independence

Four dimensions of development

The developmental maps presented later in this section of the resource are organized across the cognitive, emotional, social, and physical aspects of youth development. A brief description is provided in the following pages to highlight the key features of each of these domains.



DIGGING DEEPER: RESEARCH ON YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Research on adolescent brain development has expanded dramatically in the last two decades, with 66% of the publications on the topic appearing since 2000.

Cognitive development

Changes in the brain

The brain continues to adapt beyond the early years

As recently as the mid-1990s, the prevailing belief among neuroscientists was that the more important aspects of brain development ended by about age three. We now know that the brain continues to organize, adapt and change well beyond the early years. In fact, the changes that occur in the brain during late childhood, adolescence and young adulthood are particularly dramatic (Jetha & Segalowitz, 2011).

Brain function becomes increasingly efficient and specialized

The human brain reaches adult size just before puberty (around age 12). In several regions of the brain, grey matter (neurons or brain cells) increases until the onset of puberty and then decreases as neurons are eliminated through a “use it or lose it” process. This process contributes to the increasing efficiency of brain functioning during adolescence and to adolescents’ increasing ability to process complex information and learn new concepts. At the same time, white matter (myelin and axons) increases, speeding up the rate of signals moving between brain cells, also contributing to the brain’s increasing efficiency.

The “executive” functions slowly mature

The area of greatest change after puberty is the prefrontal cortex. This area is associated with “executive” functions such as monitoring, organizing, planning, decision making, anticipating consequences, impulse control, and delay of gratification.

The maturation of the prefrontal cortex is a slow process that takes place throughout adolescence and early adulthood. This maturation process depends to a large degree on experience—the executive functions are acquired and develop through practice. The resources and variety of experiences available to adolescents and young adults, as well as the ways in which they decide to spend their time, contribute to variability across individuals in terms of their brain development.

Processing and reasoning skills

Processing speed, concentration and memory improve

Processing speed (how quickly new information is taken in) increases until mid-adolescence. Adolescents become gradually better at ignoring irrelevant information in order to concentrate on information relevant to the task at hand. Young people also get steadily better at replacing an already-established response when a new and different response is required. In addition, working memory and the ability to multitask improve throughout adolescence and into adulthood.

Reasoning abilities improve

These improving capacities are accompanied by improvements in reasoning abilities. The ability to think abstractly develops during adolescence, as does the ability to think logically, and consider different perspectives. Youth also become more able to engage in scientific reasoning to formulate and test hypotheses and draw conclusions.

Perspective-taking

Young children tend to have a difficult time separating their perspective from others’ perspectives, or understanding that others may have a different perspective on a given situation or issue.



IN THEIR OWN VOICES

“Teachers and mentors can provide youth with the skills and ideas necessary to tackle greater concepts through a critical lens. Much of this is done through discussion and debate. When you learn from others, you grow through them and their experiences which you then incorporate into your own.”

“My opportunities to travel and work abroad have really helped me push personal boundaries and challenge myself. It has also given me a broader world view and a new perspective on old issues.”



In adolescence, the young person can come to understand that other people may hold different perspectives and that those people appreciate different perspectives themselves (this is called “mutual perspective-taking”). By late adolescence, young people can come to understand how these mutual perspectives are influenced by people’s social roles. This developmental progression is not tightly linked with age. For example, while many young adolescents are capable of mutual perspective-taking, it is not uncommon to find late adolescents who are not capable of it.

Perspective-taking on its own is not sufficient. Without the emotional capacity for empathy, for example, a person can take advantage of others with the knowledge gained from their perspective-taking abilities.

Learning strategies improve

Learning strategies generally improve throughout adolescence and into adulthood. Adolescents are able to reflect on their own thinking, and they are able to observe how they learn and develop strategies to improve their learning.

Learning and the influence of digital media

Digital media may have influenced adolescent learning styles

Some researchers believe that digital media and communication technologies have had a profound impact on the learning styles and behaviours of today’s youth (Martinovic, Freiman & Karadag, 2011). These youth:

- prefer receiving information quickly
- are adept at processing information rapidly
- prefer multi-tasking and non-linear access to information
- are kinaesthetic, experiential, hands-on learners who are most easily engaged with first-person learning, games, simulations, and role-playing (Junco and Mastrodicasa, 2007; Oblinger and Oblinger, 2005; Tapscott, 2009)

They also rely heavily on communication technologies to access information and to carry out social and professional interactions (Veen & Vrakking, 2006; Pletka, 2007).

Beliefs about knowledge

Adolescents develop a more rational approach to knowledge

As well as reflecting on their own thinking, adolescents begin to think about knowledge and the trustworthiness of different knowledge claims. Some adolescents may become skeptical of all claims, while others may accept the knowledge claims of a single authoritative source and reject all others.



DIGGING DEEPER: N-GEN’ERS

- 98% of Canadian youth (16 to 24 years old) use the internet
- N-Gen’ers—individuals born between 1982 and 2003 (\pm 2 years)—are exposed to more than 10 hours of media content a day, without taking into account time spent using the computer for school work or time spent texting or talking on a cell phone
- Email and instant messaging (IM) is used daily by 57% and weekly by 97% of 12 to 17 year olds in Canada

With further development, adolescents and young adults can move toward a more rational approach to knowledge in which it is accepted that not all claims are equally true (or untrue), and that, by considering evidence and arguments, it is possible to discern that some claims are more likely to be true than others.

Supporting cognitive development

Youth told us that they want a reasonable level of support to help keep their lives in order. They want friendly reminders about upcoming commitments and tell us, for example, that they are keen to receive instruction on how to use a “to do” calendar or agenda. When deadlines or obligations are missed (due to a conflict with a friend, for example), most adolescents are looking for their adult allies to show some understanding. But, as these skills develop, young adults say they are comfortable receiving less direct prompts and want to be held more accountable.

When faced with significant life decisions, like which career path to follow, most youth said that they are interested in hearing about, and discussing, the experiences and first-hand knowledge of others. Youth also mentioned the importance of having many adults in their lives as a way to increase exposure to a variety of different perspectives (for example, cultural activities, social perspectives). At the same time, young people told us they ultimately desire the freedom to make decisions for themselves.

Emotional development

Experiencing emotions

Emotion, motivation and stress are heightened

Adolescents often feel emotions more intensely, and are more sensitive to pleasure and reward than either children or adults. In addition, adolescents are often particularly vulnerable to stress.

Adolescents are less able to regulate their desires and emotions

Adolescents are not as able as adults to curb their desire for pleasure, which can lead to an increase in risk-taking behaviour. Adolescents are also not as able as adults to manage their emotions and their stress levels, which leaves adolescents more vulnerable to mental health issues. In fact, the lifetime risk for the emergence of mental disorders (for example, anxiety, depression) peaks in adolescence.

Although risk-taking behaviour is often associated with negative outcomes (such as car accidents or addictions), the curiosity and desire for novel experiences that fuel risk-taking also present tremendous opportunities for exploration, learning and development. Learning to become independent, for example, is a very risky endeavour, but it is a key part of adolescence.



INSIGHT: VARIABILITY IN BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

There is great individual variability in the brain-based changes described in this section. For example, many adolescents show greater brain responses to emotion compared to adults or younger children, but this is not true for all adolescents.



IN THEIR OWN VOICES

“Don’t be afraid to go out and find who you are. Try new things, take risks, and be safe. Make sure you know what you’re getting yourself into before you make decisions so that you don’t make one that you’ll regret.”

“I think just talking it over as to why I am upset, sometimes it may just be because I am tired and lacking patience for something, but overall just giving me space and time to think and then talking works best.”



INSIGHT: EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Emotional regulation refers to the strategies a person uses to manage emotions. This includes strategies such as initiating, maintaining, and modifying the occurrence, intensity, or duration of feelings (Rawana et al., 2011).

Emotional regulation

Learning to manage emotions is a key task in adolescence

The key developmental task for youth in the emotional domain is the development of emotional self-regulation. While adolescents have become more capable of experiencing emotions, their capacity for self-regulation and for decision making lags behind. Learning to regulate their emotions is, therefore, initially quite difficult for adolescents.

Strategies for emotional regulation broaden and shift from primarily external, behaviourally-oriented strategies in childhood (when parents and other significant adults help children regulate their emotions) to more internal and cognitive (thought-based) strategies in adolescence and young adulthood, when it becomes important to regulate emotions independently.



INSIGHT: THE ROLE OF SELF-PERCEPTION

A unique feature of emotional regulation that emerges in young adulthood is the perception of one's own ability to regulate emotions. Young adults who consider themselves to be good at regulating their own emotions tend to be better at managing negative emotions, are more prosocial, are less likely to avoid stressful situations, and report fewer depressive symptoms. In contrast, a lack of confidence in the ability to regulate emotions is linked to higher rates of depression and delinquency.

Adolescents develop new adaptive strategies

Some of the cognitive strategies that emerge in adolescence work well for emotional self-regulation and are considered to be “adaptive” strategies:

- redefining or reframing a potentially emotional situation so that its emotional impact is lessened (cognitive reappraisal)
- thinking about joyful and pleasant issues rather than the source of an emotional response (positive refocusing)
- replacing negative thoughts or attributions about an emotional event/issue with positive ones (positive reappraisal)
- putting things into perspective
- acceptance

They may also use maladaptive strategies

Other strategies tend to be less successful in helping to regulate emotions in a productive manner. These maladaptive strategies include:

- thinking repeatedly about the feelings and thoughts associated with a negative event, often involuntarily (rumination)
- blaming oneself for the negative emotions experienced (self-blame)
- blaming others
- inhibiting behaviour that expresses emotions (expressive suppression)



IN THEIR OWN VOICES

“When I’m too stressed I tend to not organize myself. I tend to keep stuff inside.”

Self-regulation is a critical success factor for adolescents

Adaptive emotional regulation is one of the factors that contributes to the ability to successfully cope and adapt to significant life stress or adversity. In adolescence, adaptive emotional regulation strategies are associated with maintaining good social relationships, academic achievement, and overall psychological well-being. Maladaptive emotional regulation, on the other hand, is associated with poorer mental health outcomes. In young adulthood, adaptive emotional regulation is associated with more positive outcomes in areas related to memory, relationships, and responses to stressful life events.

Empathy**Empathy develops late in adolescence**

Empathy—the capacity to recognize and share emotions that another person is experiencing—does not generally become fully developed until early adulthood. In childhood, a rudimentary form of empathy emerges when children start to feel distressed while observing someone else's emotional distress. In late childhood and early adolescence, this distress is replaced by empathy when young people recognize the distinction between their own and others' emotional reactions. Empathy during adolescence involves a largely emotional response, while mature empathy that emerges in early adulthood involves a more cognitive evaluation of the other person's emotional response.

Motivation**Motivation becomes increasingly internalized**

In early adolescence, motivations for engaging in behaviour begin to shift from extrinsic to intrinsic. When extrinsically motivated, individuals engage in activities for external reasons (for example, to earn a reward or avoid punishment). When individuals are intrinsically motivated, they engage in an activity because they are interested in and realize the benefits of the activity.

While tasks such as homework and housework do not generally become intrinsically motivated (few people enjoy these tasks in and of themselves), reasons for engaging in such tasks start to become internalized in early adolescence. For example, adolescents start doing their homework of their own accord—rather than at the insistence of their parents—because they have internalized reasons for doing so (for example, they want to earn good grades). The internalization of motivations continues to develop throughout adolescence as behaviour becomes more self-regulated.



IN THEIR OWN VOICES

"Know when I'm feeling down and don't blow it off as some tiny thing. Some things mean a lot to me and I don't appreciate having them scaled down."

"Mostly what has shaped me are the clubs I have joined. For me, I am outgoing at home, but shy at school, but joining these clubs/councils/committees has made me more outgoing, letting me take more leadership roles, which I wouldn't have done otherwise."

Supporting emotional development

As young people develop the skills to manage new and intense emotions, they tell us they often look to sources such as friends, family, teachers, and counsellors for comfort and support. When expressing their emotions, adolescents expect to have their feelings respected and validated, and they feel patronized when others downplay their emotions with statements like "it can't be that bad" or "get over it, already". Even as young people become more adept at managing their emotions, it is important to remember that we all need someone to talk to, from time to time.

Young people, while acknowledging an affinity for excitement and risk-taking, expressed a desire to take these risks in a safe environment. A class trip to a rock-climbing gym, for example, was suggested by one youth as an effective means of safely seeking thrills. Youth were also adamant that they need information and advice on the potential impacts of risky behaviours so that they are better prepared to make good decisions. They reported that access to objective, frank information is especially crucial for young adults, who are often making decisions in an unsupervised setting.

Social development

Social development concerns identity, relationships, and moral capacity

Adolescents develop a sense of self identity that carries into early adulthood. Identity development can include many different components such as gender identity, social group identity (particularly for youth in minority groups), and spiritual identity. While maintaining their sense of self, youth have to develop a capacity for intimate relationships with their peers and romantic partners, while developing independence from their parents. In order to successfully manage their relationships with others, young people also have to develop successful strategies for addressing moral issues (Côté, 2011).

Self development and identity formation

Most adolescents will explore varied identities

Early adolescents typically delay in making any identity commitments. As they mature, most will actively explore different identity options (for example, information about various career options). Many will start to question their parents' values as they consider their own values. Others may skip the identity exploration phase and commit to identity roles based on the expectations of others (for example, allowing their parents to decide on future career direction).

After a sometimes prolonged period of exploring who they are and how they fit into the world, adolescents and young adults generally begin committing to an identity that includes roles, values, beliefs and goals. Identity development includes several different components, such as self-concepts, self-efficacy, and self-esteem.



INSIGHT: SELF-ESTEEM

The self-esteem of adolescents tends to fluctuate more than that of children and adults. Early maturing girls often experience a decline in self-esteem, while early maturing boys frequently experience an increase.

Self-concepts

Self development begins with the emergence of self-concepts. In childhood, these self-concepts tend to be quite concrete (for example, I live in Canada, I have a dog, I want to be a fireman when I grow up). In early adolescence, self-concepts become more abstract (I am a leader, I am ambitious, I am spiritual) and more specific to each individual.

Later in adolescence, self-concepts become more differentiated across different contexts (for example, one individual may be deferential with parents, a leader among friends and shy in class), and adolescents also start to notice some conflicts in their conceptions of themselves in different situations. These conflicting self-concepts can provoke anxiety as adolescents try to work out who they *really* are.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy involves a person's appraisal of their own ability to organize and execute a course of action to attain a set goal. Self-appraisal skills begin to improve in early adolescence (for example, mistaken childhood beliefs of competence are replaced by realistic assessments of skill level) and early adolescents also begin to engage in social comparison (comparing their skill levels to those of their peers). As a result, self-efficacy often declines in early adolescence. Young people, especially girls, become less certain of their ability to achieve goals. The decline often continues into mid-adolescence at which point self-efficacy begins to increase.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem is a more general opinion of one's own personal worth. In contrast to self-efficacy, which is based on judgments of one's abilities in particular domains, self-esteem is based on emotional responses—how individuals feel about themselves. Self-esteem tends to decline in early adolescence (especially among girls) and often continues to decline into early adulthood at which point it begins to rise again and continues on an upward trend throughout adulthood until old age.

Gender identity

The development of gender identity shifts in early adolescence when gender role stereotypes start to intensify. Early adolescents often become more attentive to, and strict about, gender stereotypes. This often changes later in adolescence when youth tend to become less rigid about what is appropriate for men and women and begin to reject gender stereotypes.



INSIGHT: SELF-EFFICACY AND SELF-ESTEEM

Those who demonstrate a high degree of *self-efficacy* will often undertake more difficult tasks, stick with them longer, and be motivated by challenges. Such an individual might say, "I know I have the ability so, if I study hard, I will pass this math test". *Self-esteem*, on the other hand, is an emotional appraisal of a person's characteristics.

A young person with high self-esteem, for instance, may say "I like who I am". Conversely, someone with diminished self-esteem might state, "I am unhappy with the way I look".



IN THEIR OWN VOICES

"I feel most comfortable in myself when I'm working on cars or when I'm with my family. I feel less stressed out when I know I'm safe and know what I'm doing."

"Be patient. Some people don't know what they want to do, or who they are until they're 25, or 45, or even after they retire. Don't give up, and don't be afraid."



INSIGHT: YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

Some developmental processes are more challenging for young people with disabilities, including those related to their social development. While the disability itself does not impact development, the way that peers and adults interact with youth who have a disability may affect the number and quality of their social experiences (Gorter et al., 2011).



IN THEIR OWN VOICES

"Taking part in Native ceremonies gives me a sense of where I came from."

"[My] friends have been with me through a lot and they've seen the worst, but they've also seen the best... We know more about each other than anyone else... Those are the kinds of people who have the ability to shape who you are because they matter, and you listen to them."

Social group identity also expands

Social group identity also begins to shift in early adolescence. Early adolescents (particularly those from minority groups) begin to show an increase in social group-esteem (they show increasing pride in belonging to their own social group). This increase continues through adolescence and into early adulthood. By early adulthood, many youth will have achieved a defined social group identity. They display a commitment or sense of belonging to the group; they feel comfortable with their own social identity; and, after independent examination of their own beliefs, they reject the negative views held by others based on stereotypes about their social groups.

Spiritual identity

Spiritual/religious identity is another aspect of identity that may begin to shift in early adolescence—adolescents may start to question and explore the foundations of the religious or spiritual beliefs they have previously held. Young adults may integrate their religious or spiritual beliefs into their larger identity or, in other cases, religious/spiritual beliefs may be abandoned.

Development of relationships

Developments in perspective-taking and the growing importance of peers carry important implications for social development during adolescence.

The ability to appreciate varied perspectives emerges

Children learn at a young age to understand that others can have different perspectives than their own (for example, they can hold different beliefs and have different desires) but the development of perspective-taking continues into early adulthood. Later in adolescence, young people begin to understand that perspectives are almost never “neutral” and that everyone’s perspective is coloured by their context, beliefs and background.

This facilitates deeper peer relationships

These changes in perspective-taking allow for the establishment of deeper bonds of intimacy between peers and romantic partners. In early adolescence, input from peers starts to become more important and young people start making social comparisons with their peers, comparing their abilities and popularity, for example. At the same time, young people become more self-conscious (especially in the presence of their peers) and more vulnerable to peer pressure.

Romantic relationships may emerge

In early adolescence, an interest in romantic relationships begins to emerge, although mainly within the larger peer group. Early adolescents become interested in romance and start to experience passionate feelings. They may begin to form mixed-gender

friendship groups and time spent with romantically attractive peers usually occurs within the context of those groups. For lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, two-spirited and queer (LGBTQQ) youth, an early awareness of sexual orientation may be forming and LGBTQQ youth may feel some apprehension regarding their same-sex attractions due to social stigma (Scott & Walsh, 2011).

Later in adolescence, young people begin experiencing their earliest romantic relationships. These early romantic relationships are usually not based on emotional intimacy but more often are about fun and camaraderie, although some expressions of emotional intimacy may begin to emerge, and sexual behaviour may progress. LGBTQQ youth often acknowledge and may disclose their sexual orientation (“come out”) in mid-adolescence. They may tell a trusted friend or family member about a same-sex romantic interest.

In early adulthood, the focus within romantic relationships shifts to forming strong emotional and intimate bonds with a compatible partner. For many youth, it can be challenging to form close connections with a romantic partner while still maintaining a separate sense of identity. LGBTQQ youth often have their first openly same-sex relationships in early adulthood.

Parent relationships may suffer

As adolescents devote more of their time and energy to their peer and romantic relationships, their relationships with parents can suffer a period of heightened conflict. While frequent, high-intensity, angry fighting is not necessarily a feature of adolescence, the frequency of day-to-day conflicts over matters—both large and small—often grows. Conflict with parents tends to be most frequent in early to mid-adolescence, and generally declines afterwards.

Supporting social development

Young people said that exposure to different art forms and cultural ceremonies, travelling abroad and volunteering were some of the opportunities which shaped “who they are”. During this period of exploration, young people told us that freedom to discover their identity and to express their individuality is crucial but also note that they can be conscious of judgement, criticism and rejection from others. Youth advised that it is important for adult allies to keep an open mind. This will not only help youth feel comfortable as they grow, but also fosters the quality of relationships they learn to build with adults.

Peers, family members, and community leaders, as well as contemporary and historical figures, were all mentioned by youth as strong influencers of their sense of identity. Having access to positive role models, youth emphasize, is a critical ingredient in identity formation and positive development. Young people also told us that, because they are constantly observing, learning and emulating, positive role models can help them behave in positive and productive ways.



IN THEIR OWN VOICES

“The biggest mistake parents make is that they’re afraid to talk to their kids about their own personal decisions.

They’re afraid that if they do tell them their experiences, the kids might go and do that negative behaviour.”

“Family dinner at my house is a must and there is no way of escaping into your room! Even though at times it has been a pain, I must admit that there were good times in it as well.”



IN THEIR OWN VOICES

"I work out a lot because I know when you are physically healthy, you are mentally healthy, which will produce a good state of mind."



Physical development

Physical activity

Strength and endurance

Throughout adolescence and into young adulthood, young people will notice changes in their cardiovascular endurance, muscle strength and endurance, and flexibility. These changes depend on the levels of physical activity in which young people engage. In general, there is a decline in physical activity beginning around age 13 and continuing into adulthood.

Identifying physical strengths and limitations

In early adolescence, many young people will become aware of their physical strengths and limitations. Many young people will use this information to make decisions about the activities they will engage in into adulthood—often giving up sports they previously enjoyed and concentrating on those at which they excel (Lu, 2011).

Changes in the body

Sleep patterns

The physical changes of puberty are also associated with changes in adolescents' sleep patterns. Adolescents feel wide awake and alert until late at night, and have difficulty waking up early in the morning. Sleep deprivation can be a consequence. It can contribute to moodiness and irritability as well as difficulties in cognitive processing and emotional regulation (Wolfson & Carskadon, 2003).

Puberty signals the onset of many physical changes

Much of the physical development that takes place during adolescence begins with puberty. These changes include a growth spurt marking the onset of adolescence. Females typically have their growth spurt around age ten, males around age twelve. Puberty also brings the development of primary and secondary sexual characteristics.

Body image

These marked changes to the body and mind have significant impacts on how youth feel about the appearance of their body. Females, whose body mass tends to increase during puberty, may develop a negative body image. This can affect their mood, eating habits and mental well-being. Males, on the other hand, tend to put on muscle mass, start to develop a masculine shape and generally become more satisfied with their physical appearance (Hayword, 2003).

Regardless of a young person's sex, when puberty begins exceptionally early or late, there may be a greater likelihood of body image dissatisfaction (Hayword, 2003).

Nutritional requirements

The nutritional requirements for healthy development will also increase around the onset of puberty. Caloric intake, especially during a growth spurt, can skyrocket. The body's need for protein increases too, as it builds muscle mass. Calcium, the mineral required to build bones, is also very critical during the adolescent years (Spear, 2002).

As youth spend more time outside the family home, their eating habits often become chaotic. They begin to skip meals (often breakfast) and eat while on the go. An increasing portion of a young person's food energy comes from habitual snacking between solid meals.

Supporting physical development

Youth tell us that leading a healthy and active lifestyle is a high priority but many obstacles make this difficult. Because their lives are filled with competing concerns, young people reported convenience as a significant factor. Recreation during the lunch hour was cited as an attractive option as were activities in accessible locations.

Variety is also crucial to attracting and maintaining participants' interest. Some noted that activities were overly competitive, and required too large a commitment of time and resources. The option to try non-traditional activities like hiking or yoga, youth said, would also go a long way in encouraging healthy living.

Additionally, adolescents highlighted a desire to organize their own recreational initiatives. Youth report that such opportunities are valuable on two fronts: the youth organizers develop a range of valuable competencies (for example, self-efficacy, building relationships); and participants profit from their exposure to positive youth role models in a constructive setting.



Supporting youth development: developmental maps

About the youth developmental maps

An easy to use reference

In order to present the complexities of youth development in a clear and compact form, and provide you with a practical and convenient working tool, the developmental events described earlier in this section are summarized in the youth development “maps” below.

Maps are provided to describe predictable development events for youth who are in:

- Early adolescence (12–14 years)
- Adolescence (13–19 years)
- Early adulthood (17–25 years)

Maps are organized across four developmental domains

The developmental maps are organized by developmental domain, and present:

- Cognitive development (brain-based development, reasoning skills)
- Emotional development (experiencing emotions, self-regulation, empathy)
- Social development (identity, relationships with peers, romantic partners and family)
- Physical development (physical activity, growth and physical development, body image and nutrition)

As noted earlier in this section, it is important to recognize that these domains are interconnected, and that maturation always takes place as part of the whole.

Events are “stage” rather than “age” dependent

While developmental events are also categorized into the age ranges in which they generally occur, it is important to recognize that the maps represent a sequence of developmental events more than the specific ages at which they occur. Many aspects of youth development are independent of age because they depend on exposure to opportunities and experiences. As a result, there are large individual differences in the ages at which developmental events in adolescence and early adulthood occur.

Build on these ideas

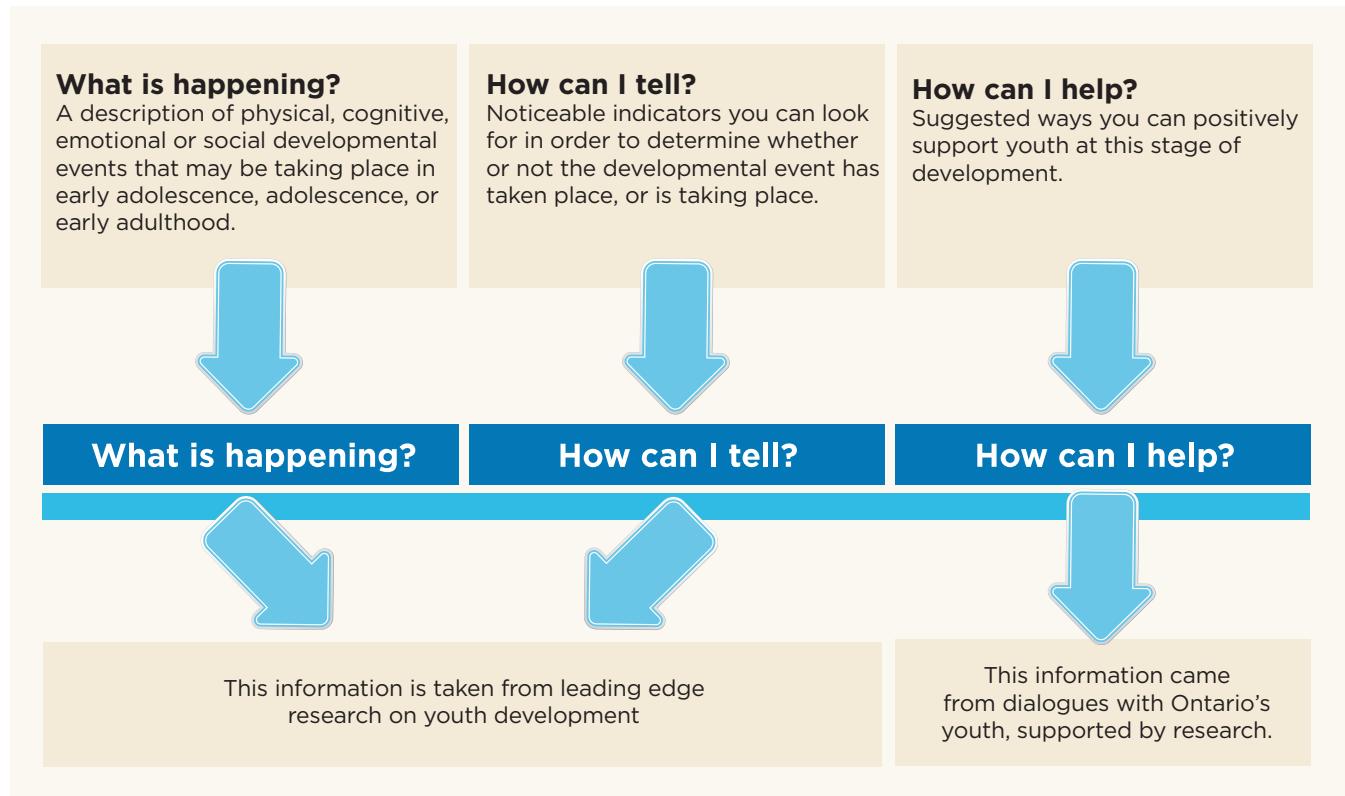
The examples presented in the developmental maps are suggestions—there are a variety of ways to support youth through these developmental stages. You know the youth you support best, so personalize the opportunities you provide for youth to meet their needs by building on these examples. Engage the youth you support to see if these ideas will work for them and come to new suggestions together.

Think creatively about how to incorporate this into your work

Information on how to best support positive youth development came from youth. As a result, youth focused on their daily interactions (for example, parents/caregivers, teachers, coaches). How often, and in what context, adult allies interact with youth differs, so regardless of the nature of your involvement in supporting youth—daily, periodically or directly—think about ways to take this advice from young people and include it in your work with youth. For those who support youth less frequently or indirectly (for example, governments, community planning tables), think about how these supports can be incorporated into the work that you do to support youth.

How the maps are organized

The maps are consistently organized across three columns, and are designed to answer three corresponding key questions you may have about key developmental events:



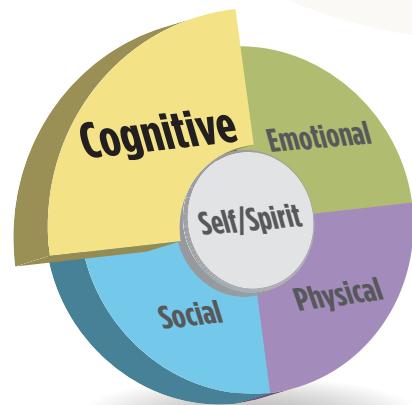
What youth want you to know: five key themes

1. **Be supportive.** Guide, don't dictate. Youth want information so they can make their own decisions
2. **Be patient and available.** Don't be discouraged if your first offer of support is turned down as youth will often come around when they feel up to it and the time is right
3. **Be open.** When they come to you, listen, listen, listen!
4. **Be understanding.** Youth learn and grow through failure and mistakes—the important issue is how youth and their support systems respond to setbacks
5. **Be empathetic.** Don't belittle the feelings of youth or be patronizing—"my feelings are real and important, even if whatever I'm going through doesn't seem like a big deal to you, it is to me right now"

In your involvement with youth—direct or indirect—**be deliberate and purposeful** in your actions. Every interaction with youth provides an opportunity to support their development. Supporting positive development doesn't necessarily require its own program or agenda. It's about what we do everyday—make every interaction matter.

Early Adolescence

(12–14 years)



Cognitive development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
B R A I N - B A S E D D E V E L O P M E N T		
The brain functions more efficiently	Can learn and grasp new concepts and interpret complex information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth learn through experience. Activities that engage the senses (for example, field trips, games or role-playing) are enjoyable and are also powerful learning tools Support participation in activities that require thinking about multiple things at the same time (for example, learning to juggle, playing a musical instrument or throwing a ball with your non-dominant hand) Introduce challenges that require complex thinking skills (such as building a model bridge structure out of miscellaneous items, including youth in organizing events) Encourage sports and exercise activities to help improve memory and attention skills Encourage continued practice in a range of activities that take advantage of and reinforce the ability to learn new information more quickly and accurately
The brain's processing speed increases	Can learn new information more quickly	
Distinctions about risks and rewards begin to emerge	<p>Eager to try a range of new activities</p> <p>May engage in behaviours that are potentially dangerous or harmful (such as staying out past curfew) with seemingly little regard for potential consequences</p> <p>May be drawn to thrill-seeking and risk-taking activities (for example, cliff jumping, roller coasters)</p> <p>May begin to improve ability to assess risk versus reward</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage youth to take safe risks by providing opportunities to participate in supervised activities that are also thrilling (for example, skateboarding) Help identify potential consequences of risky behaviour by asking questions like: <i>"What do you think could go right?"</i>, <i>"What could go wrong?"</i> or <i>"How could this affect your future?"</i> Provide or connect youth to sources of information (for example, family physician, online resources, someone with related experience) Provide supervision, advice, tools and information to encourage safety and preparedness (such as protective equipment, a cell phone, or a map) Lead by example—youth at this stage look up to older youth and adults—and model sound decision making (for example, by wearing a bike helmet or dealing rationally with conflicts)

Cognitive development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
BRAIN - BASED DEVELOPMENT		
Distinctions about risks and rewards begin to emerge (continued)	<p>Becoming more sensitive to pleasure and rewards such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having fun with friends • getting paid to do chores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support in a “non-judgemental” way when dealing with the consequences of risky or harmful decisions • When helping a young adolescent make decisions, emphasize the rewarding aspects and positive alternatives rather than the potential consequences
DEVELOPMENT OF REASONING SKILLS		
Capacity for abstract thought increases	<p>Can generalize abstract rules from concrete examples (for example, learns that practice can be beneficial to improve performance at sports and can also be applied to activities outside of sports)</p> <p>Can consider what might happen in hypothetical as well as in real life situations (for example, can describe what might happen if all the snow in the world melted)</p> <p>Can formulate and test hypotheses in order to draw conclusions (for example, “I’m going to try a new route to school because I think that it will get me there faster”)</p> <p>Can suspend beliefs about the real world to consider the structure of an argument</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage activities that allow youth to organize abstract ideas and draw reasoned conclusions (for example, developing a “pros and cons” list) • When an adolescent is learning a new concept, have them describe their thought process out loud. Probe their depth of understanding by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Suggesting alternative explanations (“But have you thought about...?”) - Posing alternative perspectives (“Would you think the same way if you were...?”) - Asking youth to generate analogies, comparisons and connections (“Do you think that’s similar to...?”) • Create opportunities for debate and have debaters argue for positions that they may not personally support (for example, the benefits of shortening the summer holidays) • Present riddles and logic puzzles • Promote perspective-taking (for example, introduce diverse perspectives, concepts, and lifestyles through movies, books, biographies, case studies and music)
Logical thinking skills expand	<p>Can understand logical principles and begin to engage in logical thinking (for example, developing strategies when playing a game that considers how other players might respond to their moves)</p>	

Cognitive development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
DEVELOPMENT OF REASONING SKILLS		
Working memory improves	Can hold multiple dimensions of a problem in mind at one time (for example, can think about the horizontal effects: if I do 'X' it will impact 'Y' which will impact 'Z')	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflect with a young person about the day's events and lessons learned Provide youth with different perspectives on how the facts can be interpreted, and explain in relatable terms why those perspectives are valid
Beliefs about knowledge and “facts” become more sophisticated	<p>Notices that individuals exposed to the same facts can draw different conclusions, calling into question the absolute nature of “facts”</p> <p>Begins to understand that the “right answer” sometimes depends on a variety of factors</p>	



Emotional development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
CHANGES IN THE EXPERIENCE OF EMOTIONS		
Emotional brain centres are developing earlier than other brain regions	<p>Experiences emotions more intensely</p> <p>May be more emotional, have mood swings and have more intense responses to issues or events such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> having a fight with a friend winning or losing at sports experiencing discipline, rules or fighting with parents <p>These intense emotions can be acted out in erratic, dramatic, or challenging behaviour (for example, acting aggressively)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Much of this emotion is biological—try not to take it personally Acknowledge that emotional “ups and downs” related to conflicts with friends or romantic partners are real and intense Offer to provide constructive help and support to youth when they are engaging in tasks that can be emotionally challenging (for example, experiencing conflict with a peer, when writing a resume) Affectionate, caring adult influences can support positive and healthy management of negative emotions. Be a supportive influence, or incorporate opportunities for youth to access supportive role models. Some ways to do this include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Validating feelings through comments such as “I understand how that could really upset you” or “That would have affected me too”

Emotional development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
CHANGES IN THE EXPERIENCE OF EMOTIONS		
Emotional brain centres are developing earlier than other brain regions (continued)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acknowledging that they are upset and that they are not alone - Talking about your own related past experiences and how you managed the situation - Being a role model and demonstrating how to manage emotions and stay calm - When developing new programs or services, think about how to connect youth to positive adult influences
DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-REGULATION		
Emotional self-control increases	<p>Becoming able to read and understand other people's displays of emotion</p> <p>May not yet be able to properly identify facial expressions of fear (which can sometimes be confused with anger)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly communicate feelings through words, as well as through body language
Motivation becomes more internalized	<p>Begins to do things that are not necessarily enjoyable because it is personally important (for example, doing homework not only to avoid punishment, but because getting good grades is important to future success)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities to encourage the development of strategies to control and address emotions, such as: reframing the situation; refocusing on something happier; trying to think positively about the issue; putting things into perspective; and accepting the situation • Some strategies include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing space to be alone, relax and reflect - Taking time to talk, listen and appreciate their feelings - Doing something productive (for example, exercise, supportive humour or art) • Provide or connect youth to information about stress reduction techniques like meditation and relaxation training, which can help young people manage emotional fluctuations and stress • Provide positive feedback for everyday accomplishments • Create opportunities for discussion about personal ambitions and challenges. Young people tend to stick with challenging tasks when members of their support system demonstrate interest in them • Encourage exploration of things that youth enjoy to learn through experience what motivates them
DEVELOPMENT OF EMPATHY		
Empathy for others begins to increase	<p>Begins to feel empathy for others as a result of understanding their perspectives and having concern for their feelings (however, not yet likely to experience personal distress about others' predicaments)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote perspective-taking to encourage the development of empathy and recognizing the difference between a youth's own situation and that of other people (for example, someone from a different cultural background) • Encourage youth to take an interest in other people and/or topics (for example, volunteering with a community organization) • Introduce diverse perspectives, concepts and lifestyles through movies, books, biographies, case studies and music



Social development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
DEVELOPMENT OF IDENTITY		
Development of personal identity begins	<p>May be aware of having choices to make about identity, and may begin exploring those choices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep an open mind while youth are exploring different selves and avoid passing judgement without first talking with the youth about the reasons behind their choices Provide support, warmth, encouragement and companionship as youth begin to explore their identity Encourage youth to consider options that make them happy, rather than trying to satisfy others
Social group identity begins to emerge	<p>May begin to identify with one or more social groups they belong to (for example, a sports team, cultural groups and communities, gangs)</p> <p>Placing more importance on “fitting in” or acceptance into their own social groups</p> <p>Increasing social group-esteem (showing pride in belonging to a social group)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support young people's exploration of cultural traditions to help them develop their sense of cultural social group identity and social group-esteem. This could include participating in local cultural events (for example, pow-wows, town fairs) or larger events (for example, local Caribbean Carnival) Consider opportunities for young people to socialize and learn from those of similar heritage, ethnicity, race, language or sexual orientation Ensure that youth have opportunities to learn about important social group customs, cultural practices and history (for example, Aboriginal children and youth can learn about the clan system through the telling of stories)
Gender identity and roles become more important	<p>Gender identity becoming more important and stereotypes about gender roles are intensifying</p> <p>May begin to conform to activities and behaviours considered typical for their identified gender</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage and create open communication that allows youth to ask questions Don't make assumptions about gender identity Be aware of using gender stereotypes
Spiritual identity may begin to emerge	<p>May adopt the spiritual traditions of their community, or explore alternative spiritual traditions, and begin to see this as a part of their own personal identity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support young people's exploration of spiritual and religious traditions to help them develop their sense of spiritual identity (for example, smudging ceremony, charitable activity, trip to the Holy Land) Acknowledge and show sensitivity to a young person's spiritual side as you interact or develop supports for them

Social development

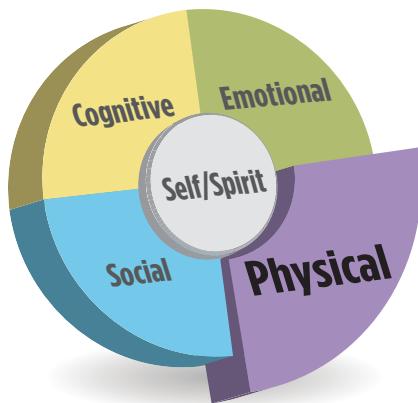
What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
DEVELOPMENT OF IDENTITY		
Self-concepts become more abstract	<p>Becoming less likely to describe themselves in concrete terms (I live in Canada, I have a dog)</p> <p>Becoming more likely to think of themselves in abstract terms (I am a leader, I am ambitious, I am friendly)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage youth in reflection about self-identity and motivate youth to think about "who they are" and "who they want to be"
Self-appraisal skills improve	<p>Able to use outcomes and feedback more accurately to gauge their ability levels (for example, setting aside enough time to study to get a good grade on a test or eating well, resting and training to do well in a race)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide encouragement and advice to youth before they undertake a challenging task to better prepare them and to help them manage their expectations Highlight a young person's personal strengths (for example, <i>"You are a very caring friend"</i> or <i>"You have always been a very creative person"</i>) Support youth to reflect on their abilities by asking questions, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"What did you learn about your abilities?"</i> <i>"What is one thing you would do the same or change the next time around?"</i>
Self-efficacy decreases	<p>May become less certain of their ability to achieve goals (especially among girls)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide guidance, support and advice to keep youth motivated and on task Provide academic guidance and opportunities to explore interests and identify talents Model a confident understanding of your own skills and capabilities—youth learn to be self-efficacious from the role models in their lives Provide realistic challenges for youth to tackle, and provide support and counselling through these challenges Help youth set goals and support their attempts to reach those goals (for example, helping them take it "one step at a time")
Self-esteem declines and becomes less stable	<p>Beginning to display less self-confidence and have more negative thoughts about themselves</p> <p>May easily have self-esteem disrupted by events that appear to be minor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer assistance if you feel the young person is becoming distraught, upset, or fatigued—ensure that the young person maintains their sense of leadership in working through the task to encourage a sense of completion and self-efficacy Remember that peer-led initiatives (such as peer mentoring and peer mediation) can and improve levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy Demonstrate confidence in youth's abilities and provide support (for example, by including them in decision making, by giving them more responsibility)
DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS, ROMANTIC PARTNERS AND FAMILY		
Perspective-taking emerges	<p>Able to understand that other people have different points of view</p> <p>Able to imagine situations from someone else's perspective</p> <p>Able to step outside of situations and imagine an observer's perspective</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce diverse perspectives, concepts, and lifestyles through movies, books, biographies, case studies and music

Social development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS, ROMANTIC PARTNERS AND FAMILY		
Input from peers becomes more important	<p>Beginning to compare themselves (their abilities, attractiveness, intelligence, popularity) with peers</p> <p>May become more self-conscious, especially in the presence of peers</p> <p>May become more vulnerable to peer pressure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage participation in positive opportunities for identity formation such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - community organizations - mentoring programs - youth groups - neighbourhood associations - physical activities - volunteer opportunities
Peer relationships become more important	<p>The peer group is expanding and becoming more important</p> <p>Spending more time with friends</p> <p>Contacting friends frequently through phone calls, texting, emailing and chatting online</p> <p>Friendships are focusing on common activities and sharing of confidences</p> <p>May begin to expect loyalty and trust in friendships</p> <p>Less competition and more sharing with friends than in childhood</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the participation of young people in organized events, clubs and teams so that they can identify their talents and potential career paths, and develop skills and moral reasoning Encourage participation in a variety of social activities including new and less direct forms of social interaction (for example, blogging)
Romantic relationships may emerge	<p>Interest in romantic relationships is emerging</p> <p>Early awareness of sexual orientation emerging, but often remains private</p> <p>Beginning to form mixed-gender friendship groups and engaging in mixed-gender social activities outside of school</p> <p>LGBTQQ youth may begin early same-sex interest and may feel some apprehension or anxiety regarding same-sex attractions (due to social stigma)</p> <p>Closeness achieved by spending time with romantically attractive peers together in a group setting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide or connect youth to sources of information (for example, workshops held by public health clinics or government/health agency websites) Facilitate participation in supervised, mixed gender activities (for example, a teen dance, a pool party). Parents and caregivers indirectly influence their children's early romantic development by channelling their social activities in age-appropriate ways Provide opportunities for discussion about relationships and sexuality that is open and non-judgmental. In the absence of accurate biological information about how the body works, youth often create their own explanations or consult their friends

Social development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS, ROMANTIC PARTNERS AND FAMILY		
Family relationships begin to evolve	<p>Interest in independence from the family is emerging</p> <p>Conflicts over minor matters may become more frequent</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support youth involvement in structured settings outside of the family to provide an opportunity for self-concepts and identity to emerge through the association of like-minded peer groups and their supporting influence Maintain family connections by establishing routines that bring the family together (such as family meals, participating in activities together)
Moral reasoning is based on social approval	<p>Makes moral decisions on the basis of a desire to win social approval so others will think well of them (I will do the right thing so that other people will think I'm a good person)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be conscientious of your own moral stances—youth replicate styles of moral reasoning in role models Encourage peer interactions (for example, challenging conversations about relevant issues, in which conflicting views are raised and resolved) to stimulate the development of higher forms of moral reasoning Discuss moral dilemmas (for example, discrimination against minorities and social class bias) Provide opportunities for youth to actively participate in deciding between conflicting alternatives or moral dilemmas



Physical development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
CHANGES IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY		
Participation in physical activity is changing	<p>Levels of physical activity begin declining, time spent playing sports and exercising decreasing</p> <p>Becoming aware of personal physical strengths and limitations</p> <p>Able to demonstrate accuracy, consistency and proficiency in activities</p> <p>Beginning to want to gain competence in particular interest activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote or create safe environments where youth can feel comfortable trying new things (for example, without a fear of being teased for failure) Provide access to a variety of opportunities for physical activities that reflect the youth's needs, skill-level, ability and commitment levels Acknowledge that motivation is external at this stage, consider providing rewards and incentives to motivate participation (for example, hosting ceremonies to recognize the accomplishments or participation of youth in an activity)

Physical development

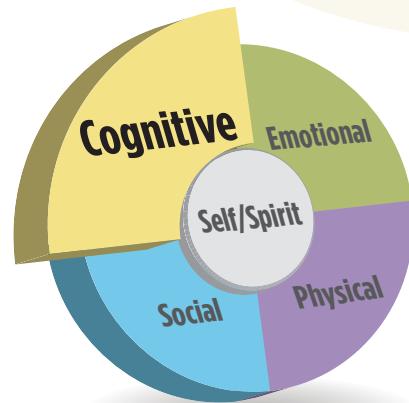
What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
CHANGES IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY		
Participation in physical activity is changing (continued)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support access to or provide fun, positive and encouraging experiences that can impact future healthy active lifestyle habits. Enjoyment is critical to physical development at this stage Provide access to activities that take into consideration barriers such as cost, equipment and transportation (for example, highlight low-cost options such as skateboarding, basketball, soccer, offer opportunities in central locations)
CHANGES IN GROWTH AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT		
Physical fitness capacities are changing	<p>Increasing cardiovascular endurance, naturally more able to sustain vigorous activity levels (for example, running)</p> <p>Natural levels of muscular strength (for example, the amount of weight that can be lifted) and endurance (for example, the number of push-ups they can do) start to reach a peak for females around age 12</p> <p>Males will experience a rapid increase in muscular strength and endurance during puberty</p> <p>Without training, flexibility begins to decline (for example, gradually less able to sit with legs extended and reach beyond toes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage youth to learn about their bodies and abilities through experiences with different activities Provide instruction and access to a safe environment where youth can learn about their changing abilities and establish their own healthy limits Activities should teach youth how to avoid and deal with injury
Puberty produces a variety of physical changes	<p>Physical changes occurring, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> height and weight change a growth spurt (more typically for females than males) increased perspiration oilier hair and skin (which often results in acne) growth of body hair growth of primary and secondary sexual characteristics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage and create open communication that is two directional and allows youth to ask questions and be provided with age-appropriate information about their changing bodies and emerging sexual characteristics. This can help youth to develop healthy attitudes about their own bodies and sexuality Provide or connect youth to information from a range of reliable sources (for example, pamphlets, medical professionals and websites) Normalize changes where possible (for example, remind youth that acne occurs for almost everyone at some point) Share your own experiences (for example, if you had experience being shorter or taller than your classmates) Establish routines and provide information about hygiene as youth develop (for example, a reminder about the need for deodorant)

Physical development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
CHANGES IN GROWTH AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT		
Hormonal changes cause sleep and waking cycles to change	<p>A natural tendency to stay awake and alert later at night, and have difficulty waking in the morning</p> <p>May become sleep deprived, which can contribute to moodiness and irritability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule activities and programs at times that are comfortable for a later sleep cycle (for example, don't hold events first thing in the morning) Help youth develop strategies and routines for going to sleep and waking up at appropriate times (for example, turning off the computer one hour before bed) Encourage youth to get a minimum of 9–9.5 hours of sleep every night
BODY IMAGE AND NUTRITION		
A sense of body image begins to develop	<p>For females, the onset of puberty results in an increase in body fat, which may have an impact on body image</p> <p>Makes more social comparisons about body type</p> <p>Dissatisfaction with body types may begin to appear (negative perceptions of body image can vary for youth from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware that youth may have an increased sensitivity to comments about body shape that were not present in childhood Encourage youth to focus on the parts of their bodies that they like and can feel confident about Role model a healthy attitude about body image (for example, avoid disparaging remarks about your own body) Share your own experiences managing low body image (for example, if you were shorter than others in your class but eventually caught up in size) Help youth to refocus on what they can do and who they are—not just how they look
Interest in nutrition and healthy eating is increasing	<p>May begin to express interest in managing own diet (for example, by making own meals)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information about nutrition, which plays an important role in development (for example, check out Canada's Food Guide) Continue to reinforce healthy eating habits and routines (for example, involve youth directly in grocery shopping or meal preparation) Teach youth to manage specific individual dietary requirements, if needed (for example, if an allergy exists) Be a role model and lead by example (such as cooking healthy food, providing healthy options in youth spaces) Provide information about nutrition and being healthy alongside sport and physical activity

Adolescence

(13–19 years)



Cognitive development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
B R A I N - B A S E D D E V E L O P M E N T		
Capacity for complex thought, planning and impulse control increases	<p>Begins to show improved abilities to organize thoughts, plan ahead, control impulses and direct attention to the task at hand while ignoring distractions (for example, a young person of this age may begin to rely on organizing school commitments in an agenda)</p> <p>May also be more able to postpone enjoyable social activities in order to keep commitments to school or work</p> <p>Begins to rely less on external forms of regulation (such as parental rules) and is more able to regulate behaviour independently</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide help, support and advice to keep youth motivated and on task Invite youth to take a leadership role in carrying out tasks Introduce challenges that require problem-solving skills (for example, a scavenger hunt) Provide opportunities for youth to plan and organize activities and events (for example, planning a bake sale, dance or group outing). Older adolescents are able to tackle these initiatives with progressively less direct support
The brain becomes more specialized and efficient	<p>Ability to process complicated information and learn new concepts is growing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage exercises that allow youth to organize abstract ideas and draw reasoned conclusions (for example, developing a “pros and cons” list) Inspire youth to try new experiences (for example, going to a museum, producing music, trying a new sport, participating on a committee) Teach youth to utilize the technology around them to stay organized and develop transferable skills for employment (for example, using the calendar option on a cell phone to stay organized and meet deadlines)

Cognitive development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
B R A I N - B A S E D D E V E L O P M E N T		
The ability to assess risks and rewards improves	<p>Ability to effectively assess risk versus reward is improving</p> <p>May engage in thrill-seeking and risk-taking behaviour such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extreme sports (such as sky diving, dirt biking) • drinking alcohol or smoking <p>May be especially motivated by risks and thrills when in the presence of peers</p> <p>Sensitivity to pleasure and reward is further increasing, particularly in the presence of peers</p> <p>May be more sensitive to criticism and peer rejections</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain open communication and promote honesty and mutual respect • Talk about how to assess risk using personal examples • Share your own experiences with risky situations (reflecting on your own good and bad choices) to demonstrate trust and respect • Encourage youth to take small steps and practice • Encourage youth to take positive and reasonable risks (for example, applying for a job) and participate in activities that are adventurous but safe (such as travel or organized sports) • Participate in a new, thrilling activity alongside youth • Demonstrate interest in youth's activities (this can help them feel comfortable approaching you for information or guidance) • Provide guidance and access to tools (for example, protective equipment, a cell phone or a map) and information from a variety of sources (for example, online forums, others who have had similar experiences) to help them learn and be prepared • Encourage youth to make decisions in a calm frame of mind and be realistic about their personal abilities and potential consequences • Encourage and reward taking safe, small steps (for example, practice) • Encourage relationships that are positive and supportive to improve peer-support for pro-social behaviour (acting in ways that benefit others) • As youth age, encourage them to stop and think about potential consequences of their behaviour. Motivations to avoid negative consequences are becoming stronger at this stage and may play a larger role in decision making
The ability to control impulses and regulate behaviour improves	<p>Under conditions of low emotional stress, can anticipate consequences, control impulses, and act on rational choices</p> <p>Under conditions of emotional or physical stress (for example, break-up, lack of sleep) the capacity to make sound decisions is diminished</p> <p>Is able to better organize and plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be patient and compassionate and acknowledge sources of stress (such as a recent argument with friend) that may be influencing a young person's emotions and behaviour • If it appears that an adolescent is under emotional stress, give them time and space to de-escalate before introducing additional demands • Help youth appraise their emotional state by posing questions like: <i>"Are you feeling calm enough to make such an important decision?"</i>; or <i>"Maybe you should sleep on it?"</i>

Cognitive development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
DEVELOPMENT OF REASONING SKILLS		
Abstract thought matures	Becomes more able to think abstractly and hypothetically Begins to suspend beliefs in areas of expertise Develops systems for organizing abstract ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage exercises that allow youth to organize abstract ideas and draw reasoned conclusions (for example, developing a “pros and cons” list) Provide experiences to train and improve skills using spatial working memory (for example, play a memory game) Promote perspective-taking (for example, have youth describe the major changes they would implement if given the opportunity to act as mayor for the day) Introduce diverse perspectives, concepts, and lifestyles through movies, books, biographies, guest speakers, case studies and music Stimulate debate and discussion on contentious issues (for example, conflicts, modern medicine, poverty, justice) Encourage youth to “probe a little further” into the sources of their beliefs, opinions, motivations, and aspirations (go beyond <i>what?</i> and ask <i>why?</i>) Offer counter-arguments to stimulate further reflection
Logical thinking skills improve	More able to think about possibilities, form and evaluate hypotheses, deduce and induce principles that guide decision making	
Working memory continues to improve	Improving ability to manipulate information held in working memory (for example, solving multi-step math problems or planning and then packing for a trip) Better able to maintain, attend to, update and evaluate information	
Beliefs about knowledge and facts continue to evolve	May adopt a sceptical approach to knowledge in some domains Stops believing that all “facts” exist independently of people’s perspectives Begins to question universal social “facts” (for example, speeding while driving is wrong) and see that some truths are relative (what if the driver is a doctor on their way to an emergency?) Begins to think about and question facts and ideas and is sceptical about answers May insist that every answer is as good as any other answer Accepts an authority figure’s position (dogma) in areas of uncertainty	



Emotional development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
CHANGES IN THE EXPERIENCE OF EMOTIONS		
Emotional responses increase	<p>Continuing to experience heightened emotions</p> <p>Emotional information becoming more important and meaningful</p> <p>May be experiencing mood fluctuations</p> <p>May be more vulnerable to stress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spend time listening, talking and practicing healthy communication (for example, staying calm) Provide youth with the opportunity for their own time and space to reflect and relax in a way they choose (for example, music, reading, drawing, writing) Provide motivation, support and encouragement through difficult times Create/promote opportunities to help youth redirect their energy to something productive (such as exercising or helping to organize and run an event)
Emotional self-regulation matures	<p>Becomes better able to use thinking strategies for emotional self-regulation (for example, trying to put a positive spin on things, focusing thoughts on things that are more happy and pleasant, planning and developing solutions, or accepting the situation)</p> <p>Begins to believe in their ability to regulate emotions and becomes aware of the personal strategies that work best</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide support on how to cope with stress. Stress reduction techniques like relaxation and meditation can help to improve mental health and also immune function Talk openly about mental health issues. If you are concerned about a young person's emotional stability, connect him or her with available supports and information (such as Kids Help Phone, family physician, websites, an appropriate mentor or counsellor)—the negative stigma around mental health often discourages people from seeking support
The ability to read body language further improves	<p>Is better able to read and understand other people's emotions, including displays of fear and anger</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to clearly communicate feelings through words as well as through body language
Motivation is increasingly internalized	<p>Demonstrates ability to set their own goals and stay on task with less prompting from others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide encouragement. Youth of this age want to know that parents, teachers and other role models are interested in their activities and ambitions but still need the freedom to set and achieve goals on their own If it appears a youth is struggling, offer to help them get started but don't complete whole task for them

Emotional development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
DEVELOPMENT OF EMPATHY		
Empathy continues to develop	Able to understand information from differing perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote perspective-taking to encourage the development of empathy, and help a youth recognize the difference between their own experience and that of others (for example, someone from a different cultural background) Encourage youth to spend time focusing on other people and/or topics (for example, volunteering with a community organization)



Social development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
DEVELOPMENT OF IDENTITY		
Identity is actively explored	Actively exploring identity options (for example, questioning parents' values, and seeking information about potential career choices)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide structured settings outside of the family (for example, at a youth centre, youth council or school club) so that self concepts and identity can emerge through the association of positive like-minded peer groups and their supporting influence
Gender role flexibility increases	Begins to become less rigid about gender stereotypes as gender identity continues to evolve (for example, may be more empathetic to gender identity of others; may begin to express gender identity through clothing and image)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A warm, supportive relationship with a caregiver can allow young people to explore their varied identities without fear of being judged or criticized
Social group-esteem continues to increase	May seek information about their social groups by reading, talking with other group members, learning cultural practices, or attending cultural events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the exploration of cultural and social group traditions to help youth develop their sense of cultural identity and social group-esteem
Exploration of spiritual beliefs may increase	Begins to question and explore the foundations of spiritual beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If appropriate, support the exploration of religious/spiritual traditions to help develop a sense of spiritual identity

Social development

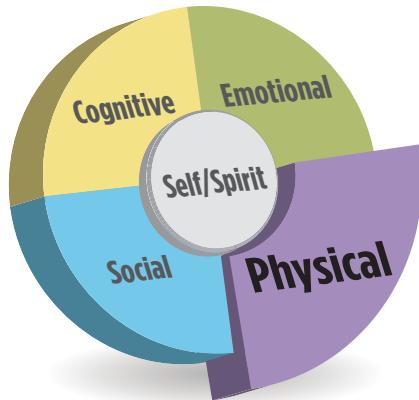
What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
DEVELOPMENT OF IDENTITY		
The concept of self becomes more complex and situation-dependent	<p>May start to notice that different contexts affect how they behave and perceive themselves (for example, I am deferential with my parents, a leader among friends and shy in class)</p> <p>May notice conflicts between the way they think of themselves and behave in different contexts (for example, I am quiet in class but vocal at soccer practice)</p> <p>May struggle with diverging self-concepts and express anxiety or stress about this internal conflict</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain to youth that it is okay to have diverging views about who they are Encourage youth to focus on their more positive self concepts
Self-appraisal skills improve	<p>Demonstrates ability to think critically and be reflective (for example, able to see one's self from other people's [peers, parents] perspective)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage self-reflective activities (such as Career Trees as ways to begin considering potential career paths) Encourage youth to seek leadership roles (for example, through event organization) but to also understand that leadership requires cooperation and partnership with adult allies and other peers Be relatable—when helping set attainable goals relate to your own personal limitations and/or challenges Provide constructive feedback to encourage the development of self-appraisal skills
Self-efficacy increases	<p>Beliefs about the ability to achieve goals grows stronger</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage youth to create a list of short-term goals to foster an increased sense of accomplishment Model a confident understanding of your own skills and capabilities. Youth learn to be self-efficacious from the role models in their lives Promote the setting of goals and support attempts to reach those goals Provide realistic challenges for youth to tackle and provide support and counselling through these challenges Encourage youth to seek leadership roles in executing a challenging task (for example, family activities, social events, social justice projects) but to also understand that leadership requires cooperation and partnership with adult allies and other peers
Self-esteem continues to decline	<p>Begins to feel less self-confident and more negative about themselves than they did in childhood or early adolescence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celebrate achievements and encourage youth to pursue interests, talents and hobbies Consistently demonstrate concern about a young person's well-being by making time to discuss successes and issues that arise Remember that having someone available who is willing to listen is very important to young people who are experiencing periods of stress

Social development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS, ROMANTIC PARTNERS AND FAMILY		
Understanding of varied perspectives deepens	<p>Begins to understand the effect of social roles in perspective-taking</p> <p>Begins to understand that “neutral” perspectives on a situation are rare, and that everyone’s perspective is coloured by their context, beliefs and background</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage understanding of the experiences, challenges, and issues of others
Peer relationships are increasingly important	<p>Continues to engage in friendships that become closer and more intimate, and involve sharing of confidences and mutual support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage relationships that are positive and supportive, particularly in difficult times
Early romantic relationships emerge	<p>Begins dating in groups (forming couples but spending time together within the context of larger groups)</p> <p>Bases romantic relationships, either with the same or opposite sex, not necessarily on emotional intimacy but more often on fun and camaraderie</p> <p>Some expressions of emotional intimacy beginning to emerge</p> <p>May acknowledge same-sex romantic interests to trusted friends or family members</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide support and help guide decisions with romantic partners rather than trying to decide on behalf of youth Be aware of factors that may influence decisions about relationships (such as religion, media, past experiences, family and friends) when seeking to understand the choices being made by youth Stay connected and approachable, providing opportunities for questions and help when needed
Family relationships continue to evolve	<p>May experience intensified disagreements with parents as their sense of individuality and independence continues to develop but occurrences will begin to decline</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give youth space and time to reflect about disagreements Listen to the problem, help them to analyze it and propose potential solutions
Moral reasoning shifts to a focus on maintaining order	<p>Makes moral decisions on the basis of a “law and order” orientation</p> <p>May feel the need to uphold laws in order to maintain order within the wider society</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be conscious of your own moral stances—youth will replicate styles of moral reasoning in role models Encourage peer interactions to stimulate the development of higher forms of moral reasoning (for example, interactions in which adolescents and young adults engage in challenging conversations on relevant issues where conflicting views are raised and discussed) to promote and facilitate perspective-taking Provide opportunities for active participation in deciding between conflicting alternatives or moral dilemmas to stimulate reasoning and problem-solving skills Expose youth to moral dilemmas concerning discrimination, oppression and bias

Social development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS, ROMANTIC PARTNERS AND FAMILY		
Self-sufficiency increases	<p>Demonstrates desire for independence in decisions about relationships and activities</p> <p>Begins to gain financial independence through employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide advice and share personal experiences related to gaining independence (for example, financial skills)



Physical development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY		
Participation in physical activity is changing	<p>May engage in less physical activity</p> <p>May begin to focus on a few physical activities or specialize in a few sports</p> <p>Choosing activities that reflect personal interests, abilities, ambitions, availability, and past experiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider barriers to participation such as cost, equipment and transportation (for example, highlight low-cost options such as skateboarding, soccer, offer opportunities in central locations to ease transportation issues) Motivation at this stage is beginning to become more internalized. Develop programs and activities that focus on helping youth develop knowledge, skills and attitudes for a healthy active lifestyle and promote the social and mental benefits of sports and leisure (for example, highlight the fact that sports like swimming can lead to a job as a lifeguard) Work with youth to set realistic goals Remind youth to balance their priorities (for example, school, work, social life) Enjoyment is still critical to physical development at this stage—providing positive experiences can impact future healthy lifestyle habits As youth age, provide more opportunities for empowerment and involvement in designing and implementing programs and activities so that they feel ownership and have a role in decision making

Physical development

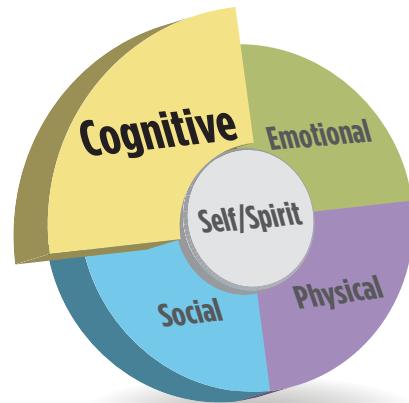
What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY		
Participation in physical activity is changing (continued)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that youth are participating in activities in a safe and secure space. Provide opportunities that allow youth to feel comfortable trying new things (for example, without a fear of being teased for failure) Provide opportunities for practice, proper instruction and encouragement—these elements are especially important during this stage of development to help ensure that youth can develop both skills and competence Encouraging participation in whichever physical activities appeal to the youth (for example, some youth who are less interested in traditional activities may want to try extreme sports while others may prefer yoga or hiking)
GROWTH AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT		
Puberty produces further physical changes	<p>Males may experience a growth spurt</p> <p>For females growth may begin to slow down after the first menstrual period (most females reach adult height before the end of adolescence)</p> <p>Sexual development beginning to mature</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage and create open communication that is two-directional and allows youth to ask questions and be provided with age-appropriate information about their changing bodies and emerging sexual characteristics (this can help youth to develop healthy attitudes about their own bodies and sexuality and can help to promote safe sexual choices) Provide access to information from a range of reliable sources (for example, pamphlets, medical professionals and websites) Normalize changes where possible (for example, remind youth that acne occurs for almost everyone at some point) Share your own experiences (for example, the first time you shaved) Provide routine reminders and information about hygiene as youth develop (for example, a reminder about the need for deodorant)

Physical development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
GROWTH AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT		
Hormonal changes cause sleep and waking cycles to continue to shift	Falling asleep even later at night and waking up even later in the morning (may result in sleep deprivation and contribute to moodiness and irritability)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider planning activities and programs at times that are comfortable for a later sleep cycle (for example, don't hold events first thing in the morning) Encourage the ongoing use of strategies and routines (for example, turning off the computer one hour before bed) to help youth wake up and go to sleep at appropriate times
BODY IMAGE AND NUTRITION		
Development of body image is ongoing	<p>Males: may be maintaining more positive body image than females</p> <p>Females: may be dissatisfied with parts of their body</p> <p>Transgendered youth may struggle with body image</p> <p>Negative perceptions of body image vary for youth from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds</p> <p>More commonly making social comparisons about body type (comparisons to unrealistic ideals shown in media can play a role in the development of this dissatisfaction)</p> <p>Placing greater importance on and forming opinions about style, clothing and appearance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware that youth may have an increased sensitivity to messages about their bodies Allow youth more independence in demonstrating their own style through clothing and decisions about appearance Encourage youth to focus on the parts of their bodies that they like and can feel confident about Lead by example—avoid making critical comments about your own body
Knowledge of nutrition and healthy eating expands	May be forming opinions about, and a desire for, independent control over eating and nutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow some independence around food preferences Remember that nutrition plays an important role in healthy development during this time. Provide information about nutrition (for example, check out Canada's Food Guide) Encourage healthy eating habits and routines (for example, involve youth directly in grocery shopping or meal preparation) Engage youth in conversations about healthy eating and be aware of dramatic changes in diets that may indicate eating disorders

Early Adulthood

(17–25 years)



Cognitive development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
B R A I N - B A S E D D E V E L O P M E N T		
Concentration, complex thought, planning and impulse control have matured	<p>Becoming more able to plan, anticipate consequences and make decisions</p> <p>Continuing to improve and refine precision and speed when performing complex tasks, with fewer errors</p> <p>Displaying more consistent and flexible use of these abilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model effective planning behaviour. If youth observe their adult ally setting goals, making plans, and achieving success, they will often emulate the behaviour Create opportunities for youth to plan larger-scale events Help young people to become financially independent by assisting them in preparing and following a budget Encourage a realistic understanding of personal abilities and skill sets Provide opportunities for independence and for leadership (summer jobs and volunteer opportunities as rewarding ways to gain these valuable experiences) Provide freedom for youth to make mistakes as this is an important aspect of learning. If a youth experiences a setback, support efforts to get back on track Provide guidance and knowledge while demonstrating trust and respect. Do not be surprised if a youth chooses not to follow your advice
Efficiency of brain functioning continues into adulthood	<p>Able to understand and interpret complex and abstract ideas (for example, able to think hypothetically and create a number of possible scenarios instead of limiting their thoughts to what is real)</p> <p>Able to learn new information quickly</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage youth to familiarize themselves with new ideas (for example, propose books, biographies, documentaries, movies and other resources that can lead to new discoveries)

Cognitive development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
BRAIN-BASED DEVELOPMENT		
The ability to assess risks and rewards increases	<p>More able to effectively assess risk versus reward</p> <p>May decrease thrill-seeking and risk-taking behaviour</p> <p>May be less sensitive to pleasure and reward</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain open communication and promote honesty and mutual respect Encourage youth to educate themselves about the potential outcomes or consequences of their actions Reinforce strategies for effective self-regulation (for example, encourage youth to stop and think before making decisions and engaging in risky behaviours) Demonstrate trust and respect for youth as they begin to make carefully considered decisions about activities they participate in Share your own experiences with risky situations (for example, by reflecting on your own good and bad choices) Show interest in the activities of youth (this can help them feel comfortable approaching you for information or guidance) Encourage youth to take positive and reasonable risks (for example, applying for a job) Provide guidance and access to tools (for example, protective equipment, a cell phone or a map) and information from a variety of sources (for example, online forums, others who have had similar experiences) to help them learn and be prepared Encourage relationships that are positive and supportive to improve peer support for pro-social behaviour
DEVELOPMENT OF REASONING SKILLS		
Abstract thought matures	Able to compare and contrast different theories and ideas to draw their own conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When a youth is learning a new theory (for example, supply and demand) have them walk you through their thought process. Probe their depth of understanding by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proposing alternative explanations (“But have you thought about...?”) - Posing alternative perspectives (“Would you think the same way if you were...?”) - Asking youth to generate analogies, comparisons and connections (“Do you think that’s similar to...?”)
Logical thinking matures	<p>Improving ability to think about possibilities, form and evaluate hypotheses, deduce and induce principles that serve to guide decision making</p> <p>Establishing abstraction and advanced reasoning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When a youth is learning a new theory (for example, supply and demand) have them walk you through their thought process. Probe their depth of understanding by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proposing alternative explanations (“But have you thought about...?”) - Posing alternative perspectives (“Would you think the same way if you were...?”) - Asking youth to generate analogies, comparisons and connections (“Do you think that’s similar to...?”)

Cognitive development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
DEVELOPMENT OF REASONING SKILLS		
Working memory matures	Further refining the flexible use of working memory (for example, when solving a puzzle, can keep track of the solutions that have already been tried)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce diverse perspectives, concepts, and lifestyles through movies, books, biographies, case studies and music
Beliefs about knowledge are more sophisticated	<p>Acknowledges that truth, facts and ideas are often relative, and sees that some methods of evaluating truth are more reliable than others</p> <p>Able to think about knowledge as being constructed. (for example, being able to think critically and question how it is we come to know “X” is true)</p> <p>May become frustrated with a lack of “right answers” to issues and questions</p> <p>Developing a mature understanding of the nature and limits of knowledge</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remember that even adults learn through experience and “doing” (for example, activities that engage the senses and allow learners to interact with the learning environment [such as travelling, volunteering, visiting art gallery] are powerful teaching tools) Guide youth to continually ask questions and seek information about all aspects of life Consider how games can be used to support problem solving and strategizing skills (for example, video games)



Emotional development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
CHANGES IN THE EXPERIENCE OF EMOTIONS		
Emotional responses are maturing and sensitivity to reward begins to decrease	Experiencing a decrease in mood fluctuations and becoming less emotionally reactive to situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize and support youth when they demonstrate greater ability to control, redirect or address their emotions in healthy ways (for example, staying calm, communicating effectively, meditating or exercising to reduce stress) Provide youth with the opportunity for their own time and space to reflect and relax in a way they choose (for example, music, reading, drawing, writing) Provide motivation, support and encouragement through difficult times

Emotional development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
CHANGES IN THE EXPERIENCE OF EMOTIONS		
Emotional responses are maturing and sensitivity to reward begins to decrease <i>(continued)</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage openness about mental health issues. If you are concerned about a young person's emotional stability, connect them with available supports and information (for example, Kids Help Phone, family physician, websites, an appropriate mentor or counsellor)—the negative stigma around mental health often discourages people from seeking support. Provide opportunities for independence and leadership
DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-REGULATION		
Emotional self-regulation matures	<p>Able to self-regulate emotions using thinking strategies</p> <p>Able to override emotional responses and make reasoned choices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide youth with opportunities for own time and space to reflect and relax in a way they choose (for example, music, reading, drawing, writing) Reinforce strategies for effective self-regulation (for example, encourage youth to stop and think before making decisions and engaging in risky behaviours)
Motivation is further internalized	Demonstrates ability to set their own goals and stay on task with less prompting from others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide encouragement. Youth of this age want to know that parents, teachers and other role models are interested in their activities and ambitions but ask for the freedom to set and achieve goals independently
DEVELOPMENT OF EMPATHY		
Empathy reaches maturity	<p>Can detect subtle signs of emotional distress in others</p> <p>Is able to respond appropriately to the needs of others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinforce empathetic behaviour (for example, giving up one's seat on the bus) Promote perspective-taking to encourage the development of empathy and to recognize the difference between own experience and that of others (for example, someone from a different cultural background) Encourage youth to spend time focusing on other people and topics (for example, volunteering with a community organization)



Social development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
DEVELOPMENT OF IDENTITY		
A sense of identity is solidifying	<p>May begin to commit to an identity after exploring various roles, values, beliefs and goals</p> <p>May signal values, beliefs and goals through the opportunities and interests pursued</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the opportunity to explore and participate in organized events, clubs and teams so that youth can identify their talents and potential career pursuits
Gender identity is more stable	<p>May display a sense of confidence around gender identity—expressed through clothing/image</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk about gender identity without making assumptions Encourage youth to engage in opportunities without concerns about preconceived gender identity labels
Social group-esteem and social identity mature	<p>May display a commitment or sense of belonging to social groups</p> <p>Begins to feel comfortable with their own social identity and has positive feelings about social group membership</p> <p>Has learned about their own social groups and has examined their own beliefs independently</p> <p>Rejects negative views based on stereotypes held by others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging volunteer and other local structured opportunities, which can lead youth to a better sense of community and social inclusion Support participation in cultural traditions to help youth develop their sense of cultural social group identity and social group-esteem Promote opportunities for young adults to mentor other youth
Spiritual beliefs may be more internalized	<p>May begin to integrate religious/spiritual beliefs into their larger identity</p> <p>Motivated to act/behave to a greater degree by deeply held beliefs</p> <p>Sense of place in, and connectedness to, the larger world beginning to emerge</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where appropriate, support youth participation in religious and spiritual traditions to help them develop their sense of spiritual identity Support critical thought about religion

Social development

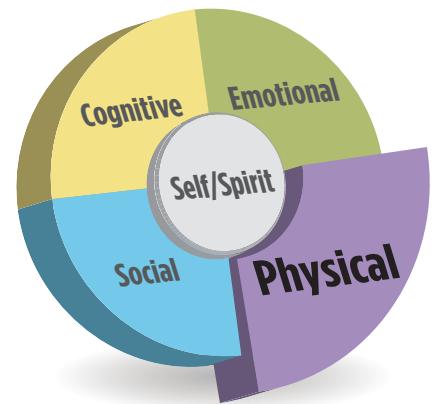
What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
DEVELOPMENT OF IDENTITY		
Self-concepts become more integrated	May be able to resolve conflicting self-concepts based upon differences in contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage youth to focus on more positive self-concepts (integrate those activities they are good at into settings where youth are less sure about themselves)
Self-appraisal skills continue to improve	<p>Continuing to refine ability to think critically and be reflective of one's self</p> <p>Is less reliant on/looking for the approval of others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide constructive feedback to encourage the development of self-appraisal skills Encourage self appraisal through questions like, "how do you feel?"
Self-efficacy is increasing	Can take on more difficult and longer-term challenges, and persevere in the face of adversity or failure to achieve goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model a confident understanding of your own skills and capabilities—youth learn to be self-efficacious from the role models in their lives Help youth set goals and support their attempts to reach those goals, to enhance self-efficacy Provide realistic challenges for youth to tackle, and provide support and counselling through these challenges
Self-esteem improves	<p>Feeling more confident and positive about themselves</p> <p>Level of self-esteem continues to improve (this process is ongoing until late adulthood)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create opportunities for youth to excel (for example, scholastic, vocational, volunteer, recreational) Show interest in the opinions, ideas, beliefs, goals and life plans of youth Provide an opportunity for young people to be leaders Recognize achievements
DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS, ROMANTIC PARTNERS AND FAMILY		
Understanding of multiple perspectives is maturing	<p>May fully understand the effect of social roles in perspective-taking</p> <p>Understands that "neutral" perspectives on a situation are rare, and that everyone's perspective is coloured by their context, beliefs and background</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support understanding of the experiences, challenges, and issues of others
Peer relationships continue to evolve	Exhibits weakened influence of peers, greater ability to choose a romantic partner based on personal compatibility (as opposed to social standing as is often the case for younger teens)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage youth to maintain connections with friends, even as they become more committed to school, work or their romantic partners Keep in mind that while the influence of peers often shifts during emerging adulthood, friends continue to support the development of romantic relationships by sharing their social networks and being supportive when relationship troubles occur
Romantic relationships mature	Shifts focus in romantic relationships from fun/companionship to forming strong emotional bond with physical and emotional intimacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give space to youth to develop relationships that are private and personal but stay connected and approachable, providing opportunities for questions and help when needed

Social development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS, ROMANTIC PARTNERS AND FAMILY		
Romantic relationships mature (continued)	<p>May have longer-lasting relationships (often more than a year) and be working with a partner toward a committed and long-term relationship in which conflicts are negotiated and resolved.</p> <p>Spending a large amount of time alone in couples, rather than in larger group (some may prefer to engage in shorter-term relationships as they explore their independence)</p> <p>LGBTQQ youth may “come out” more fully in openly acknowledging a same-sex relationship</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Demonstrate respect for a young person’s relationships
Family relationships continue to evolve	Experiences a continuing decline in conflict with parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop strategies and tools that can be used to stay connected at a distance (for example, phone, email, online messaging)Try to stay in regular contact with youth (on a daily or weekly basis) to remain informed of each other’s livesEstablish routines or dedicate certain times as “family time” such as major holidays, specific meals or a chosen day of the weekShare experiences together (for example, shopping trips, vacations, going for walks)Communicate that you are available so youth feel free to come to you for help or to ask questions
Moral reasoning may begin to shift to a focus on moral or ethical principles	<p>May increasingly make moral decisions based on self-chosen moral and ethical principles</p> <p>May begin to make decisions out of concern for equality, human rights, dignity, and life, regardless of the consequences for own self</p> <p>May continue to make decisions based on a “law and order” orientation with a focus on upholding laws in order to maintain social order</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Be conscientious in your own moral reasoning—youth are shown to replicate styles of moral reasoning in role modelsEncourage interactions in which adolescents and young adults engage in challenging conversations on relevant issues where conflicting views are raised and discussedSupport opportunities for active discussion of moral dilemmas (for example, concerning discrimination, oppression and bias) to stimulate reasoning and problem-solving skills

Social development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS, ROMANTIC PARTNERS AND FAMILY		
Self-sufficiency continues to strengthen	<p>Able to maintain close connections while still maintaining a separate sense of identity</p> <p>May leave family home to live independently</p> <p>Continues to gain financial independence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remember that many young adults move in and out of their parental home before making a final transition to independence Provide advice and share personal experiences related to gaining independence Provide advice and share personal experiences related to “firsts”, like getting a first full-time job, moving out of the family home, buying a car or first major relationship break-up



Physical development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY		
Levels of physical activity continue to decline	<p>Less likely to engage in physical activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider barriers to participation such as cost, time, equipment and transportation (for example, youth may no longer have the support of parents in paying for activities) Continue to support youth in setting realistic goals and balance them with other priorities (school, work, social life) As youth begin to master movement concepts, begin to focus more on the development of skills and techniques Motivation at this stage has become primarily internalized. Programs and activities to promote physical development should focus on helping youth develop knowledge, skills and attitudes for a healthy, active lifestyle Encourage emerging adults to feel ownership of their own development and provide them with opportunities to design and implement programs and activities

Physical development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY		
Cardiovascular and muscular endurance, strength and flexibility are changing	<p>Females: in the absence of training, exhibit no further increase in cardiovascular endurance or muscular capabilities</p> <p>Males: gradual increase in cardiovascular endurance and muscle strength is peaking, and begins to level off (there are no further increases in muscular endurance)</p> <p>In the absence of training, slow decline in flexibility continues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer activities that teach youth how to avoid and deal with injury (for example, learning a stretching routine) Provide access to information about positive and negative ways to increase strength and endurance (for example, information on the dangers of taking steroids or supplements to improve athletic performance)
GROWTH AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT		
Changes associated with puberty are concluding	<p>Females: have often completed pubertal changes</p> <p>Males: may continue to gain weight, height, muscle mass and body hair</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage and create open communication that is two-directional and allows youth to ask questions and be provided with age-appropriate information about their changing bodies and emerging sexual characteristics
Hormonal influences on the sleep cycle begin to reverse	<p>Falls asleep earlier in the evening and wakes up earlier in the morning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support youth in maintaining a healthy sleep routine—going to sleep and waking up at appropriate times (for example, turning off the computer one hour before bed)
BODY IMAGE AND NUTRITION		
Development of body image is ongoing	<p>More apt to make social comparisons about body type</p> <p>Opinions about style, clothing and appearance become important</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware that youth may have an increased sensitivity to messages about body shape and sexuality Allow youth more independence in demonstrating their own style through clothing and decisions about appearance Encourage youth to focus on the parts of their bodies that they like and can feel confident about Lead by example, through sharing your own experiences

Physical development

What is happening?	How can I tell?	How can I help?
BODY IMAGE AND NUTRITION		
The need for making independent decisions about nutrition and healthy eating increases	<p>Has more prominent opinions about, and a desire for independent control over, eating and nutrition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage some independence around food preferences and knowledge of nutrition and food preparation Nutrition plays an important role in healthy development during this time. Provide information about nutrition (for example, check out Canada's Food Guide) Encourage healthy eating habits and routines (for example, involve youth directly in grocery shopping or meal preparation) Engage youth in conversations about healthy eating and be aware of dramatic changes in diets that may indicate eating disorders



4

Moving forward

The research and input from youth presented in this document represents our current understanding of the ways young people develop. It also presents the views of a sample of Ontario's youth on how we can support them to succeed. This document is intended as a resource that will help support the positive development of young people, whether that involves developing programs or lesson plans, mentoring, community planning or designing policies. Moving forward, the information provided in this resource is meant as a tool that can be adapted, specialized and updated to suit the needs of youth in your community.

- 64 Make it relevant
- 66 A living document
- 67 Working together



IN THEIR OWN VOICES

"As a first generation Canadian, my parents don't necessarily sit my siblings and I down to talk about serious issues such as using protection and substance abuse."

"I used to play house league soccer and basketball at school—I have Down Syndrome and the coaches didn't feel comfortable with me."

"My parents never had money to put me in extra-curriculars so I never stuck to anything because I never took up anything."

Make it relevant

This resource is designed to support work across provincial and local contexts

This resource is a step toward improving the way that young people are supported into adulthood in Ontario. It is intended as a tool that can be used to foster integration and collaboration across the youth-serving sector, and a platform for continuing conversations about how services can be better aligned to support youth. It also relies on the understanding that all those who have a role in supporting youth will use, adapt and advance the information in this resource to suit the needs of youth in communities across the province—from frontline service provision to developing specific community programming and organizing broader provincial planning.

The resource can be used to identify key opportunities to introduce new programs, services or supports for youth in your community. It could also be used to generate ideas about how to enhance existing services by integrating positive developmental opportunities into current programs and practices.

It also provides an important platform for ongoing dialogue

It is our intent that this resource will also serve as a valuable tool to prompt discussion and action at the government, community, organizational and family levels.

Government: partnering across ministries/departments, various levels of government and youth-serving organizations to align and focus services, policies and programs toward positive development.

Communities: partnering with community organizations to develop local networks that align efforts and create an awareness of the services offered by the community.

Example:

Ontario Best Start Networks

Ontario's 47 local Best Start Networks play a key role in the development and evolution of an integrated local system of early years services. The networks have been established and are recognized as the planning body for the province's Best Start strategy. They are well positioned to foster community collaboration through their broad representation and in their development of a common understanding of the vision and goals that need to be achieved.

Service Providers: reforming programs in partnership with youth to engage them in the design of programs and implementation strategies.

Example:

Partnering with youth to create space for youth leadership

Providing this platform allows for youth-led social innovation, and engages young people in collective leadership and decision making. Not only does this approach provide an opportunity to develop strategies for service delivery design in collaboration with youth, but it also provides an opportunity to develop transferable skills and boost the self-efficacy and self-esteem of participating youth.

Example:

Including youth in decision making

Including youth in decision making positions within your organization is an excellent way to incorporate youth perspectives into your work. For example, the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres has two dedicated seats on their Board of Directors for youth aged 18–24. Another way to include youth is to support and validate youth-led organizations.

Families: rethinking and enhancing daily routines to support their youth's development.

Example:

Modelling a confident understanding of your own skills and capabilities allows youth to learn behaviours that will increase their self-confidence to complete challenging tasks

Youth learn to be confident in their own abilities by internalizing the confidence displayed by role models in their lives. Providing youth with leadership opportunities (for example, planning family dinners or activities), and talking through the process or problem with youth, allows them to realize both their capabilities and limitations, and to build confidence as they complete challenging tasks.





Adapt this information to local needs

While this resource explores many “typical” aspects of youth development, it offers this information with acknowledgement that no two individuals are alike, and that context also plays an important role in the development of every early adolescent, adolescent and young adult.

For example, individual differences associated with ability, culture or identity will result in different pathways, as youth face unique opportunities and challenges. Likewise, environmental differences also have an impact on development, affecting the supports, opportunities and experiences that youth have access to.

Also consider the spirit or sense of self in adapting your approach to supporting individual youth.

In the end, you know the youth you serve best. While using this document, consider the social, cultural, economic and geographical factors specific to youth in your community and how best you can support their development.

A living document

Our knowledge continues to evolve

This resource has brought together the best research and evidence on youth development available in 2011. It is clear, however, that the developmental research field is growing by the minute and that there are still gaps in this research. Similarly, the youth input that was gathered and reflected in this report is based on a sample of today’s young people—it is expected that youth across Ontario may have different experiences and ideas about the supports and opportunities that they will need in the future.

This resource is intended as a living document

This resource was created with the intent that it become a “living document” that is adapted and specialized to suit the needs of governments, communities, providers and families over time. It is important that we collectively remain current with new evidence, approaches and knowledge as they become available, taking an adaptive approach to harnessing and reflecting these advancements in our work with youth. Involving youth directly in ongoing conversations about their development will also help to ensure that this remains a living document that is relevant and personalised to meet the changing needs of all youth.

Working together

Supporting youth requires that we work collaboratively

There are many actors involved in supporting youth throughout Ontario—including governments, communities, frontline providers, and parents. These individuals and organizations have exceptional knowledge, expertise, insight and experience in supporting the development of youth.

Given the complexity of young people's lives, and the youth services sector, it is clear that no one organization or group can single-handedly address and support all aspects of youth development. However, in partnership, we can effectively support the success of young people in Ontario and have a significant impact.

Ultimately, this resource is intended as a tool that fosters the development of a common language and understanding of youth development, placing young people at the centre of an integrated system of supports that maximizes their positive development.



Appendix A: Acknowledgements

The government would like to thank and acknowledge the support and contributions of its various project partners—from community partners to the research community and Ontario’s youth.

A special thank you to the youth of Ontario who participated in the youth dialogues and the adult allies who supported them. Your contributions were invaluable in creating a resource that is not only about youth, but also informed by youth.

Throughout this initiative the government engaged key experts in the field of youth development and engagement. The government is especially thankful to Dr. Jean Clinton, Dr. Terrance Wade, Dr. Bruce Ferguson and Dr. Stuart Shanker for providing their time and invaluable expertise to support this process.

We would also like to acknowledge the contributions of the youth development research community for providing the evidentiary basis for this resource. Lead researchers include:

- Dr. Joseph Beitchman, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
- Dr. Elizabeth Brownlie, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
- Valerie Campbell, University of Prince Edward Island
- Dr. Jennifer Connolly, York University
- Dr. James Côté, University of Western Ontario
- Joanne Cripps, Canadian Cultural Society for the Deaf
- Dr. Gordon Flett, York University
- Moira Ferguson, Laurentian University
- Dr. Jan Willem Gorter, McMaster University
- Marni Herold, Lutherwood
- Dr. Michelle Jetha, Brock University
- Dr. Chunlei Lu, Brock University
- Dr. Karen MacLeod, Lutherwood
- Dr. Dragana Martinovic, University of Windsor
- Dr. Caroline McIsaac, York University
- Dr. Jennine S. Rawana, York University
- Dr. Susan Scott, Lakehead University

- Dr. Sidney Segalowitz, Brock University
- Dr. Shmuel Shulman, Bar Ilan University
- Estelle Simard, MSW, The Institute for Culturally Restorative Practices
- Dr. Anita Small, Canadian Cultural Society for the Deaf
- Dr. Debra Stewart, McMaster University
- Dr. Kate Tilleczek, University of Prince Edward Island
- Dr. Elizabeth Van Houtte, Lakehead University
- Dr. Anne Marie Walsh, Lakehead University

There were several key community partners who played a significant role in the development of this resource:

- Boys and Girls Clubs of Ontario
- Canadian Institute for Health Research
- Chiefs of Ontario
- Fair Share Task Force
- Laidlaw Foundation
- Motivate Canada
- Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth
- Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- Ontario Youth Matter! Campaign
- Search Institute
- Student Vote
- Supporting Our Youth
- The Review of the Roots of Youth Violence Co-chairs
- The Students Commission of Canada
- United Way of Burlington and Greater Hamilton
- United Way of Peel Region
- United Way Toronto
- United Ways of Ontario
- YMCA Canada
- YMCA of Greater Toronto
- YOUNG
- Youth Challenge Fund

Finally, thank you to all of the other individuals and organizations who participated in this process and contributed to the resource. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Notes:



June 2012