Personal Safety & Healthy Child Development

kids in the know ®

For parents with children 11–12 YEARS

The purpose of this sheet is to provide parents and educators with background information on child development and personal safety that will help with making important decisions in the best interest of children's personal safety.

The Growing Personality

Children 11 to 12 years of age...

» Start puberty.

» Develop "crushes."

» Start to see life more objectively in more "shades of grey," rather than in black and white.

» Acquire pride and enjoyment from doing something well (i.e. academics, sports, music, art, friendships, etc.).

» Start to imagine what they might become in the future.

» Are developing their identity. They verbally compare themselves to others to figure out who they are.

» Having things in common with friends becomes less important than talking together and confiding.

» Have an increased capacity to empathize.

» Conscience provides them with more guidance.

» Test limits as they seek greater independence, discovering how it feels to be brave and confident (they may fluctuate between seeming bold/defiant and clingy).

» Feel things more intensely as they have a broader emotional scope.

» Experience adult-like sadness that shouldn't be trivialized. They mourn losses deeply.

» Have a heightened sense of embarrassment (especially girls).

» Can be vulnerable to someone who offers insincere flattery.

» Understand justice and integrity, and can be outraged by those treated unfairly.

» Seek increased privacy as they experiment with independence.

What do 11- to 12-year-old children want to do?

» Chat, message and/or text using different apps.

» Research topics using search engines.

» Use the internet for school work.

» Play online games.

» Take pictures and/or make videos using their devices.

» Share images and videos as part of chats/messaging conversations.

» Use social networking apps; creating profiles, sharing content and/or chatting.

» Play video games through a console.

» Watch, share and create videos online using websites like YouTube®.

» Stay home alone.

» Babysit.

» Start confiding in friends.

» Experiment with relationships (intimacy).

» Go out for Halloween with friends.

» Go to sleepovers.

» Go to overnight camps.

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Things to Consider

» Closely monitor their increased independence.

» Reinforce that the internet is a public place just like the store, the neighbourhood, the playground or going to someone's house, and set the expectation that you will monitor them online to increase their safety.

» Reinforce household guidelines for internet use and set limits on the amount of time spent online.

» Use parental controls on your computer and other devices.

» Explain where it is appropriate for them to have privacy — confiding in close friends face-to-face, writing in a journal, private space in their bedroom, etc. There is no privacy on the internet.

» Reinforce the importance of being careful with whom they choose to share their personal thoughts and information, and considering how it can be misused.

» Reinforce the importance of respecting other's private information.

» Provide adult monitoring of online activities.

» Explain to children that there is no need or urgency to respond to messages. Teach children not to respond to messages that make them feel uncomfortable, scared or unsure and if they come across such messages, to tell a *safe adult*.

» Know your children's passwords and usernames.

» Explain to them that they may come across sexually graphic material online that is about violence and harm and not about a healthy relationship.

» Provide adult supervision for video chats.

» Explain that once a picture is sent online they lose control of what is done with it and that it may never be completely removed from the internet. Explain that information can be misused by some people so it needs to be protected.

» Teach them that it is illegal for people to make, access, possess or distribute naked or sexually explicit pictures of children under 18 years of age. They need to tell a *safe adult* if they are presented with this situation.

» Explain to children that it is illegal to threaten someone online or offline. If someone threatens them, they need to tell a safe adult.

» Reinforce the concept of anonymity on the internet and that people can pretend to be anyone.

» Talk about healthy and unhealthy relationships.

» Explain that relationships started online need to be adult supervised. Children should never meet someone in person that they first met online without an accompanying parent.

» Communicate openly, listening and acknowledging feelings.

» Ensure that they have more than one *safe adult* they can talk to (e.g. a parent, aunt, grandparent, teacher, etc.).

» Talk to them about the kind of person they feel they are and the kind of person they want to be. Discuss positive role models and your family's values.

» Encourage involvement in offline activities and focus on their identified strengths.

This information sheet was created after consulting multiple sources by multiple professionals, including: Linda Ashford, Ph.D.; Sharon W. Cooper, M.D.; Gavin de Becker; Erik Erikson, Ph.D.; Jay Giedd, M.D.; William Glasser, M.D.; Daniel Goleman, Ph.D.; Michael Gurian, Ph.D.; Kenneth Lanning, MS; Mary Anne Layden, Ph.D.; Linnea W. Smith, M.D.; Judith Lewis Herman, M.D.; Amy Lynch, Ph.D. (O.T); Jean Piaget, Ph.D.; David A. Sousa, EdD; and Deborah Yurgelun-Todd, Ph.D. Final content and arrangement done by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc.