



the TEEN BRAIN

The teen brain is not an adult brain. It is under construction. There are 3 main areas of the brain that are struggling to grow, interact, connect and develop during the teen years.

These 3 areas of the brain compose the pre-frontal lobes. The pre-frontal lobes regulate logic, common sense, judgment, reality, and problem solving. All of these skills are part of the journey that will continue until the mid twenties when hopefully the brain becomes fully developed as an "adult brain."

Tips for Parents:

- ✦ Your teen may look like an adult, but does NOT have an adult brain.
- ✦ Teens are struggling to develop mature problem solving skills and will make bad decisions. Allow them to face the logical consequences whenever possible.
- ✦ Teens will listen to what you have to say if you have a relationship and clearly communicate with them. Yelling and lecturing will not work. Find a time or activity that works best for the two of you to communicate.
- ✦ You have more influence than you think. Parents, mentors, and others who teens feel emotionally connected to can become the "voice of reason" that a teen will hear in his/her head.
- ✦ Teens who have several significant adults of the same gender that they feel "close to" have better adjustment.
- ✦ Due to hormones surges expect lots of emotional mood swings and struggles with sorting reality from fiction.
- ✦ Teens fluctuate from acting like 22 year-olds to 2 year-olds all within 3 minutes time; be prepared for either the 2 or 22 year-old to appear.
- ✦ During the teen years music creates lifelong patterns in our brain. These patterns shape our views about life, making the message of the music critically important. Indeed, the music of our teen years often becomes the music of our lifetime.
- ✦ Food and emotions stimulate fast growing regions of the brain. Emotional outbursts and binge eating often accompany hormone surges and spikes in brain growth & development.
- ✦ Teens are on a journey; they need lots of physical contact, love and nurturing. Many experts believe that this is a second chance for the brain to wire areas that were missed at 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. Thus, a 12 year-old and a 2 year-old act a lot alike.

The Thalamus:

Sorts sensory input, helps sort REALITY from FICTION.

The Hypothalamus:

A primitive part of the brain that drives behaviors and grows quickly during the teen years. Music, emotions, and food stimulate this part of the brain.

The amygdala:

Serves as a bridge between the thalamus and the hypothalamus. Develops as you age and mature but is NOT automatic. Development of the bridge can be promoted by the voices that teens hear in their heads from mentors, parents and others with whom they feel connected.