

## Your child at 6 - 8 years...

Middle childhood brings many changes in a child's life. By this time, children can dress themselves, catch a ball more easily using only their hands, and tie their shoes. Having independence from family becomes more important now. Events such as starting school bring children this age into regular contact with the larger world. Friendships become more and more important. Physical, social, and mental skills develop quickly at this time. This is a critical time for children to develop confidence in all areas of life, such as through friends, schoolwork, and sports.

### Developmental milestones:

#### Social/Emotional

Children in this age group might:

- Show more independence from parents & family.
- Start to think about the future.
- Understand more about his or her place in the world.
- Pay more attention to friendships and teamwork.
- Want to be liked and accepted by friends.

#### Thinking and Learning

Children in this age group might:

- Show rapid development of mental skills.
- Learn better ways to describe experiences and talk about thoughts and feelings.
- Have less focus on one's self and more concern for others.

### Positive Parenting Tips

- Show affection for your child. Recognise their accomplishments.
- Help your child develop a sense of responsibility—ask them to help with household tasks, such as setting the table.
- Talk with your child about school, friends, and things they look forward to in the future.
- Talk with your child about respecting others. Encourage them to help people in need.
- Help your child set her own achievable goals—they will learn to take pride in themselves and rely less on approval or reward from others.
- Help your child learn patience by letting others go first or by finishing a task before going out to play. Encourage them to think about possible consequences before acting.
- Make clear rules and stick to them, such as how long your child can watch TV or when they have to go to bed. Be clear about what behaviour is okay and what is not okay.
- Do fun things together as a family, such as playing games, reading, and going to events in your community.
- Get involved with your child's school. Meet the teachers and staff and get to understand their learning goals and how you and the school can work together to help your child do well.
- Continue reading to your child. As your child learns to read, take turns reading to each other.
- Use discipline to guide and protect your child, rather than punishment to make them feel bad about themselves. Follow up any discussion about what not to do with a discussion of what to do instead.
- Praise your child for good behaviour. It's best to focus praise more on what your child does ("you worked hard to figure this out") than on traits she can't change ("you are smart").
- Support your child in taking on new challenges. Encourage them to solve problems, such as a disagreement with another child, on their own.
- Encourage your child to join school and community groups, such as a team sports, or to take advantage of volunteer opportunities.

## Your child at 9 - 11 years...

Your child's growing independence from the family and interest in friends might be obvious by now. Healthy friendships are very important to your child's development, but peer pressure can become strong during this time. Children who feel good about themselves are more able to resist negative peer pressure and make better choices for themselves. This is an important time for children to gain a sense of responsibility along with their growing independence. Also, physical changes of puberty might be showing by now, especially for girls. Another big change children need to prepare for during this time is starting secondary school.

### Developmental milestones:

#### Social/Emotional

Children in this age group might:

- Start to form stronger, more complex friendships and peer relationships. It becomes more emotionally important to have friends, especially of the same sex.
- Experience more peer pressure.
- Become more aware of his or her body as puberty approaches.

#### Thinking and Learning

Children in this age group might:

- Face more academic challenges at school.
- Become more independent from the family.
- Begin to see the point of view of others more clearly.
- Have an increased attention span.

### Positive Parenting Tips

- Spend time with your child. Talk with them about their friends, their accomplishments, and what challenges they will face.
- Be involved with your child's school. Go to school events; meet your child's teachers.
- Encourage your child to join school and community groups, such as a sports team, or to be a volunteer for a charity.
- Help your child develop their own sense of right and wrong. Talk with them about risky things friends might pressure them to do, like smoking or dangerous physical dares.
- Help your child develop a sense of responsibility—involve your child in household tasks like cleaning and cooking. Talk with your child about saving and spending money wisely.
- Meet the families of your child's friends.
- Talk with your child about respecting others. Encourage them to help people in need. Talk with them about what to do when others are not kind or are disrespectful.
- Help your child set their own goals. Encourage them to think about skills and abilities they would like to have and about how to develop them.
- Make clear rules and stick to them. Talk with your child about what you expect from them (behaviour) when no adults are present. If you provide reasons for rules, it will help them to know what to do in most situations.
- Use discipline to guide and protect your child, instead of punishment to make them feel badly about themselves.
- When using praise, help your child think about their own accomplishments. Saying "you must be proud of yourself" rather than simply "I'm proud of you" can encourage your child to make good choices when nobody is around to praise them.
- Talk with your child about the normal physical and emotional changes of puberty.
- Encourage your child to read every day. Talk with them about their homework.
- Be affectionate and honest with your child, and do things together as a family.