

Overview: Seven Developmental Needs of Early Adolescents

Introductory Note: By examining the characteristics and needs of early adolescents, it is possible to design programs that spark their interests and keep them enthusiastically engaged. When program experiences and activities are directly linked to any one of the developmental needs, youth are much more likely to show and sustain interest in participating. However, this is just the beginning. The Center for Early Adolescence found that children and youth are even more likely to be drawn in when *multiple developmental needs can be met in one activity or set of activities*.

- 1. The Need for Physical Activity.** Except for the period of early infancy, early adolescents need lots of opportunities to exercise their growing bodies and explore their emerging large and small muscle capacities. They need opportunities to exercise their growing bodies and explore their emerging large and small muscle capacities. They need ample quantities of nutritious food to support their physical growth and increased activity levels. They need opportunities to learn new physical skills and learn how to keep their bodies safe and healthy as they grow. They need opportunities to challenge their growing physical capacities and test their limits with support and help from caring adults in a safe, secure environment. They also need opportunities to pace themselves by balancing periods of physical activity with needed rest and relaxation.
- 2. The Need for Competence and Achievement.** It is common for young adolescents to feel self-conscious and unsure of their abilities during this period of rapid growth. As they encounter more and more opportunities to connect with the real world, they need matching opportunities to demonstrate to themselves and to others that they can do things well. They need opportunities to learn and develop new skills and understandings related to all areas of life. Being acknowledged for their accomplishments encourages them to build on these accomplishments. Related to the need for competence and achievement is learning to set realistic goals which are likely to lead to success AND learning to deal with set backs and disappointments effectively when they do occur.
- 3. The Need for Self Definition.** Rapidly growing youth need lots of opportunities to explore who they are and what they are becoming. They need opportunities to reflect on their gender, race, culture, religion, and nationality. They need opportunities to reflect on their place in their family, community, and country. They need to participate in experiences that help them discover their interests, talents, and abilities and shape their attitudes, beliefs, values, and character. They need opportunities to make choices and decisions about what is most important to them and how they want to spend their time and energy. They need to participate in experiences and activities that allow them to dream about the future and create personal goals that will help them fulfill their dreams.
- 4. The Need for Creative Expression.** As their physical and mental capacities grow and develop, youth need lots of opportunities for creative expression. They need to participate in verbal and nonverbal experiences that allow them to explore, shape, and express emerging thoughts, feelings, interests, talents, abilities, values, attitudes, and beliefs about themselves and the world around them.
- 5. The Need for Positive Social Interaction.** Though the family remains of primary importance to early adolescents, they need increasing opportunities to experience positive social relationships that allow them to explore emerging ideas, views, values, and feelings with peers and adult friends.
- 6. The Need for Structure and Clear Limits.** As early adolescents grow in their need for both independence and freedom, they also need the security of structure and clear limits to help them cope with new areas of exploration and learning, increasing individual responsibilities, and increasing opportunities for social interaction.

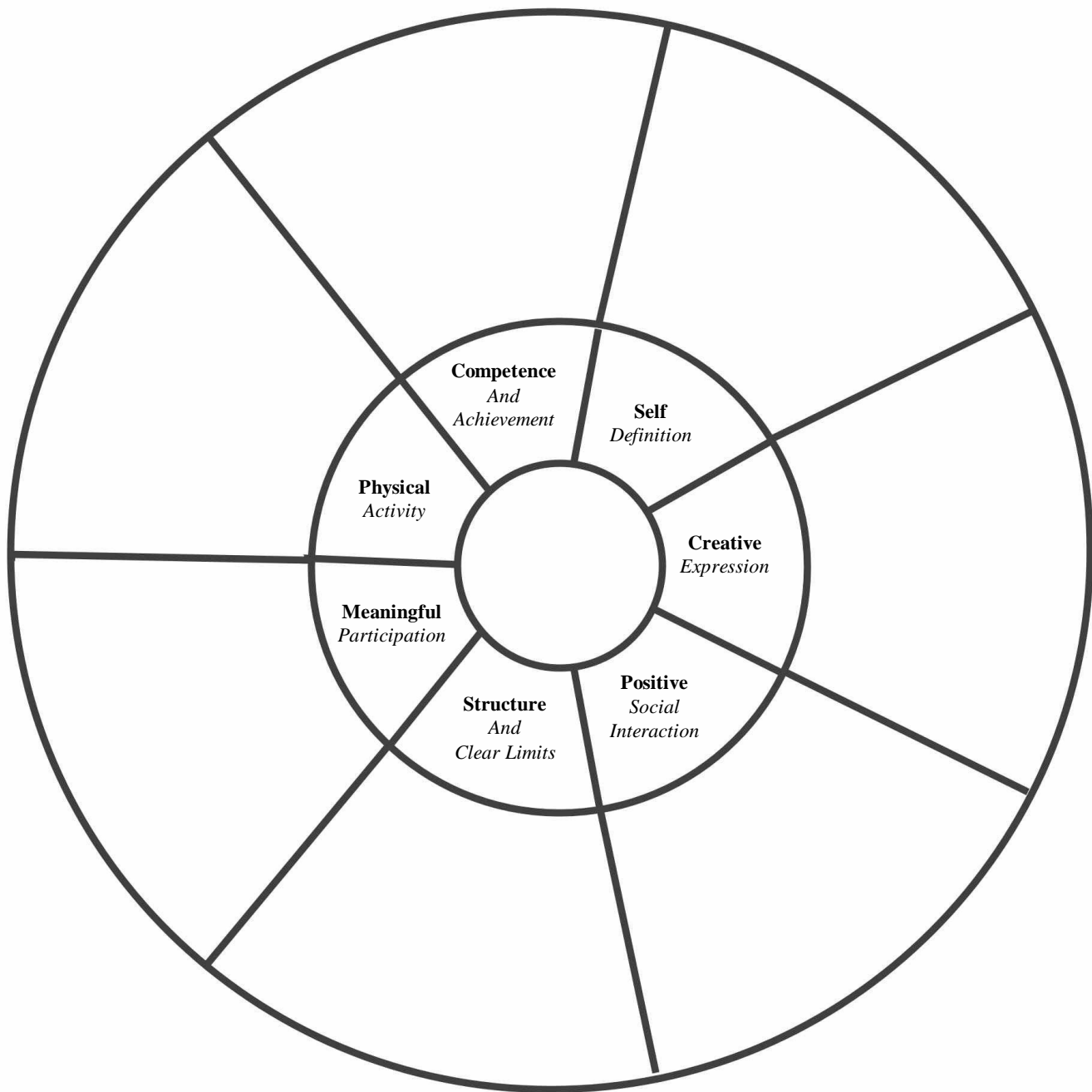
7. ***The Need for Meaningful Participation.*** Research from the Center for Early Adolescence stresses that adolescents "need to participate in activities that shape their lives." That is, they need opportunities to identify, develop, and use individual talents, skills, and interests in the context of the real world. They need to participate in activities and experiences that allow them to reflect on and shape their personal values, beliefs, and goals. They need opportunities to make positive connections between their personal priorities and the needs and interests of others in order to become contributing members of the local and global community.

Using the Planning Tools: Tips for Staff

The tools in this packet can be used to plan theme-based activities that are linked to developmental needs. All of the materials in this section may be duplicated for use in programs. Here are some suggestions to help staff using the planning tools. (See *Overview of Seven Developmental Needs* document.)

- *Use the tools regularly to help you brainstorm and organize program activity ideas. The more familiar you become with each tool, the easier the ideas will flow.*
- *When using the **Developmental Planning Wheel**, begin by selecting one of the seven developmental needs to use as a **Start-Up Focus**. Then, brainstorm **Hub Activity Themes** which seem naturally related to the **Start-Up Focus**. Keep in mind there are no right or wrong selections or match-ups. For example, **Dancing** could be used as a **Hub Activity Theme** for many different developmental needs. The **Start-Up Focus** could be **Physical Activity, Creative Expression, Competence and Achievement** or others. The focus you select for the **Start-Up Focus** may depend on which developmental need you want to emphasize and use to launch a series of activities.*
- *When brainstorming activity ideas for **Hub Activity Themes**, remember to stay focused on each developmental need as you brainstorm activity ideas for that need. Jot down all activity ideas for each need in the pie-shaped space next to the need on the **Developmental Planning Wheel**.*
- *Involve youth in using the planning tools. For example, share blank copies of the **Developmental Planning Wheel** when meeting with youth to brainstorm activity ideas. Place a stack of blank **Creating Clubs Worksheets** in a prominent place in your program; encourage youth to take initiative in planning their own clubs using the worksheet. Involve youth in deciding which activities on the **Developmental Planning Wheels** could be developed into **Launch Activities** or **Long-Term Activities**. **Added Tip:** You may want to create a new sheet for kid use by labeling the seven needs in “kid friendly” language (e.g. *The Need for Physical Activity* could become: “**Getting Exercise and Staying Healthy**,” *The Need for Self-Definition* could become “**Getting to Know Myself**,” etc.).*
- *Use the planning tools as a team. Work together with co-workers as you complete **Developmental Planning Wheels** and various **Activity Worksheets**. That way you can maximize opportunities to coordinate and connect program activities.*
- *Post copies of completed **Developmental Planning Wheels** on your bulletin board. Let parents about how you use them to generate activity ideas which meet developmental needs.*
- *Let parents know when you and youth in the program are developing new **Hub Activity Themes**. Encourage parents to join the brainstorming process by contributing ideas to the **Developmental Planning Wheel**.*

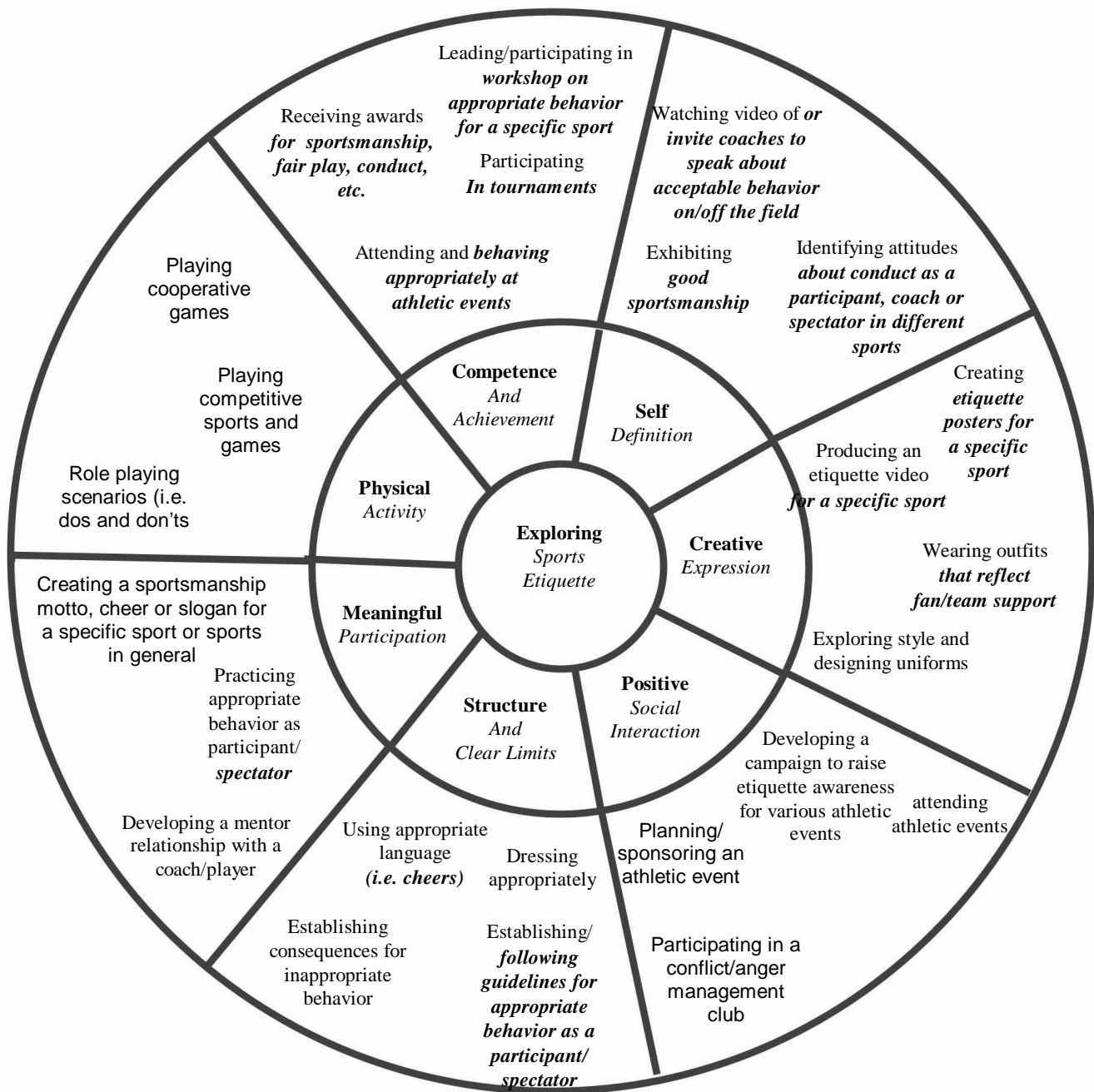
Developmental Planning Wheel (DPW) – Worksheet



Planning Wheel Brainstorming Questions as resources for completing the Developmental Planning Wheel.

1. Select a Hub Activity Theme. Write the name of the theme you select in the center of the wheel. (See *Sample Topics for Hub Activity Themes*.)
2. Choose a developmental need to use as a start-up focus.
3. Beginning with the need selected as the start-up focus, brainstorm 3 or 4 activities you could do that relate to each of the seven developmental needs on the wheel. Write these in the blank spaces next to each need. Then use the following planning sheets to develop at least one of the activities you listed for each need.

Completed Developmental Planning Wheel



Start-Up Focus: The Need for Structure and Clear Limits

Hub Activity Theme: Exploring Sports Etiquette

Developmental Planning Wheel Brainstorming Questions

Use these questions to help generate activity ideas from Hub Activity Themes for each of the seven developmental needs of early adolescence. List your ideas in the blank area provided for each need on the Developmental Planning Wheel.

THE NEED FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY:

What activities would help youth learn, practice, and develop new large or small physical skills?

What activities would provide opportunities for exercise, building stamina, and developing coordination?

What activities would provide opportunities for physical challenges?

What activities would help youth learn to balance exercise and relaxation?

What activities would help youth learn to live a healthy life style?

THE NEED FOR COMPETENCE AND ACHIEVEMENT:

What activities would help youth assess their talents and abilities, to test out their competencies?

What activities would encourage youth to set goals for achievement?

What community resources could be used to help youth use their talents, abilities, and skills in the “real world?”

What activities would provide youth with opportunities to experience success?

What opportunities could be provided for youth to demonstrate accomplishments?

How could youth to be acknowledged and rewarded for their achievements?

THE NEED FOR SELF-DEFINITION:

What activities and experiences would help youth learn more about their talents, abilities, and skills?

What activities and experiences would help youth learn more about their family and personal history?

What activities and experiences would help youth learn more about their emerging interests and concerns?

What activities and experiences would help youth reflect on who they are becoming - their emerging values, attitudes, beliefs, morals?

What activities and experiences would help youth envision their future, their personal dreams and goals?

What activities and experiences would help youth develop self-respect as well as respect and appreciation for others?

What activities and experiences would help youth connect their emerging sense of identity with positive role models (peer and adult role models)?

THE NEED FOR CREATIVE EXPRESSION

*What activities would help youth develop their artistic abilities and talents?
What activities would encourage youth to use written and spoken language to express their ideas, feelings, opinions, values, and beliefs?
What activities would allow youth to use their creative talents in “real world?”
What field trips or community resources could be used to inspire youth to use their creative abilities?
What activities would allow youth to use their creative talents in every day life?
What activities would encourage youth to be inventive and imaginative?*

THE NEED FOR POSITIVE SOCIAL INTERACTION

*What clubs could be organized?
What activities and games would help youth learn how to cooperate, collaborate, and be team players?
What activities would help youth develop communication skills?
What activities would help youth develop problem solving, conflict resolution, and leadership skills?
What activities would provide opportunities for youth to learn from each other?
What activities would help youth connect with people in the community?
What activities would encourage youth to be helpful and supportive of others?
What activities would help develop manners, social graces, and social skills?*

THE NEED FOR STRUCTURE AND CLEAR LIMITS

*What activities would help youth learn how to set rules, limits, and expectations?
What activities would help youth learn how to balance rights and responsibilities?
What experiences would help youth learn how to protect themselves?
What activities would help youth learn to use step-by-step procedures to accomplish tasks, solve problems, conduct experiments, etc.?
What activities would help youth learn and practice skills and habits for living a healthy, balanced life?
What activities would help youth learn how to use the proper methods, strategies, techniques and procedures in different circumstances?
What activities would help youth develop an understanding of the importance of rules, guidelines, and laws in the world beyond the program?
What activities would help youth learn how to plan for success?*

THE NEED FOR MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

*What activities would allow youth to use their interests to help or benefit others?
What activities would provide opportunities for youth to shape the program?
What activities would encourage youth to set and achieve personal goals?
What activities would help youth get involved in the community?
What activities would allow youth to use their skills and talents to earn money?
What activities would encourage youth to volunteer their time and talents?*

Sample Topics for Hub Activity Themes

NOTES:

- 1) Some topics appear on more than one list because they could be used as a point of departure for more than one developmental need, depending on the emphasis.
- 2) Topics are intentionally broad to leave room for expansion in many different directions.
- 3) Topics are not “dressed up” with catchy titles; do this after selecting the basic theme.

START-UP FOCUS: THE NEED FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY:

Dancing (all types)

Dancing (emphasis on one kind of dancing: ballet, modern, tap, swing, dances of the 50's)

Fitness (walking, jogging, aerobics, eating right)

Playing Sports (all types)

Playing Sports (emphasis on one sport or type of sport: tennis, basketball, baseball, football, soccer, gymnastics, winter or summer sports, individual or team sports)

Boating (rowing, kayaking, canoeing, sailing)

Hiking

Swimming

Orienteering

Juggling

Biking

Gardening

Martial Arts (Karate, Tai Chi)

Mountain climbing, rock climbing

Cooperative games

Physical challenges

START-UP FOCUS: THE NEED FOR COMPETENCE AND ACHIEVEMENT

Photography

Magic

Life skills (cooking, sewing, carpentry, gardening)

Reading and writing

Homework and school success

Traditional Hand Crafts (weaving, embroidery, macramé)

Building with clay

Building models

Earning and managing money

Weaving, sewing, embroidery

Sports

Leadership and problem solving

Art (painting, drawing, sculpture)

Printing and decorative writing

Making videos

Using the computer

START-UP FOCUS: THE NEED FOR SELF-DEFINITION

Exploring personal and family history
Identifying personal interests and style
Identifying learning styles
Exploring values, beliefs, attitudes, morals - what it means to have "character"
Exploring diversity
Exploring careers
Learning tolerance
Keeping personal journals or diaries, writing autobiographies
Searching for role models
Goal setting
Identifying personal challenges
Imagining and planning the future
Exploring community activities
Exploring how to "walk your talk"
Role playing
Learning about empathy
Using talents to help others

START-UP FOCUS: THE NEED FOR CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Painting and drawing
Weaving, sculpting, potting
Singing
Acting
Dancing
Playing musical instruments
Composing music
Writing poetry, essays, stories, plays, autobiographies
Designing and choosing clothing, jewelry, other wearing apparel
Designing environments
Gardening, flower arranging
Cooking and baking
Producing videos, audio tapes, films
Public speaking
Brainstorming
Creative problem solving
Exploring creativity in every day life
Developing personal style (moving, talking, dressing, using humor, performing, playing sports, acting, writing, etc.)

START-UP FOCUS: THE NEED FOR POSITIVE SOCIAL INTERACTION

Teambuilding

Playing cooperative games

Exploring outdoor adventure challenges

Camping

Playing drama games

Creating a program clubhouse

Making friends

Dancing

Singing

Mentoring

Working on community projects, volunteering for community organizations and causes

Exploring the workplace

Exploring rights and responsibilities

Group problem solving and conflict resolution

Learning social skills and social graces

Planning special events and celebrations

START-UP FOCUS: THE NEED FOR STRUCTURE AND CLEAR LIMITS

Creating rules, limits, guidelines

Creating standards of conduct

Setting personal expectations

Setting personal and social boundaries

Learning strategies for managing personal behavior

Role playing situations related to safety, health, problem solving, managing anger, etc.

Learning how to stay safe

Learning how to stay healthy

Playing board and table games

Playing physical sports and games

Learning sports etiquette

Learning social graces/etiquette/politeness

Learning how to use a step-by-step approach (to problems, projects, experiments)

Learning how to express emotions appropriately

Learning how to manage conflicts and disagreements

Learning methods, skills, and techniques - for a variety of different endeavors

Learning methods, skills, and techniques - emphasis on one field or activity

START-UP FOCUS: MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

Planning program activities, events, field trips

Conducting and reporting on opinion surveys (in the program, in the community)

Identifying personal priorities

Setting and working on personal goals

Working on community improvement projects

Working on a social action project

Mentoring others

Helping others

Entertaining others

Being a role model

*Fundraising (to support a field trip, special performer, purchase of new equipment,
a social action project)*

Exploring careers - general

Learning marketable skills

Exploring jobs through apprenticeships

Managing money: earning, spending, saving, investing

Volunteering