



5 Fast Facts

About Identity Development During Adolescence

During adolescence, we form a deeper sense of who we are, what we value, and who we want to be. Healthy development in adolescence involves creating a positive sense of self and belonging, based on our values and aspirations.

Following are five facts about how we develop our values, goals, and identity during adolescence:

- 1 As our cognitive abilities mature throughout adolescence, we're able to think in more complex, abstract ways that help us engage in [self-reflection on a deeper level](#).**
Our brains mature in ways that help us better understand others' perspectives and also make us [more sensitive to social feedback](#).
- 2 Our sense of identity can [impact the choices we make](#).**
For example, if we see ourselves as a hard-working student, we may skip that party to stay home and study.
- 3 Adolescence is a key window for understanding [our racial-ethnic](#) and sexual identities.**
The challenge for youth from historically stigmatized groups is that too often they are being [defined by others](#) in ways that are grounded in [negative stereotypes](#). [Support to develop](#) a positive sense of these parts of our identity can build our [wellbeing](#) and resilience.
- 4 To build a positive sense of identity, we need safe environments and opportunities to explore our place in the world.**
Programs that focus on supporting [racial and ethnic pride](#) or that provide [accepting spaces](#) for LGBTQ youth can support positive behavioral and mental health. [Sports](#) and other [extracurricular activities](#) are also environments where young people can build a sense of social identity that boosts self-worth and social skills.
- 5 As adults, we can help create opportunities for youth to explore roles and activities that can help them determine what they value and who they want to become.**
We can also ensure access to images and messages that affirm and support pride in racial, gender, or other identities.

For more research-based information about developing values, goals, and identity in adolescence, visit developingadolescent.org/core-science-of-adolescence/developing-values-goals-and-identity or read the council report [The Intersection of Adolescent Development and Anti-Black Racism](#) by the National Scientific Council on Adolescence.