

## Developmental Tasks for 6 - 11 Year Olds

This week's article is a follow up from our last article on the developmental tasks of children aged 4-5. This week we will look at the tasks of children aged 6-11. Remember as you are reading, that all children are different and that there are other factors besides their age in years which determine a child's progression through these stages. Just to recap, these include the child's temperament and personality, adult expectations and social influences.

During this time psychologist Erik Erikson says children are asking the question "Can I make it in this world of people and things?" They are developing their competence, and experiencing "Industry vs Inferiority."

From the age of 6 to 11, our children

- continue developing their sense of mastery, intellectual curiosity and independence
- are learning about rules and internalizing them
- are developing responsibility and learning many new skills, including social skills (particularly same-sex peer relationships)
- selecting adult role models of the same sex
- are continuing to learn about how the world works
- enhancing their reasoning ability and developing their capacity to cooperate.

They will continue to ask lots of questions as they gather information about the world around them. They are learning more about cooperation and social skills and are interested in rules and why they exist. They are developing a sense that people should obey rules, even though they don't always do so themselves. They may challenge, test or disagree with rules and even try to set a few themselves as they are learning to internalize this system. They may become "bossy" in the process!

You may notice your child is becoming more mature in his/her reasoning abilities and learning how to apply this to understanding the values that lie behind the rules. Children in this age group are also learning the difference between wants and needs. You may notice these developments reflected in their play. You may see that the games they play have rules, and hopefully are played with the beginnings of a more cooperative spirit.

This is a very exciting time. They are growing and learning so fast. You can support your child through these important developmental tasks in the following ways:

- Encourage your children in the learning of new skills. Children this age will want to be making the latest craft craze, starting collections (it was stamps, marbles, swap cards, footy cards in my day, possibly cabbage patch dolls, My Little Pony, Silvanian people, Pacman or Transformers in yours.) Toys from certain takeaway places are another example of things children this age like to collect, as are animal cards from the supermarket. If your child has become a "collector" resist the urge to rush out and provide the full collection. Wanting, waiting, trading, negotiating with friends are all good skills to learn and part of the fun.

- Allow, encourage and help them to finish tasks.
- Praise their efforts and for trying to do things, and affirm efforts to do things in their own way.
- Be a reliable source of information. Reassure your child they can come to you for a straight and non-judgemental answer if they “learn” something they’re not so sure about in the playground at school.
- Continue your teaching of cause and effect thinking by the use of appropriate consequences, and FOLLOW THROUGH with the consequences you set. The secret here is to make manageable consequences. Don’t promise a holiday/movie night/day at the cricket “one day” if, in your heart, you know it’s not going to happen. Similarly don’t threaten “no computer or TV“ for a month (a very long time in a little person’s life), or other punishments you can’t realistically enforce. Following through will help children see the impact of their behaviour, and they will learn that you mean what you say and that you are reliable and dependable. Set and enforce negotiable (e.g. TV time) and non-negotiable (e.g. always cross at the lights) rules
- Encourage skill development by providing opportunities to pursue activities that reflect their interests and foster social interaction with peers. This is also the perfect way to expose your children to good role models other than their parents and enhance their sense of mastery and accomplishment. Consider Brownies, Scouts, Drama, team sports
- Continue to promote the separation of reality and fantasy. Don’t hit the panic button if your child may lie or steal. Rather, without blame or humiliation, kindly confront children when these things happen and help them to set the story straight and make amends.
- Teach them to engage in problem solving exercises to engage their thinking and their cooperation.

“What do you think we could by Nanna for her birthday?”

“What are some of the ways our family could save some money for our holiday?” “Which vegetables do you think we should we plant in the garden this summer?” “Toby’s sad and worried because his Mum is sick in hospital. What do you think we could do that might cheer him up?”

“Dad’s cross because the bikes were left in the driveway again. What do you think we could do to make things better?”

Engaging your child in problem solving and decision making helps them to deal with their feelings and the feelings of others. It teaches them to manage conflict and see themselves as able to solve problems that they encounter in their lives

- Continue to give them opportunity to make decisions about things which affect them, to the degree their judgement allows
- Assign chores to encourage the development of a cooperative spirit, a sense of belonging and being needed in a family, and a sense of responsibility.

We have covered a broad age group this week. Remember, all children are different even sibling to sibling, and comparisons are not helpful. Do your level best to spend some one-on-one time with your child every week. Get to know what and who they are interested in. Enjoy them. Love them. Assure them they are loved (by your tone, a hug and the giving of your time; by being consistent and a good role model.) And know that they love you.

If you have any concerns, talk to your child's teacher and remember we are always happy to take your calls or your emails.

References and further reading

<http://centerforparentingeducation.org/library-of-articles/child-development/developmental-tasks/>

<http://www.kidspot.com.au/familyhealth/Development-Preschool-4-5-years-physical-development+2556+214+article.htm>

[http://www.education.com/reference/article/Ref\\_Child\\_Guide\\_Four/](http://www.education.com/reference/article/Ref_Child_Guide_Four/)

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