

# Teen Brain Development Information

- The teen brain is at a very special point in development and a work in progress – no longer a child and not yet an adult.
- New connections between brain areas are being built and many chemicals, especially neurotransmitters (the brains messengers) are in flux.
- The flexibility and growth in the brain give teens a increased capacity to learn. This is a double-edged sword though because an open and excitable brain can also be affected by stress, drugs, chemical substances and any number of changes in the environment.
- Unused connections in the thinking and processing part of the brain are 'pruned away' and at the same time other connections are strengthened to make the brain more effective. Pruning begins at the back of the brain.
- The front part of the brain is remodelled last. This is the part that makes decisions, plans and considers consequences to actions, solves problems and controls impulses. Because of this teenagers rely more on the back part of the brain, associated with emotions, impulses, aggression and instinctive behaviour.
- Adolescence can have an increased response to stress as they don't have the same tolerance to stress that adults do.
- They have more stress-induced illnesses and physical problems such as colds, headaches and upset stomachs/ they also have an epidemic of symptoms from nail-biting to eating disorders.

## Primary stage

This first stage of **teen development** is normally experienced by the teens belonging to the age group of 12-14. Listed below are displayed characteristics during this early stage.

- The teens are yet under the process of identifying as to who they are. They are quite moody and often get irritated.
- They are yet developing their skills of communication and therefore, they are better in expressing themselves by actions, instead of words.
- Usually, the girls do better than boys and build the required skill set faster. But, both of them show off their skills.
- Family bonds become weak as they do not expect the parents to look after them as before. Now, this care and trust is found in friends.
- Dressing sense and other interests are as per the peer group or friends that are typically among with the same gender.
- A trace of childish behaviour still exists.
- They are interested in experimenting with their bodies.
- Teens might be drawn to prohibited substances like alcohol or cigarettes.

## Middle stage

Teens between 14 and 17 years are mostly in this second stage of **teen development**. Listed below are displayed characteristics during this stage.

- In this stage, the teens tend to develop their self-identity and so the concentration is now on self-improvement.
- More focus is on the body and external appearance. This is because puberty changes occur in the body, which can also induce self-consciousness in them. In some cases, due to this, inferior complex might also develop.
- Parent and teen relationships tend to get stressful as the teen feels that the parents are interfering. Therefore, he or she withdraws from them emotionally. On the other hand, the teen notices that his or her parents no longer provide support due to which sadness and loneliness are invited.
- More and more new friends are made.
- Intellectual development begins and the teens analyze their inner self.
- For the first time, the teens might fall in love and develop passion for an opposite gender. Therefore, sex education is very necessary at this time.
- Teens develop a sense of ethics and morality.
- The teens identify their role models.
- The teens also start setting goals.

## Late stage

This is the last teen development stage seen in the teens of 17 to 19 years. Listed below are displayed characteristics during the later stage.

- The self-identity virtue becomes deeper and a sense of self-esteem is developed.
- Intellectual development advances and that the teen can now express well.
- A sense of stability is developed in emotions and so the teen seriously considers the relationships with the opposite gender.
- The teens can now take their own decisions and so rely on themselves instead of parents or friends.
- A typical childhood behaviour of inflexibility is gone and so they can now compromise.
- They begin to think for the first time about the future.
- They seek an answer regarding their role in the world.
- They accept social rituals as well as institutions.

If there is any deviation from these characteristics, then understand that there is surely a problem. In such a case, it is inevitable that a psychologist's visit is recommended to track and deal with the problem effectively and on time mainly.

## **Things that effect Teen Behaviour**

Family Environment – arguments in front of children, drug and alcohol, debt, moving home, mental health, relationship break up, death, domestic abuse, overcrowding, chaotic.

Accidental rewards – problem behaviour is likely to keep occurring if it results in accidental rewards. Sometimes parents might not be aware this is happening. For example, laughing, or spending a lot of time reasoning with the teen as the extra attention may encourage to do the behaviour again.

Escalation Traps – teenagers may learn that ‘turning up’ or escalating undesirable behaviour is effective in getting what they want when their first request is turned down. This increases the chances that this will happen again.

Outside Influences – peers and friends – mixing with aggressive or disruptive friends, problems in school, media and technology.

## **Developing a positive relationship with your Teen.**

**Positive communication** – sometimes when you spend time with teenager you will get the opportunity to talk. Parents must resist the temptation to talk about things that might cause an argument. Make sure teens are listened to and parents show attention. Reflect what they are saying and occasionally offer items from parents own experience.

**Positive activities** – to keep a positive relationship between parents and teenagers there needs to be some shared activities. These should be based on what the teenager would like to share with you. Example, bike riding, shopping, going for a coffee, watching a tv programme together, football.

**Descriptive Praise** – A good way of encouraging desirable behaviour is to notice your child behaving well and acknowledge this. Describe exactly what your child did that you liked. Desirable behaviour likely to be repeated when descriptive praise is used. Notice what teenager does and praise the behaviour you like. It needs to be more subtle with teens. Praise works best when parents are enthusiastic and mean what they say. Descriptive praise is about naming what you are praising the teen for e.g. thanks for keeping the music down while I was on the phone.

**Show affection/attention** – show them you care about them which needs to be done differently from when they were younger as public displays of affection can cause embarrassment. Affection should be Descriptive displayed more in keeping with adult relationships. A smile, a wink, pat on the back or just watching are all forms of attention.

## **Encouraging positive behaviour in our Teens**

### **Clear, Calm Instructions**

- Important to give instructions that are clear and direct and to make that the instruction is followed.
- If you want your child to do something, let them finish what they are doing first (finishing a drawing) before giving an instruction.

- Important to:

Get close and gain your child's attention

Tell your child what to do (be clear and specific)

Give your child time to cooperate (5 seconds)

Praise cooperation

Repeat your instruction

Back up your instruction with a consequence

### **Directed Discussion**

- Used to help children follow the rules
- Useful when children occasionally forget or break rules
- Important to get your child's attention, tell them the problem and why, then get your child to say and what they should have done.

# House Rules

- Children need limits to know how to behave
  - Few simple rules work best
  - Rules should tell children what to do as opposed to what not to do
  - Involve your child in deciding on rules
- 

## Logical Consequences

- Use for mild behaviours that don't occur too often
- Consequences work best if they are brief 5 – 30 mins
- The consequence can be longer if the problem happens again

# Setting Goals for Change

- Focus on 1 or 2 goals at a time
- Phrase goals positively
- Make goals simple and realistic

GOALS FOR CHANGE IN <b>CHILD'S</b> BEHAVIOUR	GOALS FOR CHANGE IN <b>YOUR OWN</b> BEHAVIOUR
<i>Examples:</i>  To listen and follow instructions  To use polite, respectful language	<i>Examples:</i>  To give clear, calm instructions  To model polite, respectful language

---

## **Behaviour Strategies to use with ANGRY teens**

- Parents can't control their teen but they can control themselves
- Focus on the issue rather than the child
- Avoid threats
- Speak slowly and softly
- Repeat statements back and ask for clarification
- Ask open ended questions
- Change environment
- Use 'I' messages
- Use positive body language
- Plan before the angry outbursts so all will know what will happen
- Have a list of non-negotiable rules and be flexible on less significant issues

<b>Do</b>	<b>Don't</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learn what is going on in the body and mind of the teen</li><li>• Spend positive time with the teen but give them space too</li><li>• Be as positive as you can be</li><li>• Listen to teen and show interest</li><li>• Help teens with organisation i.e. reminders, calendars</li><li>• Help teens to learn independence but keep them safe i.e. risk assess situations with them</li><li>• Help teens to experiment in a safer way rather than let them rebel and get into serious trouble</li><li>• Set time limits on games etc</li><li>• Make sure consequences are planned and parents stick to them</li><li>• Give short, clear instructions and check they have understood</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ridicule</li><li>• Be sarcastic</li><li>• Be disapproving or dismissive</li><li>• Try to manage a situation when emotions are running high</li><li>• Focus on winning the battles as the end game is to just help them get through</li></ul>