

Stage of Concern--7 to 12 years old

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Between age 7 and 12 years old, your child begins to spend a great deal of time in relationship with others, outside of the parents' control. This can be a source of uneasiness for parents. The child interacts with new relationships and environments with all their challenges and the impulses they call forth. Your child's ability to handle these new experiences isn't not because you are there with your child to help them navigate but because they have internalized what you have taught them. They are developing an inner moral compass that will serve them throughout their whole life.

Inside each child is the impulse to do will best helps them to become an adult. This is a part of each of our nature--part of God's plan. There is an

inner drive to attach and separate and reattach, explore and differentiate and develop their own identity. This happens with siblings, peers, friends and unlike much of the parent--child dynamic, this is a two-way relationship. They are asking themselves, "How do I fit in?" and "Who do I like to be with?"

Up until now, the child has been focused on survival, self-development, and achieving personal power. The previous stage helped them to develop a sense of themselves relating to their parents and siblings. Now they begin the task of reorienting themselves to a larger world, they begin to make room in their lives for other people besides family. Usually during this stage, the child learns how to form successful friendships with same-sex peers and learns to care about the feelings of others.

What they need:

- This age child needs wisdom and guidance from you, their parents. On the foundation of a loving relationship between you and your child, they will confide in you their struggles and seek your input and guidance. If the parent is over- or under-involved in their child's life, this is a cue to look at their own wounding from this stage in their life and begin to recognize what needs to be healed.
- Preteens need to take risks and understandably, this causes parents to feel distressed. Some time ago, I heard a new parenting term-- ***being a hummingbird parent***. Instead of hovering and micro-managing like the helicopter parent, the hummingbird parent sits nearby, zooms in when necessary and zooms out again. As children grow in age, the parents can step back further to allow more freedom while still being available when needed. I really like this model. We need to assess what is needed and sometimes engage, sometimes back off. For more on this: www.coachmyrna.org/blog/hummingbird-parenting
- As much as possible, try to like and approve of their friends—invite them over, get to know them, provide food and a place to hang out.

Instead of lecturing, ask guiding questions.

- Provide balance—step in to help them resolve the tension between wanting to belong vs sense of right and wrong.
- Loving our children means being emotionally available but also respect privacy and need to try things out.
- At this stage, children move from being self-centered to caring for others. Find ways to encourage and support this developing characteristic is important.

FAMILY TOOL: Family meetings create opportunities to build relationships, solve problems and having the whole family engaged in the process of cooperating together. The purpose of the family meeting is three-fold.

- It is an opportunity to create connection.
- Everyone works together to make a schedule that fits everyone's needs.
- It is an opportunity to share your family values with your children.

Meeting together once a week with a family calendar helps to create the necessary structure needed for harmonious living and it communicates that your family is a priority. Discover more about how to host your first family meeting or enhance your current one here:

www.coachmyrna.org/blog/making-family-a-priority

To purchase my book on

Amazon: www.amazon.com/gp/product/B09L7KS5VH

If you would like to know more about what I offer as a coach, please visit my website: www.coachmyrna.org/ Find out more about Safe Conversations www.coachmyrna.org/safe-conversations.html.

