GUIDING THE PRETEEN

Unit II: Characteristics of Boys and Girls

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Unit Two of "Guiding the Preteen." The purpose or intent of this project is to help you gain experiences that will help you learn even more about the preteen age group. There is more new information provided in this manual and there are more learning activities.

You will notice that the activities are similar to the ones you did in Unit One. But with the new knowledge and experiences that you gained in Unit One you will have a deeper and wider perspective. Therefore you will see different things in your experiences and you will learn different things while broadening your base of knowledge and experience.

Before you actually begin this project it would be well to reconsider your reasons for taking this project. Read the following section carefully and think about the reasons. They are the same reasons suggested in Unit One. But with your added experience they may appear to have some added dimensions or some new meanings.

Also go back to your project book for Unit One and read the answers you gave to the questions about your reasons for taking the project. This should be an interesting review.

Project Pointers

- This project may be taken individually or as a member of a project group. However, it will be much more enjoyable and you will learn more if you can take it as part of a project group. Should you have to take the project alone it will be helpful for you to have a willing adult adviser—someone who can help you with suggestions, activities and with whom you can discuss activities and study topics. Your project leader or adviser should have a copy of the leader's manual and the project manual.
- The activities required by this project will require some time and some careful planning. So get started soon.
- It is suggested that this project be completed within a six to 12 week time span. Also your project group should meet six to 12 times and try to have educational programs at three or four of the project meetings. These programs should be in addition to your regular sharing, reporting and discussion sessions that are related directly to the activities or to the material in this manual. The leader's manual has suggestions for educational programs.
- The subject matter or content of this manual is not divided into chapters or lessons. Hopefully this will allow and encourage your project group and leader to determine the sequence of study and project meeting lessons that best fits your situation.

Suggestions for Illustrated Talks or Demonstrations

As a teen 4-H member an important part of your educational experience could be the opportunity to speak before other groups of people. This experience helps one to develop poise, self-confidence and leadership skills.

If you get the chance to take part in such events the following are some suggested topics:

- Preteens and Parent Relations
- Coping with Preteen Brothers and/or Sisters
- Preteens and Responsibilities
- Special Health Needs of Preteens
- The Preteen as a Group Member
- Special Likes and Dislikes of Preteens
- The Handicapped Preteen—Special Needs
- Nutrition Needs of the Preteen
- Appropriate Sports and Games for the Preteen
- The Preteen's Need for Sex Education

The above are merely suggestions. Feel free to use your own ideas that relate to working with, teaching or understanding the preteen.

EAT RIGHT TODAY FOR GOOD HEALTH TOMORROW

Developing self-confidence.
Why Take this Project?

All people have their own personal reasons for doing things. We are motivated or pushed into action by the desire to fulfill certain needs. You will have your own reasons for taking this project.

Following are several reasons for taking this project and ideas relating to what one can expect to learn from it. Read these items carefully and give each one some consideration. Some of them may not seem to fit in with your own personal reasons, but by making yourself aware of the possibilities mentioned you will be alerting yourself to new things that you might learn. This will help prepare you mentally to get the most out of your efforts and activities.

Reasons for Taking the Project

Leading Youth Groups

Examples: 4-H Project Groups
4-H Clubs
4-H Junior Leadership
Little League, etc.
Girl Scouts
Campfire Girls
Boy Scouts
Recreational Programs
Camp Counseling
Church Youth Groups

The preadolescent age range (roughly 9-12) is the range during which kids are most interested in being part of organized groups.

Developing Your Qualities of Leadership

We learn best by doing. We learn leadership best by leading. We learn through the real experience of guiding and being responsible for the leadership of another group.

Becoming Capable Parents

There are many resources available for helping parents understand and deal with babies and young children. But babies and young children soon grow into school-aged youngsters. This is a critical stage of life. Many adjustments characteristic of the teen years and of later life now begin to make themselves known. There is a need for parents and others to have a better understanding of the preteen age group.

Social Work as a Career

Counseling
Churchwork
Ministry
Recreational Work
Juvenile Probation Work
Psychology
Social Services
Public Health
The Healing Arts (physicians, nurses, etc.)
Many others

Many occupations and careers require individuals who are understanding, tolerant and supportive of the personal needs of others. Only by working with, or for, the benefit of others can one gain this type of experience.

Teaching or Coaching as a Career

We learn to teach best by teaching, to coach best by coaching. Sincere teachers and coaches learn as much as or more than their students. Not only do they learn more about teaching but they also learn more about the subject they are teaching.

Self-Development, Self-Growth and Self-Understanding

We all strive to know ourselves better. We all need to know ourselves better. Through a better understanding of others we come to understand ourselves better. We understand better where we came from and how we came to be what we are now.

Understanding Others Better

Through a focused study of any group we learn things that give us clarification and insights into the attitudes and behaviors of people in other groups. Thus we can relate better to their feelings, attitudes, opinions and experiences.
Improving One's Personal Communication Skills

All through life, and day by day, a person's relationships with others are influenced by the ability to communicate well (both verbally and non-verbally) one's feelings, thoughts, opinions and attitudes. We can improve our own skills in communicating by practicing them in real life situations of working with, teaching and helping others.

Just Because the Topic Interests You

If this is one of your reasons (or your only reason) for taking this project, then that is reason enough. All people have interests of various sorts and we are not always able to express or articulate (put into words) why we are interested in something. Sometimes we just are! By pursuing that interest we not only enjoy ourselves and fulfill a personal need, but we often discover the reason for our initial interest thus learning something else about ourselves.

Ask Yourself

After having read the section entitled “Why Take this Project,” and after having reviewed some of your written responses to that section in Unit One, “Growth & Development,” what are your thoughts and feelings?

1. Do your reasons for taking this division differ in any respect from your reasons when you began “Growth & Development?” If so, explain why you think they have changed.

2. a) What are some things you hope to learn by taking Unit Two, “Characteristics of Boys and Girls,” of this project?

b) Explain how you think learning those things will be helpful to you.
3. In what ways have you changed since you began Unit One, “Growth & Development?”

4. In what ways, if any, have your attitudes changed about preteen boys?
   Girls?

   Parents of Preteens?

5. What are some activities or experiences that you feel would be helpful for you in learning more about guiding and leading preteens?
The Preteen: Some General Characteristics

In this project we are concerned primarily with the age range of 9 through 12 and within this range there are some "general characteristics" that we should consider.

The basic purpose of the project is to prepare you to work with, teach or guide preteens through group activities. Therefore the few general characteristics that follow are some that are especially relevant to understanding preteens as members of groups or in group activities. As you consider them, try to imagine how each characteristic could influence or affect a child's attitudes, feelings and behavior as part of a group.

General Characteristics
1. This is a period of slow, steady physical growth. In later stages some girls may experience growth spurts and feel somewhat out of place within their own age group.

2. Physical skills, coordination and control are still developing. Large muscle control is becoming fairly well developed. Small muscle control (hands, fingers, etc.) may not be accomplished or well coordinated until 12 years of age or later.

3. This is an age of greater desire to belong to or be a part of groups (preferably of the same age range). Preteens generally accept rules and regulations and they often like and are impressed by symbols, rituals and ceremonies.

4. Their closest friends are usually of the same sex. As they get closer to the teen years, cliques and gangs become more important.

5. Preteens are still largely dependent on adults, but they want to do more and more things through their own efforts. Although they want more independence they still need and want the advice, discipline and protection that adults can provide. They tend to idolize some adults and look to them as sources of authority. Parents are still a strong influence.

Peer acceptance is important.
6. Some preteens often display or affect a show-off manner. Try to look beyond these outward show-off ways and understand the messages behind them.

7. Preteens in general are active and energetic. They seem to have great bursts of energy, but they still have a relatively short span of attention or interest.

8. They are learning to make decisions on their own but their decision-making ability is still limited and they will look to others for help in making decisions.

4. They want experience and adventure.

Children are growing rapidly. They want and need a variety of new experiences. Each new experience adds to their maturity and to their developing self-image. Alert leadership can help them to meaningful new experiences. It can also help them appreciate the new experiences and adventures in the so-called “everyday tasks.”

5. They want love and affection.

Affection or love is essential in healthy personality development. We all need to know that we are loved and accepted regardless of our shortcomings. People are different in their ways of expressing or accepting expressions of love or affection. But all people need some kind of expression of love and affection.

**Understanding Needs of Boys and Girls as Group Members**

Every group member has needs, interests, desires, values, strengths and weaknesses which are going to affect his or her behavior. The preteen will behave in keeping with his or her own self-image. Regardless of how a behavior may appear to a parent, leader, teacher or other observers, it is reasonable to the person performing it. The preteen group member needs opportunities to experiment with various behaviors. Preteens need to learn accepted ways to act in various social situations.

While all persons have different personalities, they are alike in many ways. The following five personal needs or goals are shared by all boys and girls.

1. **They want to belong and to be accepted.**

   The desire to belong is natural and helps bring children into contact with others. This satisfies the need for friends. Belonging helps them to grow because much of their feeling of personal worth comes from what others think of them and the value that others place on them.

2. **They want to become independent.**

   Becoming independent of adults is a sign of growing up. The desire to be independent is often troublesome for parents and leaders, but it cannot be avoided if the boy or girl is to grow up normally. This desire is shown by an impatience with adult guidance and a preference for making up their own minds. The rate at which the feeling for independence develops varies with age and with the individual.

3. **They want achievement and recognition.**

   They want to know that their efforts are worthwhile and appreciated. Rate of achievement varies with each member, therefore, projects and activities need to be varied and appropriate for the group members. A meaningful part of the sense of achievement comes from opportunities to do things for others.
A Profile of the Preteen

Please keep in mind that the following characteristics are generalizations. All individuals are different and develop at differing rates and on different timetables. A grouping of youngsters in this age range will show a wide range of sizes, shapes, behaviors and attitudes. However, almost all of them will be “normal” in terms of their own developmental schedules.

Physical Characteristics

Until the tenth or eleventh year, boys are likely to be taller and heavier than girls of the same age. Around the eleventh or twelfth year girls show a sharp increase in both height and weight. A couple of years later boys will show a similar increase.

Rapid bone and muscle growth will affect coordination and posture. Boys will likely be ahead of girls in physical endurance. This is especially true for girls who have begun their sexual maturation. Most girls will begin the development of secondary sex characteristics (breast development, pubic and underarm hair, etc.) during their preteen years.

Small hand muscles develop resulting in an interest in activities that provide hand skills such as tinkering, handcrafts, etc.

Kids at this stage are extremely active. They are toning up, testing and strengthening their “new muscles.” They may fatigue easily. Thus, they need frequent changes of activities. Although youngsters at this age may be awkward and uncoordinated, it is usually a time when they are reasonably healthy and relatively free from disease.

Speed, coordination, accuracy and steadiness of movement improve with age and experience.

Eating habits may change or vary. They may be very “picky” at times but eat a great deal. Choices of food may seem erratic and inconsistent.

Both boys and girls will become increasingly aware of their bodies and interested in their new growth and development. They may become very self-conscious.

Social Characteristics

Youngsters begin to want and need more contact with kids of their own age range. The attitudes, opinions, comfort and companionship of their peers becomes very important. They are growing up and away from social and emotional dependence on their parents and other adults.

Males and females of the same age differ in size.

This is a time for group activities and club memberships. Earlier in this stage kids may have shunned or expressed contempt for members of the opposite sex. Later on, an awkward interest in the opposite sex will appear.

During this period girls may become “tomboyish.” It’s a phase that usually passes with no ill affects. But boys showing “sissy” traits may face social disapproval. They, too, usually grow out of this but it can be a tough time because of the attitudes of others.

Kids like to dress and act like the rest of the crowd. Their actions and what they like to wear may seem “weird” or “ridiculous” to adults but not to them. They can become very careless about personal appearance which is often a source of concern for their parents. They may take part in foolish capers, silly acting, giggling fits, guffawing, devising secret codes, forming secret “exclusive” clubs, rough-housing and practical joking.

Even with all of these changes preteens are still very dependent on parents and adults. They want
and need social approval from adults and can be influenced by praise from adults. On the other hand they are losing some respect for the authority and opinions of the adult world in general. Some adults or parents make the mistake of taking this personally. Furthermore preteens may challenge adult knowledge, be moody, rebellious and uncommunicative. They may want to spend a lot of time alone, especially away from family members.

Preteens are growing in self-reliance, independence and the ability to govern themselves. They need to and will try to show their independence. They can be very critical of adults (and parents) and amazingly accurate in their estimations of adults. Parents and adults no longer seem to be the all-knowing, all-powerful, totally competent “super beings” that they once were. This age group may begin to show its contempt or disregard for adult authority by trying to get away with “unsocial” acts or behavior. At the same time they have a keen sense of right and wrong. Although their ideas may conflict with those of adults, they have intense feelings about what is right, wrong, just or unjust. These youngsters may resent being told what to do while at the same time needing constant reminders regarding their routine responsibilities. On the other hand, they may exhibit surprising maturity and responsibility at times in group activities or doing their part in community activities.

This is the age of “hero worship.” Boys idolize males who appear competent, bold, daring and adventurous. Often they select sports figures, television or movie stars as idols. Also they will idolize older boys they know or men whose skills and abilities they admire. Girls also have their idols—movie or television stars, singers, or older girls and women they know.

For both boys and girls this is a period of fantasizing and playing out various roles. It’s one way they learn about others and begin to define their own interests, talents and abilities.

**Emotional Characteristics**

This age group, especially in the later stages, is strongly loyal to their friends and peer group members. They are very much concerned about acceptance and recognition by their peers. They become very self-conscious about their sexual development. From their point of view they are either “overdeveloped” or “underdeveloped.” They are seldom “just right!” This perhaps is one reason for their dependence on peers for acceptance and recognition. They find solace and comfort in their relationships with those of their own age. This is another case where the old sayings “Birds of a feather flock together” and “Misery loves company” are appropriate. This age group, however, is not always miserable by any means. They have outgrown many childhood fears and are proud of their growing skills and competencies. They are often spontaneous in expressing joy, elation and happy excitement. They love to get together and enjoy their own brand of humor. They spend a lot of time “poking fun” at adults, parents, siblings, each other and themselves. They can be very cutting in their remarks about others and, being somewhat self-conscious, they are often very sensitive and can easily have their pride jolted and their feelings hurt.
At times they may play the martyrs, "knowing" in their own minds that their parents love their brothers or sisters more than they love them. At times they may brood and be pouty and touchy. A parent may never find out the real cause and the child himself may not fully understand the reasons behind his or her mood swings.

With the mixed feelings these youngsters have about themselves, parents and adults in general, they often become embarrassed about showing affection, either physically or verbally, toward parents. They may want to but feel that they shouldn't because they are "too big." Also their developing sexuality and their interest in and confusion about the opposite sex may add to their reluctance to show affection to parents.

**Interests and Learning Skills**

One very positive note about the preteen years is that they are years when budding talents and interests begin to make themselves known. During the earlier part of this stage, youngsters still have a rather short attention span. They probably won't be able to stay with a given task or project too long without becoming weary of it or having their interest attracted by something else. But these youngsters are able to budget time. They can use logical thought and reasoning processes. They begin to be interested in the ideas and attitudes of others and some may spend much time reading as they attempt to "soak up" ideas and experience the adventures of others. They may from time to time surprise a parent with indications of new talents, new understandings and displays of leadership abilities.

In the later preteen years, youngsters continue to develop along the lines mentioned above. They also become more interested in a wider variety of topics, in other words, more interested in the world in general. They are likely to become interested in religion and they may become more moralistic in their attitudes and judgements. While this might be encouraging and quite pleasing in some instances, in other instances, their moral judgements or pronouncements may be highly critical or very harsh. At the same time the preteens may become highly critical of themselves and their own abilities. Sometimes they become discouraged easily. At such times they need encouragement and assurance that they are "okay people."

They are maturing in the ability to postpone satisfaction until later for the sake of accomplishing a task or achieving a desired goal; that is, they can apply themselves to a task in the present knowing that the payoff will come later. They show an increased interest in earning or having money and they may take pride in some chores or jobs that they have.

Kids of this age range enjoy active games of all types. They like to try to make things or take them apart. They make collections of all sorts and usually are interested in animals and pets. They enjoy opportunities to "show-off" or display their own talents or skills. As they near the age of 11 or 12, they become more interested in team games and have more ability to work together and understand the concepts of teamwork.
They like adventure and risk taking activities. They may take part in some “unwise” or “unsanctioned” activities or behavior from time to time either in response to a “dare” or to test themselves. Along this same line they will enjoy adventure and mystery stories in books, movies and television, especially if hero or heroine types are featured. They love to identify with these types. They also enjoy spoofs, comedy, and “nonsense.” Remember they are going through some trying times in struggling for a new identity and they need some comic relief. As mentioned before, they greatly enjoy making fun of others and of themselves.

Preteens are able to assess situations and people and draw their own conclusions. They are developing their own skills in problem solving. And they are forever interested in or concerned about what others think even though that concern may not be easily apparent to adults.

The Preteen and Personal Needs

With any developmental stage an individual goes through, there are certain needs that should be met. To be more specific, if the needs are met the person will be more successful in mastering the developmental skills and tasks of that stage and more likely will be ready to face the next developmental stage.

All humans have certain very basic needs at all times. Very simply these needs are for nourishment, shelter and safety. We also have needs for being loved and for feelings of self-esteem or self-worth. We always have these needs. Along with these very fundamental needs various developmental stages present more specific needs.

Physical Needs

Preteens need good nutrition for rapidly developing bodies and minds. This doesn’t mean merely a lot of food but a balanced diet that supplies all of the body’s requirements for calories, protein, vitamins and minerals.

They need adequate rest or sleep which may be up to 10 or 11 hours of sleep per day. A given child may sleep less at night but may need a rest period during the day. Sleep needs vary from person to person but usually children need more sleep than adults.

Along with good nutrition and adequate rest, a balance of regular and varied exercise is necessary. This exercise promotes the healthy development of growing muscles, bones and ligaments. It is also vital to the development of muscular coordination and physical skill. In addition, exercise aids in flushing or ridding the body of waste material. A nice thing about exercise is that most kids will naturally play and exercise if torn away from the television and left to their own devices. They will also naturally change activities frequently providing themselves with the variety that is needed to prevent fatigue of their rapidly growing bodies. This variety provides for the balanced development of both large and small muscle systems.

Some kids at this stage may need reminders or encouragement toward maintaining good posture. If they are in their growth spurt, muscle development may not be keeping up with bone growth. This of course can result in awkwardness, clumsiness and poor posture. Most kids will naturally outgrow “sloppy” posture but with others poor posture can become a habit. A couple of examples might be: the girl who slumps to hide what she considers over-developed breasts or the kid who is suddenly “too tall” and slumps to appear more the size of “normal” friends or classmates. They may need some
attention with this problem.

With increased development and activity of sweat glands the preadolescent may need some tips or instructions about his or her own personal hygiene. Although their bodies are becoming more adult, this new type of personal responsibility may not have occurred to them. They need frank and open instruction regarding bathing, facial and complexion care, deodorant use and, in the case of girls, feminine hygiene as it relates to the menstrual cycle.

They may be picky about the food they eat but this is a crucial stage of growth and they should be steered away from a lot of sweets and soft drinks. Many cola type drinks contain caffeine which is a central nervous system stimulant. Caffeine can affect a child’s disposition by causing nervousness or irritability. Of course it can upset normal sleeping schedules and prevent balanced rest.

**Social Needs**

The social needs of the preteen are focused around a natural need to establish independence from parents and other adults. Since they really cannot be independent just yet, this struggle for independence can lead to conflicts and misunderstanding. This, however, is not necessary. If a parent or leader can understand that the growth toward independence is not only natural but positive, then he or she can recognize the attitudes and behaviors that indicate the need for independence. Once a parent or leader recognizes what is happening they can aid the youngster by guiding them toward or allowing them to have experiences that lead to genuine adult maturity and independence. Take it for granted that mistakes will be made. Coping with and learning from mistakes is probably a key part of growing toward the ability to be a responsible, competent and independent adult.

Now back to some more specific social needs. The preadolescent needs the companionship of his or her own age group (peers). They need some freedom in selecting their friends. They will make “bad” selections from time to time, but with each experience they learn. They will have conflicts, jealousies and spats with and among their friends. Through these experiences they learn and develop their own styles of getting along. They learn what is socially acceptable and what is not. But this is a lengthy process and takes some time. Some boys, and girls for that matter, may go through a stage of attempting to settle differences by fist fights. Although it is not wise to encourage this type of behavior, it will happen occasionally. Don’t overreact to such a situation. Try to let the youngster know that there are better ways of solving differences of opinion. They will likely learn that themselves, but a little guidance could be a big help.

Preadolescence is the transition stage from childhood to physical maturity. The changes begin during this stage. Depending upon how the youngster and his or her family respond to and cope with these changes, the youngster will either make a relatively smooth transition into the teen years or the unresolved problems will be intensified by the even more rapid growth and changes during the teen years.

Preteens have a vital task to accomplish. They must somehow get through this period of great change with a new identity that is reasonably stable. They will be different people coming out of this stage than they were going into it. This is as it should be. However, they will be able to adjust better to the continuing changes of the teen years if they arrive there feeling relatively comfortable with their new identities.

As part of the need to be accepted by their peers, preteen youngsters will have a need to dress and act like “the rest of the kids.” And likely “the rest of the kids” will want to be wearing something or acting in some way that is “different.” This is part of the process of proving to themselves that they are independent. This age group will come up with little faddish modes of dress. They will affect certain little gestures or behaviors that may seem absurd to adults. They will even coin new exclamatory words and phrases that are very meaningful or expressive to them or they will copy and imitate the “in” words and phrases used by teens. They will use those words or phrases every chance they get.

This age group needs the feeling of security and solidarity within their group. They may be very loyal to classmates. They may form cliques within larger groups. This is an age of joining and belonging. They may show more interest than ever before in organized groups such as athletic teams, church groups, 4-H, Scouting and so forth. At this age they need to learn the social skills of getting along in groups and of teamwork.

They will have mixed feelings about members of the opposite sex, especially those of their own age range. They will need opportunities (without undue pressure) to mix casually and informally with members of the opposite sex. Some think preteens need to learn such “social graces” as dancing and dating. Adults will likely be disappointed in their efforts to teach proper dancing and dating etiquette. A few of the girls nearing the teen years might be interested in dating and dancing but they will likely have older boys in mind. If a dance is organized for preteens, a few of the girls are apt to dance among themselves. Almost all the boys and most of the girls
will wish they were somewhere else! More successful types of activities might be varieties of games that bring about natural mixing.

**Emotional Needs**

We hear much about the emotional turmoil of the teen or adolescent years. We don’t hear much about it in the preadolescent years. But the fact is, if turmoil is to be, it begins there. A high percentage of children and youth referred to various types of psychological counseling services are in the preteen years.

Perhaps one of our most important concerns about preteens should be the healthy development of their feelings of self-esteem. How does the child feel about himself or herself? With all of the “strange” feelings and urges they have, with all their confusions about who they are, hopefully they can somehow feel good about themselves. Hopefully, they can appreciate their own unique skills, talents and capabilities. Hopefully, they can accept graciously what they may feel are their shortcomings, inadequacies or failures.

Preteens need understanding, recognition for achievement, and acceptance. They need chances to make decisions of their own—even wrong ones. They need the chance to make mistakes and build triumphs of their own. Most of all, after all the dust has settled, they need adults whom they can trust in and depend upon, and they need to know that those adults like them and feel good about them.

**Interests and Learning Needs**

The preadolescent has an active, curious, growing mind and intellect. The preadolescent has increased skills in acquiring and using new knowledge. Their interest and learning needs are wide and varied, but their attention spans are still relatively short. They cannot easily tolerate long bouts with any topic or situation without a break or change of pace.
They need a variety of learning experiences that are geared to their span of attention or their ability to apply themselves to a given activity or topic.

Project Activities

This section contains your project activities. The activities are just as important as, if not more than, the informational material given in this manual, because it is through the activities that you will actually do things for yourself and with others. It is through the activities that you will gain valuable experience. And it is only through experience that the project information will become meaningful in its fullest sense.

So take the activities seriously. The more sincere your efforts, the more meaningful and valuable will be the experiences.

Suggestions for Interview Activities

In some of the activities you will be interviewing other people for their opinions and ideas about pre-teens. You will be a roving reporter, so to speak!

Be sure to fully explain the purpose of the interview to those you wish to interview. Tell them something about your project and how you will use the information they give you. In some cases you may share the information with other members of your project.

Ask them for permission to interview. When the interview is over, thank them for their time and their willingness to help.

When interviewing use the questions that are given as guidelines. But feel free to branch off into other related topics that are of interest to you or the person being interviewed. You may pick up additional bits of good information or valuable insights this way.

ACTIVITY ONE

Assist an Adult Leader

Assist an adult leader with a preteen youth group for a minimum of five sessions. As you are assisting keep in mind the following questions and then make your own observations when you have finished your five or more sessions with the group. Spaces are provided for your answers.

1. What do you see as characteristics of this age group?

2. What do they especially enjoy?
3. What do they especially dislike?

4. What do you see as especially challenging in working with this age range?

5. What are the special rewards in working with this age group?

6. What personal qualities are most needed to work successfully with the preteen?
7. What are the differences in behavior and attitudes of children when working with them in groups as opposed to working with them as individuals?

8. How can parents be involved most effectively with kids in this age group?

9. How can behavior problems involving the preteen best be handled?

10. How can you get the shy child to become involved and take part?

11. What suggestions do you have for communicating successfully with preteens?
ACTIVITY TWO

The Preteen Point of View

Talk to three different girls and three different boys in the 9-12 year age range. Use the following questions during the interview. Spaces are provided for responses.

Girl Interview One

1. What are some of your favorite things to do?

2. What are your favorite foods?

3. What are some of the best things about being your age?

4. What are some of the worst things about being your age?

5. What do you think about boys your age?

6. What are some things you would like to be or do when you grow up?

Why?

7. What are your chores or responsibilities at home?

How do you feel about them?
8. Who are some famous people you admire?

Why?

9. Who are some adults that you know and admire?

Why?

10. Who are some people your age that you admire?

Why?

11. What are some things that worry you or bother you?

12. What kinds of things make you happy and leave you feeling very good?

13. Do you have any major complaints or gripes about parents and other grown-ups?

14. What are some good things about parents and other grown-ups?

Describe the child’s behavior and attitude during the interview.

How, and to what extent, do you think your handling of the interview may have influenced the child’s behavior?
Boy Interview One

1. What are some of your favorite things to do?

2. What are your favorite foods?

3. What are some of the best things about being your age?

4. What are some of the worst things about being your age?

5. What do you think about girls your age?

6. What are some things you would like to be or do when you grow up?

   Why?

7. What are your chores or responsibilities at home?

   How do you feel about them?

8. Who are some famous people you admire?

   Why?
9. Who are some adults that you know and admire?
   Why?

10. Who are some people your age that you admire?
    Why?

11. What are some things that worry you or bother you?

12. What kinds of things make you happy and leave you feeling very good?

13. Do you have any major complaints or gripes about parents and other grown-ups?

14. What are some good things about parents and other grown-ups?

Describe the child's behavior and attitude during the interview.

How, and to what extent, do you think your handling of the interview may have influenced the child's behavior?
Girl Interview Two

1. What are some of your favorite things to do?

2. What are your favorite foods?

3. What are some of the best things about being your age?

4. What are some of the worst things about being your age?

5. What do you think about boys your age?

6. What are some things you would like to be or do when you grow up?

   Why?

7. What are your chores or responsibilities at home?

   How do you feel about them?

8. Who are some famous people you admire?

   Why?
9. Who are some adults that you know and admire?

   Why?

10. Who are some people your own age that you admire?

    Why?

11. What are some things that worry you or bother you?

12. What kinds of things make you happy and leave you feeling very good?

13. Do you have any major complaints or gripes about parents and other grown-ups?

14. What are some good things about parents and other grown-ups?

Describe the child's behavior and attitude during the interview.

How, and to what extent, do you think your handling of the interview may have influenced the child's behavior?
Boy Interview Two

1. What are some of your favorite things to do?

2. What are your favorite foods?

3. What are some of the best things about being your age?

4. What are some of the worst things about being your age?

5. What do you think about girls your age?

6. What are some things you would like to be or do when you grow up?
   Why?

7. What are your chores or responsibilities at home?
   How do you feel about them?

8. Who are some famous people you admire?
   Why?
9. Who are some adults that you know and admire?

Why?

10. Who are some people your own age that you admire?

Why?

11. What are some things that worry you or bother you?

12. What kinds of things make you happy and leave you feeling very good?

13. Do you have any major complaints or gripes about parents and other grown-ups?

14. What are some good things about parents and other grown-ups?

Describe the child's behavior and attitudes during the interview.

How, and to what extent, do you think your handling of the interview may have influenced the child's behavior?
Girl Interview Three

1. What are some of your favorite things to do?

2. What are your favorite foods?

3. What are some of the best things about being your age?

4. What are some of the worst things about being your age?

5. What do you think about boys your age?

6. What are some things you would like to be or do when you grow up?
   Why?

7. What are your chores or responsibilities at home?
   How do you feel about them?

8. Who are some famous people you admire?
   Why?
9. Who are some adults that you know and admire?

Why?

10. Who are some people your own age that you admire?

Why?

11. What are some things that worry you or bother you?

12. What kinds of things make you happy and leave you feeling very good?

13. Do you have any major complaints or gripes about parents and other grown-ups?

14. What are some good things about parents and other grown-ups?

Describe the child’s behavior and attitude during the interview.

How, and to what extent, do you think your handling of the interview may have influenced the child’s behavior?
9. Who are some adults that you know and admire?

   Why?

10. Who are some people your own age that you admire?

   Why?

11. What are some things that worry you or bother you?

12. What kinds of things make you happy and leave you feeling very good?

13. Do you have any major complaints or gripes about parents and other grown-ups?

14. What are some good things about parents and other grown-ups?

Describe the child's behavior and attitude during the interview.

How, and to what extent, do you think your handling of the interview may have influenced the child's behavior?
ACTIVITY THREE

One-On-One

Spend some time individually with one preadolescent boy and one preadolescent girl. Try to spend a couple of hours with each one in some activity of interest to them. Examples:
— teach them a new game, craft, skill, etc.
— play with them a game of their choice—hide and seek, checkers, Monopoly, etc.
— tutor or help them with school work.
— help them with a project or something they need or want to do.
— take them or go with them on an outing—movie, sports event, library, camping, etc.

1. Summarize your observation of each youngster about how they handle frustration and success, joy and disappointment.
   Boy:

   Girl:

2. Why do you think children often respond or behave differently to adults individually as compared to when they (the kids) are in groups?
ACTIVITY FOUR

For Your Own Information

Build your own mini library or collection of information on the preteen age group using articles, books, booklets, pamphlets, pictures, etc. If you have a specific interest relating to preteens this would be a good place to start or a good way to expand your knowledge. Some examples for special interest might be:

- Health and the Preteen
- Nutrition and the Preteen
- Sex Education for the Preteen
- Preteens With Special Handicaps
- Preteens and Relationships with Parents
- Preteens and Relationships with Brothers & Sisters

Check with a librarian for sources of information or check with your 4-H project leader.

Upon completion of this activity summarize your work in the area below.

Explain your special interest:

Describe how you built up your collection and what sources of information were helpful:

Briefly summarize what is in your collection:

How has this activity been helpful or educational for you?
My 4-H Project Story

Include in your story responses to the following questions:
• What are some specific things you learned from each activity?

• Explain how the things you learned in this project can be helpful to you in the future.
• What insights have you gained into the behavior and feelings of preteens?

• What have you learned about yourself?
This publication was promulgated at a cost of $1,314.60, or 26 cents per copy, to help teens understand pre-teens. 9-5M-81.