

THE TWELVE-YEAR-OLD

Calm twelve follows cantankerous eleven as sunshine follows the storm! At twelve, the child seems to have completed a struggle to accomplish something and can now rest and relax. By twelve, the child is friendly and is detached from Mother. Twelve-year-olds are pleasant with family members and persons outside the family as well. They have enthusiasm and a good sense of humor.

At this time, the middle group of girls take their biggest steps toward becoming young women. It is a time for rapid growth in height and weight. Girls look to their mothers for information about menstruation and other sexual development. Menarche occurs most often toward the end of this year. A fine crop of freckles may appear on boys and girls at this time. This was also the case at about six-years-old.

Boys are particularly interested in getting information about sexual development at this time and may go to Mother for help at this time. They want information about reproduction and will gladly go to a counselor to get it. If their curiosity is not satisfied, then they will seek additional information from where ever they can find it.

Twelves are described as a bottomless pit when it comes to eating. They usually assume responsibility for getting to bed with much less complaining than was evident with the eleven-year-old. They prefer to take showers and will do so without being reminded. Girls may still need help with the hair. Twelve-year-old children are becoming aware of their appearance. Girls will likely want to begin wearing make-up and may pull belts very tight to appear slim in the waist.

The allowance is still the primary means for getting money and many of these children do budget this. Some twelves are beginning to take on jobs such

as paper routes or baby sitting.

The emotions of the twelve-year-old are so much more mellow than those of the eleven-year-old. Anger is still exhibited at times, but is often contained. Boys have learned that they should not cry. Twelve-year-old children are beginning to find the self that the eleven-year-old was searching for. Girls and boys wish for success of others in the family.

The interpersonal relationships of twelve-year-old children are understandably improved. All is not smooth in the family, but there is much less disagreement. Interests in friends shift often. Twelve year olds want to be a part of the group and are heavily ruled by the group. This does not mean that parents are no longer needed.

Boys and girls have a wide range of interests and are, therefore, not often bored. Television is not so entertaining as it has been in the past. The twelve-year-old may have some favorite program, but does not watch constantly.

Twelve year olds need a strong teacher to counteract the influence of the group. But these children are enthusiastic and can be challenged. Each student can be expected to study, but like some flexibility of schedule.

Decisions of these children are considered. The ethical implications are thought through. They will consider what the group would think of the decision before making it final.

Source: Louise Bates Ames, Frances L. Ilg and Sidney M. Baker. Your Ten-To-Fourteen-Year-Old. New York: Dell Publishing, 1988.

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