

Welcome!

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**CIGNA'S CHILDREN &
FAMILIES
AWARENESS SERIES
THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2020**

Purpose

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Generally explore the concept of "adolescent development" and become familiar with behavior norms.

Adolescent Development is a term used to describe the common abilities and behaviors present in most teenagers.

These abilities and behaviors are signs that teenagers are moving from childhood towards early adulthood.

Understanding Your Adolescent's Behavior

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Adolescence is the time in life when young people make the journey out of childhood toward adulthood. It can be a wild ride for both teens and parents! It's all about change. These are changes that your child must try to understand and changes in your child that you must adjust to.

Adolescents are fun and stimulating, but they can also be confusing and frustrating.

Understanding normal teen behavior can reduce the confusion, if not the frustration.

“WHY DO THEY ACT THAT? WAY” BY DAVID WALSH (2004)

Teens: An Enduring Conundrum

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The children now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for elders and love chatter in the place of exercise; Children are now tyrants, not the servants of their households. They no longer rise when elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company...gobble up their food and tyrannize their teachers.

*-Quote attributed to
Socrates, Fifth Century B.C.*

Adolescence

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Adolescence is a period of rapid changes. Between the ages of 12 and 17, for example, a parent ages as much as 20 years.

UNKNOWN

Quick Adolescent Neurobiology

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- Humans develop the prefrontal cortex during teenage years –this is the part of the brain that gives humans the ability to plan, set and take steps toward goals, and inhibits dangerous/inappropriate behavior. Also emerging;
 - Self awareness
 - Empathy and Morality
 - The ability to consider future consequences of current choices.
 - The ability to control impulses

Changes

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Changes in Thinking and Reasoning;

Children tend to be concrete thinkers. As teenagers, they begin to be able to think abstractly. They have new mental tools that allow them to:

- Analyze situations logically in terms of **cause** and **effect**.
- Consider “what might happen if...?”
- Think about their futures, evaluate alternatives, and set personal goals.
- Make mature decisions more often.

- As their abilities to think and reason increase, teens will:
 - Become increasingly independent.
 - Take on increased responsibilities, such as babysitting or summer jobs.
 - Begin to consider future careers and occupations.
 - Become concerned about social issues such as racism, politics, injustice or homelessness.

Teenagers *become hyper focused on themselves* and their new abilities. It is developmentally typical for them to:

- Argue for the sake of arguing.
- Jump to conclusions.
- Be self-centered.
- Constantly find fault with the adult's point of view.
- Behave dramatically and devolve to histrionics, at least some of the time.

Teens Under Pressure

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- They have to handle sexually maturing bodies and strong urges.
- They have to figure out and manage volatile and powerful emotions.
- They have to fit into a complex social network.
- They have to deal with immense peer pressure.
- They have to deal with wildly changing moods.
- They have to decide how they are going to respond to the external pressures (alcohol, sex, drugs, body image).
- They have to figure out what their values are going to be.
- They have to renegotiate relationships with their parents.
- They have to get through school.
- They have to balance sleep, schoolwork, social time and familial responsibilities.
- They have to begin to plan their futures.

David , Walsh (1994). *Why Do they act that way?* (pg2) New York: Free Press.

The Teen Brain “A Work in Progress”

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- Brush up on the latest studies regarding how the brain changes and the effects of these changes on adolescent behavior.
- Suggested videos, websites and books;
 - *Inside the Teenage Brain Frontline Series (PBS.org)
 - *DrugFree.org
 - *The Grown-Up’s Guide to Teenage Human: How to Decode Their Behavior, Develop Trust, and Raise A Respectable Adult. By Josh Shipp
 - *www.yourbestfamily.com Dr. Ryan Smith
 - *<https://www.unicef-irc.org/adolescent-brain>
 - *<https://www.drugabuse.gov/videos/teen-brain-development>
- Changes in the teenage brain causes some the frustrating behaviors we see in adolescents such as;
 - Fixation on social standing and relationships... (social media “likes” and latest pop cultural happenings)
 - Hyper-emotional responses
 - Lack of forward thinking – planning, organization, judgment, reasoning, impulse control
 - Excessive need for sleep
 - Late night hours – The circadian rhythm of the brain changes during adolescence and they don’t want to or can’t go to bed before 12-1am.

*Underwood, Nora (2006), “*Why adolescents sleep in, take risks, and won’t listen to reason.*”

Technology & Adolescence

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- Families must have a fundamental rules and agreements about technology use that reinforces family values.
- Have positive family discussions which decrease risky online behaviors.
- Pay attention to how technology affects your adolescent - every person/family is unique.
- Don't be intimidated by technology – you don't have to be familiar with the technology – just familiar with the intention of the creator of the technology.
 - For example: “Free” porn means your teen is the “product” the sellers are after.

Risk Taking - Ten Tips for Parents

- (1) Most all teenagers take risks as a normal part of growing up. Risk-taking is the tool an adolescent uses to define and develop his or her identity, and healthy risk-taking can be vital experience.
- (2) Healthy adolescent risk-taking behaviors (which tend to have a positive impact on an adolescent's development) can include participation in sports, the development of artistic and creative abilities, volunteer activities, travel, running for school office, making new friends, constructive contributions to the family or community, working and others. Inherent in all these activities is the possibility of failure. Parents can help by recognizing healthy risk taking and supporting self discovery efforts to develop positive self image. It is important to be present to help them process feelings of rejection or failure in a healthy way.
- (3) Negative risk-taking behaviors, which could be dangerous for adolescents, include drinking, smoking, drug use, reckless driving, unsafe sexual activity, disordered eating, self-mutilation, running away, stealing, gang activity, and others.
- (4) Unhealthy adolescent risk-taking may appear to be "rebellion" -- angry gestures specifically directed at parents. However, risk-taking, whether healthy or unhealthy, is simply part of a teen's struggle to test out new identity traits by; gleaning feedback from others, serve as steps toward autonomy, force new personal boundaries and free them from restrictive constraints and expectations of others (especially parents).
- (5) Some adolescent behaviors are deceptive -- a teen may genuinely try to take a healthy risk that devolves to more dangerous behavior. For example, many adolescents fail to recognize the trap of dieting and fall into a pattern of disordered eating, sometimes even developing a full eating disorder. Parents need to be well informed in order to stay on top of teens' exploration and to help with such struggles.

Risk Taking Continued

- (6) Red flags which help identify dangerous adolescent risk-taking can include psychological problems such as ***persistent*** depression or anxiety which goes beyond more typical adolescent "moodiness"; problems at school; engaging in illegal activities; and clusters of unhealthy risk-taking behaviors (e.g., smoking, drinking and driving recklessly might be happening at the same time, as might disordered eating and self-mutilation, or running away and stealing).
- (7) Since adolescents need to take risks, parents need to help them find healthy opportunities to do so. Healthy risk-taking can help prevent unhealthy risk-taking.
- (8) Adolescents often offer subtle clues about their negative risk-taking behaviors through what they say about the behaviors of friends and family, including parents. Parents often stay silent about their own histories of risk-taking and experimenting, but it can be important to find ways to share this information with adolescents in order to serve as role models, to let teens know that mistakes are not fatal, and to encourage making healthier choices than those the parent may have made during his or her own adolescence.
- (9) Adolescents look to their parents for advice and modeling about how to assess positive and negative risks. Parents need to help teens learn how to evaluate risks and anticipate the consequences of their choices. It is important to assist them in developing strategies for focusing energy into healthier activities when necessary.
- (10) Parents need to pay attention to their own current patterns of risk-taking as well. Teenagers are watching, and imitating, whether they acknowledge this or not.

Sources:

TEN TIPS FOR PARENTS: Understanding Your Adolescent's Behavior from *The Romance of Risk: Why Teenagers Do the Things They Doby* Lynn E. Ponton, M.D.(Basic Books, 1997.

"The Sex Lives of Teenagers" by Lynn Ponton, M.D. ISBN 0-525-94561-X Dutton, Published by the Penguin Group 375 Hudson Street, New York, NY 1001 <http://www.penguinputnam.com>

Empower

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- Empower your teen;
 - By sharing information about how technology may affect their developing brains and how they experience relationships and worldview.
 - By sharing ways drugs or alcohol will affect their developing brain.
 - Encourage them to be a critical consumer of media.
 - Attend symposiums, conferences and other community outreach events focused on healthy living/choices. The more they know the more tools in the toolbox.

Know the Warning Signs of Trouble

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- A certain amount of change may be normal during the teen years, but too drastic or long-lasting a switch in personality or behavior may signal real trouble — the kind that needs professional help. Watch for one or more of these warning signs:
 - extreme weight gain or loss
 - Sudden change in sleep patterns or persistent problems
 - rapid, drastic changes in personality
 - sudden change in friends
 - skipping school continually
 - falling grades
 - talk or even jokes about suicide
 - signs of tobacco, alcohol, or drug use
 - run-ins with the law
 - Any other inappropriate behavior that lasts for more than 6 weeks can be a sign of underlying trouble, too. You may expect a glitch or two in your teen's behavior or grades during this time, but your A/B student shouldn't suddenly be failing, and your normally outgoing kid shouldn't suddenly become constantly withdrawn. Your doctor or a local counselor, psychologist, or psychiatrist can help you find proper counseling

<http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/growing/adolescence.html>

ACTIVE LISTENING

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- ❑ Give your teen undivided *attention* – intentional focus and practicing patience.
- ❑ Check your *attitude* – be aware and process fears, negativity or prejudice before important conversations. They know you and feel your energy.
- ❑ *Adjustment* – we must be open and willing to shift our own perspective.

The Parent

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- Be sure to work on your own unresolved issues or traumas.
- Explore and solidify your own fundamental values (these are the important subjects you are not willing to compromise when negotiating with your teen).
- Celebrate their strengths and contributions.
- Help your teen overcome a victim narrative when challenged with situations they can change/affect.
- Consider the feedback your teen offers to model healthy relationships, make them feel heard and know they are an important part of the family.
- Remember, it is difficult to fully remember the challenges of adolescence. Don't compare yourself/your experience with your teen's too often.
- Speak 'Life'

What kind of adolescent were you? (No, really!)

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- When you were 12 to 17, in what ways (other than physically) did you change from the person you had been were at age 10 or 11?
- What was different about your ability to think and analyze situations?
- How were you different in your desire for independence?
- How were you different in the ability to handle things on your own?
- As you look back, what kinds of things were important for you to experience on your own, completely independent from your parents, to become a successful adult?

<http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/growing/adolescence.html>

Ask Yourself

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- How did your parents “deal” with you as a teen?
What worked? What didn’t work?

Closing

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Questions