

Learning in Families Together: Adolescence and Brain Development

Adolescence is the transition stage between childhood and adulthood (age 12-19). There are many bodily changes and social and emotional changes.

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Parenting Tips

- Self-control is not fully developed in adolescents. They often seek instant rewards.
- Adolescents take more risks when friends are watching. The reward seems more important to them than the risk. In groups, the risk for teens is doubled.
- Impulsivity (doing things without thinking) generally drops throughout life, starting at about age 10, but this love of the thrill peaks at around age 15. As teens mature into young adults, there is less interest in thrill seeking and more impulse control.
- Misbehavior occurs due to immaturity, and it often goes away without any intervention. It helps teens to learn self-control by having others (parents and leaders) set limits.

Together Time

Be involved in what your teen is

interested in, communicate, and be ready to talk and LISTEN!

Share in their interests. Listen to music (of their choice) together and discuss it, check out thrilling movies, shop together, and even plan a party together. Try not to be overly critical.

Set limits on the time they are allowed to use the computer and other electronic devices. Help them set their passwords and understand safe Internet use.

Learning Time

Change is exciting in adolescence. Teens like novel things. That's why new friends seem more interesting than familiar family members.

- Find ways to meet new families or expose adolescents to new places, careers, or hobbies.
- The brain develops more complex functioning as a person ages. In infancy, the brain is mainly telling the body that it is wet, tired, or hungry. Later on,

emotions and more complex thinking processes develop.

Peer Time

The parts of the brain responsible for sensation seeking are still developing, and the parts responsible for impulse control are also under construction. Patience is critical. Adults must model good decision-making and problem-solving. Adolescents will see that learning is a process with many steps.

- Be consistent with rules and guidance, being firm but fair.
- Be smart by following up to make sure there really is a school dance or that there is a parent at a friend's home when an adolescent child says there is.
- Know their friends. Invite them to your home and meet their parents. Obtain phone numbers so you can follow up with parents or double check on your child's outings.