



## **Milestone 7: Preparing for Adolescence (Age 11)**

**Prepare yourself and commit yourself to talking about and explaining the changes that take place during the adolescent years.**

Parents, be ready for this interesting time of change, transformation, and maturity in the life of your child. If it hasn't started already, it will very soon. This period of time, from as early as 8 or 9 until 18-21, is called adolescence. Adolescence is the stage of growth in a person between childhood and adulthood. Your child will experience many physical, mental, psychological, and sexual changes. Your child's body will be preparing itself for the ability to have children and parenthood. This physical development is called puberty.

Parents, you have the greatest opportunity and responsibility to explain all of these things to your child. For all of us, as adults who have gone through adolescence, we understand the awkward, uncomfortable, and at times confusing changes that take place. Our children need us to help them navigate these changes. They need us to let them know that these are all natural changes. This is a good and exciting time of maturing and preparation for adulthood. Our children need us to help them learn the new responsibilities they have as a maturing adolescent. They need to know that we are here to help them and to answer any questions.

This milestone is intended to help you become educated and to equip you to start the conversation about all the unique changes that are happening, or will soon be happening, in your child's life. The purpose of parenting is to raise lifetime, mature, adult followers of Christ. This is one of the milestones to get them there, as the move from childhood to adulthood. We hope that this milestone will provide you guidance and answer the questions when, what, and how to give your child a basic understanding of what will happen to them during this transitional time.

Ideally, fathers should talk to their sons and mothers should talk to their daughters about this information. However, any parent can be effective.

## **When do I have “the talk”?**

By the age of eleven, children are typically ready to receive instruction and guidance about this stage of adolescence. By this point, they have likely heard things and have started to become curious. As a parent, you should know where your child is developmentally. It is best to talk to them before these changes occur, and as soon as you start to notice some of them occurring. This discussion will, undoubtedly, be awkward for parents and children, but be strong and do your best to ease their discomfort. Your children will be blessed to know that they are not alone and that what is happening to them is not wrong, bad, or weird.

## **What do I say?**

Plan to talk to your child about the many areas that they will encounter change during this time of transition, including their body, their mind, and their relationships.

1. **Body** - There will be many physical changes that happen, and this is true for both boys and girls. Your discussion about these changes should be more than just a talk about sexual abstinence. These are changes that are helping them to mature, to be prepared to enjoy marriage and parenthood later in life.
2. **Mind** - Your child is entering into the age of accountability - they are able to discern right from wrong. You need to talk to your child about them assuming responsibility for their decisions. They need to be guided and blessed to be free, but wise thinkers. This is a time to direct them to make wise decisions with their health, habits, and relationships. This will involve trust, responsibility, and discipline.
3. **Relationships** - Your child is maturing into an adult. Your relationship with them will need to change, along with all of the other changes that are taking place. You will transition from teacher to coach. To prepare them, they will need opportunity to both fail and succeed. As a coach, you train them and let them play. Your child will also begin to change in their relationships with the opposite sex. You will need to guide them in those changes as well.

## **How do I prepare for this?**

1. **Equip yourself.** Read the recommended books. Search for articles from trustworthy sources. Listen to a podcast. Do whatever it takes to be prepared, intellectually, for the things you will be discussing.
2. **Pray for God to guide you and give you the strength and courage to start these conversations with your child.**
3. **Schedule a special time or trip with your child to begin this discussion.**
4. **Create an open environment for open communication for your child to share, talk, and discuss with you.**
5. **Be a good listener.** All questions or thoughts are welcome. Hear them out. Don't judge, lecture, belittle, or jump to conclusions.

### **Next Steps in Your Faith @ Home Journey...**

- Pray daily for and with your child.
- Consistently spend time in God's Word.
- Schedule and have regular family times.
- Schedule time to have "the talk".

### **Recommended Readings...**

Preparing for Adolescence Family Guide and Workbook (by James Dobson)

Suddenly They're 13 (by David and Claudia Arp)

Season of Change: Preparing you Middle Schooler with Passion and Purpose  
(by Rebecca Ingram Powell)