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Getting Connected on Zoom

- When not speaking, please put yourself on ***mute*** to avoid background noise
- We would love to "see" you but also understand the complex world of video calls – do what's best for you! If you feel comfortable, please turn on your camera.
- Go ahead and pull up the chat feature on your Zoom as we will utilize that feature throughout the presentation. We encourage discussion, questions, and feedback.
- No worries/pressure about avoiding unwanted interruptions. We are doing the best we can!

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Objectives

- Defining Middle Childhood
- Typical Development of Middle Childhood
 - Physical
 - Cognitive/Learning
 - Social/Emotional
- **COVID-19 Considerations**
- Advice for Parents
- Impact of Divorce during Middle Childhood Years
- Application of Information in Case Scenarios
- Resources

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Before We Get Started...

Go to www.menti.com and enter 2391082: In three words, describe how COVID-19 has impacted youth/families you have served (particularly in middle childhood)?

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Middle Childhood Years (6-12)

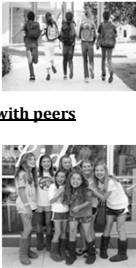
- What comes to mind when you think of the middle childhood years?
- What challenges or developmental tasks do children face during the middle childhood years?
- What would you like to learn about middle childhood and how it applies to your work?



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General Overview of Middle Childhood

- Age range = 6-12 years
- Several milestones during this time:
 - More exposure to school settings (varies)
 - Start of puberty
 - Worldview extends outward from **family** to **relationships with peers and other adults** – contact with the larger world
 - Receive feedback from the outside world
 - Important time to develop confidence and self-concept
 - Friendships become more important
 - Preparing for adolescence



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Important to Note...

- Development is a continuous process and children develop at different rates
- Description of milestones cover what is **typically common** during this age
- **What are some things that could delay typical development?**
 - Individual differences of children
 - Difficulties with providing appropriate caregiving
 - Environmental stressors
 - Trauma
 - Other risk factors (e.g., intellectual developmental disorder, medical difficulties)



(Healthy People 2020)

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Major Markers of Physical Development

- Girls tend to develop faster than boys
- More physical abilities and desire for independence
 - CDC – highlights safety risk for this age – importance for supervision
 - Learn how to look for traffic, knowing when to ask for help
- Can play and benefit from organized sports/games
 - Understand rules and cooperation with others
- Beginning of puberty



(Texas State University Extension, National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

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Puberty During Middle Childhood

- When does puberty typically begin for girls and for boys?
 - Girls = between 8 and 13
 - Boys = between 9 and 14
- At what age is puberty **considered early** for girls and for boys?
 - Girls = before 8 years
 - Boys = before 9 years



(National Research Council, Duke Health, 2013; Mayo Clinic, NCI)

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Video on Early Puberty

<https://www.thedoctorstv.com/articles/3186-early-puberty-what-parents-should-know>



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Possible Causes for Early Puberty

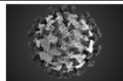
- For most, there is no known cause; however a few risk factors have been identified:
 - Female
 - Obesity
 - African American
 - Exposure to Hormones (medication or environment/food)
 - Other Medical Conditions
- **How can early puberty be a potential risk factor for girls?**
 - Cognitive and social/emotional development does not match physical development
 - Advances from others may not be understood



(Duke Health, 2013; Overholser, M)

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COVID-19 Considerations

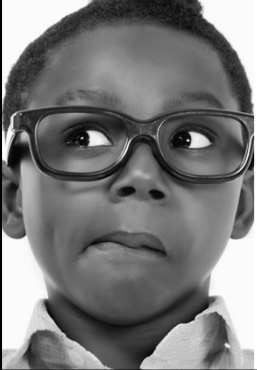


Physical Development:

- Fewer opportunities for team sports and coordinated play
- Study of parent/caregiver (n = 211) report of physical and sedentary activity of their 5-13 year-olds:
 - 9-13 year-olds (compared to 5-8-year-olds) less physical activity and more sedentary behavior
 - **Most common type of activity:** free-play/unstructured play and going on walks
 - **Most common location for activity:** at home or in neighborhood streets
- Parents and schools getting creative about how to support and encourage physical activity

(CDC, 2020; Damann, Cho, & Wang, 2020)

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Major Markers of Cognitive/Learning Development


- Ability to understand world continues to grow – branching out from family to other adults and peers
- "Rapid developmental of mental skills"
- Differentiates between fantasy and reality better
- Tells time
- Understands commands with multiple instructions
- Shifts attention between tasks
- Gives more thought to decisions and can think about the future

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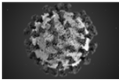
Major Markers of Cognitive/Learning Development

- Can understand the use of objects
- Reads developmentally appropriate books
- Ability to read is growing
- Can write stories
- Ability to utilize phone/technology
- Less **egocentric** – can understand others' point of view and shows more concern for others
- Can better describe own thoughts and feelings
- Active imagination


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COVID-19 Considerations



Cognitive/Learning/Academic Development:

- Difficulties with focus or organization – may have more challenges attending in Zoom school and independent work
- Pressure on parents – monitoring school and multiple demands
- Ways parents and schools can work together (flexibility, fewer demands): parents and teachers supporting one another
- Making sure parents have own support (feelings of isolation and guilt) and encouragement
- Limited opportunities for peer-engagement (becomes more important during this stage) – more on that in next section

(Warner, 2020; Natterman, 2020)

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More on Cognitive Development: Jean Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development

• Four stages of cognitive development:

- 1. Sensorimotor Stage (0-2)
- 2. Preoperational Stage (2-7)
- 3. **Concrete Operational Stage (7-11)**
- 4. Formal Operational Stage (11+)



• Concrete Operational Stage

- *Operational thought* –can use rules and apply them to physical objects (can play games and likes to build things)
- *Mental operation* –they can work a problem out in their head rather than in action
- Awareness of external world and perspective-taking of others

Wood, Smith, & Grossniklaus, 2001; McLeod, 2018

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Major Markers of Social/Emotional Development

- Can cooperate and share
- Occasional temper tantrums are normal –ability to express self develops
- Likes to play games – understands rules
- Enjoys clubs and groups
- Growing **importance of friendships/relationships** with outside world
 - Will look to feedback on own self-perception
 - Impact development of self-esteem and self-efficacy
 - Worry about what others think
- Desires more independence from family as friendships grow
- Increased interest in opposite gender
- Likes talking to others – communication is more effective as they grow



Iowa State University Extension, Overstreet, ND; National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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Self-Concept and the "Tween" Years

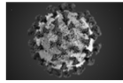
- **Self-concept is developing by comparing to others**
 - Can be impacted by messages from peers, parents, teachers, and media
- **"Tween" Years:** Around middle school (8-12 years)
 - Transitioning to teenage years
 - Want independence and need to fit in with others
 - Sense of self develops – may go through phases with exploration of different interests (development of self-esteem and self-concept)
 - Target for marketers – heavy consumers of media, clothing, and products to look "cool"
 - Examples?



Overstreet, ND; O'Donnell, 2017

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COVID-19 Considerations



Social/Emotional Development:

Friendships very important at this age – impact of social distancing

- Important to stay connected
 - Creative ways to stay connected and physically distanced?
 - Risk of Social Media – importance of monitoring

Warner, 2020; Nutbrown, 2020

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Tips for Parents of Children in Middle Childhood

- Encourage reading time
- Limit and **monitor** screen time
- Play games with child – better understand rules now
- Encourage joining groups and clubs, if possible
- Spend some uninterrupted time together (give full attention)
- Set clear and consistent rules and stick to them – they can better understand consequences



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Tips for Parents of Children in Middle Childhood

- Praise and recognize accomplishments often
 - Focus praise on what your child does rather than traits ("I liked how hard you worked" vs. "You are so smart!")
- Independence is important – find ways to develop sense of responsibility (help with tasks at home)
- Encourage respect to others and helping people in need – can take perspective of others
- Encourage child to talk about thoughts/feelings
 - Encourage talk about peer pressure and how to navigate tricky relationship situations
- Get involved with child's school and get to know friends



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Discussing COVID-19 With Your Family

- Ensure that you are in a comfortable, safe spot in your home
- Can cover the following topics:
 - What the current outbreak is
 - How it is contracted
 - What are the possible dangers
 - Protective steps being taken in community/nation
 - Protective steps everyone in family are taking
- Encourage questions and open discussion
- Provide honest, developmentally appropriate answers
 - "We may not know the answers to everything, but we are doing everything we can to keep our family safe by XYZ."



NCTSN, 2020

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Encouraging Questions, Understanding, and Open Discussions

- Try to identify feelings and validate them
 - Can be done in creative ways (e.g., drawing, music, other creative outlets)
 - Sesame Street's Dancing Emotions:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZwcFltsOfz4>
What are emotions you've identified in your own children or children you serve?
- Clarify misinformation and misunderstanding
- Provide comfort and patience to your children and yourself
- Check back in on a regular basis or as situation changes

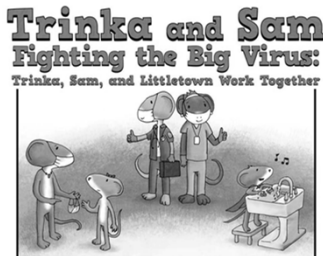


NCTSN, 2020

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NCTSN Resource: Trinka and Sam Story

Available at the NCTSN: https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/special-resource/trinka-and-sam_fighting_the_big_virus.pdf



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Parenting In A Pandemic

- Too many resources? Too many pieces of guidance?
- Feeling burned out, stressed, frustrated, sad, etc.?
 - *It's okay to acknowledge that this is hard.*
- Families weren't made to live in social/physical distancing.
- Take a moment to check in with the expectations you have for yourself, and remember:

"YOU ARE ENOUGH."
- Special moments of connection (no matter how small) is what your children will remember.



(Pattakian, 2020)

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NCTSN Resource: Coping in Hard Times for Parents

Link: https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/coping_in_hard_times_parents.pdf



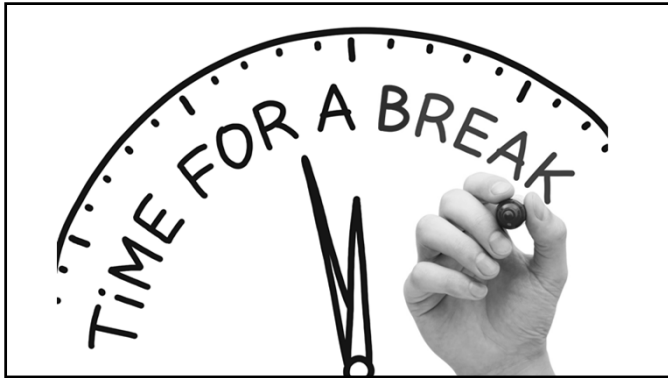
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Case Scenario #1: Delinquency Scenario

- What is the significance of the 12-year-old developmental level, maturity, and psychological status?
- How would these be evaluated?
- What evidence do you want?
- What will you decide?



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Impact of Divorce

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKcNyfXb0zQ>



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Impact of Divorce

- The goal of a home to be a safe, predictable, consistent, and nurturing place can happen in families disrupted by divorce
- **Conflict** of caregivers predicts child maladjustment/difficulties
- Impact of divorce (several considerations):
 - Conflict prior to divorce (relief)
 - Continued conflict impacting child (post-divorce)
 - Conflict was hidden (divorce can be a shock)
 - Financial strain can cause additional stressors and changes



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Short-Term Impact of Divorce



- **Grief for Multiple Losses**
 - Parent, friends/peers, and other significant others they don't see as often
 - Sadness, anger, withdrawal, anxiety
- **Financial Constraints/Standards of Living**
 - New financial constraints can cause changes to child
 - Fewer new toys, eating at restaurants, parents could get new job, rent changes, healthcare changes
- **Adjustment Period for New Settings**
 - Home, neighborhood, school, friends
- **Adjustment of parents after divorce (less conflict) helps predict the child's adjustment**
 - Important to consider self-care and support for parents

Overstreet, 2010

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Joint Physical Custody Considerations



- Can be beneficial – a positive, secure, and consistent relationship with both parents will be good for development
- **Conflict** is a large factor to consider
 - **Low Conflict Divorce** – children can do well in joint custody when parents can communicate and co-parent effectively
 - **High Conflict Divorce** – especially when child is in the middle, children can do poorly

Emery, 2009

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Joint Physical Custody Considerations



- **Arrangements can be done in a number of ways**
 - 50/50, 60/40, 25% overnights, split week/weekends
 - **More important** – parent and child develop warm, secure, consistent, and predictable relationship
- **Logistics of joint custody**
 - May have to coordinate with caregiver – making sure child has books, medications, etc.
 - May have to have two of different things
 - When possible, clear and consistent rules across households
 - Most important: consistent and predictable with clear communication between parents (without child in middle)

Emery, 2009

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**Case Scenario #2:
Moving Residence**

- What child development issues addressing best interests of the child are raised in this scenario?
- What additional information would you like to know before deciding?
- What will you decide?

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Potential Referral Resources

- Parent/Family Mediation – if trying to resolve legal disputes
- Books for Parents on Impact of Divorce
 - "We're Still Family – What Children Have to Say About Their Parents' Divorce" by Dr. Constance Ahrons
 - "The Good Divorce" by Dr. Constance Ahrons
- UNC Carolina Institute for Developmental Disabilities (developmental assessments): <http://www.cidd.unc.edu/services/clinical/>
- Duke Children's Evaluation Center (general mental health assessment and informed referral): https://www.dukehealth.org/locations/duke-childrens-evaluation-center?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=Directory+Management
- Duke Child and Family Study Center (variety of treatment and assessment for youth/young adults/families): https://www.dukehealth.org/locations/duke-child-and-family-study-center?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=Directory+Management
- Center for Child and Family Health (CCFH; multiple services for youth/young adults/families who have experienced trauma and for young children with oppositional behavior): <https://www.ccfhnc.org/programs/urbanlak-clinic/>
- North Carolina Child Treatment Program (clinicians rostered in Trauma-Informed, Evidence-Based Practices): <https://ncchildtreatmentprogram.org/>

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