

What's Going on With My 7th Grader?

The 7th grade year is the "Wonder Year," where your brand new teenager begins to try on identities and discover who they are going to be. This guide will give you a map into the body, mind, and soul of your 7th grader.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- ♦ There may be comparisons with other students, who are developing faster or slower than they are.
- ♦ Stress begins to develop from relational struggles and from an increase in school work.
- ♦ There may be a high energy level, but it is balanced by a high need for rest.
- ♦ Skin problems and acne can become issues.
- ♦ Menstruating has begun for most girls.
- ♦ Girls typically experience growth spurts before boys (about one year ahead).
- ♦ Bones and muscles are not growing at the same rate, which may lead to feelings of awkwardness and clumsiness.
- ♦ There is an increased need to pay attention to personal hygiene.

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The 7th grader may:

- ♦ Desire and need more privacy (with boundaries)
- ♦ Become moody and easily frustrated
- ♦ Begin to experience "bullying issues"
- ♦ Show more concern for body image
- ♦ Start to be mean, due to being driven by fear

- ♦ Experience emotions in extremes
- ♦ Be characterized by curiosity
- ♦ Become more socially expansive and aware
- ♦ Express less affection for parents
- ♦ Encounter periods of sadness, depression, and desperation, which can lead to poor coping habits

RELATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- ♦ Adults who tease them do more damage than they might realize.
- ♦ There is a strong desire to be accepted by peers.
- ♦ Girls have a tendency to be interested in older boys.
- ♦ There is a desire to have and "overuse" a cell phone.
- ♦ Friendships change due to new schools, boyfriends/girlfriends, and change of affinity groups.
- ♦ Girls tend to build friendships in groups of 2-3.
- ♦ Boys tend to build friendships in "packs" of 8-10, based on affinity.
- ♦ Boys struggle with being "loners" if they do not find a pack of friends.
- ♦ A strong interest in sports is typical for both genders but is not exclusive.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

- ♦ They have a great propensity to memorize Scripture, but they still struggle to fully understand it.
- ♦ They thrive in a small group of peers led by a trusted adult, who serves as a spiritual guide.

- ♦ Concrete thinking begins to give way to abstract thinking, which creates a new world of questions about faith and spiritual things.
- ♦ The desire to question and disagree with their parents' beliefs arises, but it is tamed by fear to express those doubts.
- ♦ Learning how parents interact with God through prayer and Bible study is greatly beneficial.
- ♦ While timid about taking on difficult intellectual tasks like studying the Bible, they are ready to begin the practice of daily Bible study (with lots of encouragement).