

## Goal:

The goal of this exercise is to analyze youth behaviors through a developmental lens, and to identify developmentally appropriate strategies for use by participants, organizations and communities with and/or for youth. Each case study scenario addresses youth behaviors that are traditionally misunderstood and responded to incorrectly by adults.

## Instructions:

For each case study:

- Read the scenario.
- Review the related Developmental Stage Analysis/fact sheet (2pgs) for the age range mentioned in the scenario.
  - Early Adolescence 10-14 years old . [English](#) [Spanish](#)
  - Middle Adolescence 15-17 years old [English](#) [Spanish](#)
  - Late Adolescence 18-24 years old [English](#) [Spanish](#)
- Analyze the scenario with a developmental perspective to determine what is going on and why young people are responding in the manner they are.
- Given your developmental analysis, how would you (or other adults) respond to this situation when understanding it through a “youth lens?” (At the end of this document you will find a cheat sheet for each Case Study scenario.)
- If you did the Developmental Timeline Activity, think about how different factors and environments can impact the developmental tasks represented in the scenario.
- Four scenarios are provided here. THEN try this exercise with your own scenario – some challenge you are having in your adolescent focused work, applying a developmental lens to the challenge. Any new insights or ideas on how to respond with a developmental lens?

## Variations:

This activity can also be used in a group setting. With a group analyzing scenarios together, or small groups rotating through scenarios, then discussing together at the end.

# Developmental Lens Case Study Activity

## Developmental Lens Case Study #1

A group of 13-year-old teenagers routinely “hang out” at the entrance of the QuikMart, a local convenience store/gas station in the neighborhood. They joke around, are loud and boisterous both around the entrance and inside the store. They clown around in the parking lot. Their presence and behavior troubles the manager, intimidates customers and is frowned upon by community members. The police have been called and some community members would like to enact a youth loitering ordinance.

<b>Developmental Analysis</b> What’s going on developmentally for these young people?	<b>Developmental Response</b> How would you (or other adults) respond to this situation when understanding it through a “developmental lens?

## Developmental Lens Case Study #2

A clique of 14-year-old teenagers is raising eyebrows at the 4-H Club. Program managers and administrators have commented to the adult leaders that the girls are dressed too provocatively and that the boys look like hoodlums because of their baggy pants.

<b>Developmental Analysis</b> What’s going on developmentally for these young people?	<b>Developmental Response</b> How would you (or other adults) respond to this situation when understanding it through a “developmental lens?

# Developmental Lens Case Study Activity

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## Developmental Lens Case Study #3

The South Side Coalition has reached out to engage youth as partners in their work creating a safe, livable and vibrant community. They have been assessing community issues for 9 months and now feel the need for youth involvement. Six teens (average age 16) have become Coalition members. At the first meeting, they are greeted warmly and introduced to the adult members who were present. Over the next 6 months, youth members are often silent and fidgety at the 90-minute meetings. When they do speak, they bring up issues or responses that adult members feel are irrelevant. Some youth show up late and leave early or just don't show up at all. The adult members are getting frustrated.

Developmental Analysis What's going on developmentally for these young people?	Developmental Response How would you (or other adults) respond to this situation when understanding it through a "developmental lens?"

## Developmental Lens Case Study #4

The staff of Highland High School are very concerned about disturbing trends with their 9th grade students. Over the past 4-5 years, an increasingly higher percentage of 9th graders are: Acting out in classes; Participating less in school activities; Getting C grades and lower; Truant. Traditional academic and behavioral intervention programs have been strengthened, but these challenges remain.

Developmental Analysis What's going on developmentally for these young people?	Developmental Response How would you (or other adults) respond to this situation when understanding it through a "developmental lens?"



State Adolescent Health Resource Center

# Developmental Lens Case Study Activity

## Developmental Lens Case Study On Your Own

Try this exercise with a challenging behavior or scenario you are facing in your own adolescent focused work. Applying a developmental lens to the challenge. Any new insights or ideas on how to respond with a developmental lens?

**Your scenario:**

<b>Developmental Analysis</b> What's going on developmentally for the young person/people in your scenario?	<b>Developmental Response</b> How would you (or other adults) respond to this situation when understanding it through a "developmental lens?"



# Developmental Lens Case Study Activity

## CHEAT SHEET - Developmental Lens Case Study #1

A group of 13-year-old teenagers routinely “hang out” at the entrance of the QuikMart, a local convenience store/gas station in the neighborhood. They joke around, are loud and boisterous both around the entrance and inside the store. They clown around in the parking lot. Their presence and behavior troubles the manager, intimidates customers and is frowned upon by community members. The police have been called and some community members would like to enact a youth loitering ordinance.

<b>Developmental Analysis</b> What’s going on developmentally for these young people?	<b>Developmental Response</b> How would you (or other adults) respond to this situation when understanding it through a “developmental lens”?
<p><b>Peer relationships:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More likely to engage in riskier behaviors when in group of peers.</li> </ul> <p><b>Identity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worried about being normal so look to peers for what is “normal”</li> <li>• Self absorbed (self is the center of the world) as a way to handle all the changes going on in themselves</li> <li>• Increasing focus on independence.</li> <li>• Look to peers for what is considered “normal.”</li> <li>• Fear of rejection, not fitting in.</li> </ul> <p><b>New way of thinking:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working on the ability to put themselves in another person’s shoes.</li> <li>• Mostly interested in the present and near future.</li> </ul> <p><b>New body:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physically restless – need to be doing something, need to use their bodies in some way. Thus annoying behaviors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the youth (and other youth in the community) to address the issue in a positive and proactive way.</li> <li>• The store manager could give them a role – to greet the customers, hold the door open, keep the area around the store clean, or manage a garden area in front of the store. (gives them a role, something valuable to do, something that makes a difference in their community but is physically active – helps them see the store as something they value and want to maintain).</li> <li>• Community members could work with the youth (and others) to identify and put in place fun, interesting and engaging activities for youth ages 12-15 in their community so that they have something fun to do rather than hang around the QuikMart.</li> <li>• Work with local youth organizations to use the parking lot as a youth event gathering space 1-2 times per month where youth-adult teams manage the events. Helps mark the store as a youth-friendly place that they are more likely to take care of.</li> </ul>



# Developmental Lens Case Study Activity

## CHEAT SHEET - Developmental Lens Case Study #2

A clique of 14-year-old teenagers is raising eyebrows at the 4-H Club. Program managers and administrators have commented to the adult leaders that the girls are dressed too provocatively and that the boys look like hoodlums because of their baggy pants.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Developmental Analysis</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">What’s going on developmentally for these young people?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Developmental Response</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">How would you (or other adults) respond to this situation when understanding it through a “developmental lens?”</p>
<p><b>Figuring out sexuality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Establishing a sense of sexual identity, including a personal sense of masculinity and femininity.</li> <li>● Exploring the ability to attract a partner.</li> <li>● Concerns about sexual attractiveness.</li> </ul> <p><b>Peer relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Peer crowds and fitting in.</li> <li>● Fear of rejection and not fitting in.</li> </ul> <p><b>Identity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Trying on new hats.</li> <li>● Worried about being normal so look to peers for what is “normal.”</li> <li>● Expression of values.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Educate the managers and administrators about youth development.</li> <li>● Work with youth to explore what their dress means to them and how it impacts their lives. Include opportunities to explore how different types of dress fit or don’t fit into specific situations, how dress has changed/stayed the same over time, etc.</li> <li>● Partner with youth to define a dress code that is acceptable to both youth and adults at the Boys and Girls Club.</li> <li>● Partner with youth to hold a fashion show in which adults and youth can share their fashions and share what it means to them.</li> <li>● Analyze media to explore the role and message of dress.</li> </ul>



# Developmental Lens Case Study Activity

## CHEAT SHEET - Developmental Lens Case Study #3

The South Side Coalition has reached out to engage youth as partners in their work creating a safe, livable and vibrant community. They have been assessing community issues for 9 months and now feel the need for youth involvement. Six teens (average age 16) have become Coalition members. At the first meeting, they are greeted warmly and introduced to the adult members who were present. Over the next 6 months, youth members are often silent and fidgety at the 90-minute meetings. When they do speak, they bring up issues or responses that adult members feel are irrelevant. Some youth show up late and leave early or just don't show up at all. The adult members are getting frustrated.

<b>Developmental Analysis</b> What's going on developmentally for these young people?	<b>Developmental Response</b> How would you (or other adults) respond to this situation when understanding it through a "developmental lens?
<p><b>Defining a personal sense of identity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying who they are and what role they play in their world. Figuring out what they're good at, where they can "shine"</li> </ul> <p><b>Adopting a personal value system:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Idealistic and ready for action.</li> <li>Beginning to question social conventions (how things get done) and re-examining personal values and moral/ethical principles</li> </ul> <p><b>Meeting demands of increasingly mature roles and responsibilities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning about the roles expected of them and the skills necessary for these roles. Like all ages, when learning new skills, teens try them on tenuously (speaking in groups with adults, taking on new experiences).</li> </ul> <p><b>Cognitive development:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With burgeoning abstract thinking skills, youth see many varied and interesting possibilities to issues that they'd like to explore and put into action. They are less skilled in deep analysis or understanding of how systems work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Train adults about how to effectively partner with youth.</li> <li>Train adults and youth about how to effectively partner together.</li> <li>Work with adults to change how meetings are held.</li> <li>Provide routine opportunities to all members to get to know each other, find common ground, etc. This provides a "we" approach to their work.</li> <li>Have adults who are developmentally on-track with youth mentor youth members – help them get up to speed on the Coalition's work, how work gets done, etc.</li> <li>Provide a hands-on activity in which adults and youth partner together to accomplish a concrete task for the Coalition.</li> </ul>



# Developmental Lens Case Study Activity

## CHEAT SHEET - Developmental Lens Case Study #4

The staff of Highland High School are very concerned about disturbing trends with their 9th grade students. Over the past 4-5 years, an increasingly higher percentage of 9th graders are:

- Acting out in classes.
- Participate less in school activities.
- Getting C grades and lower.
- Truant.
- Just seem lost.

Traditional academic and behavioral intervention programs have been strengthened, but these challenges remain.

Developmental Analysis What’s going on developmentally for these young people?	Developmental Response How would you (or other adults) respond to this situation when understanding it through a “developmental lens?”
<p><b>Physical body:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They already feel off kilter because they’re adapting to a wildly changing body that’s not in their control. Now they’re thrown into a new school setting that also totally out of their control.</li> </ul> <p><b>New way of thinking:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Still in earlier stages of abstract thinking skills. High school requires much higher levels of abstract thinking (planning ahead, managing time and projects, working collaboratively with others, much greater opportunities to draw from and on) which for some students is a skill that needs lot of support.</li> </ul> <p><b>Identity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on where do I fit in, what is my role??</li> <li>• Trying on new hats.</li> <li>• Youth are increasingly expected to take on more mature roles – at a time when their brains and skills are not yet consistent in accomplishing these roles.</li> </ul> <p><b>Peer relationships:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peers increasingly important. Need to fit in. New peer crowd and expectation. At the bottom of the hierarchy. Need to re-establish themselves with their peers (both those they’ve gone to school with previously and those they haven’t).</li> <li>• Riskier behaviors in presence of peers.</li> <li>• Peers increasingly important. Need to fit in. New peer crowd and expectation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train teachers and other school staff in early-middle adolescent development and transition.</li> <li>• Identify and act on opportunities for teachers and staff to build personal relationships with 9<sup>th</sup> graders so teens know someone knows and cares about them.</li> <li>• Provide leadership opportunities for 9<sup>th</sup> graders, especially those who are struggling.</li> <li>• Help students who are socially isolated make friends.</li> <li>• Provide opportunities (in class and other areas of school) for students to get to know each other and work together.</li> <li>• Partner with students to assess school activities – change those that need changing.</li> <li>• Provide more arts opportunities for youth to express themselves and get connected to school.</li> </ul>