

1. Describe any physical or behavioral signs of incipient puberty, including changes in physical appearance, behavior or emotions at ages 12 and 14 years.

- Below I have listed three examples of change I have observed in Tobias:
 - Appetite - Tobias has been consuming food voraciously, mostly junk food. This is a likely predictor of a “*growth spurt*,” and can be referred to as the “*vacuum cleaner effect*.” As the body grows, it requires greater nutritional support. (Berk, p. 371.) I have attempted to steer him away from junk food by providing healthier snacks in his backpack.
 - Facial Hair - At age 14, Tobias showed me some “peach fuzz,” and insisted it was time to start shaving because his friends were also starting to do so. I told him that I don’t want him doing something because his friends do it, and then bought him a razor anyway. This new appearance of facial hair could be considered a sign of “*secondary sexual characteristics*,” and a clear signal that sexual maturation is in process. (Berk, p. 365.)
 - Identity Moratorium - Tobias has been moody and argumentative more than usual. His occasional acts of defiance and curiosity represent his natural desire and need for exploration in order to establish (*commitment*) his own identity apart from us, his parents. (Berk, p. 403.)

2. How has your teen adjusted at 14-18 years of age to typical adolescent issues such as risk-taking, drugs, alcohol, and sexual interests, and how have you responded to your teen?

- Tobias has begun to be very curious and interested in girls. He even has experienced his first official boyfriend/girlfriend relationship, and shortly thereafter declared that he is in love. Much to our surprise he took his girlfriend and got a matching tattoo! We discussed the potential consequences of that choice, and allowed him the space to experience those himself. He is naturally and appropriately curious about sex as well. We encouraged open discussion about sex in our home, hoping that he will understand that it is safe to talk and ask questions. We gave him truthful, accurate information about the risks (*STD’s, teen pregnancy, emotional distress of a break up, ted.*) of sexual behavior before marriage. We also encouraged him that, if he chooses not to abide by our expectations, to be sure to use contraception in order to protect himself and the significant other in the relationship.
- Tobias also came home from a party having experimented with alcohol. He had the wisdom to call and ask us to pick him up, rather than risk driving home with a drunk driver. We praised him for that wise choice, but he did suffer some consequences of being “*grounded*” for doing what he knew to be wrong, that is underage drinking.

3. As the program ends, what pathways does your child appear to be on in terms of physical, cognitive, social, emotional and moral development? To what extent could

you have predicted these pathways based on what you knew of your child's earlier development?

- *Physical* - Tobias is not particularly gifted in sports. He has never been. He has however demonstrated willingness to explore new athletic opportunities and has remained physically active throughout his development into a teenager. "Inactivity is both the cause and the consequence of obesity." (Berk, p. 292.) He has most recently become interested in cycling. Consistent physical activity in early development predicts continued physical activity into adulthood.
- *Emotional* - Tobias has benefitted from a warm and supportive home. He is very close with both my partner and I having developed strong, intimate parent/child relationships. This has positively affected his ability to develop strong, intimate, relational connections with others. It has also been the foundation from which he has engaged others in a proactive, pro-social way. Despite some difficulties in our marriage, my partner and I have helped Tobias to navigate those difficulties with consistent emotional support, and a unified, authoritative approach to parenting. He is generally happy, and calm and not given to emotional instability. He can be moody and argumentative, but that can be attributed to normal developmental processes. His current level of emotional development was predictable considering the variables mentioned above.
- He has also developed with regard to his self concept. He has demonstrated traits and behaviors consistent with *identity moratorium* (Berk, p. 405) in that he is exploring and attempting to establish his own identity apart from us, his parents. He is moving toward a settled sense of identity or *identity achievement*.
- *Morality* - Tobias has developed a strong sense of morality which I believe will continue into adulthood. This could be attributed to a unified and authoritative approach to parenting. Given Tobias's temperament, personality and consistency in parenting style, this outcome could be considered likely or predictable. Social children brought up in this way are more likely to develop a strong sense of morality that continues into adulthood. Early Tobias's adolescence he often would focus intently on what his friends would "say" and what they would "do." He would also use the words "unfair" and "fair" in response to those observations. He also demonstrated a keen interest in talking about some school mates who were caught stealing. I responded to this by offering some moral dilemmas to help him think through issues of "right" and "wrong." He seemed very interested in the effect and consequences of this event. This demonstrates that Tobias has developed a *conventional level* of morality development. (Berk, p. 408.)
- *Cognitive* - Tobias is on a strong cognitive development pathway. He has demonstrated a more abstract understanding of people and personalities which is consistent with the *formal operational stage*, according to Piaget. (Berk, p. 382.) His sense of humor is more subtle and he is even pointing out inconsistencies in what I say and do. This demonstrates his ability in "analyzing the logic and content" of what I say and do, which is consistent with a growing sense of "*hypo-deductive reasoning*." (Berk, p. 382.) With regard to academic development, he is above average in oral reading, decoding, and spelling. He is well advanced in the subjects of Geometry, Physics and Chemistry and the Arts. These strengths were predictable in that Tobias has consistently demonstrated strength in *spatial intelligence* over the duration of his development.

4. Have there been any changes in your teen's behavior toward you or your partner? Why are these occurring and how are you responding?

- Tobias is spending more time with friends and is sometimes less cooperative than usual. I attribute this to *identity moratorium*, where he is exploring his identity in relationship to his peers and moving toward identity achievement, or the establishment of his own unique identity. We monitor his activities, and communicate about who he is with, where he is going and what he is doing, but are giving him our trust and space to explore, and disciplining him appropriately when he occasionally steps beyond the boundaries of our love.

5. Do you see any examples of how cognitive and physical changes in early adolescence (ages 12-14) relate to your teen's social or emotional behavior?

- As Tobias transitioned from elementary school to middle school, he became obsessed with his appearance. This resulted from a compliment he received from a girl. This motivated him to desire “cool” clothes. This is a very normal response demonstrating an early or late developing teen’s desire to match the “physical, cultural ideals of attractiveness, and their desire to ‘fit in’ physically with their peers.” (Berk, p. 370.)
- Tobias’s attention has become more selective. He works independently and is effective at time management according to his teachers. This *selective attention* demonstrates cognitive gains in attention which is a “specific mechanism of executive function,” according to the *Information Processing* view. (Berk, p. 384.)

6. Describe some specific ways in which your child developed that appeared to be influenced by influence of contemporary middle-class American culture.

- Tobias was likely influenced by the reality that both my partner and I were forced to work full time jobs as a result of the financial strain under which we lived. This is very commonplace today. His healthy attachment to us and to others were the result of his temperament and parenting strategies aimed at compensating for the deficiencies of time, affection and attention that resulted from our work schedules. Tobias also demonstrates consistent anxiety about changes in relationships with others. This may be the result of his developed internal value of relationships and an understandable sense of loss and fear when they change. He experienced this significantly when my partner and I separated for a time.
- Tobias was also influenced by what our culture deemed to be physically attractive and valuable. This was most apparent when he received a compliment from a girl and as a result he became obsessed with his appearance. We spoke about cultural trends and ideas about what is “cool” and “uncool” and attempted to help Tobias understand that his value does not stem from his appearance but rather his character. We attempted to support his natural desire to “fit in” physically by offering him opportunities to work toward earning money for clothes, and then allowing him autonomy in his choices.