

Teen Brain – Smart Kids, Foolish Choices

Which 3 characteristics best describe your teenager? Which one brings you to the brink?

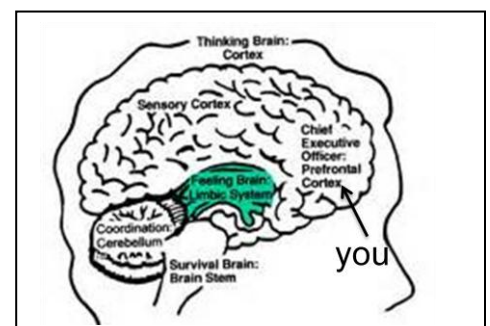
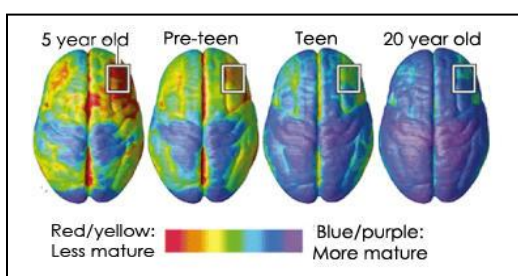
1. Quick to find your faults
2. Embarrassed by you
3. Rapid response – pissed off – blaming – rebellious
4. Sleep deprived – PM night owl; AM cranky & listless
5. Quick to Over-Emote – outbursts of tears/laughter/anger
6. Prone to overestimate short-term payoffs and underplay longer-term consequences
7. Likely to overlook alternative courses of action
8. Somewhat disrespectful and self-centered
9. Impulsive
10. Little knowledge of 'why I just did ____'
11. Uncommunicative/Unresponsive
12. Obsessed with fashion, persona, fitting in
13. Likely to take risks
14. Reactive to stress
15. Friend-centered

Important to note Teen's list for us Parents:

1. Worried, worried, worried
2. Obsessed with clean
3. Eyes In the back of their head
4. Likely to say 'No'
5. Focused on us (kids) doing well
6. Prone to Emotional Outbursts (tears/anger)
7. Likely to bring up 'the olden days'
8. Have difficulty believing we would make a good choice
9. Selfless – always focused on us (like a hobby)
10. Stressed
11. Need rest
12. Do as I say, not as I do

Net Result – they are doing their job as we do ours – their brain is ill-equipped to do the planning without support from adult – perfectly suited for innovating, social cuing, learning

- Pushing you away to figure self out
- Demonstrating independence
- Figuring out what it takes to be taken seriously, trusted, responsible
- Expressing volatility in different ways
- Developing into who they are going to be



So what can Parents/Adults do? – Knowing this is nice, but it doesn't make it easy.

- Accept that it's messy – don't take it personally
- Don't be shocked, yet don't let things slide
- He/she needs to make himself proud – let them know specifics that make you proud
- Catch them doing good, recognize their friends acts of goodness
- Remember, mistakes and “failures” are critical to growth – use it or lose it phase!
- Don't look for trouble – you'll find it!

Don't Cave into their TRAPS

- Circular arguments, negotiation, whining, disrespect – then they win! Walk away!
- But everyone else is.... “We are not everyone else”
- I have to go too. “We know you may be disappointed, but this is our decision”
- I can never win with you. “What would it take to earn that privilege?”
- Avoid blaming, shaming, and threatening

EXPECTATIONS and CONNECTIONS are Key to Winning the War

- Responsibilities and clear expectations are critical to the development of a young adult.
- Teach your teen exactly what it is you expect before you expect it, not after. Encourage them to take responsibility for planning – increases competence!
- Let your child know that you like him, really, truly like him and enjoy being with him.
- Be sure there are others in his life that provide scaffolding – coach, youth worker, therapist, teacher. Control is not the key – connection is!
- Keep your expectations and standards higher than you hope to achieve
- Negotiate privileges and responsibilities – ahead of time – 24 hour rule
- Avoid overindulgence - Work toward ‘industry’ – Fostering Producers vs Consumers

Transfer Owner of CONSEQUENCES to TEEN – A PLAN

- They need to communicate to you, when, where, with whom, if change, then ____.
- Discussion of potential
 - Risks
 - Non-negotiables
 - If, thens
 - Alternatives
 - Consequences, if not done to PLAN – Future rewards based on repeated achievement

ASSUME SUCCESS – and Expect the BEST of your TEEN

- “Thanks for adjusting your attitude, it helps me to...”
- “Your effort meeting your curfew..., it's time you...”
- “Making that choice to...with your friends rather than go to that party....”
- “You are getting so much better at managing your... It's time we...”

Tips for CALMING Conversations

Breathe, meet privately, listen, then talk

- When you can speak to me with respect, I want to discuss your feelings about this.
- You are not going to like what we have decided, but I want you to understand why.
- I am truly sorry if that's how my tone/words made you feel.
- Ok – we're going there?
- Is this worth losing ____ over?

Resources:

A Parent's Guide to Understanding Teenage Brains: Why They Act the Way They Do, Mark Oestreich
Blame My Brain - The Amazing Teenage Brain Revealed, Nicola Morgan
Why Do They Act That Way, David Walsh
<http://samafoundation.org/youth-substance-addiction/effects-of-drugs-on-adolescent-brain/>
Smart but Scattered Teens – The “Executive Skills” Program for Helping Teens Reach Their Potential