

AGES
10-12



Understanding your child

Here is some information about how children learn and grow. Remember that each child grows at their own pace and not all children will be learning the same things at the same ages. Use this information to notice where your child is growing at *their* pace, and to support their growth as only you can. If you have questions about your child's development, please bring this information and your questions to your child's next medical appointment.



WHAT I CAN DO

I have a LOT of energy! I am growing really fast, and entering puberty. My

body is changing, and so is my mind and my emotions! I feel powerful and have lots of opinions. Friendships are very important to me, and I really care about what other people think of me.



WHAT I AM LEARNING

I am learning who I am: what I like and where I fit in. I am learning to think for

myself, and to take responsibility for things. I am learning to do real jobs, like helping out around the house or taking care of a pet or a sibling. I am learning about drugs and alcohol, and I might be excited or fearful about them.



WHAT I NEED FROM YOU

I need you to keep talking and listening to me. I need you to stay open and not judge me. I need you

to be on my side and be my cheerleader. I also need boundaries and limits. I think I am grown up, and maybe I'm starting to look more grown up, but I am still a kid. Let me take part in the household: ask my opinion when you're making decisions, and let me help with family tasks. Ask me what I'm learning and encourage my schoolwork. Start to talk to me about your experience with drugs and alcohol in a way that won't make me feel afraid or worried about you. Tell me what you've learned about taking care of yourself. Help me understand that I am cool and will have friends, even if the "cool" kids at school don't like me. Remind me that you like me, often. Make sure I know that I can talk to you about anything. Tell me you love me a lot, even if I don't say it back.



WHAT THIS TIME MIGHT BE LIKE FOR YOU

You may feel excited that your child can be clear about how they feel and what they want, but this can also be triggering. Your child may have strong negative emotions, and you may have the urge to try and fix them or make things better. Your child is entering puberty, which means they will become moody and selfish, and maybe naughty and rude. It's hard to believe, but this is exactly what they're supposed to be doing right now. It can make you mad or hurt your feelings, but remember that it's temporary, and if your child feels safe enough with you to be rude, that's actually a good thing. They might want more alone time, or to try out being different from you. This isn't a rejection. They are learning who they are. Try to give them space for this, while also letting them know that you always love them.



WHAT YOU MIGHT BE FEELING

It is very important for you to have your own, adult support as your family works through feelings and emotions related to your past. If you're not already in therapy, this may be the time to start. Find friendships and safe places where you can process. Your past does not define you. What matters is who you are now, along with your willingness to learn and change. In recovery, you can model for your child how to admit when you're wrong without feeling bad about yourself. Remind yourself that making mistakes is part of being human. Try to remind yourself and your child: it's what you do that matters, not what other people might think about you, or what you did in the past. If you are doing your best, then it's enough. You are a good mother, and your child is lucky to have a parent in recovery.



HOW YOU CAN TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF RIGHT NOW

It can be frustrating for you to see your child struggle, and it might hurt if they criticize you or bring up your past. If you have lost and regained custody, this may feel even harder, as feelings of regret, shame, or anger might arise. Try to remember that both you and your child are healing in recovery. It is a sign of closeness if your child feels comfortable enough to tell you their thoughts and feelings about your recovery. Try not to take it personally. Their feelings are really intense right now, but they will change. Hang in there, and keep reminding them you are in recovery now, and you love them. If your child is having a hard time at school or with friends, it may bring up difficult memories from your own childhood. Try to give your child some space to make their own decisions, and tell them you believe in them and are proud of who they are.

“My son started arguing with me more when I told him something and it was hard for me to let him have a say, but he was old enough and we learned to compromise about some things.”