



5 Fast Facts

About Our Need to Feel Respected During Adolescence

During adolescence, physical and cognitive changes combine with new social contexts in ways that increase our sensitivity to belonging and earning respect from those around us. This heightened attention to our place in a wider social world motivates us to adapt to the more complex social demands of adulthood.

Following are 5 research-based facts about the need for respect and social status during adolescence:

- 1** During adolescence, changes in our **bodies** and **brains** motivate us to **tune in to the social world** around us.
Feeling rewarded from **positive attention** appears to peak in adolescence, motivating us to find ways to earn approval from those around us.
- 2** Programs that support our increasing desire for autonomy and respect **appear to be more effective** than other interventions during our adolescent years.
Relationships and environments that provide empathy, support, and positive pathways to earn status can **improve academic motivation** and **increase the effectiveness of health interventions** aimed at young people.
- 3** The flip side of our **increased sensitivity to social reward** is the pain of being disrespected or socially rejected.
Research indicates that when we feel as though we are being excluded by peers, **we report greater distress and show greater activity compared to adults in a brain region** associated with higher levels of depression in general.
- 4** Experiences that make us feel disrespected or treated as though we don't belong thus **become powerful social threats**.
The **negative effects of racism, discrimination, and other forms of exclusion** are amplified when we're adolescents—making efforts to eliminate or at least mitigate exposure to racism and bias for youth especially important.
- 5** Youth need ample **positive pathways** to channel their desire for belonging and respect into activities that help them find a meaningful place in the world.

For more research-based information about developing values, goals, and identity in adolescence, visit developingadolescent.org/core-science-of-adolescence/respect-and-social-status.