

SIX YEAR OLDS

General

* The sixth year is the age of transition. At this age, children are active, outgoing and self-centered. Their own activities take precedence over everything else.

* They are in constant motion: jiggling, shoving and pushing. They like to roughhouse and their play may go too far because they don't know when to stop.

* They can play organized games with rules, but only at beginning levels because strategy and foresight are not highly developed at the age of six.

* Six-year-olds may be clumsy and tend to dawdle. For example, they may be slow at dressing to go to school or other places. On the other hand, they want their needs met at once and get upset when adults do not drop everything to do their bidding.

Self-Concept and Independence

* They want to be the center of everything and to win. They are the center of their very own universe and their way of doing things seems the best and only way. They do not lose gracefully or accept criticism.

* They are assertive, bossy and extremely sensitive to real or imagined slights. They dominate every situation and are always ready with advice.

* Growing up may be a strain at times for six-year-olds and there may be a period of regression during which they engage in baby talk and display babyish behavior.

* Six-year-olds are extremely possessive of their belongings.

* When the outside world impinges adversely upon them, they are stubborn, obstinate and unreasonable.

* They tend to project their own feelings onto others and then criticize other people because of this. "She thinks she's everything" or "He's so fresh."

* They are ashamed of their mistakes and fears and of being seen crying and are careful not to expose themselves to criticism.

Relating to Other Children and Adults

* Six-year-olds often pair up and have best friends with whom they spend a good deal of time. Such pairs often take pleasure in "keeping out" a third child who wants to join them.

* Friendships are erratic and may change many times. Lots of tattling and putting-down of other children goes on; for example, "He's dumb."

* Boys and girls occasionally play together at this age, but the movement toward same-sexed friends has already begun.

* Six-year-olds can be highly sensitive to their parent's moods. For instance, they are quick to notice changes in facial expressions.

* Although the six-year-old is most loving of his mother, he is also building his sense of self by trying to break away from her. Many temper tantrums are directed at her and the six-year-old may often refuse to obey his mother's directions. On the other hand, this age can be sympathetic toward his mother when she is not feeling well.

* Parents can find the six-year-old trying. Adults working with "sixes" need to keep a sense of perspective and their sense of humor. If parents and other caregivers remember the transitional nature of this age, six will become a more manageable and less trying age.

Games and Activities

* Their activities center on the physical. Riding a bicycle is an activity they enjoy. Roller skating and swimming also are favorites.

* They are poor at games requiring strategy and foresight like chess, checkers and tic-tac-toe, but like running games such as tag and hide-and-peek.

* Six year olds like making things as well as cooking activities. They also like to paint, color and draw.

Distributed by: Diana Converse, Dept. of Family and Consumer Sciences, University of Florida Extension Service, 5339 S. County Rd. 579, Seffner, FL 33584, phone 744-5519.