



A NEW KIND OF PARENTING

Raising Kids Ages 10 To 16



www.ourkidsnetwork.ca



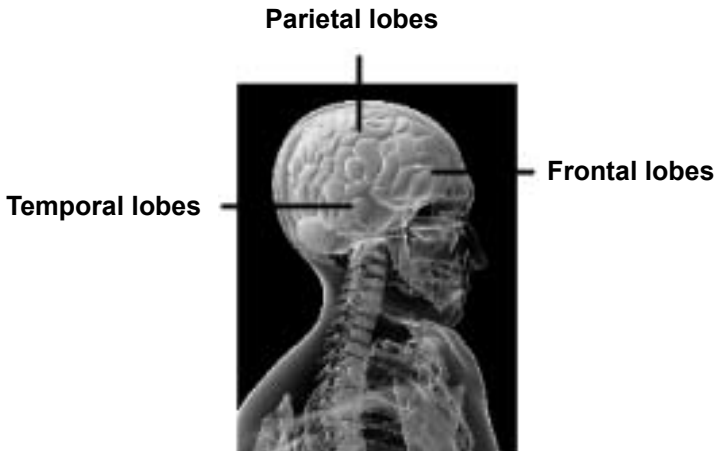
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The Teen Brain – “Under Construction”

New research in brain development shows that during the age of 11 in girls and 12 in boys, a rapid period of brain development occurs. These changes will continue until approximately age 24. The areas of the brain affected are:

- The **frontal lobes**, including the prefrontal cortex. These areas control the ability to “see into the future.” This is where decision making in teens can be affected, as they cannot fully understand the long term consequences of their actions. This area also regulates impulse control.
- The **parietal lobes** and cerebral cortex (outermost layer of the brain). These areas are responsible for logic and spatial reasoning. They also assist with decision making.
- The **temporal lobes**. Areas associated with language.



- During this time, preteens are also starting to develop **abstract thinking**, where they are beginning to see the world as being more complex.
- According to Erik Erikson, a development psychologist, the developmental task of adolescence is to **identify**: figuring out who they are and where they “fit” in society.

A New Kind of Parenting

Have you noticed changes in your preteen or teen's behaviour? Does your teen seem like a completely different person sometimes? Are the techniques you used with them as children no longer working?

Although your teen may not want you to know this, being present as a parent is just as important as ever. However, the way you parent your teen may be different. Understanding the changes impacting your preteen and teen (e.g. brain development) can help you to support them.

The good news is that most adolescents make it through and become successful adults. Many – but not all – families will go through a period of “turmoil” during the teen years. We hope the information in this book can help to give you some understanding and help you make it through the teen years.

Developmental Assets

“Developmental Assets” are the skills, qualities, opportunities, and relationships that young people need to help them grow into caring, responsible adults” (Search Institute, 2005).

As a parent, one of the most powerful things you can do is to build assets in your preteen or teen. The *Search Institute* has developed a list of 40 Assets (see page 5) that youth need to succeed. The more assets a person has, the more likely they are to do better in school, make friends, and make healthier decisions. They are also less likely to engage in risk taking behaviour, such as experimenting with drugs or alcohol, or early sexual activity.

The important thing to remember about Developmental Assets is that by intentionally building them you increase important building blocks for your child's development. Several strategies in this booklet are based on this philosophy.

40 Developmental Assets

Search Institute

External Assets	Internal Assets
<p>Support</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family support 2. Positive family communication 3. Other adult relationships 4. Caring neighbourhood 5. Caring school climate 6. Parent involvement in schooling <p>Empowerment</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Community values youth 8. Youth as resources 9. Service to others 10. Safety <p>Boundaries and Expectations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Family boundaries 12. School boundaries 13. Neighbourhood boundaries 14. Adult role models 15. Positive peer influence 16. High expectations <p>Constructive Use of Time</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 17. Creative activities 18. Youth programs 19. Religious community 20. Time at home 	<p>Commitment to Learning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Achievement motivation 2. School engagement 3. Homework 4. Bonding to school 5. Reading for pleasure <p>Positive Values</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Caring 7. Equality and social justice 8. Integrity 9. Honesty 10. Responsibility 11. Restraint <p>Social Competencies</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Planning and decision making 13. Interpersonal competence 14. Cultural competence 15. Resistance skills 16. Peaceful conflict resolution <p>Positive Identity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 17. Personal power 18. Self-esteem 19. Sense of purpose 20. Positive view of personal future

Rudeness and Disrespect

What parents say

“My daughter doesn’t listen to me anymore! I never had any real problems during elementary school, but now I’m seeing changes – especially in her attitude.”

“The teachers are telling me he is disrespectful in class – he is challenging them on everything they say. How come I’ve never heard this before?”

What’s happening?

With the development of the prefrontal cortex comes abstract thinking. Your teen is now questioning everything they know because they have learned there is more than one way to look at a situation. They are also learning their own identity and are asking what they believe in. Although they may disagree with you, they still want to have a relationship with you.

What your teen wants you to know

“I want to know that you care about what I have to say.”

Quick wins:

- Say yes more than no.
- Use humour to take the edge off tense situations.
- Ask for their opinion for family decisions.

Worth the effort:

- Be honest with your teen about what you do not know, and then look for the answers together.
- Talk to your teen about sharing opinions in a respectful way. Give them examples of this in action.
- Show them different sides of the argument.
- Hold a family debate. Set ground rules to ensure everyone will listen and be heard.

Communication

What parents say

“When I ask him what’s wrong, he shrugs his shoulders and says ‘nothing’”.

“My daughter doesn’t come to me to ask for advice anymore – she says I wouldn’t understand.”

What’s happening?

As part of developing their own identity, teens are starting to define themselves and differentiate themselves from their parents. Peers become more important influences in their opinions and decisions. This is a normal stage of development because friends are the people who are experiencing the same events right now. However, research shows that the parent-teen relationship is as important as ever during these transition years.

What your teen wants you to know

“I ache for connections with my family.”

Quick wins:

- Listen – take the time when they come to you to talk (on their terms).
- Seize opportunities to do something fun together.

Worth the effort:

- Ask them what the best way to stay in touch is. Sometimes a text message can be an easy reminder instead of a phone call.
- Have an open door policy: encourage your teen to come to you with concerns or questions. Be ready to listen and acknowledge your child’s feelings.

Friendships

What parents say

“I trust my son to make good decisions, but I’m worried about what he will do when his friends are around.”

What’s happening?

A normal part of adolescence is that teens want increasingly more independence from their parents. They are also developing a sense of personal identity and finding more connection with peers. This helps adolescence prepare for adulthood, and means we are doing our job! However, many parents are saddened by the change in the relationship.

What your teen wants you to know

“I feel connected to peers in ways you may not understand.”

Quick wins:

- Learn the names of your child’s friends. Greet them when you see them.

Worth the effort:

- Find different ways to stay involved. It’s still important. Follow your teen’s cues and ask them how they like to be shown affection (e.g. high five, tap on the back).
- Keep the conversation going: talk to your teen what it means to be a good friend.
- Recognize that your teen may see positive attributes in their friends that you cannot see.
- Be an asset builder: be intentional about getting to know your teen’s friends and be a good role model for them.

Trust and Responsibility

What parents say

“He tells me he has no homework. Then the school calls to tell me he has not been handing in his assignments.”

“She told me her friend was throwing a party and that her friend’s parents would be home. Then I called them and found out they knew nothing about it.”

What’s happening?

As teens get older, they start wanting more independence and to be treated like adults. However, knowing that their brain is still developing, and they are still learning how to handle responsibility helps parents realize that they are going to make mistakes. Your role is to help guide them through a decision, without making it for them. It’s about getting the balance right between trust and supervision.

What your teen wants you to know

“I want to be held accountable for my actions.”

“When you set reasonable limits, it shows me you care.”

Quick wins:

- Celebrate small successes – comment when they do something well and act responsibly.

Worth the effort:

- Continue to monitor – this means knowing who their friends are, who they spend time with, where they go
- Set reasonable rules and expectations. Talk to your teen about what you expect, and negotiate responsibilities together.
- Plan ahead with your teen for new situations (e.g. first high school party). Talk about your concerns and problem-solve possible scenarios together.

Other Considerations

Diversity

What your teen wants you to know

“I like living in a world where people can be different.”

This generation of youth has grown up with many kinds of diversity. When parents support the message that everyone has value, no matter how they might be different, teens can feel accepted for who they are.

Newcomer families

Some families experience challenges when they move to Canada. Many youth experience challenges with a “dual identity” as they are going through adolescence, since they want to fit in with their Canadian peers, but also still identify with their home culture. They are also aware of their parents’ expectations to maintain the traditions of their culture.

Single Parent Families

Parenting a teenager on your own can seem like a daunting task. However, as a parent, you are never really alone. Research shows that the more caring adults in your child’s life, the more developmental assets they will have. Teachers, neighbours, coaches, and family friends can all have an impact in your teen’s life. Find supports you trust to discuss your children and parenting approaches.

Resources/References

Brain Development

Clavier, R. (2005). *Teen Brain, Teen Mind*. What parents need to know to survive the adolescent years. Toronto Key Porter Books.

Strauch, B. (2003). *The Primal Teen: What the new discoveries about the teenage brain tell us about our kids*. New York Anchor Books.

PBS Frontline (2003). *Inside the Teenage Brain*. Available online at www.pbs.org.

Preteen and Teen Development

McNeely, C. & Blanchard, J. (2009). *The Teen Years Explained: A Guide to Healthy Adolescent Development*. Centre for Adolescent Health at John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Available online at <http://www.jhsph.edu/adolescenthealth>

Schonert-Reichl, K., et al. (2007). *Middle Childhood Inside and Out: The Psychological and Social World of Children 9-12*. University of British Columbia/United Way of the Lower Mainland. Available online at <http://middlechildhoodmatters.blogspot.com>

Ungar, M. (2008). *Today's Teens: Why Parents Matter*. National Clearinghouse on Family Violence. Published by the Minister of Health. Available online at <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/pdfs/nfnts-raise-ado-eng.pdf>

Developmental Assets

For further information on the Developmental Assets, please visit the following websites:

www.search-institute.org

www.thrivecanada.ca

“A NEW KIND OF PARENTING: Raising Kids Ages 10 To 16” was researched and written by Monique Leparskas, RN, BScN, BHSc, Public Health Nurse, Youth Health, Halton Region Health Department.



Our Kids Network (OKN) is a Halton-wide partnership of organizations and agencies serving children and youth. Focused on child development from pregnancy to 18 years, OKN provides leadership for planning, integrating and aligning services and supports so all children thrive.

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