

Your eighth grader is changing...

PHYSICALLY

- Needs 9-11 hours of sleep each night and may easily fatigue or develop headaches
- Girls outpace guys in development
- Guys experience changes in height and body shape, and may develop body odor, body hair, and increased muscle mass
- Girls experience a significant growth spurt, development of body odor, body hair, and breasts; menstruation is likely (10-16 years)

MENTALLY

- Capable of self-evaluation and self-critique
- Able to see two sides of an argument
- Enjoys forming and sharing their opinion
- Growing ability to organize

SOCIALLY

- Often interested in pop culture, slang, current events, or politics
- Wants to negotiate rules
- Displays an increasingly adult-like personality
- Needs non-parental adult influences
- More concerned about personal appearances than personal environment (the state of their locker or bedroom)

EMOTIONALLY

- Enjoys sarcasm and sophisticated jokes
- Often interested in leadership roles and teaching younger children
- May emphasize physical appearance and performance
- Tends to overschedule their time
- Often feels more comfortable in their own skin

GIVE OPTIONS WHENEVER POSSIBLE.

Remember when you had a two-year-old who wanted to "do it myself?" Your teenager's resistance may not come in the form of a toddler tantrum, but the emotions may feel familiar. Whenever possible, give options so they have some freedom to choose.

RE-DEFINE THE CONVERSATION.

Your eighth grader may answer your questions with one word, an eye-roll, or an all-too-clear facial expression. But don't mistranslate the cues. Eighth graders actually want to have adult conversations sometimes. Be available—even if it seems a little pointless.

EIGHTH GRADERS ARE SMART.

In fact, there may be no phase quite as smart as this one—just ask them. Being so much smarter than everyone else can really become a burden. Sometimes their patience just runs out, and they simply can't explain it to you one more time. On some occasions, have fun going toe-to-toe with your eighth grader and challenge them back. Just remember, the important thing is how they personalize what they believe in this phase. So encourage their personal discoveries.

SO DON'T MISS IT.

IT'S JUST A PHASE

YOUR ROLE IS TO AFFIRM THEIR PERSONAL JOURNEY

Your eighth grader is cool. No longer at the mercy of an uncontrollable emotional outburst, eighth graders are increasingly able to self-regulate their actions, emotions, and activities. But, this emerging sense of control creates a new kind of tension for your teenager to resolve. When you consistently affirm their journey through this sometimes-turbulent season, you help them gain stability.

THINKS LIKE AN ENGINEER	You help them learn when you CONNECT THE DOTS.
WANTS TO KNOW, "WHO DO I WANT TO BE?"	You capture their heart when you PROVIDE STABILITY.
IS MOTIVATED BY ACCEPTANCE	You coach their moral abilities when you AFFIRM THEIR VALUE.

THIS YEAR YOU WILL PROVOKE DISCOVERY SO YOUR EIGHTH GRADER WILL OWN THEIR OWN FAITH AND VALUE A FAITH COMMUNITY.

Your eighth grader wants to discover how faith applies to them, right now. Connect Biblical truth to their everyday world by purchasing a youth Bible, so they have access to articles and devotional copy that can inspire them. And, connect faith to everyday experiences through conversations at home.

SAY THINGS LIKE . . .

"CAN WE PRAY ABOUT THIS TOGETHER?"

"HOW CAN I PRAY FOR YOU TODAY / THIS WEEK?"

"GOD MADE YOU, HE KNOWS YOU, AND HE LOVES YOU."

WHAT WOULD BE A FUN WAY WE COULD SERVE OTHERS TOGETHER?

(Consider serving at your church or a local ministry that appeals to your eighth grader's interests.)

"THE WAY YOU LIVE CAN SHOW OTHERS WHO JESUS IS."

"GOD WILL NEVER STOP LOVING YOU."



Instill purpose by starting the day with encouraging words.



Interpret life during informal conversation as you travel.



Establish values with intentional conversations while you eat together.



Listen to their heart by staying available just in case.



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