

ZERO TO TWO YEARS

**CHARACTERISTICS RELATED TO FAITH DEVELOPMENT**

- yearn for and actively seek relationship
- experience adults as representations of God
- experience God as a source of comfort (like a “blankie”)
- experience God’s love through consistently positive relationships with parents and other caregivers
- incorporate images and narratives into their worldview
- oversee and overhear faith
- are developing notion of self apart from others
- are testing trustworthiness of the world

*For more on faith and conscience development, see Information Sheet #3.*

**NURTURING FAITH**

- Communicate joyous welcome within the family and church family.
- Provide loving care and consistently meet needs.
- Sing hymns while holding or rocking the child.
- Include pleasant religious symbols in their world.
- Share Bible story books and picture books.
- Provide a safe place for toddlers to explore.
- Celebrate independence—it is the foundation for agency

**\* Building Blocks of Faith:**  
 Trust vs. Mistrust→ Hope (birth to 1 yr.);  
 Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt→ Will/Determination (1–3 yrs.)

**Child-proofing:** Babies have lots of energy, move about, touch and taste things. They learn and grow through these activities. Young children need to explore. It is absolutely necessary for brain development. The best solution is to make the environment safe or “child-proof” your home. Crawl through the house to see it from your child’s point of view. Look for dangers—sharp objects, poisons, breakables and put them up high or in locked cupboards. Cover electrical outlets. Lock up medicines. Turn pot handles toward the center of the stove. Secure toilet seats and dressers and make sure heavy objects can’t be pulled down. As your child moves toward preschool age and becomes more active, you can begin calmly saying “stop” or “no,” and then distracting them with something else to do. At this age redirecting attention is better and less frustrating than “teaching.” Scolding and yelling only frightens children.

***WE CAN EITHER CHILD-PROOF OUR HOMES OR CHILD-PROOF OUR CHILDREN.***

DEVELOPMENT	PARENTAL NURTURING	POTENTIAL ISSUES & RESPONSES
<p><b>0 TO 6 MONTHS</b></p> <p>Being brand-new to the world, infants can’t make much sense of things and are easily frightened. They need to feel safe and protected for healthy development. Discipline is not appropriate at this stage as babies can’t understand rules. They only need to know their needs will be met.</p> <p>Touching and mouthing things is essential for brain and muscle development throughout the early years.</p> <p>It takes 9 months of listening before language expression begins.</p>	<p>When caregivers are sensitive to and meet babies’ needs, they nurture a sense of trust and predictability, the foundations of hope. Consistently creating comforting environment is crucial. Feeling safe encourages strong attachments—the foundation for your relationship for years to come. Cuddling and rocking actually promote brain development.</p> <p>Speaking softly while gently stroking the babies face, singing or reading to babies sets the stage for language acquisition and speech.</p> <p><b><i>IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO SPOIL A BABY.</i></b></p>	<p><b>Crying</b> can be a challenge. Crying is normal, even if it lasts a while, especially in the evening. Crying babies need to be comforted but you won’t always be able to calm them. Parents’ moods affect children. It is important to be aware of your moods, get regular sleep and nutritious food and seek support if you frequently feel angry, sad, or worried.</p> <p>Consider possible causes (hunger, thirst, pain, stomach gas, illness, fear, wet or dirty diaper, or normal crying patterns) and respond accordingly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Offer breast, a glass bottle, or pacifier.</li> <li>● Rock the baby, offering a toy if need be.</li> <li>● Walk the baby, outside if weather permits.</li> <li>● Dance or cuddle.</li> <li>● Sing softly to soothe your baby and yourself.</li> <li>● Massage the baby, especially on the back, which can help colic.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>NEVER SHAKE, HIT OR YELL.</i></b></p>

**Handout C**

**DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES AND PARENTING**

<p><b>6 MONTHS TO ONE YEAR</b>          Babies usually smile more and cry less now, but they start teething and without speech, crying remains their primary means of communication.          Crying also signals that babies’ bodies and brains are developing. The brain becoming “organized” is a main development task for this stage.          The reflexive babbling of early infancy, transitions to intentional babbling—trying to imitate speech or simply playing with sound-making. This activity is a necessary precursor to speech. Some babies may say their first words at eight months, while others not until after the one-year mark.          Walking may start anytime between nine and 18 months.</p>	<p>A critical task is building babies’ trust. They need to know that parents are always close by. They notice when a parent leaves the room, but don’t yet understand that he or she will come back.          Responding to babbling is essential to language and speech development and encourages communication, a key foundation for your relationship.          Listening to and responding to babies lays the foundation for them expressing and honoring their own feelings.          It is important to develop a support network. If you find yourself at your wit’s end, don’t hesitate to ask someone to take over.          Remember that babies never cry to annoy you. They don’t understand persons outside themselves.</p>	<p><b>Crying</b> at the same time each night is common at this stage. It can be a major challenge for parents to get enough sleep. Babies don’t understand what is happening and it helps to know that someone is nearby. They also have no other way to tell you they feel sick, are in pain or afraid. They may cry out of fear and a feeling of helplessness.          Check for comfort: teething (swollen gums), too warm or cold, feverish, earache (tugging at an ear) or other signs of illness.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A car ride often puts crying babies to sleep.</li> <li>• Rocking, cuddling, walking and speaking calmly can soothe babies.</li> <li>• Never touch the baby when angry or frustrated; calm yourself first.</li> </ul> <p><b>Yelling/being loud:</b> Excited about discovering new sounds, babies often yell or make noise, sometimes in quiet places.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebrate these “noises” as welcome signs of healthy development. (They are not trying to embarrass you.)</li> <li>• Babble back to the baby.</li> <li>• Adjust your lifestyle—babies don’t belong in some places.</li> <li>• Ask your church to create a crying room where you can participate in the service without worrying about disruption or find a child-friendly church.</li> </ul> </p> </p>
<p><b>1 TO 2 YEARS</b>          This “me do it” stage sees children walking and having a “language explosion.” They learn to act on their environment. They show preferences. Their new independence thrilling. They learn about the world by touching and tasting—hands in food; toys in mouths; food spit out. They do things over and over. All this exploration is critical to brain development.          They start to test limits, resist sleeping or eating. Saying “No” is a milestone for personal agency.          They can learn from structure and</p>	<p>Nurturing independence and honoring will in a safe space is a primary task.          Vocabulary is enriched through talking, reading and naming objects. They say “No!” often. They hear “No!” often, but don’t understand intentions. SIMPLE explanations may be appropriate and understood at this stage.          Wanting to be independent while needing limits leads to frustration for children and parents. A deep breath and prayerful moment helps parents and models handling frustration in constructive ways.          They are often picky eaters and tastes</p>	<p><b>Keeping children safe:</b> The aim of gracious parenting is to respond to behavior in ways that lead to long-term goals. Remember that it takes time for children to learn all that they need to know. And toddlers still need to learn mainly by touching things. They don’t touch, taste and drop things to be naughty. They don’t have an understanding of which objects will hurt or are valuable to you, or breakable. They don’t know anything about money. The toy on the shelf or candy in the bin looks available for the taking.          Never punish for exploration—this is a child being a child.  <b>Toddler frustration:</b> Toddlers and preschoolers cannot regulate themselves. They don’t know their limits or the risks in the world. They easily become frustrated and may act out.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide preemptive structure.</li> <li>• Consider how the child thinks and feels. Are they tired, feeling out of control, over-stimulated, or frustrated by something they can’t have?</li> </ul> </p>

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## DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES AND PARENTING

<p>understand more than they express. They don't yet understand feelings or that parents are tired or need quiet. With language skills insufficient to express feelings, frustration may come out through screams or physical frenzy. They may begin showing interest in toilet training, but parents shouldn't expect too much too soon.</p>	<p>may change daily. Keep calm at meal times. Let them help in the kitchen. Offer different foods in small amounts. Allow them to feed themselves even if it's messy. Let them decide how much to eat—never force them. Bring crayons and paper or small toys when eating out. Don't expect your toddler to sit quietly through your whole meal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frame parenting as nurturing development vs. dealing with problems or controlling behavior.</li> <li>• Stay calm. Most around you will understand. And those who don't aren't worthy of your concern.</li> <li>• If need be, take them home or to a quiet area—some children are over-stimulated by crowded, noisy environments</li> <li>• Do not yell, scold, or threaten to spank or leave the child.</li> <li>• Stay close by and make sure the child can't get hurt or knock anything over if they are expressing frustration in a tantrum.</li> </ul>
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**Shaking children:** Up to age 5, children have weak neck muscles that cannot support their heads very well so they risk serious injury including brain damage, or even death, if they are shaken, which often happens out of frustration or in an effort to stop crying. When shaken, the brain slams against the skull wall. One out of four babies with Shaken Baby Syndrome die from it. Others develop learning difficulties, cerebral palsy, blindness, seizures or developmental delays. Spanking can also produce a whiplash effect that causes Shaken Baby Syndrome. Get medical care right away if your baby was shaken. [*National Information, Support and Referral Service on Shaken Baby Syndrome (888) 273-0071 or [www.capcenter.org](http://www.capcenter.org)*]

### PRESCHOOLERS

<p><b>CHARACTERISTICS RELATED TO FAITH DEVELOPMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• concrete, literal thinkers with unrestrained imaginations</li> <li>• limited ability to distinguish fantasy from reality (They aren't lying!)</li> <li>• egocentric (unable to distinguish their needs from others'—this is not intentional selfishness)</li> <li>• curious, lots of questions</li> <li>• awareness of feelings</li> <li>• developing essential skill of setting personal boundaries</li> <li>• Play is their work.</li> </ul> <p><b>*Building Block of Faith:</b> Initiative vs. Guilt → Purpose/Courage</p>	<p><b>NURTURING FAITH</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• God is experienced as powerful, mysterious and potentially frightening.</li> <li>• Images and stories portraying an angry, punishing God have life-long negative effects.</li> <li>• Communicate belonging to the family and the church.</li> <li>• Models grace, authenticity and integrity in faith.</li> <li>• Welcome curiosity; celebrate initiative; provide a safe place for making choices.</li> <li>• Invite play with the music, symbols, rituals and gestures of faith.</li> <li>• Provide clothing and props for unstructured imaginative play around Bible stories.</li> <li>• Read stories in which fear is transformed to hope.</li> </ul>
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**Toddler negativism:** It is completely normal for toddlers to refuse to do things that you want them to do. They are not defying parents. They have simply discovered that they are individuals and are experimenting with their ability to make decisions. They want and need to learn to make choices. It can be helpful to offer choices so that they can practice decision-making skills. Be sure not to offer false choices such as "Do you want to go or stay home?" If you do, children will only learn that their choices don't matter. *A threat is not a choice. Threats only lead to fear.*

**Tantrums:** Parents sometimes become angry when children have tantrums, either because of embarrassment or the misconception that their job is to control behavior. A parent's relationship with a child is much more important than other people's opinions. Children have tantrums because they don't know how to handle frustration. Trying to control a tantrum is like trying to control a storm and punishment only enhances frustration and fear. Stay close and give the child a chance to calm down. Then talk very simply about how strong feelings can be. Let the child know you didn't like the behavior, but reassure him or her of your love. Then move on. Be sure to model calm behavior yourself. Yelling, yanking and hitting are part of grown-up tantrums.

**Potty Learning:** According to the American Association of Pediatricians, potty training is the time when children are most vulnerable to abuse. After years of experience, adults have forgotten how hard this complex skill is. NEVER use punishment. See *Information Sheet #2, "Easy Potty Learning" for more.*

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DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES AND PARENTING

DEVELOPMENT	PARENTAL NURTURING	POTENTIAL ISSUES & RESPONSES
<p><b>2 TO 3 YEARS</b>                      Children are just beginning to understand their own feelings at this stage, but do not yet understand the feelings of others. Changes in behavior, including fears—crying when parents leave or shyness—are common. These signal a growing understanding of the world. An increased understanding of danger coupled with a powerful imagination and inability to distinguish between make-believe and reality combine to enhance fears. These fears are real to children. Resistance to being held by family friends or relatives is indicative of a healthy desire to have control over their own bodies. At this stage, children commonly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• say what they want and feel</li> <li>• argue or bargain with adults</li> <li>• say “No” when they mean “Yes”</li> <li>• may be ready for toilet training. (Don’t expect too much too soon.)</li> </ul>	<p>This is a time to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be clear and precise</li> <li>• state limits simply and in positive language</li> <li>• stop unwanted behavior with a suggested alternative—“It is not okay to throw the truck, but it is okay to push the truck on the floor.”</li> <li>• Praise positive behaviors. The most important task at this stage is to respect children’s feelings, which builds confidence and teaches them to respect others’ feelings. Help them put words to feelings and acknowledge that you feel the same way sometimes.</li> </ul> <p><i>Never shame, embarrass or punish children for their feelings.</i></p> <p>It is also important to respect children’s right to control their own bodies so they learn body safety and body privacy—hugs, kisses goodbye etc. need to be optional.</p>	<p>Plan ahead for responses that reflect parenting goals of providing a sense of security and providing structure. Ask yourself:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does this response demonstrate emotional support, unconditional love, respect for developmental level, sensitivity to needs and empathy with feelings?</li> <li>• Does this response provide clear expectations and behavior guidelines, explanations in keeping with the child’s level of understanding, support for the child’s learning process, or encouragement for independent thinking?</li> </ul> <p><b>Resisting bed time:</b> Consider reasons a child might cry or otherwise resist going to bed at night:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a sincere feeling of danger when alone powered by a mighty imagination and the inability to distinguish between imagination and reality</li> <li>• the inability to understand that when you leave, you will come back</li> <li>• the inability to express fears in words</li> <li>• increased stress when sensing parent becoming angry</li> <li>• stress or problems in the household (Children are gifted sensors.)</li> </ul> <p>Sticking to sleep routines and doing quiet things before bed will help children settle in without a struggle.</p> <p><b>Acting out when refused something:</b> First become aware of your reactions. Are feeling embarrassed? Sad because you can’t afford what your child wants? Like a bad parent because your child is unhappy? Remember it is okay for children not to get everything they want. And no one needs to be embarrassed when children act like . . . well children. While setting boundaries, do so keeping in mind that young children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lack an understanding of how stores and money work</li> <li>• do not understand why the desired object is not theirs</li> <li>• cannot express their feelings in words</li> <li>• are unable to understand how parents are feeling</li> <li>• have strong desires for independence and control over their world</li> </ul>
<p><b>Children’s fears:</b> It’s difficult to convince young children that the things they fear are not real because they don’t understand the difference between real and imaginary. Sometimes the best thing to do is to check under the bed or in the closet to show there’s nothing there, and then stay until they relax and fall asleep. Most of us dislike being alone in the dark. Even adult imaginations can run wild. Fear is a natural human response to feeling vulnerable. If we are aware of our own fears, we can understand children’s fears more easily. In cultures, where children sleep in their own rooms, extra effort may be needed to ensure children feel safe and protected.</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Children love and want to be loved and they very much prefer the joy of accomplishment to the triumph of hateful failure.                      Do not mistake a child for his symptom. (Erik Erikson)</i></p>		

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**DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES AND PARENTING**

<p><b>Discipline</b> is teaching, not punishing. Obedience is not the goal; nurturing self-discipline and teaching skills necessary for adulthood are the goals. A parent who is consistent with structure will help children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• grow into happy, healthy people with self-control</li> <li>• learn how to set her own limits, accept no, and make good choices</li> <li>• increase self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others</li> <li>• learn appropriate ways of getting their needs met</li> <li>• feel safe and secure</li> </ul>		<p>Understanding that we learn from—rather than get punished for—mistakes is essential. To set limits well, parents need to be consistent, which is time consuming, patient, self-confident, and mindful of children’s needs. A parent who is inconsistent trains children to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• manipulate and pit one parent against the other</li> <li>• argue relentlessly</li> <li>• feel unsafe and unparented</li> <li>• feel unfairly “picked on” and treated unfairly</li> </ul>
<p><b>DEVELOPMENT</b></p>	<p><b>PARENTAL NURTURING</b></p>	<p><b>POTENTIAL ISSUES &amp; RESPONSES</b></p>
<p><b>3 to 5 YEARS</b></p> <p>At this stage children are capable of initiating activities and asserting control over their world through social interactions and play. They want to know everything —what things are called, what they are for, and why things do what they do. This is also when they begin to understand rules. They are more likely to will follow rules when they understand the reasons for them. Playing is their “job.” They love to imaginary games at this stage, and pretend to be all kinds of things. This play is crucial to brain development and the development of empathy. Through it, they learn problem-solving, invent new things, and figure out how things work. At this stage, children evidence a desire to help. By “apprenticing” adult life, they build confidence. Learning to do tasks at home lays the foundation for future learning.</p>	<p>Initiative occurs when parents allow children to explore within limits and then support their choices. Anger, sadness, frustration...provide opportunities to help children name and manage their emotions. It is important to validate feelings and give concrete reasons. “Because I said so” dismisses feelings. Explaining “No candy now; it is too close to dinner when we eat food that will make us strong and healthy” provides principles they can internalize and apply to other situations—the foundation for self-discipline. It is more efficient to do chores ourselves, but encouraging children to help out, even if they can’t do a great job, gives them practice in learning something new and nurtures self-confidence. Assign tasks that are feasible for little hands and developing motor skills. Be patient as they work to master a new task and resist the temptation to redo tasks (at least in sight of the children).</p>	<p><b>Dangerous curiosity:</b> While it is important to respect curiosity and encourage learning, curiosity can lead children into dangerous situations. Clear rules, boundaries and a watchful eye are the best defense. When parents accompany children on adventures and help them find answers, children learn that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• it’s ok to not know everything</li> <li>• their ideas matter</li> <li>• there are many fun ways to find information and solve problems</li> </ul> <p><b>Dawdling:</b> Trying to get a child out the door or to the bath can be frustrating. Children usually dawdle for one of several reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• your demeanor: Children often freeze when a parent is stressed and rushed.</li> <li>• feeling tired, hungry or distracted by too much going on around them</li> <li>• being absorbed in their play because it feels so real</li> <li>• confusion: Multi-step directions can be too hard to follow.</li> <li>• being over-directed: Over-directed children will dawdle to regain some control in their lives.</li> </ul> <p>To keep things moving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don’t assume they are being intentionally unresponsive or disobedient.</li> <li>• Keep requests action-oriented and simple with smaller steps.</li> <li>• Get down on their level and engage with humor—i.e. put hat on backward for the child to fix.</li> <li>• Provide a choice that doesn’t compromise your schedule—“Do you want to tiptoe or hop out the door?”</li> <li>• Know your child. Some people simply do things more slowly.</li> <li>• Check yourself for continual directing of the child or a need to control things that don’t really matter.</li> <li>• Build extra time into your routines whenever possible.</li> </ul>

**Handout C**

**DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES AND PARENTING**

**Children’s anger:** A major task of childhood is learning to understand and express. Sometimes children’s emotions overwhelm them. Just as they had tantrums in the early years, they might have angry outbursts in the middle years. Or they might simply be silent, unable or afraid to express how they feel. It’s not really possible to have a calm conversation with children when they are very angry. The best thing to do is to simply stay nearby, letting them know that they are safe and loved. Staying calm models how to handle feelings in a positive way. Once the storm has passed, you talk about issues and consider solutions.

**EARLY ELEMENTARY YEARS**

**CHARACTERISTICS RELATED TO FAITH DEVELOPMENT**

- intuitive/literal thinkers
- eager to please
- limited ability to understand abstractions, space and time
- aware of justice and fairness/a highly operative sense of morality
- very sensitive to approval and disapproval
- aware of others’ feelings
- increased importance of peers
- connectedness with creation and other living creatures
- developing essential skill of setting personal boundaries

**NURTURING FAITH**

- God is understood as a superhero and is imbued with human characteristics.
  - Welcome participation in the family and the church family.
  - Provide models of grace, authenticity and integrity in faith.
  - Provide opportunities for service beyond the church.
  - Honor their concerns for persons, animals and creation.
  - Engage in role plays of Christian empathy (e.g. forgiveness) and events in Bible stories.
  - Provide opportunities to retell Bible events.
  - Teach specifics about Christian symbols, rhythms and rituals.
- \* **Building Block of Faith:** Industry vs. Inferiority→ Competence

**DEVELOPMENT**

Ability to cope with feelings improves. Language skills continue to grow. Children will begin to negotiate with parents as the desire for independence increases.

They will begin to imitate parents’ moods, coping styles, and attitudes. They begin to establish peer relationships, compare themselves with others, and desire to fit in.

They are increasingly influenced by the outside world and media.

Starting school is a major turning point for children (and parents), during which they must quickly learn to:

- manage on their own
- get along with many new children
- meet expectations of new adults
- follow new schedules and routines

**PARENTAL NURTURING**

Parental support is essential for children to develop a sense of pride and accomplishment. Otherwise they come to feel inferior and inadequate.

A priority task is to really hear children’s concerns. Follow up on concerns about experiences at school or other places.

With their growing coping skills and parental support, children can learn to soothe themselves.

Take note when children do well or behave properly. Let them help with other chores. Play together some every day. These activities build confidence and strengthen bonds.

Talk about how you see God’s hand in the world and in daily life so children can see that faith is a real, lived experience.

**ISSUES AND RESPONSES**

**Discipline** means to teach and is about guiding your child. It involves:

- setting limits with love and consistency
- monitoring television, computer, music and phone use
- Modeling attitudes, choices, and behaviors you want them to adopt

**Adapting to school:** Children may start school at the same time, but they are not the same. Differences in temperament affect how children respond to school. Some children will be excited and adapt quickly to the experience. Others will find the new environment stressful and difficult.

**Temperament** is inborn and cannot be changed. It is part of what makes each child unique. It is important for parents to recognize their children’s temperaments and respect their individuality. It is not possible to make an active child into an inactive one, or to make a less persistent child into a persistent one. But we *can* identify each child’s strengths and build on them, and identify each child’s unique challenges and create a supportive environment to help them thrive.

*For more on temperament and assessing temperament, see Information Sheet 1, “On Temperament.”*

**Safety from predators:** How children are treated at home affects their ability to talk openly about important issues. Inconsistent parenting, especially if it includes punishment or excessive strictness, makes children less likely to speak up if they are sexually abused. Not knowing what kind of response they will receive, they become fearful and shut down. Children who are hit do not feel the right to set boundaries for their own bodies. Punishment leads children to assume they are the “bad” ones in all situations so they don’t feel safe to tell parents what happened. Parenting that is focused on compliance also makes it less likely that children will stand up to *any* adult, putting them at greater risk for predation. Kidnappers and offenders typically look for compliant children.

**Criticism:** Some parents correct their children by telling them that they are bad, rude, or lazy . . . or they think their primary job is to critique children for simply being children. Such criticism feels like rejection, making children feel like failures. We all thrive on encouragement. Replacing criticism with encouragement can have a powerful effect. Children depend on us to build up their knowledge, skills, self-confidence and sense of self, which requires encouragement and support. Recognize you children’s efforts, appreciate their desire to help, support them when they fail, and remember they are children, not adults. Children who know their parents believe in them, come to believe in themselves . . . and learn that God believes in them.

**OLDER ELEMENTARY/EARLY ADOLESCENCE**

<p><b>CHARACTERISTICS RELATED TO FAITH DEVELOPMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● spiritual inquirers</li> <li>● abstract, reflective and practical thinkers</li> <li>● active/observational learners</li> <li>● increasing attention span</li> <li>● beginning logic and symbolic thought</li> <li>● developing individual ideas, skills, interests and talents</li> <li>● tend to adopt heroes and emulate adult role models</li> </ul> <p><b>* Building Block of Faith:</b> Identity vs. Role Confusion → Fidelity/loyalty</p>	<p><b>NURTURING FAITH</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● God is understood to be at work in systems that shape the world.</li> <li>● God is seen as the creator and a friend who cares about us personally.</li> <li>● Communicate belonging and welcome contribution to the family and the church family.</li> <li>● Provide “spiritual heroes”—models of grace, authenticity and integrity in faith.</li> <li>● Provide respite from increasing pressure of school.</li> <li>● Introduce Bible study skills, Bible history and chronology through charts.</li> <li>● Encourage them to identify and interpret biblical themes, such as forgiveness, grace and covenant.</li> <li>● Encourage making connections between Bible stories and their real-life experiences.</li> <li>● Nurture inquisitiveness and provide freedom to investigate faith</li> <li>● Provide opportunities for choice-making.</li> <li>● Avoid promoting competition (like sword drills)—relationship with God is not a contest.</li> <li>● Provide models of grace, authenticity and integrity in faith.</li> </ul>
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DEVELOPMENT	PARENTAL NURTURING	POTENTIAL ISSUES AND RESPONSES
<p>Friendships become increasingly important in this stage. Friendships are critical to emotional well-being and social development. They teach interpersonal skills, and lead to new interests.</p> <p>Self-identity is tied to performance and they often feel anxious, worried, and competitive.</p> <p>The need for independence and self-sufficiency increases. Children are</p>	<p>Keeping children safe while respecting their growing need for independence can be a challenge. To build a safety net:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Spend time together talking, listening and taking an interest in their concerns and interests. Openly discuss the physical and emotional changes of puberty and celebrate milestones.</li> <li>● Establish agreed upon rules and consequences.</li> <li>● Talk about risky activities and help them to plan ahead to respond to peer pressure. Discuss boundaries for behavior at home and away.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Family Conflict and Peer Pressure</b></p> <p>Parents may experience sadness, grief or confusion over children’s enhanced need for independence and focus on friends. It is important to acknowledge those feelings while remembering it is not rejection but a natural part of growing up. Parents need to be humble enough to give attention to children when they want it and space when they need it.</p> <p>Sometimes children will do things against parents’ wishes just to feel accepted. This can be a risky time with new influences or experimentation with behaviors while not yet having the knowledge and skills to safely navigate all aspects of life.</p>

**Handout C**

**DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES AND PARENTING**

<p>beginning to own their beliefs and figure out who they are as individuals. Family values and rules may be questioned.</p> <p>Puberty and physical growth spurts can lead to tiredness, moodiness or self-consciousness and relational changes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize accomplishments and encourage belief in abilities, strengths and special characteristics.</li> <li>• Be involved with school. Attend events.</li> <li>• Get to know teachers, friends and friends’ families.</li> <li>• Keep them involved in family life with activities and responsibilities.</li> <li>• Encourage volunteer activities or service to others.</li> <li>• Plan for the future together, encourage dreaming and goal-setting.</li> </ul>	<p>Parents need to listen, honor differences between themselves and their children, be cautious about being preachy. Rather look for “moments of openness” to discuss issues.</p> <p>Emotions can overwhelm children at this stage and lead to angry outbursts or sullenness. Conversations need to be reserved for when everyone is calm. Accept emotions as valid while Consistently holding children accountable for behavior. Discuss respectful ways to express emotions.</p>
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**Report cards:** Approach report cards as just one way to measure learning. Ask yourself how it felt the last time you were evaluated for anything? Depending on spoken or unspoken academic expectations, your child may be worry, feel embarrassed or internalize negative judgments. Your reaction will have a profound impact on your child and affect potential for future school success. Take time to review carefully and discuss all aspects of the report calmly to help both of you process the information. Parents who over-identify with their children will likely over-react to both high and low grades. Instead of focusing solely on grades, consider the overall learning process. Ask questions such as “What did you learn? What was most enjoyable? What do you think impacted your performance? What could you have done differently?” Finding out if your child understands why he or she received each grade can provide valuable insight for next steps. Develop a strategy together for the days ahead. This is a wonderful opportunity to show trust in a child’s ability to do better or to rethink unrealistic expectations to avoid unnecessary pressure. All children need to know that they are more than their school performance—whether “good” or “bad.”

**FOUNDATIONS FOR THE TEEN YEARS:** The relationship you have built during childhood will be the anchor for the journey through adolescence. Children who learned early in life that their parents can be trusted are more likely to listen to their advice during adolescence. Those whose independence was nurtured when they were young will be less likely to be influenced by their peers. If feelings were respected when they were little, they will be more likely to express fears and worries to parents. If confidence was fostered, they will be more able to believe in themselves during these tumultuous years. Support and guidance provided early on lays the foundation for teens to go to parents *before* trouble strikes.

**OLDER ADOLESCENCE**

<p><b>CHARACTERISTICS RELATED TO FAITH DEVELOPMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● seeking identity</li> <li>● a preoccupation with self that is characterized by ego-centrism and an extreme sense of uniqueness</li> <li>● grappling with big questions</li> <li>● experiential and experimental learners</li> <li>● logical-hypothetical thinkers who engage critical thinking</li> <li>● diminishing reliance on authority of community</li> <li>● interested in being committed to causes and groups</li> <li>● aware of a multiplicity of perspectives</li> <li>● difficulty distinguishing God’s work from human activity</li> </ul> <p><b>*Building Block of Faith:</b> Identity vs. Role Confusion → Fidelity/loyalty</p>	<p><b>NURTURING FAITH</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● God is seen as a confidant, guide and counselor who is concerned with personal behavior.</li> <li>● God understood as being at work behind the scenes often in ways that are not always clear.</li> <li>● Encourage reflection on activities in light of beliefs and experiences.</li> <li>● Provide guided practice in spiritual disciplines of discernment, such as Bible study, stillness, meditation, critical reflection, and service.</li> <li>● Create safe places for asking difficult questions, challenging assumptions, considering perspectives, and exploring issues that connect with their experiences of daily life.</li> <li>● Practice acceptance and trust—avoid communicating fears about “wrong” ideas or doubt.</li> <li>● Provide opportunities to participate in rituals of belonging, such as baptism/confirmation and the Lord’s Supper when they feel they can do so with integrity.</li> <li>● Encourage service related to their interests through church or other community organizations.</li> </ul>
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DEVELOPMENT	PARENTAL NURTURING	ISSUES AND RESPONSES
<p>Older adolescents are preparing for adulthood. They are at a crossroads in which emotions, hormones and body remain in flux. The prefrontal cortex, the area of the brain that provides judgment, is not yet developed and they have a sense of indestructibility/immortality. They think for themselves and are skilled at arguing their points of view.</p> <p>They make goals and pursue them, develop concern for others, and often struggle with their place in life. They may also rebel against parents. Rebellion usually subsides in later adolescence or early adulthood. Friendships and romantic relationships become more important.</p> <p>The main task of adolescence is to develop a sense of self. Questions like “Who am I?” or “What do I want to do with my life?” are at the forefront. Teens may “try on” various selves to see which fit and explore roles and ideas. Those who are successful at this stage will have a strong sense of identity and be able to remain true to their beliefs and values. When adolescents are apathetic, do not make a conscious search for identity, or are pressured to conform to parents’ ideas, they may develop a weak sense of self, experience role confusion, and be confused about the future.</p>	<p>While teens are approaching adulthood, they still need parenting.</p> <p>Work as a partnership to set clear rules for curfews, appropriate behavior, school attendance, homework, family obligations, drinking, sexuality, and motor vehicle safety—as a passenger and as a driver. Adjust rules according to age and maturity —increased freedom encourages self-control and self-correction.</p> <p>Listening and engaging remain critical. Family meals encourage sharing and a sense of family and support. Say, “ I love you” with both words and actions.</p> <p>Find ways of having fun together. Attend as many of the special events in your child’s life as you can.</p> <p>Balance respect for privacy with a realistic need to know what’s going on. Get to know their friends and daily activities. If it isn’t possible to have an adult home after school or during breaks, maintain structure and responsibilities that will keep teens occupied with healthy activities.</p>	<p><b>Rebellion</b> At this stage, children need more independence from their parents. However without a fully developed prefrontal cortex, they still need guidance and protection.</p> <p><b>With ordinary conflicts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know that some rebellion is normal as teens seek their own identities.</li> <li>• Be patient—one day’s passion may very well be superseded as quickly as it developed.</li> <li>• Remain respectful even when in conflict.</li> <li>• Apologize when you are wrong or make hasty judgments.</li> <li>• Stay consistent with consequences to avoid family chaos.</li> <li>• Treat mistakes as learning opportunities not as irreparable errors.</li> </ul> <p><b>Risky Behavior:</b> If drug abuse, illegal activities, anorexia, bulimia, depression, suicidal tendencies, inappropriate sexual activity or other signs of dangerous behaviors are apparent, take them seriously. Consequences can be severe and life-changing. Intervention is vital. Teens do get to make the choice in these situations. Be prayerful. Turn to specialists and get reputable professional help.</p>
<p><b>NOTE:</b> Parents who remember what it was like being a teen themselves will act with greater understanding and wisdom. Recognizing that mistakes made as a teen were part of your learning will help give balance to this potentially trying time. The Teen years can be a time of joy and awakening toward adult mental and spiritual capacities. If approached with respect and understanding, your time with your almost young adult can be a wonderful experience.</p>		

**Sources**

*Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting*, Dr. Joan Durrant, PhD (By permission of the USAlliance to End Hitting of Children.)

Age-appropriate Disciple-formation, Cassandra Williams, EdD (Download at <http://abhms.org/resources/>)

\*Erik Erikson’s stage theory of psychosocial development proposes that during each stage, a person experiences a psychosocial crisis (e.g. autonomy v. shame and doubt) which could have a positive or negative outcome for personality development. Successfully resolving the crisis results in a virtue (self-determination or agency). This theory provides the foundation for the identified “Building Blocks of Faith.”