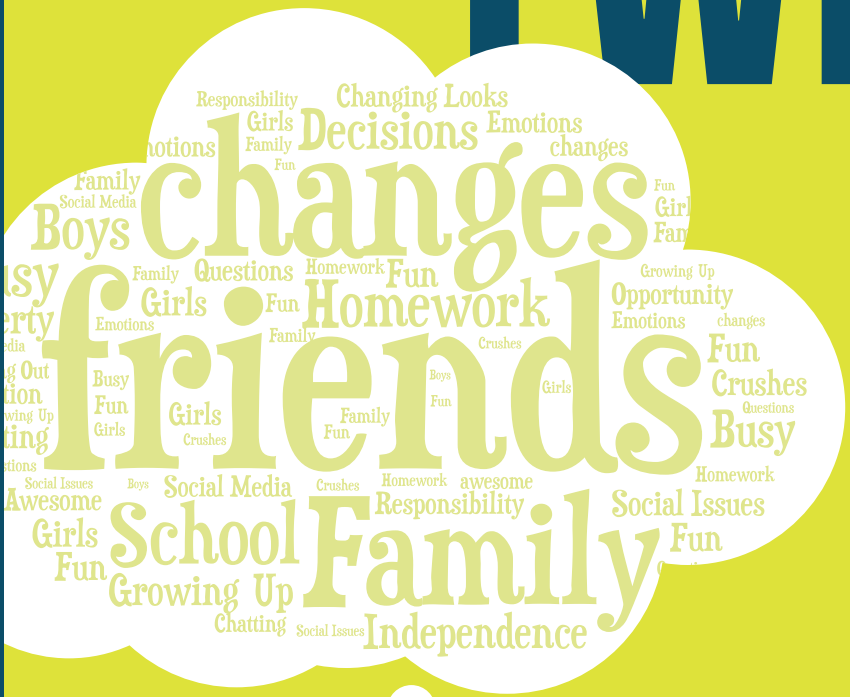
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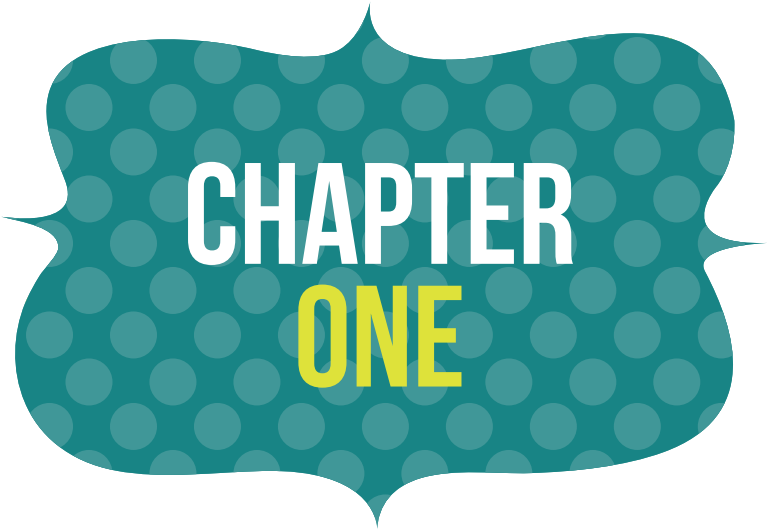




A GROWING-UP GUIDE FOR THE CHANGING YOU

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TWEEN BEING

Here you are! You're between being a child and a teen. You're a tween. But what does that really mean? How does that feel? What has changed? Are you comfortable as you, now that you are a tween? Take a minute to think about how you feel, how you act, and what you think.

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DO ANY OF THESE STATEMENTS DESCRIBE YOU?

- ☐ I know what activities and interests I would like to continue pursuing as a tween.
- ☐ I think I can control how fast I change into a tween, then a teen.
- ☐ I have thought about new hobbies and activities I'd like to try.
- ☐ I can balance schoolwork, after-school activities, and hanging out with friends.
- ☐ I am comfortable with the changing feelings I am experiencing as a tween.
- ☐ I am comfortable with the new thoughts and ideas that I have.
- ☐ I am comfortable matching my behavior to the situation.



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There is no one right way to feel, think, or act if you are a tween—or a teen or an adult, for that matter! The tween years can lead to some changes, though. You may begin to look different physically, you may want more freedom to make decisions, your friendships and the activities you want to do with friends might change, and you may even find that some of your thoughts and opinions are different now. Some tweens want change to happen quickly, while others like to have a more gradual transition from childhood into being a tween.

Change is an important part of the tween years. It's the time you will move from childhood into being a teen. It's great if you are totally comfortable with the changes that are happening in your life. It's also okay if you are reading this book to learn how to become more comfortable. Welcome to being a tween!

BEING YOU!

Many tweens secretly wonder if they have to say goodbye to everything that made them who they were as a little kid. For example, Zack thought that he needed to pack up his toy trucks and stuffed animals and ship them off to a younger cousin. He thought that he would be teased if he kept these things in his room. Melanie wondered if she needed to stop playing with her dolls and pretending that she was a famous movie star. She was afraid that her friends would laugh at her now if they knew that she still enjoyed both of these activities. Like Zack and Melanie, you have had many years to be who you are. You might be pretty comfortable with that.

So, does everything have to change? Do tweens have to look and act a certain way? Do tweens have to give up the toys and games they used to play with just because they are tweens now? What do you think is the right answer?

The short answer is *no!* If you think that you need to give up the games, hobbies, and activities that you enjoyed when you were younger, think again. Some tweens choose to continue playing as they always have. Then there are the tweens that tell other kids, "I don't play with baby stuff anymore!" and start doing all new things. And there are other tweens who still love all their favorite toys from childhood but only play with them when friends aren't around. Whatever you decide is okay. You can focus on new adventures or

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stick with what you liked to do as a pre-tween while trying to figure out what you want to do as a tween. It is up to you.

When you make decisions about how you want to act as a tween, you may get pressure from others to "act your age!" Your friends may have certain expectations for how you and they should act, look, and what you should do now that you are all tweens. Your parents may encourage you to try out new activities or take on more responsibility so that you will be prepared for becoming a teen in a few years. Even your teachers may guide you to approach your schoolwork in a more independent manner. Clearly, there's a lot going on during your tweens!

The good news is that you can learn how to deal with these new expectations. Now is the time to figure out who you want to be as a tween, and how to comfortably react to your friends', parents', and teachers' changing expectations of you. You will read more about all these topics later in this book.

KNOW-HOW NOW:

THE ADULTS IN YA

It's not just tweens who hold onto their favorite toys and activities from childhood. Lots of adults do "kid things" too! Do you know why young adult (YA) books like the Harry Potter series or the Divergent series are so popular? Because grown-ups read them, too! According to a new study, a whopping 55% of people buying YA books are older than 18 years old. While you might think that those grown-ups are just buying books for kids, think again. When asked, 78% of those adults said they are reading the books themselves. Adults can have a fun, carefree, and even silly side for their entire lives. Tweens and teenagers may be fearful of acting like a little kid, but really it is okay, even healthy, to hold onto the wonderful parts of being young.

New study: 55% of YA books bought by adults. (2012, September 13). *Publishers Weekly.* Retrieved from http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-industry-news/article/53937-new-study-55-of-ya-books-bought-by-adults.html

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KEEPING THE "KID STUFF"

Here are some childhood activities that other tweens say they would like to continue doing:

- collecting dolls
- climbing trees
- building with Legos
- playing tag or hide-and-go seek

Can you think of interests or hobbies that you would like to keep in your life as you grow into a teen? You may want to write them down on a separate sheet of paper so you'll always remember them.

You may never want to change some of these hobbies. However, you may want to think about how you could expand your childhood hobbies into "tween" versions of the same interests. For example, remember Zack, who loved playing with toy trucks, and Melanie, who liked to pretend to be a movie star? Zack could start building model cars. Melanie could try out for her school play or go to theater camp.

Here are some more ideas for ways to expand on your pre-tween activities:

- collecting dolls ➡ making clothes for dolls
- climbing trees ➡ scaling rock-climbing walls
- building with Legos ➡ creating building designs
- playing tag or hide-and-go seek ➡ doing scavenger hunts

Now, for fun, can you take it one step further and convert those new activities into adult jobs or hobbies? Here are some ideas:

- collecting dolls ➡ making clothes for dolls ➡ designing clothing or reviewing fashion
- climbing playground equipment ➡ scaling climbing walls ➡ working as a fire fighter
- building with Legos ➡ drawing building plans ➡ becoming an architect
- playing tag or hide-and-go seek ➡ going on scavenger hunts ➡ doing map-making

See? You don't have to change who you are or what you like to do just because you are getting older!

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JOINING NEW ACTIVITIES

Now that you are a little older, you may have the opportunity to try new activities. For example, you may be able to try out for a school or community sports club for older kids. Sports teams may become more competitive over the next few years. As a tween, you have the chance to try different sports to see if you want to put serious time into any one of them later.

Being on a sports team can have special challenges in the tween years. For example, Daniel made his school's cross country track team. He loved track and had been running almost since he was able to walk. But imagine how he felt when he walked out onto the track that first day to meet the coach and noticed that most of his friends grew a lot over the summer. Daniel was no longer as tall as some of his friends. At first, he felt uncomfortable and feared that he would lose his edge in track. He talked to his coach about this, and guess what? Daniel's coach wasn't worried. Daniel's speed and stamina were still strong. After talking to his coach, Daniel felt better about being on the team and enjoyed the season.

many communities also have after-school clubs or programs for your age group at the library or community center

Not every tween wants to join a sports team or continue playing a sport at a more competitive level, and that's okay. There are lots of other activities or hobbies to pursue. If you are looking for a way to hang out with a group of tweens, you can try joining a club at school that interests you. Many communities also have after-school clubs or programs for your age group at the library or community center. For example, you could look into joining an art club, theater group, dance program, book club, or other group. Ask the adult who runs these clubs for advice on choosing a program that matches your interests. Ask older kids, ask your parents, ask your teachers…ask, ask, ask! And if you can't find a club that appeals to you, maybe you could start something on your own.

Before picking which activities you want to try this week or month, take a moment to make a list, on paper or in a computer file, of all the activities that you think that you might be interested in. Then review the list, and pick some activities to try now and some to try later.

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IT'S YOUR TIMELINE

Some kids wish there were a clear rule book for growing up, something that would let tweens know exactly what to do and what to say…and when. Well, no such book exists. There's no exact schedule, or exact words to use, or exact way to do things as a tween. But that's a good thing. That means you can be an individual and a little creative in developing your own schedule and timeline for growing up. You may have noticed that kids mature at different rates—some girls may be a head taller than every boy in your class. Some boys have deep voices now and others do not. Just as bodies change at different rates, your tween "readiness" happens on its own schedule, too.

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Each tween's mental and emotional development follows a unique timeline and is affected by individual physical changes, hormonal changes, and emotional maturity. Some of these factors are beyond your control. However, there are some changes you do have control over and can deal with at your own pace. Imagine a boy or girl asks you out, but you don't want to date yet. Do you have control over the situation? Yes. What if your mom now expects you to make your own lunch or babysit for your brother while she runs a few quick errands around the neighborhood? Do you have control in this situation? Maybe or maybe not. In either case, you can share your feelings, thoughts, and concerns in a mature and respectful way.

You may find that you are looking forward to being older and having more freedom and responsibility to make your own decisions. But sometimes, you might want to be taken care of and have things done for you without any pressures or decisions to make. It is not unusual for tweens, teens, and even adults to want to be taken care of sometimes! Remember that you don't have to take on grown-up responsibilities right now. Luckily, you will have time to change from being a child to being an adult. Growing up can happen gradually. Take your time! Determine your own schedule! Consult with your parents and decide what is right for you. Take on some independence, wait until you feel comfortable with it, and then think about moving forward.

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For example, as a tween, Samantha started picking out her own clothes and making her own creative lunches. She was comfortable with this increased independence and enjoyed it! Later, when she was comfortable taking on even more independence, she earned money doing extra chores at home so that she could save up for new clothes. When she had saved enough money, she went shopping with her mother. They agreed that Samantha could decide what she wanted to buy, especially since she was buying the clothes with her own money, but her mother would have veto power. Samantha knew that her mother generally trusted her opinions and she decided that part of being mature was to trust her mother's feelings about the clothes as well. Samantha's mother did veto one outfit but generally liked her daughter's confidence, clothing choices, and the fact that she worked to buy these items. Samantha felt pride in being able to buy new clothes that reflected her move from childhood into the tween years!

KNOW-HOW NOW:

DISCOMFORT WITH CHANGE

Did you know that psychologists and philosophers even as far back as the Buddha recognize that there are some key areas of suffering (or discomfort) that people frequently encounter? One of these typical areas of suffering is the discomfort with or fear of change. The first step to dealing with this fear is to identify that it exists, accept that it exists, and then find a way to move forward despite this feeling.

Some tweens love the chance to be older and more independent. But did you know that it is also totally normal to be anxious about growing up? Lots of college students are nervous about graduating, entering the "real world," and getting a job. An older adult, who has worked for many, many years may be frightened by the idea of retirement. Changes at any age can be exciting, but may also create worry as you face new and unexplored situations.

Shore, D.A., & Kupferberg, E.D. (2014). Preparing people and organizations for the challenge of change. *Journal of Health Communication, 19,* 275–281.

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What would you do if changes seem to be happening too fast for you? Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Ask people you trust for help dealing with the changes in your life.
- Make decisions that you are comfortable with, not ones that you feel pressure to make just to fit in with your friends.
- You don't have to try every new experience or way of acting. If it doesn't feel right, then it's probably not right for today!
- Remind yourself of why you like yourself and make sure what you are doing reflects who you are.

Don't worry if you don't feel ready to do things that other kids are doing right now. Remember, there's no one timeline for growing up!

TOTAL TWEEN MOMENT: EMMA'S STORY

Emma told her friends that Andrew asked her out. "I was happy that he was interested in me, but I was also kind of grossed out." Most of her friends totally understood her feelings. A few of them thought it was weird that she didn't want to go out with him.

Emma talked to her mom and said that she wasn't ready to date anyone, but she didn't want to hurt Andrew's feelings, either. Her mom reminded her that she shouldn't do anything that made her uncomfortable just to please someone else! So Emma told Andrew that she wasn't ready and wanted to date when she was older and more comfortable with it.

Andrew felt comfortable asking Emma out, but his friend Harry felt he wasn't ready to ask girls out. Right now, though, it can be helpful to just remember that there is no right way to be at this age, so Harry's, Andrew's, and Emma's feelings are normal.

Has this "dating dilemma" ever happened to you?

How would you react if you were Emma?

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SELF-HELP/LIFE SKILLS
AGES 9-13

THE TWEEN YEARS are a time of change and possibility. They are also a time when kids may begin to feel confused, unsure, and even different. Have you ever felt like that? This book is for you—the tween!

The Tween Book is chock full of tips, advice, research, and reflection questions to help you navigate the tween experience, including:

- Finding the right pace for **GROWING UP**
- Adjusting to your **CHANGING ROLE** in your family
- **GAINING INDEPENDENCE** and responsibilities
- Making decisions and **SETTING GOALS** for your future
- Understanding your changing looks and your **BODY IMAGE**
- **GETTING CRUSHES** on other kids and dating (or not!)
- **MAKING FRIENDS** and hanging out in groups
- Dealing with rumors, teasing, and even **BULLYING**
- Completing schoolwork and **GETTING ORGANIZED**

And more! Take a look inside and begin your tween adventure!



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