

MODULE

2

“let’s talk”

ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT



LEARNING GOALS

During this module, participants will:

- Define terms such as adolescence, self-esteem, autonomy, and social environment.
- Learn about the stages of adolescent development (e.g. need for independence, self formation).
- Understand the importance of self-esteem and emotions in the process of healthy development.
- Reflect on development milestones and consider forthcoming milestones.
- Understand how the different examples of a young person’s sense of self impacts their experience navigating development.
- Consider how self development relates to issues faced by young people who run away or are considering running away.



1-800-RUNAWAY



1800RUNAWAY.org



DEFINE THE ISSUE

Adolescence is a developmental stage generally thought to begin with puberty and extend into a youth's late teens or early 20s. Some consider it to be more stressful than other periods of development because of the biological, psychological, and social changes that may be taking place simultaneously, but it also represents a time of rich learning and self development.

Young people run away for many reasons, including issues related to adolescent development. For example, some youth run away to gain a sense of autonomy or independence in their lives. Others may run to connect with a peer group that bolsters their self-esteem and self-image. Some may also run because they have unsafe home environments, home that are unable to fulfill their basic needs, or families that don't affirm who they are as people.

Module 2 is designed to teach participants about the aspects and challenges associated with adolescent development.

ICONS

For further details, see the Introduction Module.



MODULE ACTIVITIES



ACTIVITY	TIME	METHODOLOGY
A. Understanding Adolescence	10 minutes	Discussion
B. Creating Your “All About Me” Page	15 minutes	Activity/Discussion
C. What Would You Do?	20 minutes	Activity/Discussion



Total time required: **45 minutes**

MATERIALS

- Poster paper or chalk/dry-erase board
- “Adolescence Infographic” handout
- “All About Me” worksheet
- “What Would You Do?” handout



Consider showing the companion film *American Street Kid*.



Contact the NRS Prevention & Youth Engagement Specialist at **773-289-1723** or prevention@1800RUNAWAY.org for support and technical assistance.

ACTIVITY 2A

ADOLESCENCE INFOGRAPHIC



10 minutes

STATE We're going to begin this module examining the transitional period of life between childhood and adulthood. This period is called adolescence. During this time, every person experiences physical, emotional, and biological changes. As your brain continues to develop throughout this stage of life, the way we process information, decisions, and emotions is changing rapidly.

HAND OUT "Adolescence Infographic"

ALLOW Students to begin independently reviewing handout

ASK What is one thing you are surprised to learn from this handout?

ALLOW one or two participants to respond.

STATE Let's spend the next few minutes becoming familiar with the information on this sheet.

ASK Looking at this infographic, what are some changes our brains go through during adolescence?

ALLOW one or two participants to respond

ASK What questions do you have?

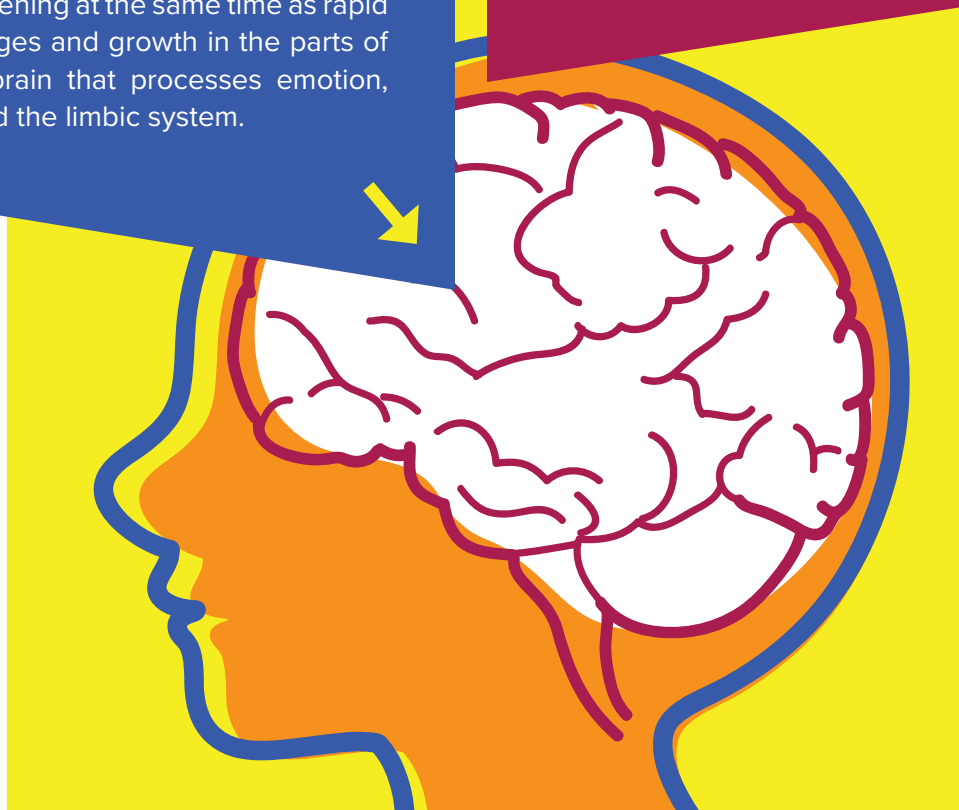
DISCUSS responses.

ADOLESCENCE INFOGRAPHIC

Adolescence is the period of metamorphosis we all undergo from childhood to adulthood. During adolescence an individual undergoes biological, psychological, and social transitions as they develop into an independent and unique adult, which can be broken down into three stages: **early adolescence**, **late adolescence**, and **emerging adulthood**.

The **frontal lobe** of the brain is in charge of decision making, problem solving, judgment and self-control, and it is the last part of the brain to fully mature. This means the way adolescents are able to maintain attention, resist impulses, and understand the consequences of their actions develops over time. These more gradual changes are happening at the same time as rapid changes and growth in the parts of the brain that processes emotion, called the limbic system.

Our brain controls all the important functions of our body. It tells our lungs to breathe, controls our conscious and unconscious thoughts, receives messages from the outside world, and reacts internally. During adolescence our brain is undergoing constant dynamic changes. Although 90% of our brain is developed by age 6, the brain is not fully developed until age 25.



ACTIVITY 2B

UPDATING YOUR “ALL ABOUT ME” PAGE



15 minutes

INTRODUCE the topic of self development.

STATE Take a few moments to look around the room. Look at each person. Notice how unique they are. No two people look exactly the same — each has different physical features or clothing styles. And even those who may look similar or are dressed similarly may have very different outlooks on life.

Self development is about asking ourselves, “Who am I?” and “Where am I going in life?” These questions are not unique to adolescence. In fact, we ask ourselves these questions throughout our lives.

However, in adolescence, these questions can be particularly challenging, as many people are still developing a sense of personality and who they feel they are. This may be especially true for people who are in situations where they feel they have little or no control.

For the next few minutes, we are going to work on developing our understanding of our identities. We’ll refer to it as an “All About Me” page.

STATE This worksheet is designed to help us determine the characteristics that might be most important to us. It is to help us recognize our own distinct sense of who we are and the similarities and differences we may have with the people around us.

HAND OUT “All About Me” worksheet

STATE You will have about 5 minutes to work on this handout. If you need additional time, you can continue working at the end of the lesson. After the 5 minutes have passed I will ask for volunteers to share what they have created with the group.

ASK For volunteers to share to group after 5 minutes has passed

ALLOW one or two participants to respond.

ASK What aspects of this activity relate what we learned about adolescence previously?

DISCUSS responses.

ASK What questions do you have?

DISCUSS responses.

“ALL ABOUT ME” WORKSHEET

A key challenge in adolescence as one asks oneself, “Who am I and where am I going?” Examining this question can be complex. Complete this wheel as a way to begin examining what factors make you “you”.



ACTIVITY 2C

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?



20 minutes

STATE In this final activity of the module, we will build off the skills and knowledge we have already developed in the previous activities to understand the difficult decisions that adolescents sometimes face. We know that the adolescent brain is still developing into young adulthood, and our individual identities affect our decision making processes.

Young people may experience a variety of difficult situations during adolescent development that make the option of running away seem like the best choice available to them.

We are going to read a profile of a young person who is in a difficult situation, and must make a difficult decision. As you read, try to imagine how you would feel, and what you would do if you were in this person's position.

DIVIDE participants into six groups. If there are fewer participants, make sure to have three to four participants in each group and assign two to three topics to each group.

HAND OUT "What Would You Do" page 1 and 2 handouts.

STATE Please follow along as I read. Be prepared to then discuss the situation with your group.

READ the profile.

STATE Now I am going to assign each group a topic to think about in relation to this person's story. Please discuss the topic you are assigned and how it might have impacted the difficult decision they had to make. One person from each group should be writing down the group's main ideas to share out later.

ASSIGN topics to each group:

- Communication
- Family Roles and Responsibilities
- Planning for the Future
- Emotions
- Social Environment
- Sense of Self

STATE Now that each group has been assigned their topic, please discuss how it played a role in the difficult situation we had read. One person from each group should be writing down the group's main discussion points to share out later.

STATE 5 minutes for the groups to discuss the issues.

ACTIVITY 2C →

ACTIVITY 2C CONTINUED

ASK Now we're going to share the results of your discussions. How does your assigned topic relate to the difficult situation?

ALLOW 1-2 minutes for responses and discussion.

STATE Based on what we've discussed, what would you do if it happened to you, and how did you make that decision?

ALLOW 1-2 minutes for responses and discussion.

ASK What are some possible consequences (both positive and negative) of this person's decision to run away?

ALLOW 1-2 minutes for responses and discussion.

STATE In any crisis situation, you can always contact the National Runaway Safeline at 1-800-RUNAWAY or 1800RUNAWAY.org and connect confidentially with a trained NRS frontline team member.

ASK What questions do you have?

DISCUSS responses.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO? PAGE 1

Avi is 14 years old. He has been living in a group home with eight other kids for about three months, and is so uncomfortable and unhappy that he is desperate to find other options.

Avi misses his parents and siblings. His mom's mental health got so bad that she was found to be "unfit", which is why Avi was taken out of the home. Now, his mom is staying in-patient until she is more stable. His father has a new family of his own who lives hours away. Avi misses his half siblings and has not gotten to see them in almost a year.

Avi has been attending the same school since before moving into the group home. His first year of high school has been okay, but lonely. Avi has an early curfew at the group home, and has not been able to bring his friends over. Avi makes Cs, with Bs in English, and likes the student teacher in that class because she knows Avi is smart. Avi likes going to school because he gets to see their old soccer coach, who will sometimes let him play even though Avi is no longer on the team. Avi knows that if he runs away from the group home, he won't be able to go back to school, because school is the first place they'll look for him.

Avi still attends the same synagogue he's always gone to. The rabbi and his wife know Avi's situation, and they have been supportive. They even gave him a place to stay a few years ago when things were tough at home. But Avi can't get in touch with the rabbi if they decide to run away because his caseworker will find out.

Avi does not like living at the group home, but the people there have been supportive, and it is a safe place to stay, with a bed, food, and showers. The thing is, Avi really misses his family. Avi has tried talking to his caseworker about frustrations and wanting to return home, but his caseworker continually explains this is the only option right now. Avi feels like there has to be another way. He feels ready to leave and is considering running away.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

PAGE 2

TOPIC	RESPONSES
Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who could you talk to?• How might communication have helped or hurt your situation?	
Family Roles and Responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How has your family helped/hurt the situation?• What roles do you play in your family?• Who do you see as your family?	
Planning for the Future <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How might running affect your future?• What goals do you have?• Who can help you plan for your future?	
Emotions <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How might you feel about your situation toward others?• How do you manage negative emotions?	
Social Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is your social environment like?• Who is a part of it?	
Sense of Self <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do you view yourself?• How does that play a role in whether to stay or go?	

ACTIVITY 2

SUMMARY

STATE Now I'd like to summarize the key points from this module.

- Adolescence is the transitional period from childhood to early twenties.
- In the “Adolescence Infographic” handout, we identified how our brains undergo complex changes that transition us from childhood to adulthood, and that these changes affect the way we think, process emotion, and make decisions.
- A key part of adolescence is asking ourselves, “Who am I?” and “Where am I going in life?” throughout our lives, young people can find these questions particularly challenging. In the “All About Me” worksheet, we began to ask and identify the answers to what can be difficult questions.
- In the “What Would You Do?” activity, we identified different factors that can influence how young people make difficult decisions in times of crisis, like contemplating running away.

HANDOUTS AND WORKSHEETS

- A. Adolescence Infographic
- B. “All About Me” Page Template
- C. What Would You Do? Page 1
- D. What Would You Do? Page 2

REFERENCES

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- Scerif, G., & Cohen Kadosh, K. (2017, March 10). Brain Development in Teenagers.
<https://www.oxfordsparks.ox.ac.uk/content/brain-development-teenagers>.

RESOURCES

- Act for Youth Center of Excellence is a resource for positive youth development that offers an Adolescent Development Toolkit filled with resources (<http://www.actforyouth.net/>).
- National Runaway Safeline (NRS) works to keep America’s runaway, homeless, and at-risk youth safe and off the streets. NRS operates the 1-800-RUNAWAY hotline and 1800RUNAWAY.org online services, including live chat, emails and forums. NRS provides youth and families in crisis with support and access to resources 24 hours a day, 365 days a year (<http://www.1800RUNAWAY.org>).
- Prevent Child Abuse America works to ensure the healthy development of children nationwide (<http://www.preventchildabuse.org/>).
- The Runaway and Homeless Training and Technical Assistance Center, Family and Youth Services Bureau provides positive youth development information (<https://www.rhyttac.net/>).
- The Trauma Informed Care Project has resources to educate about the impact of trauma (<http://www.traumainformedcareproject.org/>).