

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Spiritual beliefs are closely related to the moral and ethical portion of the self concept and must be considered as part of the child's basic needs assessment. Children need to have meaning, purpose and hope in their lives. Also, the need for confession and forgiveness is present even in very young children. Extending beyond religion, spiritual affects the whole person: mind, body and spirit. James Fowler has identified seven stages in the development of faith; three of which are closely associated with and parallel cognitive and psychological development in childhood.

STAGE-2 MYTHICAL-LITERAL FAITH

School Age (Approximate)

Through the school age years, spiritual development parallels cognitive development and as closely related children's experience and social interaction. Most of them have strong interest in religion during the school age years. The existence of a duty is accepted and expected to be answered; good behavior is rewarded, and bad behavior is punished. If I am good to God, God will be good to me. Their developing conscience for thoughts and matters and are able to articulate their faith. They may even question its validity. This is a time when the child organizes the stories of the faith into an orderly fashion. Symbols and words are one-dimensional and literal. Baptism is being dunked in the water. Nothing more, nothing less. Stories become powerful for the child in this stage of faith.

STAGE-3 SYNTHETIC –CONVENTIONAL FAITH

Adolescence (Approximate)

As children approach adolescence, however they become aware of spiritual disappointments. They recognize that prayers are not always answered (at least on their own terms) and may begin to abandon or modify some religious practices. They begin to reason, to question some of the establishment parental religious standards, and to drop or modify some religious practices. Learning the rules and symbols of the faith are very important in this stage. This is the authoritarian time of faith. The individual is not strong enough yet to hold their faith in themselves, so they entrust the faith to their group. Their group holds their faith. The group interprets truth, and loyalty to the group is of utmost importance. Groups are divided into groups like us and groups not like us. Only groups like us are good. All others are bad.

Fowler, James W., (1995) *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* Harper Collins.



WHAT TO EXPECT FROM YOUR

SCHOOL

AGE

CHILD

AGES AND STAGES IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT

School-age children build on the important developments of the early years of life and seem to settle down to a steadier pace of growing and learning. While school-agers are continuing the development processes started in earlier years they have their own set of issues and needs. Between early childhood and adolescence, the school-agers are gaining independence, self-reliance and confidence. They are moving from the sheltered world of family and child care, into the larger world. School-agers are likely to test the standards, behaviors and beliefs they have accepted and be influenced by the standards, behaviors and beliefs of others. Acceptance by their peer group becomes increasingly important to children as they go through the school-aged years.

Young school-age children are usually interested in real life tasks and activities, and "pretend" and fantasy play can lessen considerably. School-agers want to make "real" cakes, take "real" photographs, and create "real" collections of treasured items.

School-age children have longer attention spans and are often more willing to follow their own interests than in having activities organized for them. They are more likely to stick with things until the project is finished, the problem solved or the argument resolved. Doing things with friends, following rules, and fairness are very important during this developmental period. This age group is fascinated by rules and can develop games with extensive rules and rituals.

SOCIAL - EMOTIONAL

- ♥ likes group activities and team games
- ♥ can accept more responsibility
- ♥ enjoys a challenge
- ♥ likely to have a best friend
- ♥ likes praise and seeks approval from adults and peers
- ♥ often states dislike for opposite sex
- ♥ learning to control his/her fears
- ♥ interested in rules and rituals
- ♥ generally enjoys playing with and caring for younger children
- ♥ finds criticism or failure difficult to handle

INTELLECTUAL - COGNITIVE

- 📖 reads and grasps basic math concepts
- 📖 can plan ahead and problem solve
- 📖 enjoys planning and building
- 📖 likes to play with peers and can play cooperatively
- 📖 reading may become a major interest
- 📖 interested in magic and tricks
- 📖 can distinguish between left and right
- 📖 can begin to understand time and days of the week

LANGUAGE

- vocabulary continues to expand
- able to use language to explain his/her emotions
- able to carry on adult-like conversation
- able to relate involved events from the past

PHYSICAL - MOTOR

- ➔ plays actively with children of his/her own age
- ➔ enjoys running games: tag, dodge ball, skipping, etc.
- ➔ catches with one hand
- ➔ capable of using tools such as scissors with ease
- ➔ can tie shoelaces
- ➔ generally becoming more coordinated, although awkward stages come and go as do growth spurts
- ➔ enjoys testing muscle strength and skills
- ➔ development of permanent teeth

Reference:

The Child From Five to Ten, Dr. Arnold Gesell et al, Harper & Row