



Stages of Development

In the development of children and young people, several stages can be identified. The different areas of personal growth interact with each other at certain periods to create a temporary state of balance or imbalance, which is called a stage. These stages represent successive steps in the process of growth. It is necessary to take them into account in order to establish or review our system of age range sections.

Sociological and economic factors have an impact on purely physiological and psychological factors, creating different rhythms and steps according to the culture and the era. Moreover, depending on the criteria selected (psychological, social, etc.), the stages of development can be analysed in different ways.

For this reason, it is important to regularly question the relevance of the stages of development under consideration and to review them in order to respond to the needs and aspirations of young people in the best possible way. It should be noted from the outset that a child is not a miniature adult. At each age, he or she has particular characteristics and interests. It is, therefore, necessary to grade the educational objectives according to the potential reached by the young person.

Before the age of 7

It can be seen, for example, that before the age of seven the ability of a child to cooperate within a group is very limited.

This is an important issue to take into consideration if you are planning to develop a programme for a Pre-Cub section.

One of the key elements of the Scout method (the team system) cannot really be implemented.

Late childhood

Certain stages can easily be identified, such as “late childhood” from 7/8 to 10/11 years old, which is characterised by a certain level of stability. It is even referred to as “infant maturity”.

The physical growth is slower. The child is at ease in his or her body. He/she has acquired the capacity for logical reasoning on concrete data; he/she demonstrates intellectual curiosity.

The child tries to adapt to a group and be appreciated. He/she has the capacity to develop reciprocal exchanges in a group. He/she can imagine oneself in another person's situation. He/she accepts the authority of adults. This is the Cub Scout age.

Puberty

This stability is perturbed between 10 and 12 years old (earlier among girls, later among boys) by the occurrence of numerous changes, both on a personal level (an acceleration in physical growth, the onset of puberty, a new stage of logical reasoning) and on the social level (the end

of primary school and the beginning of secondary school in many countries).

This is what some psychologists call the crisis of early adolescence, which is shown by the rejection of childhood rules, the challenging of adult authority, the attraction towards smaller social groupings, etc.

This is a period of opposition and rejection of previous identifications. Childhood rules and regulations are called into question. However the ability to create new rules through mutual consent appears. That announces the development of moral autonomy and the acceptance of moral principles as a way of sharing rights and responsibilities within a group

Adolescence

Between 13 and 15 years old, a new stage is reached with the acquisition of sexual maturity, the establishment of gender identity and the development of abstract logical reasoning.

However, the restructuring phase which started at the age of 11 or 12 continues, i.e. it is only towards 16 or 17 that a new balance is progressively attained.

Between 11 and 16, a fairly unstable stage is experienced, during which development rhythms vary widely depending on sex (maturity is reached more quickly by girls) and under the influence of social and cultural factors. This explains the wide range of age section systems used by associations.

Nevertheless, a distinction is usually made between early adolescence, from 10/11 to 14/15, and late adolescence, from 14/15 to 17/18.

After that, youth begins, with its major challenge of taking on adult roles and becoming fully integrated into society.

First and second childhood

Ages	Physical	Intellectual	Affective
Birth	Weight: 3-4 kg. Height: 50 cm. Progressive development of posture, grasping and walking.	Sensory-motor stage: from reflexes, constitution of patterns of actions combining perceptions and movements to reach an aim.	Elementary emotional reactions: states of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Pleasure associated with sucking (oral stage). Desired object: mother's breast. 3 months: smiling response to human faces.
6-9 months	Standing upright.	Action games.	Recognition of the mother.
10-12 months	First steps		
2 years	Cleanliness (sphincter control).	Mental representation of action patterns. Appearance of symbolic games. Acquisition of notions of objects, space, time and the relation between cause and effect.	Anal stage: affective value attached to sphincter control.
3 years	Growth slows down.		Genital stage: interest in genitals; masturbation; curiosity about differences between the sexes.
4 years			Affective identification with parents based on confidence and admiration.
5-7 years	Precision in movements and balance acquired.	Intuitive thought (affirmation without demonstration).	"Latency period": sexual energy oriented towards other goals.

First and second childhood

Ages	Social	Spiritual	Character
Birth	No differentiation between self and others. Immediate imitation.		No awareness of self.
6-9 months	Anguish and fear of strangers.		
10-12 months	Delayed imitation.		
2 years	Appearance of symbolic function (ability to represent absent objects). First words (20 words at age 2).		Appearance of "no", sign of construction of personal identity.
3 years	Egocentric speech; collective monologues; interest in one's appearance; shyness.	Acceptance of regulations and ideals promoted by one's parents; confusion between the paternal image and the concept of God.	Identification with parent of the same sex. (Oedipus complex). Creation of "Superego".
4 years		Anthropomorphic, magical and egocentric religiosity.	
5-7 years	Development of speech (2,500 words). Rules considered intangible and determined by adults. "Moral realism": mistakes judged by damage caused; intentions ignored. Acceptance of moral norms.	Notion of good and evil, right and wrong linked to religion.	

Late childhood, adolescence and youth

Ages	Physical	Intellectual	Affective
7-10 years	Slower growth. At ease with one's body.	Intellectual curiosity. Development of the capacity for logical reasoning on concrete data. Notion of conservation, ability to classify, make series and count.	Latency period: emotional balance. Affective attachment which goes beyond the family circle.
10-11 years (girls) 11-12 years (boys)	Onset of puberty; acceleration in growth (firstly height, then weight); clumsiness. Appearance of secondary sexual characteristics. Ill at ease with one's body.	Stage of concrete logical operations. Development of the capacity for logical reasoning on abstract data.	Awakening of sexual impulses with the onset of biological puberty. Strong, but confusing emotions. Need for friendship. Need to assert oneself as an individual. Identification with heroes.
13-15 years	Sexual maturity.	Stage of formal logical operations reached (reasoning through hypotheses and deductions).	Awakening of the Oedipus complex; development of sexual identity. Adolescent crisis, idealism and depression. Age of friendship. Attraction towards the opposite sex (earlier among girls).
15-16 years			Solidarity with peers. Worries, intense excitement. Need for security, success and accomplishment.

Late childhood, adolescence and youth

Ages	Social	Spiritual	Character
7-10 years	Reciprocal exchanges. Adoption of different roles; ability to imagine oneself in another person's situation. The child tries to adapt to a group and be appreciated.	Acceptance of family's spiritual heritage. Conformity to conventional morality. Orientation towards "law" and "order".	Conformity to the group. By adapting to a wide variety of situations (school, groups), the child discovers him/herself as a multi-faceted personality. He/she gains a deeper understanding of him/herself.
10-12 years	Childhood rules and regulations called into question. Ability to create new rules through mutual consent. Groups established for the purpose of common activities.	Development of moral autonomy. Acceptance of moral principles as a way of sharing rights and responsibilities within a group	Period of opposition and rejection of previous identifications.
13-15 years	Period of social restructuring. Rebellion against authority. Efforts to define personal moral values. More closely-knit groups formed, based on mutual trust. Search for a common identity.	Childhood religious practices called into question. Use of symbols to express spiritual meaning. Interest in ideologies and religions. Notion of contract and democratic acceptance of the law.	Crisis of identity. Search for new models for developing one's identity.
15-16 years	Individual awareness of principles ("personal code of honour").	Acceptance of universal values (Human Rights).	Structuring of one's self image. Development of personal autonomy.
17-20 years	Recognition of enrichment due to accepting individual differences. Problem of social and professional integration.	Orientation towards universal ethics.	Confirmation of personal choices. Search for a social role.