

Embracing the Joy & Fostering Resilience, One Milestone at a Time

6-20 Years Old

Age	Joyful Milestone	What ALSO to expect	One Connection Activity	One Self-Care Strategy for Parent	One Age-Appropriate Self-Care Strategy for Child
6-10 Years	Your child is communicating regularly with clear sentences!	Your child falls off their bike and comes inside with skinned knees, crying. So much blood and tears!	Even if it doesn't seem like a big injury, validate your child's experience. Instead of saying "Oh you're fine" try saying "Ouch! I bet that hurt!"	You may have a wave of fear if your child comes inside crying and bleeding. Breathe and try walking meditation as you greet them at the door.	Toes-to-nose can help a child check in with their whole body, not just the skinned and bleeding bits, as you take care of them.
	Your child can get dressed all by themselves!	The outfit they chose is completely inappropriate for the occasion or the weather.	Spend time with your child ahead of time, organizing clothes into better for play/at home and those that are better for school/family outings.	Enjoying our children in these moments can feel hard. Maybe you're already late for work and your child comes downstairs dressed for the beach, not a wintery day of school. Take a moment to breathe and just enjoy their expression of self!	Your child probably feels frustrated by not being able to wear what they want. Validate the frustrated feeling with 3 validating sentences in a row (Of course you feel... Anyone would be frustrated.... It's totally normal to want to...) and then say "and you can put this on as soon as you get home." Keep validating feelings as you help them pick an appropriate outfit.
	Your child is showering on their own!	You notice that they forgot to wash their hair even though they insist they did it.	Instead of arguing immediately, try starting with curiosity. Ask them about how washing their hair is going first! Keep some dry shampoo around for when there's no time to hop back in the shower.	See if you're feeling frustrated and worried about being late. Let go of any tendencies to yell or criticize. Nurture yourself for a moment, even just drinking a glass of water or stepping outside for 5 big deep breaths of cold air.	Normalize forgetting things and how we all need reminders when we're learning something new. Ask your child for ideas about how they could remember this part. Maybe a checklist on the shower wall with bath crayons could help.
	Your child knows the date and can keep track of time!	Your child may be so excited about an upcoming event or day (i.e. Christmas, Halloween, their birthday) that it's all they ever want to talk about!	Make a map on paper like a pretend board game with milestones between now and the exciting event. Your child can move a small item or check off their progress as time goes on. Plan times to check in with your child.	Often upcoming holidays and birthdays can feel stressful and pose financial challenges. Notice these feelings if they arise. Breathe, try 5 big deep breaths, and maintain your boundaries around spending.	If your child is so excited and they need help calming down, try toes-to-nose with them and ask them to notice where they feel the excitement in their bodies: Is your heart racing? Do you have thoughts whirling around in your brain? Are your hands clenched?
11-14 Years	Puberty can be variable but all kids will probably have started in this window.	Arguments about remembering to use deodorant or wearing a bra.	Pick a time when everyone is calm, maybe in the car, and ask open ended questions, letting your child explain what's going on with their lives and bodies. It's okay if they don't talk. You're showing that you care and validating how there's a lot changing with their bodies.	Breathe. You've got this. Your child is changing and you are leveling up as a parent. You might want to yell back if you get a snippy response from your growing child. Instead, try 5 big deep breaths) before you respond. Remember, you're in this together!	A certain amount of nervousness is normal at this age. Encourage your child to have two or three strategies they can use when this worried or awkward feeling arises – maybe relaxation breathing, walking meditation and sensory grounding.
	Your child is beginning to think more abstractly and philosophically.	A child who previously was always polite and agreeable may begin to argue with adults or challenge things they have never challenged before!	If you usually shut arguments down, try allowing your child to argue their point. Ask them about what they are thinking and how they came to that conclusion. This doesn't mean you will agree, but validate what is valid in their argument.	Ground your senses. Having a child with strong opinions may help them along the way but it can feel rough as a parent, especially if they are choosing to "go against the grain" and argue with you. Try lightly noticing everything that is blue while you are listening.	Teach your child about their nervous system and how they can think most clearly when they are not in fight or flight mode. If they feel upset, encourage and model taking some time to regulate so they can communicate more clearly what is important to them.
16-17 Years	Your child is old enough to drive!	Your child doesn't come home by the time you asked them to.	Ask your teen if they want to plan a regular activity for just the two of you. Ask them what would work – and it doesn't have to cost money! Maybe it's just going for a walk on Sunday afternoons with the dog, folding the laundry together while you talk or cooking dinner together on a weekend. Stick with it!	Sometimes we really want to spend time with our teens but then they get frustrated or irritated with us and push our buttons. Don't take this personally, see it as a bid for connection and breathe. Relaxation breathing and loving kindness meditation help here. Lean in with curiosity and see what they're trying to express.	Getting a good night sleep is worth its weight in gold but most teens don't want to sleep and they can have very chaotic sleep habits. Emphasize the importance of pre-midnight sleep and if they're having trouble falling asleep, make sure they aren't taking long afterschool naps!
	Your child is going through a growth spurt!	Your child actually grows while they are sleeping. So they may seem like they are sleeping all the time!	Understand that the sleep is essential and they aren't being lazy. Ask them about their interests and friends. Check in about their mood –sometimes extra sleeping can be a sign something is up with their mood and they may need extra support.	If you find yourself stomping around the house cleaning up after your teen, try walking meditation. Express your feeling and the shared responsibility of the house cleaning to your teen but not when you feel angry – regulate your nervous system first.	Growing can cause aches and pains as their ligaments and tendons stretch. Sometimes, this is not noticeable during the day but your child will notice it at bedtime. Teach them toes-to-nose so they can check in with each part of their body as they fall asleep.
	Getting ready for next steps (college, trade school or another pursuit)	Not wanting to do the homework or other things they need to do to achieve their goal.	If your teen has a goal but seems off track to get there, sit down with them when they are engaged and draw a timeline and sketch out options for what they could be doing along the way to accomplish their goal. Remember, this is a collaboration, not a dictatorship!	It's normal to worry that your child will fall off track or not be able to reach their goals. This can lead to helicopter parenting if you don't notice it. Take care of your nervous system with loving kindness meditation or relaxation breathing. Allow your teen to forge their path!	Figuring out how to do everything and not feel overwhelmed is challenging for all of us. Model balancing self-care with homework, sports, friends and the other responsibilities your teen has. Encourage them to use a self-care skill (like 5 big deep breaths) when they feel stressed.
	Your child is growing a sense of independence and managing things on their own or with their friends.	Feels like you are not as aware of what is going on in their lives.	You've been so used to knowing everything but now you'll notice a shift. They aren't being sneaky, they need privacy. Text them to let them know you miss hanging out, ask if they want to hang out and point out a strength you see in them.	Allow yourself to grieve the loss of your little child and welcome your young adult. Loving kindness meditation is great to use here, so is a sitting meditation where you just breathe in and out deeply and gaze at a favorite family photo.	If your teen doesn't want to talk to you about rough patches or things that seem to upset them, encourage them to journal. Writing down our experiences and feelings helps us through hard times!
18+ Years	Able to problem-solve and take care of themselves when things go sideways.	They may try unhealthy coping skills (doom-scrolling the internet, vaping, alcohol, etc).	Look beyond the behavior - is this a bid for connection? Does your teen need something? Are they anxious, depressed, feeling lonely, trying to fit in, etc? Ask them about the unhealthy coping skill. Lean in with curiosity and try to support them.	Teen behaviors can really trigger our fears and worries. Don't take it personally. See yourself as in this with your teen, don't pit yourself against them. If you feel overwhelmed, use toes-to-nose to ground yourself back in your body.	Talk to your teen about what healthy coping skills feel within reach. Maybe they can try one of these before the unhealthy one next time they feel stressed, anxious, etc. Listening to music, going outside for a walk, snuggling the dog, drawing or journaling are all good places to start.
	Your child is officially an adult!	They still want your help with things they don't like (for example, bringing you dirty laundry or asking you to schedule appointments).	You're relating to each other in a new way. Talk to them about it. Maybe you're happy to help but only on weekends. Support them in figuring out why they avoid these chores.	Model healthy boundaries for your child. Boundaries are about you (not telling them what to do or not do). Express your boundaries in a kind way and journal about it if you find it hard.	Adding music or signing to an unpleasant chore can make it feel more fun. It can also lower stress! Encourage your child to make a "laundry folding playlist" or to take 5 big deep breaths before they have to make an important phone call.
	Off to college or trade school and seems to be largely independent.	Still calling you at random hours and asking for money.	If you're going to give your young adult child money, talk through everyone's responsibilities. Bartering to try to get your child to do something is less effective than clear boundaries, roles and responsibilities.	If you feel stressed, it may seem they are adding to your stress level. Try to see you and your child as "in it together." Ground yourself with deep breaths. Express your boundaries and tell them you love them.	Modeling some form of daily mindfulness practice can help your teen to integrate this into their life. Listen when they talk about their feelings or experiences. Encourage them to pick 1-2 practices they can access easily.